

# **American Studies, Ethnography, and Knowledge Production: The Case of American Indian Performers at Knott's Berry Farm**

**David Kamper**

## **Introduction**

Although the practice of anthropology arguably grew up in America with ethnographic studies of indigenous peoples, the discipline of American studies did not really begin to consciously implement ethnographic methodologies until the field's "anthropological turn" in the 1970s.<sup>1</sup> Since that time, American studies forums have also become increasingly important venues for U.S.-based anthropologists who have shifted from traditional objective social scientific analysis towards cultural criticism and activist- or policy-oriented methodologies. Even as American anthropologists and American studies practitioners continue to gravitate towards one another, there is relatively little explicit discussion of how this sharing of methodologies and venues mutually enriches the disciplines. In this article, I hope to renew the discussion of ethnography and American studies begun decades ago with the field's "anthropological turn" and to articulate how ethnography can enhance our understanding of American intellectual, social, and cultural life.

Ethnography is scholarly face-to-face engagement with cultural actors in the domains where they enact and produce culture. Hallmark ethnographic methodologies include participant-observation and ethnographic interviewing. Like many others trained as anthropologists in the 1990s, my understanding of eth-

nography encompasses reflective, self-critical models propounded by figures like James Clifford and George Marcus. Clifford, Marcus, and many others—before and after—interrogated standard notions of ethnography as a “social science.”<sup>2</sup> They attempted to redefine fieldwork as a more humanistic process and promoted more conscientious and responsible relationships between ethnographers and their consultants. They emphasized ethnography as a relationship suffused with power and history that takes seriously consultants’ own accounts of their lives and their surroundings as well as their thoughts about these accounts. According to this new understanding of ethnography, meaning is not produced simply in the extraction and documentation of cultural data; rather, it is generated out of the relational and interactive dimensions of the ethnographic process. Undertaking ethnography as relational, communicative process vests ethnographic subjects with more authority to participate in and direct the interpretation of their own experiences. It does not entirely resolve power imbalances between scholars and subjects, nor does it yield definitive, universal, or comprehensive truths. It can, however, imbue humanistic inquiry with more collaborative sensibilities.

There seems to be an implicit understanding that ethnographic methods are already at work in the field of American studies, as they have been in the Birmingham School of cultural studies at large.<sup>3</sup> Ethnographic methods have been employed skillfully by Ann Cvetkovich, Susan Davis, the Project on Disney, John Dorst, Kathryn Dudley, Sunaina Marr Maira, Riv-Ellen Prell, and Gutherie Ramsey, Jr., to name just a few.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, Paul Lauter has called for ethnographers and ethnography to play an even more substantial and expansive future role in the discipline. He writes, “It may well be that ethnography will emerge as a new methodological force within the American Studies mix, and that anthropologists who focus their work on the United States will be among the more active claimants for room in the American Studies tent.”<sup>5</sup> If ethnography is to be newly realized and expanded as a “methodological force” within American studies, there needs to be a more explicit deliberation of its methodological value, a return to the line of questions initiated during the “anthropological turn” of the 1970s.

I suggest the following assessment of the value of ethnography to American studies: ethnographic methods, especially methods representative of more responsible ethnographies, require the analyst of culture to build and maintain relationships with cultural actors and producers. The object of these relationships is not simply information gathering. These relationships entail a shift towards dialogic production of knowledge about culture, a shift in which cultural actors and scholars come face-to-face, recognize each other, and negotiate the power relationships in which they are imbricated. In an American studies enriched by ethnographic methodology, scholars of culture do not expect to enter a cultural environment anonymously, record data, and extract meaning from that data. They interact with cultural actors in a way that consciously positions

them not as troves of data but as parallel producers of knowledge. I contend that ethnography is valuable to American studies because it elicits cultural actors' own beliefs and theories of cultural production. In so doing, it can reorient the relationship between scholars of culture and cultural actors towards greater parity and a greater sense of collaboration in the production of knowledge. What I am trying to distinguish here as the distinct value of ethnography is not so much the enhanced descriptive yield of practical methods such as participant-observation and interviewing, but an orientation towards more collaborative relationships between scholars and their subjects.

### **Ethnography Goes to the Amusement Park**

To illustrate this point, I will use an ethnographic lens to reframe a familiar American studies problem: how meaning is made at theme parks. American studies analyses of tourist attractions and theme parks have conventionally focused on built environments as encoding master discourses of imperialism, nationalism, racism, capitalism, and sexism. What happens when we incorporate ethnographic interviewing in our analyses of theme parks? Ethnographic interviews with Native American performers at Knott's Berry Farm, a popular Southern California amusement park, provide a different way of viewing how meaning is made: one that centers on how performers understand their situation within broader historical traditions, local social-economic contexts, and built environments and on how they responsively theorize their performances at the park. One of the most important features of this kind of ethnographic approach is that it allows us to view Native American performers as active theorists of culture and producers of knowledge, just like academics. Using ethnography to actively elicit theories of knowledge production implicit in cultural performances, we come to recognize scholarship and culture as complementary forms of knowledge production.

Several studies of the tourist industry—for example, Andrew Ross's study of the Polynesian Cultural Center and Susan Davis's study of Sea World—have relied primarily upon the ethnographic method of participant-observation to critically analyze theme park built environments.<sup>6</sup> Some, like the Project on Disney's *Inside the Mouse* and Stephen Snow's *Performing the Pilgrims*, also conducted ethnographic interviews with employees focusing on working conditions.<sup>7</sup> However, only a few have used ethnographic interviews to incorporate performers' perspectives on how meaning is made at the theme park. An important example of this kind of ethnographic practice is Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*, particularly as Handler and Gable discuss the active role of performers from the Department of African-American Interpretation and Presentation in educating visitors about the realities of slavery at Williamsburg.<sup>8</sup> Like black performers at Williamsburg, Native American performers at Knott's Berry Farm occupy a complicated position. They are neither simple dupes of an ex-

exploitative institution, nor are they radicals enacting political resistance. As Shari Ortner and Andrew Ross have argued, neither of these modes of assessment really serves scholars of culture.<sup>9</sup>

I would also suggest that critiques of built theme-park environments as fully-intended master discourses without reference to the perspectives of the workers who animate them are of equally limited utility. Eliciting theme-park workers' own theories of knowledge production through ethnographic interviews can yield a more humane and nuanced understanding of how cultural performers self-reflexively use even institutionally circumscribed positions to achieve what they consider to be the worthy goals of culture. Put plainly, it matters how theme-park performers understand their own situations and consequentially strategize and theorize their own performances. It is not possible to get at this understanding only through the anonymous observation of park environments or performances. Entering the theme park as an unannounced observer, taking notes on exhibits, performances, and built environments, and returning to academic environments to theorize recorded observations can yield interesting and valuable insights. It is not the same kind of knowledge, however, as that derived from entering the theme park, introducing oneself and explaining one's project to performers, taking notes on exhibits, performances, and built environments, sitting down with park workers at the work site, and asking them to reflect collaboratively on the cultural processes at work in their own environments. Ethnographic interviewing conducted as a conscious, collaborative conversation with theme-park performers yields a more articulate mutual understanding of how theme parks work.

### **Knott's as a Venue for Cultural Performance**

Southern California's Knott's Berry Farm has hosted about 3.5 million visitors annually since 1998.<sup>10</sup> In addition to roller coasters, theme rides, and concession stands, the park offers a celebration of the nineteenth-century American West in its "Ghost Town" section: a giant stage play in which park visitors and employees physically negotiate an elaborately reconstructed frontier town and participate in a performance of "Old West" history and culture. In addition to drawing tourists, Knott's Berry Farm's Ghost Town also attracts thousands of Southern California elementary school students who take educational field trips to the park each year.

Ghost Town is constructed through an aggregation of historic nineteenth-century buildings purchased in Calico, California; Prescott, Arizona, and other western towns and relocated to Buena Park by Knott's' founder Walter Knott and staged reenactments of period lifestyles and activities by paid actors. Together, these represent an "Old West" whose precise chronological time period is purposely ambiguous and presumably evident to park visitors.<sup>11</sup> In the late 1980s, a new theme area called "Indian Trails" was added to Ghost Town. Comprised of a collection of artifacts and architectural structures organized to rep-

resent North American Indian regional cultures, Indian Trails completes the popular American imagination of the “Old West” as the counterpart to the “cowboy” ethos of Ghost Town.

In purporting to educate while entertaining, Knott’s does not conform neatly to academic typologies of classification for the tourist industry and living museums.<sup>12</sup> Ghost Town and Indian Trails blend the technologies and tropes of museums, memorials, expositions, and films to create a space where visitors and employees play pioneers and Indians. Most of the displays in Ghost Town and Indian Trails are constructed with an interactive component designed to put the visitor in the imaginary role of a pioneer or an Indian. For example, at Indian Trails, children run in and out of the park’s (scaled-down) replica teepees, making cinema-stereotypical war whoops, their fingertips beating against open mouths. In Ghost Town, visitors can pan for gold or mosey up to the saloon bar and order an ice-cold bottle of sarsaparilla. Additionally, throughout both these parts of the park, employees are paid to dress in costume and perform themed activities such as blacksmithing, butter churning, train robbing, powwow dancing, woodcarving, and story telling. The point of view of the performers suggests two categories of performance: performances in which the performer has no immediate or inherent connection to the role and those in which the connection is more immediate or intrinsic. Typifying the latter, performers at Indian Trails are contemporary American Indians, while in the instance of the former, the “Old West” performers of Ghost Town are clearly actors portraying the past and coded as non-coeval to park visitors.<sup>13</sup> The Native performers are hired to exhibit powwow dances and songs, to display the process of fabricating their dance regalia, and to explain the meaning of these various forms of cultural production to inquisitive park visitors. Consequently, unlike their pioneer and cowboy re-enactor coworkers, Knott’s American Indians employees are engaged in a form of intercultural performance that more intricately complicates the relationship between park employees and park visitors.

Knott’s Indian Trails employees belong to a long history of intercultural performative contact between indigenous Americans and European-Americans. As James Roach suggests, these formal displays of knowledge and memory have allowed communities to invent “themselves by performing their past in the presence of others.”<sup>14</sup> In the context of colonial imbalances of economic and political power, these intercultural performances have also served as sites for the reproduction of inequality. This has been the case for indigenous people captured and displayed as savages in cages around sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century Europe, to those economically and socially compelled to perform at world’s fairs or circuses.<sup>15</sup> Buffalo Bill’s “Wild West” shows and World’s Fairs exhibitions created a popular body of knowledge about the history and culture of the “Old West,” and American Indian performers were utilized to promote, naturalize, and justify U.S. imperialism and nationalism.<sup>16</sup> Today, popular cultural performance venues such as Knott’s Berry Farm’s In-

dian Trails dehistoricize and decontextualize difference so as to neutralize the harsh realities of colonialism and exploitation.<sup>17</sup> Cultural difference is not used to challenge what viewers know about social relations but rather to confirm their beliefs and self-identification through the contradistinction of “them” on stage and “us” viewing their performance. As Jane Desmond argues, “Face-to-face encounters produce a safe sublime—a literal enactment of what is metaphorically a broader merging between past and present, here and there, ‘them’ and ‘us.’”<sup>18</sup>

Still, it is important not to discount either the agency of Indians who participate in intercultural performances or the way in which they theorize their own participation. Some recent scholarship has suggested the enthusiasm of Native performers in historical “Wild West” shows.<sup>19</sup> As Quetzil Castaneda observes, concern for the “tourist impact” of intercultural performance on Native communities and critiques of the appropriation and commercialization of Native culture sometimes reductively portray Indian artists and performers as the agentless dupes of colonial fantasies and global capitalism. Lamenting “tourist impact” becomes a form of imperial nostalgia that purports to protect indigenous communities from contamination.<sup>20</sup> Ethnography offers one methodological answer to the problem of how to acknowledge the agency and authority of American Indian performers in intercultural settings. Specifically, ethnographic interviews with performers can help elucidate meta-performative theories of knowledge production, or the performers’ own determination of how and why they participate. Using ethnographic interviews to focus on these metaperformative theories of knowledge production is not necessarily a more “authentic” interpretation of who controls the knowledge produced in these cultural performances. However, by recognizing that performers also have theories about what they do and how to do it, this kind of ethnographic analysis establishes a more collaborative relationship between the performer and the scholar of culture.<sup>21</sup> Listening to Native American performers’ views on their role in the production of Indianness complicates and enhances our understanding of how and why cultural knowledge is publicly produced.

### **Theorizing the Cultural Performance of Indianness at Knott’s**

Knott’s Berry Farm employs four American Indians to perform powwow songs and dances in stage shows scheduled three to four times each day. These shows take place on a circular outdoor platform in a central plaza that marks the transition from the “Indian Trails” section of the park to “Ghost Town.” During each thirty minute show, one Native performer acts as a master of ceremonies and performs accompaniment music on a drum or flute as two or three other Native American performers present powwow dances such as the male fancy dance, hoop dance, jingle dress dance, and shawl dance. These powwow dances represent contemporary pan-tribal interpretations of song and dance styles that

historically emerged from specific tribal contexts; pan-tribal genres of powwow dancing are performed at powwows across the country with substantial uniformity. After the song and dance presentation, Knott's performers field questions from audience members. Performances are open to all park visitors and listed in an events schedule in the park's brochure, but the audience often consists entirely of elementary school children touring the park on fieldtrips organized by the Knott's Berry Farm education department. When they are not dancing, Native American performers sit at picnic tables in "Indian Trails," beading, sewing, or assembling their dance regalia and making crafts. Even this less formal activity counts as a performance of Indianness because Native American employees are paid to display this craft production process and explain it to inquisitive visitors. Thus, from the moment they step into the park, Knott's<sup>22</sup> Native American performers are constantly engaging in intricate acts of self-representation.

My interpretation of Native self-representation at Knott's comes from a six-month ethnographic project, conducted between November 1998 and April 1999. In my visits to the park, I employed participant-observation to analyze the built environment of Knott's and Indian Trails, observed how the Native performers and park visitors interact with the park environment and each other, and conducted ethnographic interviews with the Native performers. Because my objective in this article is to demonstrate the value of ethnographic interviewing within the domain of American studies, I focus only on the substance of ethnographic interviews. My aim in this essay is not to provide detailed analysis of the structure and content of Native American song, dance, or craft demonstrations at Knott's Berry Farm or of the built environment of Knott's itself. Moreover, in this article I have not sought to extract and analyze data about the performers' cultural backgrounds. Rather, in keeping with the aims of this essay, I have chosen to focus on how the performers articulate their own theories of knowledge production. In this instance, I found that more than any other method, ethnographic interviewing established a conversational, relational dynamic that best elicited performers' own reflexive theorizing of their roles at Indian Trails.

I interviewed three of the four Knott's Berry Farm American Indian song and dance performers while the performers were working on crafts at their stations in the Indian Trails section of the park.<sup>23</sup> The interviews took place over six different visits I made to the park from November of 1998 to April of 1999. These performers—I'll call them Jon, Albert, and Mary—were all in their twenties and lived in Orange County, California, near Knott's Berry Farm. Like Los Angeles County, northern Orange County is home to a significant urban Native American population. Albert and Mary are cousins who identify as both Navajo and Sioux; Jon describes himself as Mayan.<sup>24</sup> All of the performers are experienced powwow dancers. Our interviews began with my questions about how the performers conceived of their performances and from there progressed into

more free-form conversations. In talking about their roles at Knott's, these Native American performers highlighted the positive and empowering relationships that they have developed while working at the theme park and spoke of very few negative or unpleasant aspects of their work.<sup>25</sup> They all appreciated the opportunities their jobs afforded them to teach park visitors about American Indian cultures while at the same time providing them with financial support as they developed their respective artistic careers.<sup>26</sup>

These ethnographic interviews reveal that Native American artists at Knott's Berry Farm see their performances as highly intercontextual: they have both a nuanced understanding of how their performances relate to popular depictions of Indianness circulating in dominant society and a keen awareness of how their performances relate to other forms of expressing Indianness outside the context of Knott's, such as powwows. Finally, they understand how their participation at Knott's fits within a long tradition of Natives performing for non-Natives, and they recognize how this tradition determines the expectations of the Knott's corporation and park visitors as well as the commercial economics of this kind of cultural performance. These Native American performers perceive that these different contexts and discourses are highly interconnected and mutually constitutive—that is, that they are manifest both within and without the park, and that they both affect and in turn are affected by their performances. Their theorizations of their participation in Indian Trails fall into two categories: theories of how cultural knowledge is disseminated through performance and theories of the use value of their knowledge and expertise. In the sections that follow, I will elucidate these theories of cultural production drawing from Native American artists' comments from ethnographic interviews.

### **Dissemination/Translation of Cultural Knowledge**

American Indian performance at Knott's Indian Trails constitutes a complex act of self-representation that is related to many historical and contemporary discursive representations of Indianness in museums, fairs, exhibits, and popular media. Much of the power American Indian performers can exert in these contexts comes from their ability to disseminate knowledge and act as translators of cultural difference. Of course, Knott's management does exercise control over the employment and working conditions of performers, the marketing of their performances, and the built environment in which they are staged. Yet, according to the American Indian performers, the park management asserts little to no control over the content of their song and dance performances or their interactions with visitors. There is no official script at Indian Trails: Knott's does not tell the performers what songs, dances, or commentaries to present, or what crafts to make while stationed in Indian Trails. Mary and Albert told me that the Knott's education department wants the performers to be good communicators, to speak about the history of the different songs and dances, and to follow general employee rules, but, as Albert put it, the Knott's



staff “doesn’t really tell us to say anything besides, ‘Welcome to Knott’s Berry Farm.’”<sup>27</sup> According to the performers, in the hiring process, Knott’s did not so much evaluate their ability as dancers or test the depth of their knowledge about specific tribal or pan-tribal Indian traditions. Rather, they felt they were hired based on their connections within the urban Indian community, extended family relationships, the powwow circuit, or to other Native performers who worked at the park and could vouch for them as experienced dancers. While the Native performers recognize that Knott’s, as their employer, has ultimate control over their jobs, they feel that *they* are empowered to determine how they will represent American Indian traditions.

Jon’s, Albert’s, and Mary’s positive assessments of their experience at Knott’s comes in large part from their ability to craft their performances as alternatives to traditional Euro-American displays of Indianness. A key factor in their reconstruction of Native American performance for non-Native audiences is the performers’ decision to present powwow dances to the Knott’s Berry Farm audience rather than ceremonial dances linked to the performers’ specific tribal communities. All of the performers at Knott’s are seasoned powwow dancers who participate in powwows held both in Southern California and nationwide.

Choosing to perform powwow dances allows Jon, Albert, and Mary to diverge from what they view as dominant representations of Indianness in two important respects. First, choosing to perform pan-tribal powwow dances rather than tribe-specific ceremonial dances allows them to represent Indianness to non-Indian communities without having to share with the uninitiated, sacred content entailed in the ceremonial dances. Second, the contemporaneity of these songs and dances allows them to counter the persistent exoticization of American Indian communities. As Albert explains, “What we teach here are social dances. They are not ceremonial or from specific tribes. They are just like a social dance that may be for anybody, like a fiesta for Mexicans, the two-step for cowboys, and so on.” These performances, according to Albert, thus constitute “safe” intercultural exchanges that actively deflect more predatory observers in search of what they believe to be “essential” or “secret” tribal knowledge. By choosing to perform these powwow dances, pan-tribally developed dances that are performed socially at public occasions and in public venues across the country, Knott’s’ Native performers protect specific dances that constitute sacred traditions belonging to individual tribes.

American Indian performers at Knott’s Berry Farm also reflect on precautionary measures they take when disseminating information about American Indian views of the sacred to park visitors. Albert comments on balancing the significance and weight of ceremonial life with the preservation of sacred knowledge:

**Author:** What do you feel is the most difficult thing to explain to kids?

**Albert:** One of them is the seriousness and sacredness of the dances. That it is not something we do as a show; it's taken seriously. People live and die powwow, they grow up, and it's a way of life. So sometimes, it is kind of hard for them to understand that. They think that we come here to play Indians and I tell them that 'I come here an Indian and when I clock out, I am still Indian.' People, in my regular clothes, they would ask me, 'are you Indian?' and things like that. Some of the more sacred things like what they call 'a whistle,' where you can play a drum, and medicine men and visions and things like that are a little more complex for them to understand because you have to be at the ceremonies to actually see it and experience the supernatural. So, some of those things I start talking about but then I forget that I am not supposed to be talking about those things to just anybody. 'Cause even some Indian people don't really know about that. It is something that is more sacred, like about the sweat lodges, I wouldn't talk about like peyote ceremonies, or that my grandfather is a peyote road chief and some of the things, I catch myself, I start going into that, they don't understand so I just say, 'I am not 'sposed to be talking about that,' that's what I say. That's basically it.

At Knott's, Albert confronts the desires of dominant society for an Indianness that appears to them to be "authentic," "authentic" being defined as exotic, primitive, and noble. Performances judged "inauthentic" do not qualify, in the eyes of dominant society, as Indian. Hence, Albert's dilemma: he wants to convey that he and his community take being Indian seriously but it is hard to fully explain this solemnity without describing some ceremonies deemed to be sacred, only for cultural insiders. His solution is to refrain from telling park visitors all that they might want to know, at the risk of providing superficial cultural knowledge. Built into his performances are escape valves to protect knowledge that he does not want to share, does not think should be shared, or may not even know how to share. Recontextualizing the performance of Indianness in the form of powwow dances rather than more sacred ceremonies, Albert controls access to knowledge about Native American cultures.<sup>28</sup>

This strategy of deflecting potentially predatory or primitivizing inquiries can also be seen in the way Knott's Native American performers contextualize their powwow performances as expressions of multiculturalism. Many scholars have explored how exploitative representations of Indianness rely upon primitivizing tropes that allow non-Native experts to authorize themselves by constructing American Indians as backwards and exotic.<sup>29</sup> Jon, Albert, and Mary effectively limit the availability of Indianness as exotic by couching their per-

performances in the terms of multiculturalism. In this way they control the dissemination of knowledge about Indianness by employing translation strategies that connect their own performances of culture to the cultural practices of park visitors, emphasizing sameness over difference and repositioning American Indian cultures from the “exotic” margins towards the broad core of multiculturalism. In order to achieve this movement, performers simultaneously deemphasize their own individual skill or expertise while promoting comparisons of their performances to performances in other cultures. Albert draws out cross-cultural commonalities by asserting to the audience that dancing plays an analogous role in other cultures:

**Albert:** A lot of [the grade school student visitors] never seen anything, or they have never seen anything culturally based, so it is kind of good for them ‘cause even if they are, like, maybe Mexican, sometimes they know they may be Aztec and it helps them to get into it, or better understand their own selves and also, even if they are Black, the African dances that are still being done and if you are Irish or English, there’s dances. So, we just try to stress that this is what we do and this is what we’ve learned when we are kids to keep on our tradition and I say “every ethnic background has a traditional dance style or just a folklore dance that was being practiced for a long time,” and now a days a lot of kids forget about that or they just don’t know what they are or what their culture may be. So, sometimes, some of the kids get curious and then maybe they go home and ask their parents, “What are we?” or “What dances do we do?”

Albert stresses a cultural relativism that minimizes the difference between the powwow dances and songs he presents at Knott’s Berry Farm and the respective traditions of park visitors. In so doing, he subtly downplays the fact he and his co-performers, not the visitors, are getting paid to perform their cultural traditions because they are different or exotic. Instead, he suggests that everyone has traditions; what distinguishes him and his fellow Knott’s performers is the fact that they have learned them and keep performing them.

Mary also works to normalize her performance by de-emphasizing her difference and defusing primitivism. She does so by asserting that she and her co-performers are coeval to or contemporary with her audiences:

**Mary:** [Performing] is trying to let them know that, yes, we put these outfits on, our regalia, you know, during the time we are here . . . but, ya know, it’s like, we live in an apartment, we drive cars, just like everyone else and so a lot of times the

kids are just like, “What, how can that be?” and ya know, “Well, you know, it’s just like you.” So, at least for myself, I try to, I don’t know, I guess, encourage the kids to learn about themselves. . . . I try to teach them a few [Native] words and then I ask the kids that are there “Who speaks more than one language and who speaks something other than English?” and they will raise their hands and then I try to let them know, it’s like, “Well, you should be proud of that,” you know, and that “you all have been raised in an environment which is natural to you.”<sup>30</sup>

Mary highlights her coevalness to her audience by reminding them that she too lives in a world of cars and apartments and by trying to highlight qualities they share, such as speaking multiple languages. Mary, Jon, and Albert frame their performances within multiculturalism in an attempt to counteract the distinction between the “us” (audience, mainstream) versus “them” (performers, cultural others), which Jane Desmond identifies as a central dynamic of intercultural performance. Highlighting their role as cultural actors who participate in a multicultural play of identity, American Indian performers at Knott’s short-circuit the availability of their otherness and emphasize their sameness, both in terms of temporality and culture, to the visitors of Indian Trails. Additionally, their appeals to multicultural markings of Indianness diffuse the demand to prove the “authenticity” of their Indianness based on cultural knowledge that they deem inappropriate to share. While Knott’s might control their jobs and the audience their appreciation, the Native performers take control of the tropes that define their Indianness. In so doing, they draw significant boundaries around their cultural knowledge and regulate access to it.

However, these American Indian performers do not always minimize the differences between themselves and the park visitors. They are, after all, hired to be Knott’s experts on American Indian cultures, and they benefit from the park’s authorization and professionalization of their expertise. The fact that Knott’s has chosen them to be ambassadors endorses Jon’s, Albert’s, and Mary’s ability to represent Indianness and legitimates them as experts. Enacting their cultural performances in a context that is predominantly non-Indian transforms their experience with powwows and Indianness in general into specialized knowledge. Jon, Albert, and Mary are conscious of how performing at Knott’s puts them in a position to represent all American Indians, and they feel the weight of their responsibility to appropriately disseminate knowledge about what it means to be Indian.

This is no easy task. There is significant tension both within and without American Indian communities over who counts as an Indian, especially in urban Indian communities. Joane Nagel traces the developments of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, when many American Indians migrated to cities, formed urban communities, and participated in the Red Power movements. The connec-

tions of many urban Indians to their own tribes diminished at the same time that their interaction with Indians from other tribal communities increased. Nagel theorizes that the shared experiences of these migrants enhanced an incipient supra-tribalism that developed into Pan-Indianism as Indians from different backgrounds interacted in local community centers and protested together in Red Power movements. Expressions of Pan-Indianism are still prevalent in many urban areas today, and urban Indians are sometimes criticized by members of reservation communities because of their lack of grounding in any one specific heritage or tradition, the very factors that keep reservation life cohesive. However, as American Indians frequently travel back and forth between cities and reservations, Pan-Indianisms can be found on many reservations, while strict notions of tribal affiliation are also found in urban settings. Thus, it seems much more appropriate to view reservation Indians and urban Indians not as categorical opposites but as reference points among frequently changing notions of Indianness.<sup>31</sup>

Similar debates over Indian identity often surface around powwows. While powwows enjoy significant vitality and popularity on many reservations, they are often produced in and around urban areas to forge and enhance a sense of Native community. Urban powwows often generate supra-tribal expressions of identity by affording participants the opportunity to express their “Indianness.” However, mere participation in powwows may not always be sufficient to identify an individual as “Indian.”<sup>32</sup> Powwows (urban powwows in particular) are inter-tribal celebrations, both the songs and dances have taken on Pan-Indian characteristics as people borrow and blend different traditions. In addition, many urban Indians seek recognition of Indianness beyond participation in powwows and point to other characteristics to signify their Indianness. Hence, while participating in a powwow may not fully ratify one’s Indianness, performing powwow songs and dances under a different set of circumstances might. Jon, Albert, and Mary are all urban Indians living in northern Orange County, California. They are also active participants on the powwow circuit: the yearly calendar of powwow events that are held throughout the U.S. They attend powwows—smaller, local Southern California powwows and larger seasonal powwows in the western United States—whenever their Knott’s work schedules permit.

At Knott’s, performing powwow dances is a very potent marker of one’s Indianness. While at an actual powwow, Jon, Albert, and Mary are individuals among many singers and dancers and little marks them as special. Jon himself remarked that at a powwow he would be more relaxed, “kicking back in a chair watching or going to look at stuff with [his] girl and just walking around,” but performing powwow songs and dances at Knott’s transforms him and his fellow performers into authoritative cultural arbiters.<sup>33</sup> Jon, Albert, and Mary are all conscious of questions pertaining to who Indians are or what Indians do and how these questions relate to their performance of Indianness at Knott’s. At Knott’s, they have the responsibility to formulate and communicate definitions of Indianness.

Native American performers at Knott's direct this process of delimiting identity both externally to educating audiences, whom the Native performers believe are over-exposed to faulty depictions of Indianness, and internally towards strengthening their own identification with what they believe to be important about being Indian. All three performers conceptualized their participation at Knott's in opposition to other pop-cultural forms of representation. They expressed concern with the way the media distorts or misrepresents Indianness, suggesting their desire to disseminate what they felt were more appropriate representations. Albert asserts, "as they get older, everybody is set in their own ways about Indian people by the movies, by books, mostly movies, mostly that stuff is not true."

**Author:** How would you define the purpose of the performances here?

**Albert:** Just to let people understand what the real dances are because I know on TV they're never shown, well, they have now, but like in movies they've never shown real dances and real Indian people. It's just recently they started using Indian people in Indian movies. So it just helps to break the stereotypes of what is created on TV about Indian people, in general because a lot of people think Native American people are not even alive and they still say it to me. They're like, 'Indian people ain't alive. You're not Indian.' I just say, 'yeah whatever.' It's just to let people understand the dances and what is going on today. . . .

Mary reported that one of the questions she is most frequently asked by children is "Do you know Pocahontas?" or "Are you Pocahontas?" in reference to the popular Disney film. Albert and Mary have also found themselves in near-confrontation with some Knott's' patrons who have tried to supercede the performers' knowledge of Indianness and interrogate their legitimacy as cultural arbiters. As Albert relates:

**Albert:** Sometimes I feel like the people look at me as if I am stupid or as if I don't know what I am talking about or they want to question what I am saying and they don't even know, or they don't have a clue about it but I get that a lot.

Similarly, Mary recounts incidents where schoolteachers supervising field trips have contradicted her pronunciation of an Indian word or "corrected" her on facts about Indian life. In response to these preconceived notions about Indians, Jon, Albert, and Mary have concentrated their performances on illustrating what they conceive to be the most important elements of Indianness. They all

realize that they are cultural ambassadors and stress their desire to perform correctly. They recognize that they are performing for people who do not have much experience with Indian communities; they know that they may be representing all American Indians for these visitors.

Thus, in the context of Knott's Berry Farm, the performance of powwow dances confers much more authority and responsibility on Jon, Albert, and Mary than singing or dancing at a tribal or urban pan-tribal powwow. As Mary states, "I am not worried about being told [the performance is] not right because I try to uphold what I have learned to the truest degree." All three conceive of themselves as educators and rightfully so: they are cultural brokers who must compete with many other representations of Indianness. Within the space of Knott's Berry Farm, their performances provide them with the power to call other representations of American Indian identity into question.

Clearly, expressions of this kind of authority also improve the self-esteem of the performers. This point is especially important because many researchers have argued that urban life can strain and displace Indian identity. Couple the strain of urban life with the internal tensions surrounding authenticity in some Indian communities and it is easy to see how one might find Knott's Berry Farm to be a safe haven for questions of identity. Cultural identity at Knott's is not bound to the same authenticity politics found on reservations or in urban Indian communities for two reasons. First, most visitors to the park have too little experience with and knowledge of Indian communities to assert themselves as legitimate authenticators of Indianness, even though, as Jon, Albert, and Mary point out, this inexperience does not stop everyone. Second, and more significantly, visitors to Knott's construe and construct identity more liberally. Most amusement park visitors have few grounds on which to evaluate the powwow dancers' Indianness other than by the way they dressed and the social roles they perform in the park. In this intermittent social environment, Native identity is much more flexible than in other contemporary American venues where Indianness is often measured by blood quantum or by federally-issued identification cards. (Certainly, one illustration of this flexibility is that Jon, who identifies himself as a "Mayan," participates in the production of North American Indianness at Knott's.) These legal systems of identification are often great sources of debate because they define Indianness not by practice but by racial categories or bureaucratic qualifications.<sup>34</sup> Knott's' American Indian performers conceive of Indian Trails as a space where they can express their Indianness relatively unrestrained by suspicions about or challenges to their legitimacy and a space from which they can launch criticism and corrections of dominant cultural representation of Indianness.

### **Use Value of Cultural Knowledge**

While Native American performers at Knott's Berry Farm acknowledge their responsibility to represent Indianness to park visitors, they also have a

notion of how their performances of Indianness can be employed towards meeting their own complex needs. Linguistic anthropologists Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs argue, “Texts [such as social performances] may be valued because of what you can use them for, what you can get for them, or for their indexical reference to desired qualities or states.”<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Knott’s Native performers have a clear appreciation of how to use their knowledge of powwow dances and American Indian culture to secure jobs, hone their craft, develop artistic careers, and achieve personal emotional and spiritual goals. Additionally, by recontextualizing performances of Indianness within the comparatively uncontested environment of Indian Trails, they can foster their own self-confidence and psychic strength. All of the performers explicitly associate their performance at Knott’s with their own participation in the contemporary circuit of powwow events across Indian Country. The popularity of this circuit—also known as the “Powwow Highway”—has grown significantly in the last fifteen years primarily as a result of significant increases in prize money for winners of the competitive dances, which include men’s fancy dancing, women’s fancy shawl dancing, and women’s jingle-dress dancing—the same dances performed for Knott’s visitors. At Knott’s, however, Native performers dance in front of audiences who are not as experienced as those within the powwow community. Indian Trails, then, becomes a place where Native performers practice their steps and improve their techniques without being concerned about making mistakes. Even if this practice is not parlayed into the financial success of competition dance prize money, there still is tremendous amount of social capital garnered by the best social dancers at powwows.

In addition to the way performing at Knott’s can translate into social cache and economic success in contexts beyond the park, Native performers all recognize the personal value generated by their performances of Indianness.<sup>36</sup> Jon, Albert, and Mary each expressed great pride in representing their respective tribal communities, and all commented on how much satisfaction they gained from making their audiences happy. Albert mentioned some personally moving moments when he witnessed people crying while he was playing the flute. Much of my conversation with Jon involved talking about a “good spiritual sense” that he received from performing at Knott’s. Additionally, all three performers consistently commented on how much they enjoyed working with the many children who visited Knott’s. On some occasions, they even felt strong emotional bonds with these children; for example, Mary tells a story of a child spontaneously running up and hugging her after a performance. One of the most significant rewards for these performers comes from other American Indians who happen to be viewing the performance. All three performers highlighted occasions when they received compliments from visitors they identified as their own people. In such moments, Jon, Albert, and Mary experienced legitimation simultaneously from both non-Indians and Indians—an opportunity that is not so common in other settings.



Jon, Albert, and Mary also conceive of their participation at Knott's as a means of achieving practical, professional goals by offering opportunities for artistic development. For example, these three also perform in other settings for non-Indians (such as for student and community groups and at weddings and parties) on a contract basis, and they work on other artistic projects related to their Indianness. Albert quipped about his frequency of dancing, "If there was a trophy, I think I would be nominated to get it as being one of the most dancing powwow performers." To these ends, they see Knott's as an ideal rehearsal space. Jon admits that before working at Knott's Berry Farm, "I did not really like to talk a lot to people. A lot of Indians I know, it takes a lot of trust [of the audience to speak publicly] and working here and putting me on the stage with a mic [microphone] really taught me how to talk a little bit and be able to express myself." Knott's is a more comfortable space for Jon to perform because he recognizes that the audiences appreciate performances, but they generally do not have the background to distinguish between an exceptional and an average performance of Indianness. Knott's becomes a "safe" space for these performers to practice dance moves, singing, and even public speaking skills. This rehearsing can improve their performing skills as a whole in ways that they can parlay into greater success outside of Knott's—such as on the powwow circuit or other in performing opportunities.

The most fundamental value of these performances to Knott's' Native performers is material: working at Knott's is a full-time job with flexible hours to pursue outside interests. All three performers comment on how great it is that they get paid to do what they love. Albert says, "I grew up dancing and I thought if I can get a job getting paid to do what I have been doing all of my life, that would be the best thing that can ever happen," while Mary remarks, "I have to punch in and out, but I am doing something that I love to do." "It's cool. I get paid for doing what I love to do and that's cool," Jon muses. He even confesses that other employees at the park seem to be envious of his favorable working conditions. Although there is significant prize money involved in powwows, a limited number of highly skilled dancers can make a living and survive on prize money alone. At Knott's, by modifying these powwow dances for Indian Trails, Native performers can support themselves by doing something they enjoy and getting paid to continually refine their skills.

Knott's' Native performers clearly conceptualize their knowledge of powwow dances and Indian cultures as a means of supporting themselves financially and develop their careers. Working at Knott's makes Jon, Albert, and Mary professional performers, and being able to support themselves while they perform allows them the time to continually develop their artistic skills and career ambitions. In addition to powwow dancing and singing, Jon is a budding graphic artist, Albert is forming a Native-themed hip-hop music group, and Mary has a college degree in dance and has plans to pursue other forms of dancing as well. The expertise they gain from performing at Knott's can be channeled into

other forms of representation related and not directly related to American Indian traditions.

Moreover, Jon, Albert, and Mary each derive personal and material value from the crafts they fabricate while on the job at Indian Trails; beadwork, ribbonwork, and so forth can either become part of the performers' dance regalia, or become art objects for display or sale. Each performer expressed to me a sense of pride in being able to make everything they wear. Here again, they are getting paid to hone their skills and work on projects that both bring them pleasure and fortify their connection to Indianness. Jon, Albert, and Mary are able to take advantage of Knott's Berry Farm's exhibition of Indianness by creating a place to work on their own artistic personal development while at the same time getting paid for work they would do even if they were not employed by Knott's. This analysis of the "down-time" at Indian Trails is not meant to construct a romantic vision of Knott's as a beneficent employer. Indeed, the "down-time" is not always pleasant: questions from visitors are often incessant and can range from the merely annoying to the offensively racist. Still, performers can use this "down-time" to their economic or spiritual advantage.

Finally, it is important to honor the spiritual enrichment that all of the performers believe they have gained from performing at Knott's. Both Albert and Jon commented on the seriousness and almost religious power of performing powwow songs and dances.<sup>37</sup> Albert talked about the powwow as a way of life and compared performing powwow dances to praying in a church. Jon also compared his singing to praying, and when asked if the distractions of an amusement park diluted those feelings, he declared that this spiritual feeling exists despite performing in park:

**AUTHOR:** Do you get that good [spiritual] feeling even when you are performing here?

**Jon:** Yeah, when I used to sing with the guys, I used to call it the "zone;" you get in that and you forget you are even doing what you are doing. You forget you even . . . you just forget about yourself even. You're just lost in it and that's what's cool. Sometimes we get that here, even when I am singing. You can tell when they are dancing hard, you can tell. Nobody knows except us and it connects good. Everyone feels cool.

Jon suggests that sometimes during performance the entire context—the fact that they are in an amusement park getting paid by non-Indians to perform Indianness for non-Indians—drops out and they get lost in the moment of dancing and singing. Clearly, these performers are able to enjoy their art, culture, and tradition even in the Knott's Berry Farm context. At the same time, Jon, Albert, and Mary take their jobs seriously and fully conceive of themselves as

teachers and arbiters of American Indian cultures. They all maintain the explicit goal of combating hegemonic stereotypes of American Indians, and they also use their performance time at Knott's as an opportunity to prepare for performances and develop careers outside of the amusement park. As these ethnographic interviews demonstrate, American Indian performers at Knott's Berry Farm have formulated folk theories of knowledge production through cultural performance to advance and perhaps justify these goals.

### Concluding Thoughts

In his groundbreaking work on the performance of Indianness, Philip Deloria chronicles the way Euro-Americans have advanced the aims and agendas of national and local politics, social scientists, and naturalists, counter-culture, and environmental movements through performing their notions of Indianness. "As the nineteenth and twentieth centuries unfolded," Deloria adds, "increasing numbers of Indians participated in white people's Indian play, assisting, confirming, co-opting, challenging, and legitimating the performative tradition of aboriginal American identity."<sup>38</sup> Clearly, Native performers at Knott's Berry Farm typify this trend. What also seems clear is that actions such as "assisting, confirming, co-opting, challenging, and legitimating" are not easily disentangled: they intermingle in each American Indian performance of Indianness for the dominant culture. Consequently, it is a mistake to argue that the American Indians who work at Knott's Berry Farm's Indian Trails are committing powerful acts of resistance, or that they are wholly appropriated by Knott's' capitalist-imperial agenda.

Instead, I have tried to present a more nuanced sense of how cultural actors actively make meaningful choices no matter how constrained those choices might appear from the outside. This is not to say that the Knott's' performers just "make do" or "make the best of" a difficult situation. This would ignore those performers' own sophisticated theorization of their own cultural production. Cultural actors are often acutely aware of their choices and the significance and consequences of these choices. In the specific case of performers of cultural knowledge, this meaningfulness constitutes a local theory of knowledge production. I contend that ethnography is an advantaged methodology for eliciting local theories of knowledge production because it can establish a conversational, collaborative relationship between scholars and cultural actors. When we incorporate ethnographic interviewing into our analyses of theme parks we are able to develop an understanding of how the parks work that acknowledges and authorizes the viewpoints of the Native performers who make them work.

It is no coincidence that I have come to this kind of understanding of ethnography through working with Native Americans. American Indians have long been the object of ethnographic exploitation, as Vine Deloria Jr. wryly and famously observed in *Custer Died for Your Sins*. Indigenous studies scholars like Devon Mihesuah and Linda Tuhiwai Smith writing in the tradition of Deloria's

critique have made it clear that responsible ethnographic research in American Indian communities be conceived as a relationship with cultural actors maintained over time, a relationship that demands acknowledgment of the concerns, interests, and agendas of ethnographic consultants.<sup>39</sup>

I recognize that there is some irony in suggesting ethnography can be reclaimed in the interest of better eliciting Native American perspectives and understandings, but it can inasmuch as it entails a renewed relationship of responsibility to the ideas and agendas of the cultural actors we study. In this article and this research I have tried to portray the ideas and agendas of Jon, Albert, and Mary in a respectful manner that illustrates their own theories of cultural production. They conceive of their participation in Knott's performance of the West as an opportunity to reassert Native control of the representation of Indianness and a way to use their performing skills to sustain themselves economically. I also recognize that, just like academic theories, local theories of knowledge production are embedded with contradictions, inconsistencies, and gaps. Conscientious scholars acknowledge that our interpretations are never free of what James Clifford calls "partial truths." Ethnography helps us recognize that local theories of knowledge production and how they parallel, intersect, or conflict with our "professional" theories and interpretations can lead to more thoughtful, nuanced scholarship. Implementing ethnographic methods in American studies research can help generate this beneficial reflexivity. In this way, ethnographic methodology can foster a more lateral, conscientious relationship between scholars and their subjects. It thus complements and extends American studies' commitment to understanding the intellectual lives of historical-cultural actors: both ourselves as scholars and the individuals and communities whose cultural products and knowledge we study.

## Notes

1. See Stanley Bailis, "The Social Sciences in American Studies: An Integrative Conception," *American Quarterly* 26:3 (1974): 202-224, and John L. Caughey, "The Ethnography of Everyday Life: Theories and Methods for American Cultural Studies," *American Quarterly* 34:3 (1982): 222-243. Bailis and Caughey both proposed the incorporation of structuralist ethnography, suggesting that anthropological methods could present a comprehensive understanding of human communities. For a more recent discussion of ethnographic methods, see also George Lipsitz, *American Studies in a Moment of Danger* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 57-82.

2. For some examples see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) and *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); James Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths," in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, eds. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); George E. Marcus, *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); George W. Stocking, Jr., ed., *Colonial Situations: Essays on the Contextualization of Ethnographic Knowledge* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Ahkil Gupta and James Ferguson, eds., *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology," *Current Anthropology* 36:3 (1995), 409-440; and Charles L. Briggs, *Learning How to Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

3. See, for example, Paul Willis, *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981). Anthropological critiques of cultural studies ethnography include Jean Lave, Paul Duguid, Nadine Fernandez, and Erik Axel, "Coming of Age in Birmingham: Cultural Studies and Conceptions of Subjectivity," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21 (1992): 257-282, and Richard Handler, "Anthropology is Dead! Long Live Anthropology!," *American Anthropologist* 95:4 (1993): 991-999.

4. Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Susan G. Davis, *Spectacular Nature: Corporate Culture and the Sea World Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); The Project on Disney, *Inside the Mouse: Work and Play at Disney World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); John Dorst, *The Written Suburb: An American Site, an Ethnographic Dilemma*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989) and *Looking West*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Kathryn Dudley, *Debt and Dispossession: Farm Loss in America's Heartland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) and *The End of the Line: Lost Jobs, New Lives in Postindustrial America* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997); Sunaina Marr Maira, *Desis in the House: Indian American Youth Culture in New York City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002); Riv-Ellen Prell, *Fighting to Become Americans: Assimilation and the Trouble Between Jewish Women and Jewish Men* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000) and *Prayer and Community: The Havurah in American Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989); and Guthrie Ramsey, Jr., *Race Music: Black Cultures from Beehop to Hip-Hop* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

5. Paul Lauter, *From Walden Pond to Jurassic Park: Activism, Culture, & American Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 17.

6. Andrew Ross, *The Chicago Gangster Theory of Life: Nature's Debt to Society* (New York: Verso, 1994); Davis, *Spectacular Nature*.

7. The Project on Disney, *Inside the Mouse*; Stephen Eddy Snow, *Performing the Pilgrims: A Study of Ethnohistorical Role-Playing at Plimoth Plantation* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993).

8. Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997)

9. See Ross, 54; Shari Ortner, "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37:1 (1995): 173-193.

10. Sandi Cain, "Long Before Walt Disney Bought Land for Disneyland Park in the Early 1950s, Walter Knott Planted the Seeds of the Amusement Industry in Orange County, California," *Hotel Online* (May 2004): [http://www.hotel-online.com/News/PR2004\\_2nd/May04\\_Knotts.html](http://www.hotel-online.com/News/PR2004_2nd/May04_Knotts.html).

11. I use the term "Old West" in quotes to demarcate both an idealized time period and an ethos represented by Knott's. On Knott's Ghost Town, see Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1983), 39-48; and Hsuan L. Hsu, "Authentic Re-Creation: Ideology, Practice, and Regional History along Buena Park's Entertainment Corridor," in *True West: Authenticity and the American West*, eds. William R. Handley and Nathaniel Lewis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 304-327.

12. See Dean MacCannell, "Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings," *American Journal of Sociology* 79:3 (1973): 589-603; Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985); Snow, *Performing the Pilgrims*; Valene Smith, "Introduction," in *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, ed. Valene L. Smith (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 1-14; Christopher B. Balme "Staging the Pacific: Framing Authenticity in Performances for Tourists at the Polynesian Cultural Center," *Theater Journal* 50:1 (1998): 53-70.

13. This presents an interesting twist on Johannes Fabian's notion of the "denial of coevalness," in *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), as Knott's performances of Indianness run counter to the standard primitivizing representations of American Indians as vanished (or vanishing) peoples of the past.

14. James Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 5.

15. See Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Cultural Performance," in *English is Broken Here: Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 37-64; Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Leah Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996); Nancy J. Parezo and John W. Troutman, "The 'Shy' Cocopa Go to the Fair," in *Selling the Indian: Commercializing & Appropriating American Indian Cultures*, eds. Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001), 3-43; Kenn Harper, *Give Me My Father's Body: The Life of Minik, the New York Eskimo* (Iqaluit, Canada: Blackhead Books, 1986).

16. Richard Slotkin, "Buffalo Bill's 'Wild West' and the Mythologization of the American Empire," in *Cultures of United State Imperialism*, eds. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 164 -181; Huhndorf, *Going Native*.

17. See Jane C. Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999); John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990); Dean MacCannell, *Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976); Handler and Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum*; and Snow, *Performing the Pilgrims*.

18. Desmond, *Staging Tourism*, xv.

19. See Joe Starita, *The Dull Knives of Pine Ridge: A Lakota Odyssey* (New York: Berkeley Books, 1995), 140-163; Bobby Bridger, *Buffalo Bill and Sitting Bull: Inventing the Wild West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); and Philip Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

20. Quetzil E. Castañeda, *In the Museum of the Maya Culture: Touring Chichén Itzá*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 9. On "imperial nostalgia" see Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989). Castañeda's notion of tourist impact is similar to the concept of "salvage ethnography" elaborated in James Clifford, "Of Other Peoples: Beyond the 'Salvage' Paradigm," in *Discussions in Contemporary Culture (No. 1)*, ed. Hal Foster, (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987), 121-130.

21. For an excellent example of this kind of work, see Patricia Pierce Erickson, Helma Ward, and Kirk Wachendorf, *Voices of a Thousand People: The Makah Cultural and Research Center* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

22. I will use Knott's ' to indicate the possessive, in keeping with the form the park does in its own literature.

23. I audio-recorded the interviews during a slow time during the performers' workday in a quiet corner of the park. Quotes used in the text of this article come from transcriptions of these interviews. Out of concerns for the confidentiality of my consultants, the transcriptions are not public. Due to scheduling conflicts, I was only able to interview three of the four Native performers.

24. Although Indian Trails purports to represent North American Indians, neither Jon nor his co-performers see his ability to perform North American Indian traditions as compromised by his self-identification as Mayan. This situation demonstrates that contemporary Indian identity in the United States is very complicated and multi-valent; see Joanne Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) and Eva Marie Garrouette, *Real Indians: Identity and the Survival of Native America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). This situation also suggests the importance of behavior and knowledge as determinants of Native American identity as noted by Garrouette. Jon's performance of Indianness is an interesting parallel to instances that Balme, "Staging the Pacific," and Ross, *The Chicago Gangster Theory of Life* (21-98), describes at the Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawai'i, wherein individuals sometimes perform multiple cultural identities—for example, as Hawaiians and as Tongans—in order to maintain the show's cohesion. Finally, it is worth noting that special performances by Aztec- and Mayan-identified performers have become a regular feature of powwow programs in Los Angeles and other southwestern settings. Moreover, Knott's also offers performances of these kinds of dances, but John chooses to dance powwow dances instead.

25. I gained access to these performers through a mutual friend, not through the Knott's management. Based on this social connection and the tenor of the interviews, I do not feel that the performers viewed me or my research as allied to park management. If they did, this might hinder their expression of negative assessments of the park. Still, while these interviews took place on very slow days at the park when no one else was present, they were conducted on the park's grounds, which may have limited the performers' comfort level in criticizing the park and its management. The unequivocal quality of their positive statements about working in the park conveyed to me the sense that the performers were not influenced by concern for their jobs or what management would think of their commentary about working at Knott's.

26. See Adria L. Imada, "Hawaiians on Tour: Hula Circuits through the American Empire," *American Quarterly* 56:1 (2004), 111-149, for a comparison of the benefits and problems encountered by Hawaiians performing in early twentieth century Hawai'i and New York City.

27. Interview with Albert, 3/20/99.

28. In their discussion of how performances are infused with power, Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, "Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Social Life," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19 (1990), 76, contend that the process by which performances are lifted out of one context and then recontextualized in another can confer upon performers the power to control access to cultural knowledge.

29. See Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), on anthropology; Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 189-251, and Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest*, on art, collecting, and tourism; Gretchen M. Bataille and Charles L. P. Silet, eds., *The Pretend Indians: Images of Native Americans in the*

*Movies* (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State University Press, 1980), and Tom Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1995) on cinema and television; Fusco, *English is Broken Here*; Huhndorf, *Going Native*; and Parezo and Troutman, "The 'Shy' Cocopa Go to the Fair" on exhibitions; and Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) on popular culture.

30. Interview with Mary, 4/3/99.

31. On Pan-Indianism and urban identity, see Nagel, *American Indian Ethnic Renewal*; Garroutte, *Real Indians*; Devon A. Mihesuah, "American Indian Identities: Issues of Individual Choices and Development," in *Contemporary Native American Cultural Issues*, ed. Duane Champagne (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira), 13-38; and Joan Weibel-Orlando, *Indian Country, L.A.: Maintaining Ethnic Community in Complex Society* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

32. It is not uncommon to see non-Indian "hobbyists" taking active, accepted roles in powwows, but these Euro-Americans are not considered Indians. For a discussion of "hobbyists," see Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 128-153. For the role that powwows play in identity formation in urban and reservation settings, see Barre Toelken, "Ethnic Selection and Intensification in the Native American Powwow," in *Creative Ethnicity: Symbols and Strategies of Contemporary Ethnic Life*, eds. Stephan Stern and John Allan Cicala (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1991), 137-156; Mark Mattern, "The Powwow as Public Arena for Negotiating Unity and Diversity in American Life," in *Contemporary Native American Cultural Issues*, 129-143; and Weibel-Orlando, *Indian Country, L.A.*

33. Interview with Jon, 2/24/99.

34. On the detriments of blood quantum identity classification, see Garroutte, *Real Indians*; Ward Churchill, "Nobody's Pet Poodle," in *Indians Are Us?: Culture and Genocide in Native North America* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1994), 89-113; and Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 174-182.

35. Bauman and Briggs, "Poetics and Performance," 77.

36. See Lewis I. Deitch, "The Impact of Tourism upon the Arts and Crafts of the Indians of the Southwestern United States," in *Host and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, ed. Valene L. Smith (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 73-184.

37. It is important to note that, although they belong to a pan-Indian episteme, powwow performances do have spiritual importance for practitioners. For the spirituality and community in powwows see Robert Desjarlait, "The Contest Powwow versus the Traditional Powwow and the Role of the Native American Community," *Wicazo Sa Review* 12:1 (1997), 115-127, and Mark Mattern, "The Powwow as Public Arena."

38. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 8.

39. Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People* (London: Zed Books, 1999); and Devon Abbott Mihesuah, *So You Want to Write about American Indians?* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).