PART 2

Bioarchaeological Research in North America

5

Negotiating the Gateway:
Working with Multiple Lines of Evidence to Determine Identity

Lynne Goldstein
Department of Anthropology, Michigan State University

Until the advent of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) in 1990 and other recent legislation on local, state, and international scales, modern physical anthropologists did not necessarily focus their research on determining ethnic or tribal identities. Indeed, much work over the last 40 years has been devoted to issues of health, disease, and more precise determinations of age and sex. Some work focused on biological distance between groups, not as a way of linking past groups with living tribes or nations but instead as an approach to determining interrelationships between groups living at the same time in the past (cf. Buikstra et al. 1990). Beyond the fact that research took different directions, one reason for this lack of attention to the relationship between the bones of the past and living groups is the difficulty of making such links over what can be hundreds or thousands of years. Another reason is the not unwarranted concern that if one states that there *may* be a relationship, someone could take that statement of possibility for certainty and assume that there is indeed a relationship.

This reluctance to pursue such research has been unfortunate in many ways and was most notable when NAGPRA became U.S. law. NAGPRA requires museums and other institutions holding human remains to make determinations of relationships between those remains and living Native American tribes. The research on how to make these links and on how to determine identity was not well developed, and archaeologists and physical anthropologists did not have sophisticated or mature approaches to address this issue. Because the question had largely been avoided for so many years, researchers approached it with caution, at best. The best current research takes a multidimensional and multivariate approach to answering the question of identity, and indeed NAGPRA requires this. However, how many people or institutions actually go through the time and trouble of taking these steps?

My original intention in writing this paper was to employ case studies to examine what happens when archaeologists and physical anthropologists do and do not work with native peoples in determining identity when conducting repatriation studies. One major line of evidence in identity determination comes from native people, yet this can often be the most difficult kind of data to incorporate and collect. In conceiving this project, I was more than aware that there were biases, set views, and several different sides regarding this particular issue. Some saw archaeologists, physical anthropologists, and some ethnographers as gatekeepers in controlling and legitimating identity; others saw native peoples as having taken total control of the situation in recent years; and still others saw a general leveling of the playing field. To my knowledge, as of this writing, no one has examined real data to see what has actually happened in repatriation cases.

There is little question that anthropologists have traditionally been considered authorities on identity, but over the last 15 years, this view has shifted and changed

rather dramatically. The organizers at a Society for American Archaeology symposium in 2007 stated:

> Laws and public opinion have traditionally empowered anthropologists as the authorities on Native American identity. More recently, Native Americans have asserted the right to establish their own identity. They embrace oral history and tradition in opposition to "scientific data" for determining identity. These conflicts have real consequences in debates over repatriation, land claims, and government recognition. This session examines the rights and autonomy of indigenous people in determining their own identity and the role of archaeologists as gatekeepers in legitimating that identity [Atalay and McGuire 2007].

Although a number of people and specific tribes may view the situation this way, one issue is that the law, at least in the United States under NAGPRA, has not changed, and *both* kinds of evidence (as well as other kinds of data) are equally valid. Further, this need not be an either/or debate, since many native people commonly use different kinds of evidence in documenting and determining their identities. Similarly, many anthropologists include and integrate oral histories in determining identity. Nonetheless, my sense in beginning this project was that archaeologists and physical anthropologists, and even cultural anthropologists, were not very consistent or clear about *how* they used oral history and oral traditions in determining identity. In addition, I did not think researchers purposely ignored oral tradition; but I thought they did not necessarily know how to incorporate the data, were uncomfortable doing so, or considered such data too "messy" or problematic. My sense of this situation came from my experience working with many archaeologists and physical anthropologists struggling to determine the potential identities of the archaeological and human remains in their possession. It also comes back to the problem of scholars not having addressed this kind of research for so many years.

Although this particular paper uses examples from the United States, the issue is not limited to the United States; it is a worldwide problem that is increasing as more and more countries wrestle with issues of repatriation and native identities. The focus of the problem is on identity and the kinds of evidence scholars use to make identity determinations from human remains, funerary objects, mortuary contexts, and oral and written histories. These kinds of determinations are made throughout the world, and the best analyses take into consideration every kind of data, as well as the potential biases of every data set. For example, in her case study from the classical Near East, Perry (2007) looks at textual data in addition to bioarchaeological data to answer research questions in Near Eastern archaeology. One of the important points Perry makes—a point also made by Buikstra et al. (2000) for a historic cemetery in Grafton, Illinois—is that it does not matter *whether* the historical and biological data differ but "*why* the texts provide a divergent history from the skeletons" (Perry 2007:490). The associations and interrelationships can be examined to let us better understand larger cultural and political processes.

Outline of the Project: The Smithsonian, Burials, and Repatriation

To examine these issues in a more systematic way, I looked to the Repatriation Office of the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History (SI). Even though the Smithsonian does not operate under NAGPRA, it is a good choice for this project for several reasons: (1) the SI has chosen to follow NAGPRA policies, and its law was subsequently amended in 1996 to follow NAGPRA more closely; (2) the SI has the financial and personnel resources to attend to repatriation in ways that most other institutions do not; (3) its reports are of high quality, are reasonably consistent in format, and are accessible;[1] (4) the SI has repatriated more human remains and objects from more sites and geographic areas than any other museum (see Table 5.1); and (5) because I served on the SI Repatriation Review Committee for 15 years, I had copies of most of its reports, although these reports are available to anyone who requests them.

For this project, I examined 45 reports—not all the reports produced by the SI Repatriation Office (I eliminated most reports dealing with only one or two items, for example) but a sufficient sample for this purpose. Geographically, the reports cover the United States—from Alaska to the Northwest Coast, from the Southwest to the Plains, from the Midwest to the Southeast to the Northeast (see Table 5.1).

Coincidentally, in 2005 Stephen Ousley, William Billeck, and Eric Hollinger published a long discussion and description of physical anthropology's role in repatriation at the Smithsonian, focusing on consultation between tribes and the SI, the SI's documentation of human remains, and especially the issue of cultural affiliation and the many ways that affiliation can be

Table 5.1. Smithsonian Institution Museum of Natural History Record of Repatriation: 1989–2005.

	Human Remains		Archaeological Items		Ethnographic Materials	
Region	**Returned**	**Not Returned**	**Returned**	**Not Returned**	**Returned**	**Not Returned**
Alaska	3,171	85	751	127	527	10
Northwest Coast	182	68	177	0	10	3
Hawaii	190	0	12	0	624	0
California	2	0	0	0	0	0
Great Basin	50	17	0	0	0	0
Plains	1,695	49	14,961	0	1	1
Plateau	83	8	2,225	15	1	2
Southwest	299	14	0	0	3	0
Northeast	16	37	3	28	2	1
Southeast	0	120	13	0	0	0
Totals	**5,688**	**398**	**18,142**	**170**	**1,168**	**17**

approached from the perspective of physical anthropology in particular. Ousley et al. (2005:9) make the point that the mandate to consider all available evidence and all relevant information is both reasonable and obvious. They go on to say: "The assumption that this process of consideration of evidence somehow pits archaeology against oral tradition, or scientists vs. Native Americans, is generally false." Because their focus is on physical anthropology, they really do not provide examples of oral histories or traditions that have helped inform cultural affiliation determinations. Indeed, their examples of interactions with tribes have to do with consultations on reburials, traditional care requests, and improved relationships, all of which are important but do not directly speak to the issue of determination of identity per se.

In a close reading of Ousley et al. (2005), it is clear that because of the quantity of human remains in the Smithsonian, much of the physical anthropology team's time is spent in documentation and sorting accession and other catalog problems. There were originally approximately 18,000 Native American human remains at the National Museum of Natural History; well over 5,000 human remains had been returned as of 2005. Once catalog problems are sorted, physical anthropologists focus their efforts on determining cultural affiliation and identity through various osteological data points and comparisons to known groups. They see their work as being especially helpful when other data sources are absent or ambiguous. However, in their 2005 paper, Ousley et al. do not discuss how they integrate other kinds of data, including oral traditions and oral histories, with biological data.

It is useful at this juncture to say something about the massive amount of work involved in documentation of the materials at the Smithsonian. While it is true that most of the human remains and objects at the Smithsonian have been there for a very long time, and while it is also true that people have been coming to the Smithsonian to study its collections for many years, comparable information is not available for all collections. In other words, beyond some basic catalog data, the Smithsonian does not have the same information for everything in its holdings. No large museum does. This is especially true when a museum and many different individuals have been collecting items over a long period and in many different contexts.

When it became clear that museums across the country would likely have to repatriate most of the human remains in their collections, a group of physical anthropologists met to determine a minimum set of standard measurements and observations that should be recorded for each set of human remains, whenever possible. These sets of observations came to be called the Standards, and ideally they will allow physical anthropologists to conduct comparative research using this information in the future, whether or not the particular remains have been repatriated. Buikstra and Ubelaker

(1994) compiled and edited the volume outlining the Standards. The Smithsonian has used a version of this system for all its human remains and has a digital version of these data available. Other institutions have done the same thing, in the United States and internationally. The comparability is not perfect, but it is far better than anything that would have been possible otherwise. The Standards have also created increased comparability in discussion and in print; they have become a reference tool.

What is most unfortunate is that nothing similar to the physical anthropology Standards was made for archaeology. Granted, physical anthropologists have the luxury of dealing only with human remains, which are certainly complicated, but archaeologists did not even try to decide at a general level what kinds of data and documentation should be recorded and kept. There were no comparable discussions about data.[2] This lack of attention to the problems of data and the overwhelming amounts of data is clear in the inconsistencies one sees in repatriation reports and in the lack of reports in many cases. This case study would not be possible for most institutions because the information does not exist.

Figure 5.1 shows the distribution of all the reports produced by the Smithsonian Repatriation Office from 1989 through 2005 by region of the country (the regions were labeled by the Repatriation Office). A total of 82 reports were produced during this period, and Figure 5.1 illustrates that the geographic distribution is not even. There are several reasons for this biased distribution: (1) Priority was first given to remains of named individuals and those with known descendants; and (2) priority was next given to tribes that had filed for the return of specific remains and/or collections. The distribution reflects both the collecting histories of the institution and the specific requests that tribes made.

Figure 5.1 shows clear bias or preference for Alaska and Northwest Coast regions, as well as for the Plains. The source of some of this bias is relatively easy to explain. First, most of the cases in the sample are historic in nature and are from collections that were originally in the Army Medical Museum; in 23 of the 45 reports examined, one or more individuals had originally been

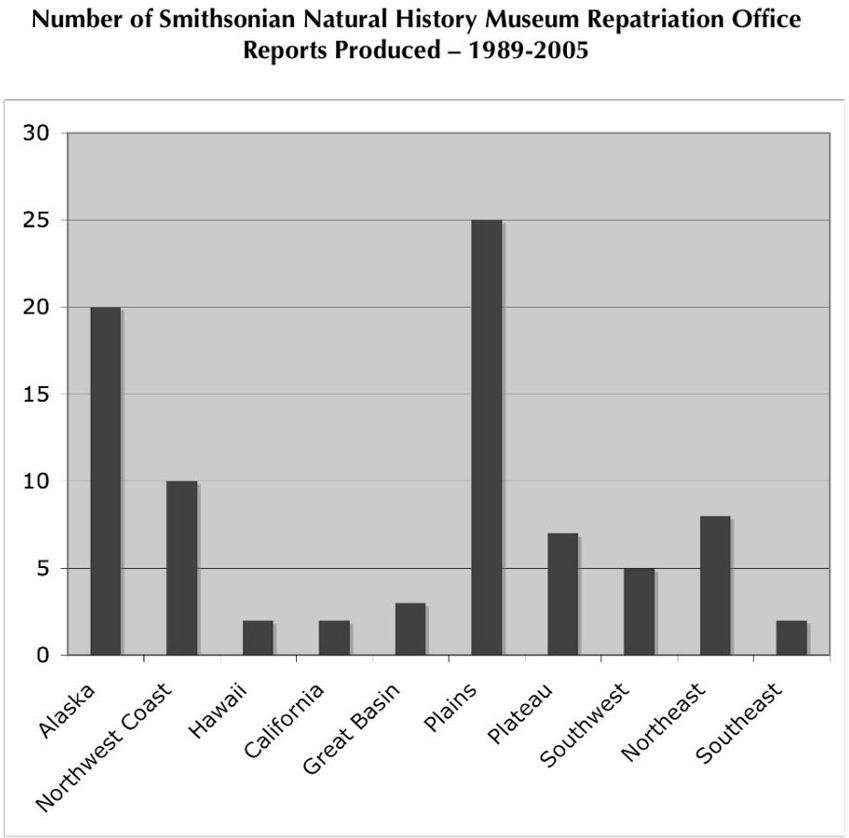

Figure 5.1. Number of Smithsonian Natural History Museum Repatriation Office reports produced from 1989 to 2005.

donated to the Army Medical Museum and were associated with army forts or army operations. Since many army operations in the middle to late nineteenth century occurred on the Plains, the correlation is not surprising.

A majority of the materials in Alaska and the Northwest Coast came to the Smithsonian from the expeditions of Smithsonian researchers, often from the expeditions of Aleš Hrdlička. Hrdlička was an important figure in the history of physical anthropology, but his field techniques were sometimes problematic from a modern perspective, and he documented his own excavations of graves of known individuals. Some sites he excavated were historic sites with clear links to peoples currently living in modern villages.

Hrdlička and other Smithsonian researchers in the first half of the twentieth century were especially interested in issues of migration from Siberia into Alaska. Other Smithsonian researchers during this time included Henry Collins, James Ford, and T. Dale Stewart. Their research included questions about how many waves of migration occurred; how the waves accounted for the present distribution of cultures, languages, and physical types; and whether or not one could identify the areas of origin of these peoples. The major research issues were New World origins and relationships between groups. The researchers excavated major sites and areas throughout Alaska.

Although the Plains have a large representation due to the presence of the army in the nineteenth century, another reason for the region's popularity in the Smithsonian collections is that the Smithsonian houses many materials from the River Basin Surveys (RBS). The importance and extent of the surveys warrant a short, separate discussion.

The RBS came out of the work of the Committee for the Recovery of Archeological Remains, a group of anthropologists sponsored by the American Anthropological Association, the Society for American Archaeology, and the American Council of Learned Societies, with liaisons from the Smithsonian and the National Research Council. These groups wanted to preserve archaeology threatened by post–World War II programs such as dam and reservoir construction. The ultimate result of the committee's work was the Inter-Agency Salvage Program, an arrangement among the Smithsonian, National Park Service, Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, many universities, and other public and private organizations. It was particularly active in the Missouri River basin, West Coast states, southeastern states, and Texas.

In two articles in *Science* (Johnson 1966; Wedel 1967), the accomplishments of the program are outlined. Wedel, who at the time was the senior archaeologist in anthropology at the Smithsonian and had also been field director of the RBS, focused his discussion on the Smithsonian work in the Missouri River basin. For our purposes, it is significant to note that Wedel outlines the many contributions of the Missouri Basin project, especially since if the work had not been done, all this information would have been lost through flooding and construction. Instead, "[g]reat quantities of artifacts and important collections of skeletal material have been gathered under controlled conditions; and rigidly selected representative samples, with full provenience data, have been added to the national collections" (Wedel 1967:592). Wedel (1967) goes on to note that more than 200 sites were tested or extensively excavated, whereas prior to the program, fewer than a dozen sites in the region had received professional attention. More than 800 historic Arikara burials were excavated, as well as burials from the Central Plains and Woodland traditions.

Through most of its existence, the RBS was a unit of the Bureau of American Ethnology (BAE), with headquarters in Washington, D.C., and with field offices. One major field office was in Lincoln, Nebraska, and that office directed the work in the Missouri Basin. When the BAE was disbanded in 1965, the RBS joined the Smithsonian Office of Anthropology. In 1966 the headquarters moved to Lincoln, and in 1968 the RBS was placed administratively under the director of the National Museum of Natural History. In 1969 the Smithsonian transferred the RBS to the National Park Service, but provision was made for the deposit of records and manuscripts in the Smithsonian. The relationship between the RBS and the Smithsonian is a long and close one.

Analysis of Repatriation Office Reports

The Repatriation Office reports I examined for this exercise include assessments of human remains only, as well as assessments of human remains and funerary objects. The report dates range from 1992 through 2004. Unfortunately, this range excludes one of the major reports and repatriations conducted by the SI—the Arikara collection, consisting of 1,288 individuals and 14,449 funerary objects—but since I did not have

immediate access to the completed report, I could not include it in this analysis (although it is included in both Figure 5.1 and Table 5.1).

The reports are biased in terms of when they were prepared; 33 of the 45 were written prior to 1998. This is *not* because the Smithsonian was productive in the earlier years of the Repatriation Office and is not productive now, but the difference likely reflects several factors: (1) a decrease in staff due to an overall decrease in budget; (2) the 1996 change in the Smithsonian law, which changed what the SI had to report and when it had to report it; and (3) a shift in work to some of the larger collections, such as the Arikara collection, which required significantly more time to complete. The time bias is particularly relevant because not only did the reports improve in quality over time, but as case officers gained confidence and experience in working with tribes, their reports became more sophisticated and inclusive.

Reports fall into one of three categories: (1) human remains only; (2) human remains and funerary objects; and (3) objects only (the objects may be cultural patrimony, sacred, or unassociated funerary). Of the reports, 20 reports fall into the first category; 19 fall into the second; and 6 fall into the third. Although it is fairly easy to divide reports into these categories, there is a great deal of diversity within each group.

The first category—assessment of human remains only—is the least diverse group and the one that is least likely to include a discussion of oral histories and oral traditions. Of the 20 reports in this category, 16 did *not* include any mention of oral histories or traditions. Of the 651 individuals considered for repatriation in this group, 454, or 69.7 percent, were offered to tribes for repatriation. I do not know how many reports tribes subsequently challenged, but I am certain that at least a few reports were challenged.[3] Seventeen of the reports examined were completed between 1992 and 1998.

In the second category of human remains and funerary objects, of the 19 reports in this category, 13 did *not* include a specific discussion of oral traditions or oral histories. Of the 2,184 individuals reported here, 2,096 (or 95.9 percent) were offered for repatriation, along with 1,103 of the 1,447 objects considered (76.2 percent). Of the 19 reports, 8 were completed from 1997 through 2004. Several tribes have challenged the decisions of the Smithsonian in this category, and in more than one case these challenges ended in a reversal of the initial SI decision. The tribes brought forward additional evidence, sometimes in the form of oral histories, sometimes other kinds of evidence, but always information that the Smithsonian did not have or did not interpret properly because case officers did not have as extensive or intensive knowledge of the specific area or region.

In the category of objects only, there are six case reports. In three of these reports, the authors did not use oral traditions or histories in their discussions, either because historic and/or archaeological evidence was sufficient to establish the identity and/or because such oral evidence did not exist. The Smithsonian returned objects in four cases; in another case, it returned one object and retained the other. In the sixth case, the Smithsonian used oral tradition and oral histories extensively. The museum established that the tribe requesting the object had a cultural affiliation to the object but had not demonstrated that it was a sacred object or an object of cultural patrimony. Various scholars at the Smithsonian thought the object should be returned, and people worked very hard and deliberately over several years to document that the object had been used historically in ceremonies and/or rituals but found that they could not demonstrate that this had been the case. Indeed, interviews with tribal elders documented that if the object were returned, it would not necessarily be used in a ceremony today. Further, the Smithsonian was able to document that the museum had clear title to the object.

I have deliberately not been specific in outlining these cases because my purpose is to provide only a sense of the kinds of information available and the kinds of cases that have been processed. However, at the end of this paper I have listed a separate and complete bibliography of all the case reports that I used in this analysis.

In terms of the use of oral histories and oral traditions, with a few notable exceptions, the report authors tend to outline what the traditions and histories say, indicate how they agree or disagree with each other and the other data, and then continue. In other words, they either do not appear to know what to do with these data or have decided not to use them. Unlike "messy" archaeological data, which authors might discuss, dissect, or sort, the discrepancies here often seem to be sufficient for authors to set all the data aside. When oral histories and traditions do not agree with archaeological and other data, they are dismissed. Roger Echo-Hawk (2000) and others have discussed specific and systematic ways to approach such problems, but none of the case officers used these methods in the reports I examined. In a few reports, oral histories were used extensively, but

these were exceptions; most of the time, the histories were simply outlined.

Indeed, archaeologists and physical anthropologists do not tend to eliminate archaeological or osteological data when they find an errant sherd or an unusual bone, so why eliminate oral history when it doesn't quite fit with other data? Rather than automatically assigning a malevolent cause, I think the reason is likely much simpler: We have not been taught what to do with the data. Few graduate anthropology programs specifically train students in how to incorporate oral traditions and oral histories into archaeological, ethnographic, historic, geographic, and other data. As we desire to be more scientific, we tend to like messy data less and less. This is unfortunate since reality is more and more messy, and more and more interesting. Data that fit a neat pattern are never as interesting as data that have some rough edges. If we really want our students to do better in these circumstances in the future, it would be to our benefit to focus training on such issues.

At the outset, I said I wanted to examine what happens when archaeologists do and do not work with native peoples in determining identity. I am not certain that this examination of using oral traditions in reports gets directly (or even indirectly) to this question, but I can say that since the Repatriation Office at the Smithsonian has been in existence, and as the case officers have gotten more experience, not only has the quality of the reports improved, but the level and degree of interaction with tribes have also improved.

Appropriate to this discussion, we can look at the overall pattern of case reports and record of returns. Table 5.1 provides this information. It is organized by region in the same way as Figure 5.1 and is divided by categories of information—human remains, archaeological items, and ethnographic materials. For each category for each region, I have tallied how many of the items requested and reported were returned (through 2005) and how many were not returned. The human remains represent individuals, but the archaeological numbers are a bit misleading; beads are sometimes counted individually, leading to very large numbers in places like the Plains. The lack of returns of archaeological and ethnographic items in some regions relates to the circumstances of the original report; the return of historic human remains had highest priority, so it was done before everything else.

Table 5.1 demonstrates that the Smithsonian has returned a significant number of human remains, archaeological items, and ethnographic objects and that it has rarely refused to return items. Indeed, in the reports I examined, it returned 93.5 percent of the human remains it considered, 90.7 percent of the artifacts considered, and 98.6 percent of the ethnographic items considered. These numbers may be misleading, however, since the SI has a long way to go in processing all its collections and all the requests it may receive from tribes; the reports I examined represent what can be termed the easiest requests to fulfill.

Buikstra (2006:400–401) discusses the fact that ethnologists, archaeologists, and historians have made strong arguments that Native American oral traditions may reflect ancient historical events. As noted earlier, especially useful is the fact that several scholars have developed methods to validate the substance of these oral traditions (Echo-Hawk 2000; Vansina 1985; Whiteley 2002).

Especially relevant to the subject here, Echo-Hawk (1994, 1997) presented to the Smithsonian Institution a meticulous approach to using information from both oral traditions and archaeology to determine whether or not the Pawnee were culturally affiliated with the prehistoric Central Plains tradition and thus had rights to repatriation. This was the topic of one of the SI reports that tribes challenged. The Repatriation Office did not accept the challenge, so the Pawnee asked that the secretary of the Smithsonian send their appeal to the Repatriation Review Committee for a hearing. It was the first time a hearing was requested by any tribe. The committee accepted Echo-Hawk's approach as well as his interpretations, and human remains from the prehistoric Steed-Kisker site were transferred to the Pawnee (Echo-Hawk 1997).

CONCLUSIONS

To my knowledge, this report data set, as crudely outlined here, is the most complete documentation of how any institution (or even set of institutions) has or has not used evidence to repatriate human remains and funerary objects. But what does it actually tell us? Very little by itself. For the most part, if we look carefully into the reports, we find that the early case reports from the Smithsonian did not use oral traditions and oral histories because the remains and objects being returned were historic and came largely from the Army Medical Museum. Many of these items were from battlefields, forts, or other unsavory collection spots. The Smithsonian case officers rightly focused

attention in their reports on specific collectors and their particular histories. Indeed, many of these reports are fascinating accounts of the early development of the Smithsonian and somewhat uncomfortable accounts of how collections got to the museum. If one reads several case reports, one comes to understand that some collectors are more trustworthy than others and that some designations as Kiowa, or Arapaho, or Sioux are more reliable than others.

In other instances, the case officers do not look to oral traditions and histories because the cases are nineteenth century or early twentieth century in nature, and there is ample documentation of exactly what happened, even if it is not a gruesome army situation. This is the case for many groups in Alaska, where Hrdlička and others excavated historic cemeteries, and the documentation of what was done is explicit and specific.

However, it is the third kind of case that should use oral traditions but does not. In these instances, oral traditions are mentioned or discussed, but they are not integrated or analyzed the way that other data are used. It is here that we have to look to improving our relationships with tribes and our knowledge of how to work with these kinds of data. It is here that we must become more comfortable with messy data and try to figure out *why* the oral traditions may not agree with some of the other data, if that is the case. As noted earlier, this kind of analysis may teach us much more about larger cultural and political processes.

Anthropologists may be gatekeepers in that they control access to the collections, but it is relevant to note that, in the Smithsonian case, they also help many native people gain access to a wealth of information stored by the federal government across Washington, D.C. For those tribes who are making or are planning to make a request, the Smithsonian Repatriation Review Committee, on which I sat for 15 years, had (and still has) a travel grant program to bring two tribal representatives per tribe to the Smithsonian to consult with case officers, get oriented to existing documentation, and examine collections containing items that may be subject to repatriation. Further, as a case officer works on a request, it is the policy, at least at the Natural History Museum, to call and consult with relevant tribes. None of the decisions or reports has been made in a vacuum, and there have been significant improvements in these consultations over the last 15 years.

Finally, as I read in more than one report in comments made by tribes, tribes have learned over the years that they get better results if they request specific items or kinds of items rather than asking for "everything." Where does one begin with a request for "everything"? Even if archaeologists are gatekeepers in some ways and in certain senses of the word, it is difficult to respond adequately and promptly to such a request. This increase in sophistication on all sides suggests that perhaps a number of us have learned to work more productively with others.

As long as people see themselves in opposition, I don't think the dialogue or the work will be especially productive or useful. We may not agree on a number of issues, and we may profoundly disagree on others, but there are potentially many ways in which we can move forward. It will, however, require real, open, and honest discussion, as well as new kinds of training for us and for our graduate students.

Notes

1. It is quite startling to discover that most institutions have not documented or prepared written reports on collections subject to repatriation. They have prepared lists for tribes but not necessarily reports on their decisions whether or not to repatriate and on how these decisions were reached. This is a disturbing and troubling discovery that should be addressed by the profession.

2. All comments about data recording assume that the institution has permission from the appropriate group to record, take, and keep such measurements.

3. When a tribe challenges or questions a report, the Repatriation Office may work out the problem or issues with the tribe without the involvement of any other office or individuals. The tribe may present additional evidence, the Repatriation Office may provide a satisfactory explanation, or both. If the tribe is not satisfied, it can request that the secretary of the Smithsonian review the decision, and this review can include bringing in the Repatriation Review Committee for a formal or informal hearing.

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