

# ISSA Proceedings 2006 - “Yucca Mountain Will Become Unhappy And Angry” : Culture, Metaphor, and Argument



*“Yucca Mountain Will Become Unhappy And Angry”*  
- Southern Paiute Edward Smith [i]

Argumentation is a cultural phenomenon. It is a way of thinking and speaking that can vary slightly or vastly between different national, ethnic, regional, gendered, or racial cultures. George Kennedy’s (1998) examination of the rhetorical traditions of a variety of cultures provides support for the argument that the Western Greco-Roman tradition of argumentation that serves as the foundation for most American and European theories of argumentation is not a culturally-universal tradition (see also, Combs, 2004a). An increasing corpus of literature supports this thesis by showing both the similarities and differences in argumentation across cultures, most often defining culture as national culture[ii] (Combs, 2004a; Combs, 2004b; Becker, 1986; Dolina & Cecchetto, 1998; Ellis & Maoz, 2002; Endres, 2002; Garrett, 1993; Garrett, 1997; Lee & Campbell, 1994; Liu, 1999; McLaurin, 1995; Walker, 1987; Warnick & Manusov, 2000). Indeed, the diversity in argumentation across cultures can be categorized into variations of the form (preferred reasoning forms), function (goals of engaging in argumentation), and evaluation of argument (how ought we to judge a “good” argument) (Endres, 2002). However, the field of argumentation still focuses mostly on the Western Greco-Roman argumentation tradition. When non-western cultures are considered, they are often evaluated based in according to the Western tradition of argument and are sometimes considered to be cultures without an argument tradition. Littlefield and Ball (2004) concur stating, “There is a certain presumption in our acceptance of Greco-Roman forms of argumentation as proper, intellectual, even historical. But every society must have accepted forms of argumentation if its members are to solve conflict” (p. 99). The key is recognition that the Western tradition is not the only way of arguing and understanding the world. One goal of scholarship that explores the

connection between culture and argument is to better understand the forms, functions, and evaluations of argument as understood and used by members of particular cultures.

Just as important as a focus on argumentation theory and practice in particular cultures is the study of cross-cultural argumentation in particular issues of controversy. In other words, what happens in the interaction of two or more argumentative traditions? In addition to showing how the forms, functions, and evaluations of argument differ across cultures, we must also turn our attention to how the differences and similarities in argumentation traditions play out in public debate and controversy (see Dolina & Cecchetto, 1998; Ellis and Maoz, 2002; Liu, 1999; Walker, 1987). This essay closely examines the arguments in a scientific and environmental controversy over the Yucca Mountain nuclear waste site, the future site of the first permanent nuclear waste repository in the United States. Though there are multiple participants in the controversy, this essay focuses on the arguments of American Indians from the Western Shoshone, Southern Paiute, and Owens Valley Paiute and Shoshone in a situation that demands intercultural communication with non-Indian audiences[iii]. By examining the arguments of these American Indian tribal members in a public hearing session about the Yucca Mountain site, I reveal the forms of argument used by tribal members in this controversy, show how the European-American Western tradition of argumentation interprets these arguments, and examine how these arguments circulate in the Yucca Mountain controversy.

Interestingly, though some American Indian forms of argument can be classified and discussed under the rubric of Western argumentation theory, such characterizations do not tell the entire story of argumentation in American Indian cultures. Attending to role of history, values, worldview, and ritual in American Indian cultures provides a rich understanding of American Indian arguments in an intercultural controversy. For example, American Indian arguers often referred to Yucca Mountain as having living, human characteristics, which can be considered a form of prosopopoeia or of metaphor. Further investigation of the values, spirituality, and worldview of the tribes, however, discloses that what a Western argumentation theorist might classify as prosopopoeia is likely not seen by American Indian arguers as such, but is reflective of a worldview that assumes that mountains speak and feel. This difference in understanding has significant implications for the force of American Indian arguments and the outcome of the controversy.

Because this essay looks at a case of intercultural controversy as opposed to a case of argumentation within a particular culture, this finding has significant implications for the intersection of values, culture, and argumentation in controversy. Moreover, this essay contributes to the scholarly conversation with an improved understanding of American Indian forms, functions, and evaluations of argument, and the importance of considering the intersection of differing cultured ways of arguing in public argumentation over issues of controversy.

This essay begins with an examination of American Indian forms, functions, and evaluations of argumentation in general. This examination includes scholarship focused on individual American Indian nations and on American Indians as a whole. In this section, I identify some of the problems with current understandings of American Indian argument. Next, I investigate the particular case of American Indian arguments in the Yucca Mountain controversy as a way to show specific ways of arguing by the Western Shoshone, Southern Paiute, and Owens Valley Paiute and Shoshone, the difficulty of characterizing these arguments with Western theory, and the implications of this on the controversy. The paper concludes with implications and a call for further research.

### *1. American Indian Argumentation*

Examination of the communication patterns of American Indian cultures is a complicated area of study for a couple of reasons. First, though American Indians are often viewed as a distinct culture, there are over 500 tribal nations in the United States each with their own systems of thought, language, and culture. Scholars, therefore, ought to be careful not to generalize the communicative patterns of one or a few American Indian nations to all American Indians in the United States. However, to add to the complexity, there exists a pan-Indian culture that is a result of the interaction and collaboration of American Indians from various tribal nations throughout the US. This pan-Indian culture often focuses on similarities across many tribes such as the tendency for American Indian cultures to have land-based spirituality. Pan-Indian communication may be expressed through Powwows, the American Indian Movement, and other organizations that bring together Indians from all nations. This reminds us that many American Indians are simultaneously negotiating their identities as members of their tribal nation, members of the "Native American culture," and members of the United States, not to mention fighting the perceived and often stereotypical identities ascribed by non-Indians. This essay focuses on the comments made by members of particular American Indian nations, but also

recognizes the similarities in the types of arguments used across these nations. By no means does this essay attempt to lay out a comprehensive characterization of the forms, functions, and evaluations of argumentation for all American Indians. Instead, the analysis in this essay adds to our understanding of arguments by self-identified members of American Indian nations in a context of cross-cultural communication at a public hearing. It also adds to our understanding of the pastiche of the discourse of Native Americans.

Secondly, most of the research on American Indian rhetoric and argumentation considers published speeches that were primarily directed to a non-Indian audience and therefore invoked non-Indian, primarily western white, values and rhetoric (Kennedy, 1998). Therefore, most of the analyzed oratory of American Indians is intercultural in nature. This is in line with my call for attention to intercultural controversy and the role of cultured argumentation in such controversies. However, it does not recognize the non-western arguers are often forced or choose to assume western modes of arguing (Liu, 1999). In the case of American Indians, Richard Morris (1997) states that they are always judged by dominant standards such that they are “forever caught in a deadly double-bind: she can participate fully only to the extent that she acquiesces to the requirement that she be other than who she is” (p. 167) Whatever results scholars come up with in studying American Indian argumentation have to be seen in light of the dynamic nature of culture in general. American Indian cultures are continually developing, as are all living cultures, and this development is in relation to contact with non-Indians.

Though little work has been done specifically on argumentation in American Indian cultures, we can glean a contemporary understanding of argumentation from the variety of materials that focus on American Indian communication patterns. Some of the patterns include value placed on the ethos of the speaker in many American Indian cultures, (Arnold, 1997; Kennedy, 1998; Woods, 2001), listening in the Blackfeet culture (Carbaugh, 1999), razzing as a form of ritualized humor in many American Indian cultures (Pratt, 1998), the use of silence in many American Indian cultures (Clair, 1997), abduction/dissociation in the Navajo culture (Scheutz, 2003), the role of metaphor in many American Indian cultures (Clements, 2002; German, 1997 Kennedy, 1998), factionalism in the Jemez Pueblo (Littlefield and Ball, 2004), and collaborative approaches to decision making among many American Indian cultures (Runningwolf and Richard, 2003). Moreover, Randall Lake (1983, 1986, 1991, 1997) shows in several essays that

American Indian social movement rhetoric and American Indian identity must be understood in relation to the cultures, histories, and values of the American Indian nations. Each of these patterns can be linked to the forms, functions, and evaluations of argument. Moreover, scholars link each of these patterns to the cultural histories, practices, and values of particular tribes or American Indians in general. Despite this growing corpus of literature on communicative patterns of American Indian cultures, further research that specifically examines argumentation patterns of American Indian cultures is necessary.

Beyond more research into the forms, functions, evaluation of arguments by American Indian cultures, we must also look at argumentation in issues of controversy across cultures. While it is important to understand the patterns of communication within a culture, globalization both mandates cross-cultural communication and pushes Western systems of thought into non-western cultures (whether welcome or not). So, understanding the unique forms, functions, and evaluation of arguments in a particular culture is just a starting point for an examination of intercultural argumentation. This study raises many questions. Is the western tradition of argument sufficient to understand intercultural argument? Is there a possibility of argumentation across cultural styles or do members of “the nonwestern world prefer to draw from *Western* discursive resources and to frame, formulate, and defend their positions in *Western*, rather than their own native terms” (Liu, 1999, p. 302). Finally, how does the use of varied cultural argumentation practices affect the outcomes of controversies?

## *2. Native American Argumentation in Yucca Mountain controversy*

Yucca Mountain lies on land that is part of the original land-base of the Shoshone and Paiute Indians who, before Caucasian contact, occupied the Great Basin region since “time immemorial” according to the Shoshones (Harney, 1995). The Western Shoshone, the Southern Paiute, and Owens Valley Shoshone and Paiute tribes claim spiritual and traditional connections to Yucca Mountain. Though there is little pre-1859 archaeological data on the various tribal groups such as the Western Shoshone, there is data to suggest that there have been dwellers in the Great Basin for over 12,000 years (Pritzker, 2000). The surrounding region and Yucca Mountain are claimed by the Western Shoshone under 1863 Ruby Valley Treaty of Peace and Friendship. Some members of these tribes call Yucca Mountain “serpent swimming west” because of the belief that the mountain is a snake spirit. Corbin Harney (1995), a Western Shoshone spiritual leader, states, Yucca Mountain lies asleep like a snake. When you walk on top of the mountain, it

feels like you are walking on the dried snakeskin. Someday when we wake that snake up, we will have to sit down and talk to that snake. It will get mad and rip open. When it awakens, we will all go to sleep. With his tail, that snake will move the mountain, rip it open, and the poison will come out on the surface. Long ago, the Indians talked about it (p. 154).

This is but one example of an argument made against the Yucca Mountain site by an American Indian, in this case a Western Shoshone.

In order to understand American Indian arguments in the Yucca Mountain site authorization controversy, I examined public hearing statements and comments submitted by self-identified Americans Indians during the initial and supplemental public comment periods between May-December 2001. Comments took the form of a statement at one of the 66 public hearings that the DOE held in all counties of Nevada as well as Inyo county in California, a statement to a court reporter at the Yucca Mountain Information Center, an e-mail message, or a written comment sent via post. From a corpus of over 5000 public comments, there were 52 comment statements made by 33 self-identified Americans Indians from 26 tribes and two organizations (Western Shoshone National Council and Consolidated Group of Tribes and Organizations).**[iv]** Although this may be a small number of comments compared to the total number, keep in mind that American Indian tribal populations are smaller than the rest of the population of the United States that submitted comments, and that many of the 52 comments and statements were issued from tribal councils or governments that speak for larger numbers of people. The comments contain official tribal governmental speakers, tribal council resolutions, and personal statements by tribal members.

All but two of the 51 American Indian public hearing statements and public comments express opposition to the site. Of the two that are not opposed to the site, one is a letter from the chair of the Cocopah Indian Tribe in Arizona and Mexico asking a question about potential effects of radioactive waste disposal on water and air quality and the potential for accidental releases of radiation (Cordova, September 7, 2001). The second is a statement from a member of the Mdewakanton Sioux from the Prairie Island reservation in Minnesota that is in favor of the Yucca Mountain site because the site would remove waste from the nuclear power plant that lies right next to the Prairie Island reservation, about 600 yards away. The site has reached its storage capacity and the Prairie Island tribal council claims that radioactive release from the temporary site storage endangers the Prairie Island tribe (U.S. Department of Energy, October 12,

2001b).

A close reading of self-identified American Indian hearing statements reveals prominent argument themes (i.e., the land, spirituality) and argument forms (i.e., narrative, prosopopoeia) that distinguish American Indian forms, functions, and evaluations of argument. In line with Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's (1969) contention that, "values enter, at some stage or other, into every argument," the public hearing arguments also show the importance of values and cultural history in the arguments made at the hearings (p. 75, see also Sillars, 1995; Sillars and Ganer, 1982; Walker & Sillars, 1990). I describe two examples of arguments in the public hearings to better our understanding of American Indian forms of argument in relation to western forms of argument and the role of these arguments in controversy.

### *3. Figurative Arguments or Literal Arguments?*

Forms of metaphor and prosopopoeia were used heavily in the public hearing statements by members of most of the tribes. This is not surprising because many scholars have noted the prominence of figurative language in American Indian rhetoric (Clements, 2002; German, 1997; Kennedy, 1998). Indeed, William Clements (2002) asserts "By a large margin, the feature of Native American speech most frequently mentioned by commentators has been the use of metaphor and other tropes of language" (p. 79). Though the use of figurative language, namely metaphor, is widely associated with American Indian cultures, figurative language in oratory is often mistakenly characterized as ornamentation or serving as mnemonic devices for traditionally oral cultures (German, 1997). However, as Kathleen German argues, figurative language for American Indian cultures is not merely ornamentation or mnemonic, but is reflective of the culture and values of the tribes. My analysis of public hearing comment confirms German's point about the link between figurative language and the cultures of many American Indians; however, I also examine how labeling these arguments as figurative or metaphorical is problematic in a context of political controversy where health and land are at stake.

In the corpus of American Indian comments in the Yucca Mountain site authorization hearings, there are many statements that express concern over putting nuclear waste in Yucca Mountain because of the effect it will have on the spirits of the plants, animals, and the mountain itself. Edward Smith of the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe (Shoshonean) states, "We believe that Yucca Mountain will become unhappy and angry if you put radioactive waste into it. The spirits

living in the area will move away and eventually the land will be unable to sustain plants, animals, water, air, people, and life" (U.S. Department of Energy, October 5, 2001, p. 25). Marlene Begay, a member of the Walker River Paiute, explains the importance of protecting Mother Earth and the consequences of delinquency in this responsibility. She states, "Putting nuclear waste in the land is polluting it and will kill Mother Earth. We have only one earth and one water. Everything is related. If we poison the earth, then we are poisoning ourselves." (U.S. Department of Energy, October 12, 2001a, p. 17).

From a western perspective, these arguments would be classified as metaphor or prosopopoeia (personification). Edward Smith's statement implies that the resources of the mountain, and the mountain itself, have living characteristics. Begay, similarly, attributes human characteristics to the earth, Mother earth, and states that nuclear waste will kill her. Considering these arguments as a form of metaphorical argument allows for an interpretation from the western tradition of argument. Indeed, the western tradition, from Aristotle to Lakoff, places a high value on metaphor and one of its forms, personification. However, is it possible that these arguments are not metaphorical for the arguers? Kennedy (1998) states that "what to an English speaker seems a metaphor was to the native mind undifferentiated from reality" (p. 98). This suggests that there is another ways of interpreting this form of argument.

Though we can characterize non-western arguments using Western terminology, knowing about the culture and their values allows for a better interpretation of the argumentation. Just as values shape all arguments, culture also affects all arguments. Charles F. Wilkinson (1991) argues that most American Indian tribes have a spiritual and physical connection to land with strong ties to environmental protection of the land. Unlike many non-Native religions in America, he writes, "the fact that humans cannot survive without the natural environment is recognized by most Indian religions, and tribes usually are responsible for protecting the ancestral territories provided them by their creator" (p. 50). From the perspective of many American Indian nations, "everything the creator made is a living entity" and "all living things existed in a state of harmony" (Kidwell, Noley & Tinker, 2001, p. 127-8). These living things have the ability to communicate with humans. Carbaugh (1999) demonstrates this form of communication in the Blackfeet culture in which birds talk and places speak, if only humans would listen. The belief that all parts of the earth are living, filled with spirits, and able



to communicate is integrally linked to Western Shoshone, Southern Paiute, and Owens Valley Shoshone and Paiute forms of spirituality, in particular, and many forms of American Indian spirituality in general (Deloria, 2003; Harney, 1995; Kidwell, Noley & Tinker, 2001; Wilkinson, 1991) Spirits inhabit the land, plants, animals, sky, and water. Thus, Smith, Begay and others' arguments that the mountain will become unhappy or die as a result of nuclear waste storage are likely perceived by them as literal and not figurative. These arguments are not using metaphor or prosopopoeia, but are referring to the literal beliefs of the people who make them. Keep in mind that I do not claim this to be true of all American Indians, all Shoshone and Paiutes, or all contexts in which metaphor is employed. Indeed, there are times when metaphor is perceived and used as metaphor by members of these tribes. However, in this particular context and set of discourse, we find the use of seemingly metaphorical arguments as literal.**[v]**

Why does it matter if we call these arguments figurative or literal? This is where the issue of controversy becomes crucial. The classification of these arguments as figurative allows for their dismissal by western audiences. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) suggest, "metaphor for most people is a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish - a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language" (p. 3).**[vi]** In the case of the Yucca Mountain controversy, it is ultimately a western institution, the federal government, that decides whether or not to go forward with the project. These arguments, though making an important point that storing nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain will disturb the ecosystem, are dismissed because they are perceived as metaphorical arguments. Jessica Bacoch, Tribal Chair of the Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley states, "The Paiute people regard the total ecosystem as a living entity and the spirits and beings that dwell there to this day are still meaningful to us. Many tribal people indigenous to the Yucca Mountain region have informed DOE officials that this area has special meaning and expressed opposition to the proposed Yucca Mountain project." (Bacoch, October 3, 2001). In the Secretary of Energy's recommendation of the Yucca Mountain site report published after his consideration of scientific documents and the public hearings, there is no mention of American Indian objections to the site (Abraham, 2002). This represents a negative consequence of lack of cultural understanding in cross-cultural argumentation in issues of controversy. By viewing these arguments from a western perspective as prosopopoeia or metaphor, they are stripped of the argumentative force intended by the arguers.

One potential objection to my argument is that by arguing that many American

Indian cultures have land-based spiritualities and that when they say the mountain feels, they mean it literally if that I am romanticizing or falling prey to stereotypical notions of American Indians. Many scholars point out that viewing American Indians as the protectors of the earth is a stereotypical and created image. Deloria, Jr. (2003) states that American Indians are often stereotyped as “either a villainous warlike group that lurked in the darkness thirsting for the blood of innocent settlers or the calm, wise and dignified elder sitting on the mesa dispensing his wisdom in poetic aphorisms” (p. 23). However, Deloria (1992) also states that there is substantial evidence through the religion and culture of many American Indian tribes to show that they viewed the earth and everything on earth as living. This is a complicated matter. Certainly, there are dangers to stereotyping all American Indians as ecologists, especially because it views American Indians as a thing of the past. However, it is important to recognize that the passages I used in this essay (and the many other passages I am not including in the essay) are direct quotations from self-identified American Indians. It is possible that the Native Americans used these arguments to invoke this romanticized image for persuasive purposes and that they do not really believe that the mountains can experience emotions. Either way, this type of argument (metaphor or prosopopoeia) appeared very frequently in the public hearing comments and is clearly an important argument the American Indians who made them.

#### *4. American Indian Scientific Arguments*

Many of the arguments by American Indian tribal members in the Yucca Mountain public hearing process concern the use of science in the Yucca Mountain hearings and controversy more generally. Most of the tribes reject the science presented by the federal government and assume that science has been manipulated to guarantee site authorization. Chad Smith, the tribal archeologist for the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, states, “We do not accept the validity of the nearsighted scientific studies or the flawed Environmental Impact Statement process your office has attempted to impose upon the people of the State of Nevada and Indian Tribes upon whose ancestral lands this project is proposed.” (Smith, September 21, 2001, p. 1). Arguments varied and included arguments that the science is difficult to understand, arguments that challenge the scientific models, arguments that identify of geologic dangers such as volcanism, groundwater contamination, and earthquakes, and arguments that assert that site authorization is moved by politics and not science.

Though the arguments listed above about the scientific basis for the site are similar to arguments made by non-American Indian opponents to the site, American Indians who submitted comments or spoke at the hearings also made arguments about how to evaluate arguments. In response to scientific proof of the safety of the site, Calvin Meyers, chair of the Las Vegas Paiute, states that he believes in the advice of a medicine man: "I have read a long time ago and I believe this, because it came from the medicine man, that before the government or anybody else even messed with the - with radiation, they were told not to bother with it because they don't know what to do with it. They don't what it can do to them. They don't know how to get rid of it" (U.S. Department of Energy, December 12, 2001). This indicates a different value of knowledge. While the tribes certainly employ scientific evidence and challenge the science that supports the Yucca Mountain project, Meyers and others also value the collective knowledge of the tribe. In his book, *Red Earth White Lies*, Vine Deloria Jr. (1997) challenges the predominance of Western scientific thought and the public's blind acceptance of scientific fact as "truth." His book posits an alternative to western scientific knowledge that draws from both science and traditional tribal knowledge.

Scholarship that discusses the role of science in public deliberation states that science often dominates decision-making while non-scientific, pathos-based arguments made by the public are viewed as less important (Katz & Miller, 1996; Waddell, 1990; Waddell, 1996). American Indian arguments represent an alternate perspective on knowledge that displaces the superiority of science, not eliminating it, but adding to it with other knowledge. The Department of Energy's justification for the site has a strict value of scientific argument. From this perspective, science and knowledge are continually advancing and progressing to meet the goals of society, just as the Yucca Mountain project, firmly rooted in science, is an end that allows us to achieve our national goals. Arguments that challenge the supremacy of science and advocate alternate evaluations of argumentation are often disregarded.

## 5. Conclusion

Members of American Indian Tribes, particularly Shoshone and Paiute peoples, who spoke at the Yucca Mountain public hearings made a variety of arguments against the site. This essay specifically focused on two types of arguments: those that claimed that the site would harm the mountain, plants and animals and those that challenged the scientific findings of the federal government. Arguments

about the natural world are a form of argument that can be classified as either literal or figurative, depending on the perspective of the classifier. Nonetheless, whether they are literal or figurative, this is a form of argument unique to many American Indian nations that is related to the culture, history, and values of the tribes. Though many of the arguments about science directly challenged the scientific findings of the federal government, several arguments challenged how we evaluate scientific arguments. In this evaluation of argumentation, collective knowledge of the tribe is valued above western scientific information. Though this certainly does not describe all of the forms, functions, and evaluations of argument in all American Indian cultures, these two argumentative patterns increase our understanding of the arguments of particular cultures. However, as the example of scientific argumentation shows, these findings should not suggest that American Indians are incapable of making arguments in the Western tradition. Rather, American Indians of all tribes use a variety of argument forms, functions, and evaluations that draw from both western and tribal traditions of argumentation. In fact, because of the use of Western forms of argument in collusion with non-western forms makes it all the more tempting to use a Western standard of evaluation of the arguments. However, as I have shown, lack of consideration of other cultures forms, functions, and evaluations of argument can severely limit one's understanding of controversy.

While this essay tells us something about American Indian forms and evaluations of argument, it is more important to examine the ways that western and non-western forms of argument interact in cross-cultural controversies. In this case, the western tradition of argument is not always sufficient to describe the ways of arguing of other cultures and can actually have harmful implications for the non-western cultures such as dismissal of arguments. That is, because they are viewed as metaphorical, the arguments about the effects of nuclear waste on Yucca Mountain made by tribes are not considered and, in effect, the tribes' voices in the public hearings are silenced. Regarding scientific arguments, we see again that alternate understandings of the role of science and the evaluation of arguments are not considered by the federal government. In issues of controversy which will inevitably involve cross-cultural argumentation, we must recognize that viewing all forms of argument from a western perspective has a definite effect on the outcome of the controversy. In this case, voices in the controversy were silenced.

## NOTES

**[i]** This comes from the following statement from Southern Paiute Edward Smith in public hearing testimony. “We believe that Yucca Mountain will become unhappy and angry if you put radioactive waste into it. The spirits living in the area will move away and eventually the land will be unable to sustain plants, animals, water, air, people, and life.” U.S. Department of Energy, Yucca Mountain Project Comments, reporter’s transcript of proceedings taken on Friday, October 5, 2001 at 2:20 p.m. at Fiesta Hotel, Las Vegas, NV, reported by Christine I. Phelps, CCR #683, available at the Yucca Mountain Information Center, 4101B Meadows Lane, Las Vegas, NV 89107, 702-295-1312, 25.

**[ii]** I subscribe to a broad definition of culture as a “socially constructed system of symbols, meanings, premises, and rules” which includes nationality, gender, ethnicity, and other ways of defining a culture (Philipsen, 1997). However, much of the research in cross-cultural argumentation is limited to a definition of culture as synonymous with nationality. I find this definition limiting because it denies the many other forms of culture in society and may lead to a tendency toward essentialism. This criticism is not the focus of this essay, but it is important to note that one area for further study involves expanding our definition of culture in cross-cultural argumentation scholarship.

**[iii]** This essay specifically focuses on the arguments made by the members of a variety of American Indian nations in the United States. In all, there were representatives from 26 tribes or bands and two organizations who spoke at the hearings. Though I sometimes categorize these arguments as American Indian arguments so as not to have to list all of the tribes and organizations, it is crucial to remember that American Indians are not a univocal culture. There are over 500 distinct American Indian nations in the United States alone. Though there are some commonalities between these cultures, there are also significant differences. My findings then, relate to the specific tribes who spoke at these hearings, most of whom were Great Basin tribes.

**[iv]** These include the Moapa Band of Paiutes, Western Shoshone, Southern Paiutes, Delaware Indian, Cherokee, Prairie Island Reservation (Mdewakanton Sioux), Lone Pine Paiutes-Shoshone Tribe, Ely Shoshone Tribe, Timbisha Shoshone Tribe, White Knife Band of the Western Shoshone, Walker River Paiutes, Las Vegas Paiutes, Kaibab Paiute Tribe, the 5 Paiute Tribes of Utah (Shivwits Paiute Tribe, Cedar City Paiute Tribe, Indian Peaks Paiute Tribe, Kanosh Paiute Tribe, Koosharem Paiute Tribe), Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Bishop Paiute Tribe, Chemehuevi Paiute Tribe, the

Hopi Tribal Council, Cocopah Tribe, Yakama Nation Tribal Council, and Fort Mojave Tribe.

**[v]** This is consistent with my personal interactions with the Shoshone. The Shoshone with whom I have interacted confirm this difference in thinking. But, I have also encountered American Indians who do not adhere to this way of thinking that believes in the literal ability of Mountains to speak and feel.

**[vi]** I do not cite Lakoff and Johnson here to invoke their thesis that all people think metaphorically. Rather I cite them for their astute description of how metaphor is perceived to be an ornamental and non-literal form of speech.

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