

CONSTRUCTING NATIONAL HISTORY AT PIER 21

by:

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ABSTRACT

This research examines how national historical narratives help construct both how we see the past and how we interpret and act upon our present circumstances. This study focuses on Pier 21 as a site in Canada where immigration and Canadian history are taught and exhibited through the reconstruction of immigrant “experience”. Between 1928 and 1971, Pier 21 was one of the major Canadian ports of entry for immigrants. In this thesis, I examine the Pier 21 exhibit and the institutional relations at work in its production and continual operation. I contend that the ways in which the museum represents itself, and is presented by the media, as well as how it represents immigration experience, shapes public understandings and definitions, and historicizes the Canadian nation. I argue that there is a disjuncture between the way the Pier 21 exhibit has been constructed within public discourse, and its actual project of representation.

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**Pier 21
Halifax, Nova Scotia**

This site witnessed the arrival of approximately one million immigrants, who have enriched the cultural mosaic of Canada. Opened in 1928, Pier 21 served as one of Canada's principal reception centers until it closed 1971. It typifies the large, self-contained immigration facilities that the Canadian government had begun to establish at major ports near the turn of the 20th century. The staff at Pier 21 handled large volumes of immigrants rapidly, checking their citizenship and medical conditions, and providing quarantine, detention, customs and social services (Heritage Canada, Sites and Monuments Board Plaque)

We intend to recognize the contributions of all immigrants of all ages. It doesn't matter if you came here in 1928 or 1998" (Ruth Goldbloom in the Toronto Star, January 23, 1999).

We are blessed to live in our country. What are important are the values that we share. People came from all over the world to share this country. Here in Canada we are all equal. we can live with different color and languages, religions and we are sharing the advantages and responsibility of being Canadians (PM Jean Chretien, Pier 21 Opening Ceremonies, CNN, July 1, 1999).

Chapter 1: Introduction

Situating the Project

This project is an examination of Pier 21, an immigration history museum in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Between 1928 and 1971, Pier 21 was one of the major Canadian ports of entry for immigrants, refugees, and soldiers arriving to Canada by ship. It was through Pier 21 that many newcomers to Canada had their first contact with both Canadian society and the Canadian state. The Pier 21 exhibit recreates the “experience” of coming through the pier as a new immigrant and contextualizes it within major historical events such as the economic depression of the 1930s, and the Second World War. The museum contains stories, artifacts and exhibits that deal specifically with three major fields: citizenship, genealogy/family history and Canadian history. According to museum documents, the Pier 21 facility was designed to allow visitors to learn more about Canada’s history and heritage¹.

The purpose of the study is to examine the Pier 21 museum exhibit as well as the different institutions that brought the museum into being in light of theories of power, hegemony and citizenship education. I examine the history that is represented and its implications in the context of citizenship education and non-formal learning.

I undertook this research with the understanding that the representation of public history is always partial, subjective and ideological. With this in mind, this thesis has two main objectives. The first is exploring some of the content of the Pier 21 exhibit. Specifically I am interested in what, from the history of the past forty-three years related to immigrants and immigration, was selected by exhibitors for the museum. I explore

¹ See, *Pier 21 Society, A Brief Overview*, 1999: 1

what is included and left out of this institutional rendition of immigration history and examine narratives that address both immigration and the Canadian state. The content of the exhibit, I believe, throws notions of, as well as prescriptions and actions for citizenship and “nationhood” into relief. I am most interested in examining the framing of the exhibit as a symbol of the nation in public discourse as well as the production of the exhibit and its associated meanings.

The second part of this project explores some of the individual and institutional relations at work in the making of, and continual operation of the Pier 21 exhibit, and thereby raises questions about the positioning and accountability of the history represented there. Through an exploration of institutional coordination, I uncover part of the terrain on which a particular version of national history and identity is organized, shaped and determined by relations that go beyond our encounter with the museum and its content. I do this by examining newspaper articles and other public documents that “frame” the exhibit, as well as by closely examining specific elements of the exhibit content. With the understanding that this research is not to be on immigration as a phenomenon, but a project of exploring and analysing the uses and implications of history education, I am interested in uncovering not only the cultural and political ideas communicated by the exhibit, but also the institutional and ideological relations that produced it. Dorothy Smith writes that as we explore the world from our place in it, we become aware of a rupture between experience and the social forms of its expression, located in relations of power in which one group dominates (1987:50). I endeavor to explore how these relations are constructed by institutional systems and ideologies that ultimately work within a hegemonic cultural and economic system that regulates and

governs society. Through an analysis of ideologically formed factual accounts, I aim to make visible the extended relations that produce a division of labor among different sections of society, and produce class hegemony (Smith, 1990: 153).

Pier 21 – The Exhibit

**If a building could speak, if its walls could whisper, then Pier 21 would have an incredible story to tell. It is a story of a million people who immigrated to Canada through Halifax between 1928 and 1971. One million lives, one millions experiences – a country transformed. It is a story with countless variations, shared by millions who have come and continue to come to the country. Discover Pier 21, discover the immigration experience.
(Pier 21, Exhibit Hall entrance)**

Visitors enter the main floor of the Pier 21 building and proceed to the exhibit hall, passing the Sobey Donor Wall of Honor. Riding up the escalator I am struck by the look of the interior of the building. It reminds me of the trendy loft-space apartments in downtown Toronto, polished concrete floors, floor to ceiling windows, sandblasted brick walls, and chrome. Upstairs, the exhibit hall is flooded with visitors. Today they are expecting four school groups and passengers from a cruise ship in addition to the usual museum traffic. I am greeted by a site interpreter before I proceed through the main doors of the exhibit. Here I encounter three small figures (see Figure 1), the family with whom I embark on this journey. These figures will mark the seven different stages of the immigration “experience” at Pier 21. A caption imposed on a five-foot by 7-foot photo of an old woman giving a drink to a small child sets the tone for the exhibit. It reads, “It was hard to leave but impossible to stay.” A recording plays overhead. A little girl says “mommy I don’t want to go” and a man responds, “I can’t believe it! You are afraid to go

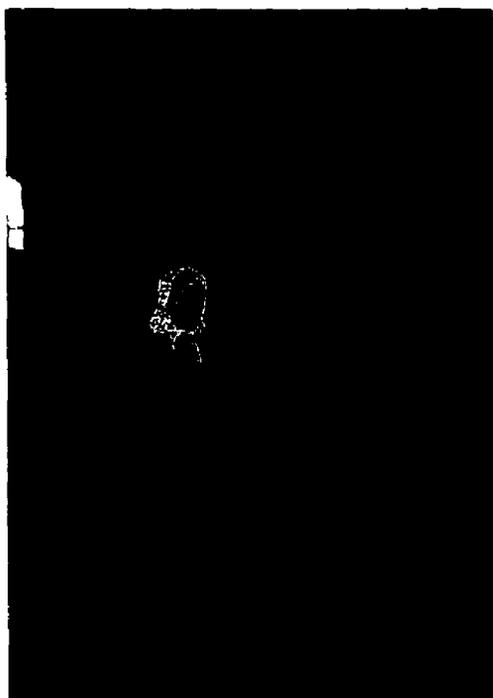
to Canada? Lets get on board before they change their minds.” Their accents are generic European.



(Figure 1)

I step towards two reproductions of posters advertising overseas immigration, and then through the space between them to the Wall of Ships. Stepping off to the right, there is a section called “People”. Here, the exhibit addresses immigration as a phenomenon, immigration policy and the experiences of immigrants as they are heard through recorded

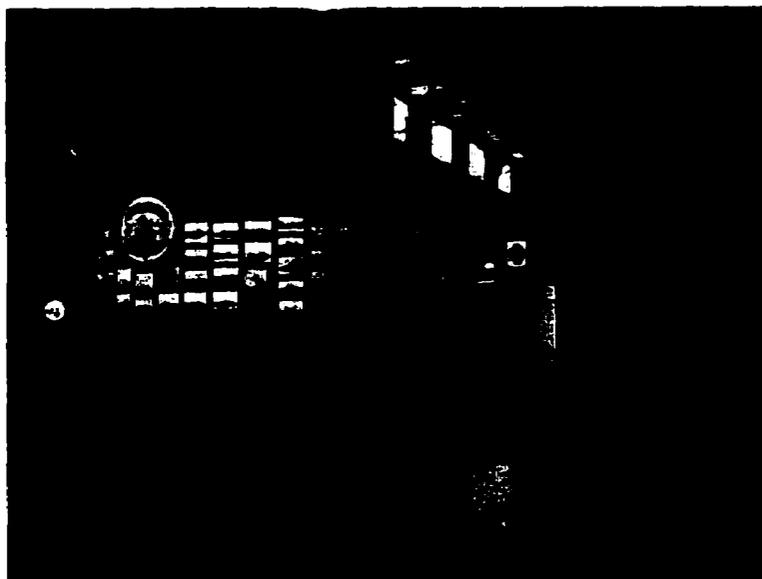
testimonials from immigrant silhouettes (see figure 2).² It is this hall that I am particularly interested in examining. This is the section in which the actual history of immigration and immigration policy are addressed. I step back however, and follow the self-guided tour. The exhibit sections that I move through now take me on the immigrant journey, as if I myself have embarked on it. I imagine myself leaving the Port of Riga, the city in which I was born, at the end of the war. Next I am oriented to the countries that other immigrants had come from and introduced to the idea that people coming from overseas either had to apply for immigration to Canada at posts in their home countries or come over as refugees.



(Figure 2)

² As well as presenting testimonials from immigrants, these silhouettes also present testimonials from home children, evacuee children, war brides, soldiers, workers and volunteers. Because of time constraints and my interest specifically in the representation of immigrants, I have chosen to discuss only the representation and testimonials of workers, volunteers and immigrants.

Visitors who imagine themselves on this journey may choose the ship that we came on from the Wall of Ships (see Figure 3), and depending on the ship we also choose our country of origin and get a glimpse of the conditions under which we would have traveled; the class of passenger we may have been as well as what our accommodations might have been like – i.e. hotel like suites on the cruise deck or rows of bunk-beds in a large communal room; black tie balls in the dining room or card games around a fold out table; immigrants or refugees.



(Figure 3)

At the end of this section, the experience of arrival is simulated. Visitors move through the “traveling” exhibit to the waiting area.

The waiting area (see Figure 4) has 8 rows of benches arranged in two sections – four rows in each. From the benches play voices of immigrants, though in the general hum of the museum their words are virtually indecipherable. From what I can discern, these recordings are of people voicing their concerns over arriving at the immigration

shed in Halifax. The benches face large (approx. nine foot by seven foot) post-war photos of people waiting to be processed by immigration officers. The photos are positioned so that they are literally looking back at us. As we wait, we are called one by one by the site interpreter who is playing the role of immigration officer, sitting at the front of this area, questioning visitors who approach and stamping their Pier 21 passports.

What ship did you come on?
Do you have any money?
Why did you come to Canada?
Do you drink?
Where are you going in Canada?
Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence?

A metal fence surrounds this area and towards the back there are compartments that hold suitcases.

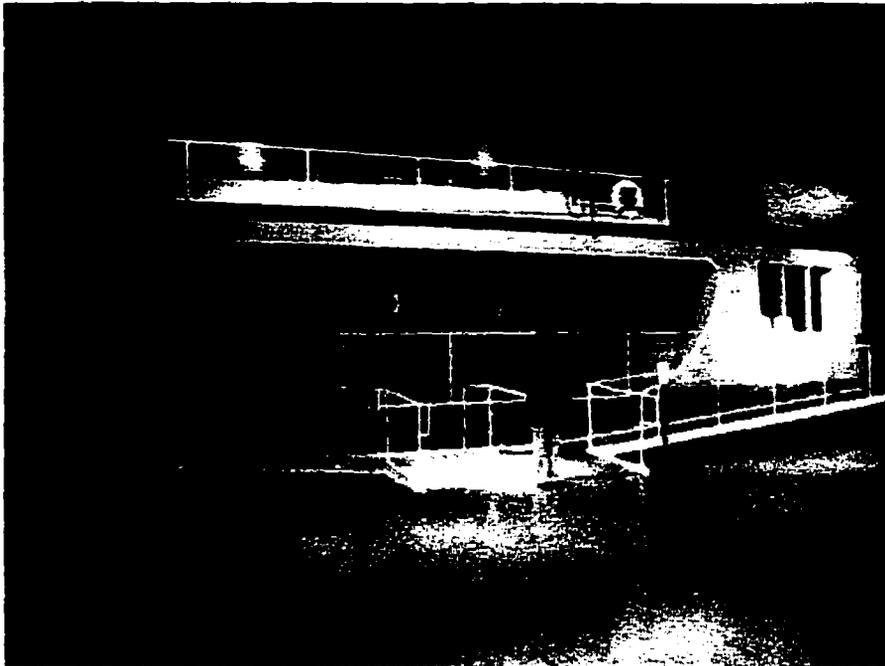


(Figure 4)

Depending on whether the visitor passes the immigration interview or is detained, they proceed to one or the other side of the immigration table. On the left-hand side is the path to the baggage claim area and Canada Customs. On the right-hand side there is a signboard with images and text addressing the people who were detained at the pier:

Most people passed through Pier 21 in a few hours, but some had to stay for days and weeks. The reasons varied: missing papers, not enough money, lack of contacts or other problems meeting the immigration criteria. In the end most detainees were able to settle in Canada but some would be immigrants were deported.

I move through this area, completing this part of the journey by entering a large theatre that has been built into a replica of a ship (see Figure 5). It plays a multimedia presentation called "Island of Hope" which tells us the story of immigrant experience again – it serves as a kind of summation. There are 6 vignettes that parallel the stories told through the interactive testimonial kiosks that stand in the exhibit hall. The vignettes consist of a series of dramatizations of immigrant experiences.



(Figure 5)

Then, I get onto a replica of a train for a simulated ride across Canada. On the train, immigrant video testimonials play in replicas of berths. At the end of the tour, I reach a final sign. It is the testimonial of Gerhard Herzberg, Nobel Laureate. The national anthem, and a video showing pictures of people of different skin colors and ethnicities, plays in the background. The video and the tempo of the anthem creates a feeling of motion and at the end, people's faces are displayed in tiles side by side – a mosaic. This is the only place in the exhibit where I have seen non-white faces. The caption on the sign reads:

In 1952, I came to Canada, a refugee from Germany and the Nazis. I traveled by train across the prairies on my way to Saskatoon. As we passed through small railway stations, I would see two or three houses, a grain elevator. Where were the people? I wondered. But when I arrived in Saskatoon, I found them. Those people were curious to listen to me and

my story. I settled into work at the University of Saskatoon and found colleagues of considerable repute. Canada is really the country that saved me. I have got a hunch that Canada is my country.

From here I exit into the gift shop where I can purchase souvenirs by which to remember my visit and then continue upstairs to the resource center.

Sitting in the Pier 21 resource center, I witness a constant flood of people who come up here to find information about their relatives or themselves; about their personal connections to Pier 21. At the resource center, visitors to the museum can find everything from records of their own or a family member's arrival - how much money people came with, where they sailed from, how much baggage they had, or the names and photos of the ships on which they had traveled. These records are kept in a database that the staff accesses for visitors. I watch people come in to contribute their stories, family heirlooms, photos and travel documents to the museum on a daily basis. I see that many of the people who are coming through the Pier are looking to connect their personal histories with the site. The Pier 21 exhibit appears to be a project that members of the general community are actively interested and involved in (Reflections, IZ, p.1, June 13).

Situating Myself

I came across the Pier 21 Museum for the first time as a tourist on a holiday road-trip from Winnipeg to Halifax. Pier 21 was advertised in provincial tourist centers and on tourist information websites as Canada's premier immigration history museum. A brochure that I had read on Pier 21 described it as "Canada's Historic Soul," a place that "recreates and stands as a testament to the immigrant experience" (Pier 21 brochure, 1999). Having immigrated to Canada myself, I was interested in how this telling of

collective immigrant history would speak to my own personal experiences, and those of others I had encountered. Having spent a number of years previously studying immigration history and the making of immigration policy in Canada, I saw the museum as a potential site for public discourse around immigrants and immigration – an arena for reflecting on, and constructing common understandings of both immigrant experience and the historic and present-day role of immigration in Canadian society.

What initially struck me about the Pier 21 exhibit was that it appeared to reflect only one side of the immigration and resettlement experience and that it did not seem to speak to changes in immigration policy in any coherent way. The epic and romantic telling of immigrant history of flight from oppression to opportunity - like other mainstream versions of immigrant history– spoke to my understanding of the immigration experience only in a superficial sense. My impressions were that the exhibit did little to speak to the now well-chronicled experiences of oppression and discrimination faced both by immigrants in the past and in the present. I also felt that it did not address either the historical use of immigrants to colonize the country or the present-day necessity of large-scale migration for supplying the labor market. I became interested in trying to uncover what is being spoken to, or constructed at, the Pier 21 exhibit, as well as the implications of this telling of history.

A preliminary exploration of the history at Pier 21 was striking because the stories of immigration, integration and colonization of Canada told there appeared to be devoid of any substantive conflict and contestation. The fact that immigration was used as a tactic of colonization, that immigrants typically came over not as asylum seekers but as workers, that their integration experiences did not typically go smoothly, and that the

state recruited large numbers of immigrants to supply an otherwise withering labor market. not to mention the actions of participation and resistance on the part of immigrants, are essential elements of Canadian history. By presenting the history of immigration without conflict, Pier 21 constructs Canadian national history and the meaning of Canadian citizenship in a fundamentally hegemonic way.

Having said that, Pier 21 did have an impact on me. It made me reflect on immigration and its history. I particularly thought about how difficult it must have been for people during WWII, and the conditions under which many of them had traveled. I felt empathy for the people whose journeys were harrowing, and some resentment towards those who traveled in first class. As a Russian Jew I imagined myself fleeing post war Latvia on one of the over-crowded ships that sailed with refugees on board. When I was sitting in the reconstruction of the interview waiting area, I imagined what it must have been like to be sitting there in the 1940s waiting to find out whether or not I would be able to enter Canada. I saw people shed tears in the exhibit hall, as well as talk to each other about their own or their family's immigration histories. Many people traced their stories to the Pier 21 immigration shed.

The Original Pier

The original pier was in operation during times of tremendous social and economic upheaval in Canada. During the years that it was in operation much of Western Canada was colonized, there was a major economic depression as well as tremendous labor unrest. the Second World War and later a refugee crisis took place, and the Canadian Pacific and the Canadian National Railways were built. Between 1928 and

1971. Pier 21 was one of the major processing centers for immigrants, refugees, and soldiers arriving to Canada by ship. The complex housed government and non-government organizations such as Immigration Services, Customs, Health and Welfare Canada, Agriculture Canada and the Red Cross. It was through the Pier that many newcomers to Canada had their first contact with both Canadian society and the Canadian state.

The Museum

The exhibit at Pier 21 contains stories, artifacts and exhibits that deal specifically with three major fields: citizenship, genealogy/family history and Canadian history. According to museum documents, the Pier 21 facility was designed to allow visitors to “learn more about Canada’s multicultural heritage as well as recognize the successes and limitations of our recent past as we consider better paths for the future.”³

Although the Pier 21 museum is an organization that is funded primarily by corporations and private donors, it received a one-time 4.5 million dollar matching grant from the government and currently works closely with the Federal Government through its national advisory committee. The museum is a result of the work of the Pier 21 Society, a registered non-profit organization established in 1988 in Halifax, N.S. The main concern of the Pier 21 society when it formed in the mid-1980s was the restoration of the pier in order to “commemorate” one of Canada’s major ports of entry⁴. Their mandate was “to transform Pier 21 into a facility of international importance, acknowledging the significance of immigration to the building of Canada and also to the

³ Pier 21 Society: A Brief Overview, 1999: 1

⁴ See *About Pier 21 Society*, <http://www.pier21.ns.ca/whatisPier21/whatIs.html>, visited April 15, 2000

strength of our cultural diversity.”⁵ Establishing its mandate, the society worked through the late eighties and early nineties to muster financial and other support for the project. In 1995, on the last day of the G-7 Summit, Prime Minister Jean Chretien announced a 4.5 million dollar pledge towards re-opening Pier 21. The pledge came with the condition that the Pier 21 society matches the government’s pledge through contributions from the private sector and individuals, which they did. Work on restoring the site began in November of 1998 and the site was re-opened as a museum on Canada Day, 1999.

Opening Ceremony: Canada Day 1999⁶

We are blessed to live in our country. What are important are the values that we share. People came from all over the world to share this country. Here in Canada we are all equal, we can live with different color and languages, religions and we are sharing the advantages and responsibility of being Canadians (Jean Chretien, Canadian News Network, July 1, 1999).

In 1999, the city of Halifax held its Canada Day celebrations at the grand opening of the Pier 21 museum. The Canada Day opening ceremony of Pier 21 went down with a great deal of fanfare. Hundreds of people gathered at the Pier for an event hosted by popular CBC radio personality Hanna Gartner, to hear speeches by representatives of all three levels of government and to be some of the first visitors to the new exhibit. The opening day ceremonies were telecast nationally on CNN television network and the Prime Minister spoke through a live feed from Ottawa. The ceremony culminated in a

⁵ See Pier 21 Society: A Brief History, 1999: 9

⁶ The data for this section was obtained primarily through viewing a video recording of the opening day ceremonies as they were telecast on the Canadian News Network, as well as through reconstructions in local and national newspapers.

speech from the Prime Minister and the performance of the Pier 21 song, the chorus of which was a take on the national anthem,

Oh Canada
Behind these dockyard walls there's freedom to dream
Beyond the wire and stalls
Here, on this day,
A new life has begun,
As we set foot
On Pier 21 (Pier 21 song)

It was clear from the opening day ceremony that the Pier 21 museum was intended to have a great deal of significance for Canada. The day was concluded with a special citizenship court. Former CBC broadcaster Don Tremaine, who presided over the [citizenship] ceremony, told the day's newest citizens not to forget their place of birth, but that after today, they should think of themselves as Canadian. He said, "It is important to pass on to your children and grandchildren why you chose Canada... but after today think of yourselves as only Canadian." He continued, "A hyphen is small on a computer, but as a divider of people it looms large" (The Halifax Daily News, July 2: 1999).

Thesis Preview

In chapter two, I conceptualize the work done by public history museums in society. I examine public education as citizenship education, and then go on to consider theories of hegemony as they relate to the production and reproduction of ideologies about the nation within public education for citizenship in general, and museum exhibition in particular. I go on to consider changes to museum policy in Canada, and the

setting of Multiculturalism as an ideological frame for Canadian society, and then offer some preliminary conclusions on the reproduction of hegemony. In chapter three, I address the methodology of this research project, as well as my initial observations and interest in Pier 21. In chapter four, I examine the construction of the Pier 21 exhibit within the public discourse looking specifically at newspaper articles and Pier 21 documents, as well as the construction of immigrants and the Canadian state within the exhibit. In chapter five, I argue that the representation of history at Pier 21 forms and informs perception and conceptions of Canadian nationality, nation and Multiculturalism. I contend that the way in which the museum represents itself, and is represented by the media, as well as how it represents immigration experiences shapes how the public understands, defines, and historicizes the nation. In chapter six, I argue that there is a disjuncture between the way the Pier 21 exhibit has been constructed within public discourse, and its actual project of representation. I offer some conclusions and discuss some of the limitations to this research.

Summary

In this thesis, I explore how the exhibit at Pier 21 'imagines'⁷ social and political community as well as how it constructs citizenship. I specifically examine the ideological framing of the exhibit within public discourse, and some of the messages communicated by the exhibit content. Through the exhibit, I argue, we learn how Canadians have behaved and participated in democracy in the past, as well as how we are to participate currently and in the future. We are learning not only our individual

⁷ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism, (1983)

identities and positions, but how to identify with each other and participate in our society as citizens. I make this argument with the conviction that the construction and display of public history is inherently an ideological practice. As an ideological practice, it contributes to organizing and coordinating processes and events that occur in different places at different times. In effect, because the making of public history is an ideological practice, dominant versions can serve to maintain the hegemony of dominant belief systems.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The past, historian Michael Wallace (1987) argues, cannot be separated from the present. In the case of public history in particular, the past and the present are mutually constitutive. The present is constituted both by how we experience it as individuals on a day-to-day level and by the collective meanings that we invoke to understand those experiences. The representation of history is always ideological. It serves a political agenda, regardless of whether the politics are on the left or the right.

National narratives construct both how we see the past and how we interpret and act upon our present circumstances. Public history education - as it takes place in museum settings - is both a reflection of society and an ideological construction of society. Through public history exhibits, such as Pier 21, Canadian experiences are constructed, confirmed and authenticated. Examining how Canadians come to understand and construct ourselves as active social agents as well as how we see ourselves represented and constructed as citizens - our agency, our communities, our commonalities – is integral to exploring our current day struggles for democracy.

Mainstream or dominant versions of citizenship education have historically been one of the means through which the power of both the state and dominant groups in society has been institutionalized and reproduced. Like other manifestations of official, institutional or “legitimate” citizenship education, museums speak with an authoritative voice. Museums create as well as disseminate culture and ideology on behalf of the groups that fund and support them. For this reason, citizenship education encodes within

it a paradigmatic representation of identities, of the national (the group) as well as the "model citizen." It communicates proper and legitimate social relations, as well as contributes to the definition of politics by organizing the boundaries of political debate and problem recognition (Jenson, 1997). In this case, citizenship education as it takes place at Pier 21 informs both public constructions of citizenship and the nation, as it works to reproduce those constructions at both the societal and individual levels. The constitution of citizenship therefore is dialectical. Institutions shape and constrain outcomes while ideas and interests simultaneously constitute institutions. In the abstract, this dialectic consists of negotiation between main bodies of organization such as the state, the economic market and communities (Jenson, 1997: 631-32).

In this chapter, I conceptualize the work done by public history museums in society. I begin by examining public education as citizenship education, and then go on to consider Gramsci's theories of hegemony as they relate to the production and reproduction of hegemonic ideologies about the nation within public education for citizenship in general, and museum exhibition in particular. I consider the use of "invented tradition" for historicizing political and social change, as well as the museum as a tool for disseminating ideological construction of society. I go on to consider changes to museum policy in Canada and the setting of Multiculturalism as an ideological frame for Canadian society and then offer some preliminary conclusions on the reproduction of hegemony.

Public History Education as Citizenship Education

Public history, like other forms of non-formal education, is one of the means through which citizenship is socialized. Public history is an integral part of history in practice. In its narrow and more traditional definition, public history is the presentation of historical materials, especially in museums, to the general public. More broadly, however, it can be understood as all of the means through which those who are not professional historians or students in school acquire their sense of the past and the present (Jordanova, 2000: 20-21). Jordanova (2000) conceives of history as a participatory and political activity. She argues that history can be best described in terms of what it is that historians, both professional and amateur, do. It is a set of social practices; a value laden political activity subject to a wide range of imperatives.

As public history education uses the past to selectively inform audiences about political and social trends of the present, the materials presented are inherently ideological. Museums, as communicators of public history, convey narratives and values as well as insights and information. Considering that museums are sites where images of “self” and “other” are articulated, it is not surprising that they can become focal points for struggles to define the shape of public culture (Butler, 1999: 57). Public history, then, intensifies questions about “the responsible dissemination of knowledge, the nature of historical authority, and about responsible moral judgments and the assignment of blame” (Jordanova, 2000: 21). As Arendt insists, the representation of history plays an important role in “the organization of an entire texture of life according to ideology” (Arendt in Stanley, 1998:41).

Many presentations of public history can be criticized, as Worthington argues, for revising history – reshaping the past to make it more “acceptable, fashionable and comfortable” (Worthington, 1990 in Butler, 1999: 84). This practice serves to create a unifying discourse that identifies interests that are purported to be shared by different groups within the society. The museum’s voice, as Harris argues, “is no longer seen as transcendent. Rather it is implicated in the distribution of wealth, power, knowledge, and taste shaped by the larger social order” (Harris in Weil, 1990: 51). Revisioning history in this way is more common in public history than in academic history, for instance, in part because of the logistics of telling a more or less fluid story within an extremely limited space and importantly because of issues of museum profitability, entertainment, accessibility and palatability. History museums, after all, are in the business of attracting visitors so that they can turn a profit and continue to operate *as well as* teaching about Canadian history and identity. Their content is influenced not only by professional historians, but also increasingly by market forces and funders such as private individuals, corporate donors and the state. Wallace illustrates this relationship between museum sponsors, audiences and political climates through an analysis of Disneyland’s Epcott center where major corporations and products are exhibited at pavilions in a past that has been vacuum cleaned of the less desirable repercussions of economic and technological progress such as poor labor standards, political and economic unrest, environmental pollution etc. creating a march or progress within utopian Disney realism (1998: 44-45).

Another factor to consider in the making of a public history that is more comfortable to encounter, is that this history can serve to maintain existing social and political relations by demonstrating that not only have a particular set of relations existed

for a long period of time, but that they have in the past made society work more smoothly. Wallace writes that most public history (apart from that aimed at schoolchildren who are a captive audience) is produced for a market, as a commodity. People don't have to buy it if they don't want to. Consumers have their own conventions and assumptions, and tend not to gravitate to presentations that don't reinforce these (1987: 43).

Reconstructions of the history are made in conversation with both the dominant ideologies of the past and those of the present. Hegemonic constructions of the past give momentum to dominant social and cultural relations that at the same time feed into hegemonic constructions of the past. Wallace, in reflecting on the politics of museums and their exhibits, argues, "the future will be decided not by the past, but by the outcome of contention in the present between people with different visions of what they want the future to be" (1987: 37). Representations of the past, therefore, constitute dominant social forces while simultaneously being a product of them. Public history education influences present-day thinking, social structures and institutions.

For citizens to accept representations of our history unquestioningly, however, can be equally impoverishing if not ultimately detrimental to collective constructions of the present. As Wallace points out, it was Marx who argued that people make their own history; namely that people are active in their understandings and interpretations of their society. These understandings and resultant representations, however, are constrained by dominant ideologies and their manifestation in social organizations and institutions. In his article The Politics of Public History, Wallace urges his reader to question the relationship between the past and the present. "If we do not understand the past/present

relationship,” he argues, “we live on the surface of things, vulnerable to explanations that focus on the conjunctural, the immediate. We misdiagnose our problems and hamper our search for solutions” (1987: 38). Wallace argues that some of the most fundamental pressures on public historical memory are generated by the everyday workings of capitalism if it is considered as an economic, social and cultural system.

National museums, like other state and private sector endorsed and subsidized forms of citizenship education serve an agenda that is consistent with that of both the state and dominant groups in society. The federal state, over the years, has been profoundly interested in citizenship education, particularly in fostering a widely shared sense of national identity. To this end, it has used several policy instruments, particularly financial inducements, capacity building and cooperation with private surrogate organizations (Sears, Clarke & Hughes, 1999: 122).

The state’s prompting and regulating of the presentation of public history has historically served the reigning hegemony in two particular ways. First, social history exhibits shore up faith in the state’s capacity to represent the national populace. The exhibits achieve this by their symbolic value as impressive displays of legitimate power and cultural authority. They also work as devices to instill the citizenry with a sense of shared national character or “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983) that is in fact based on the beliefs and values of the dominant gender, race and class.

Citizenship Education

Texts that address and historicize the nation are a form of citizenship education. Historically, citizenship education has been a tool through which many groups in society

have been assimilated, and a tool through which systems of power have been institutionalized and consequently made invisible. In many cases, hegemonic forms of citizenship education tell the story of who gets to be considered the nation's 'real', 'normal' or 'ideal' citizen (Strong-Boag, 1996: 1). Citizenship education in Canada also has a history of being used as a tool of assimilation¹, and a way of managing or subsuming tensions among dissenting groups such as workers, women, immigrants, "ethnic minorities," people who are gay, physically disabled (Epstein and Johnson, 1999, Sears, Clarke & Hughes, 1999, Strong-Boag, 1996)

Citizenship education serves many important educational functions in Canadian society. It is one of the main ways through which Canadians come to have some shared sense of national identity, of the nation as a social whole. Understanding our rights as both individuals and collectives is an important part of participating and working to set the direction of Canadian society. Within Canada, it is a citizen's democratic right to make contributions to, and to debate, the political, social and economic climate of the nation as a whole. There are, however, different conceptions of civic participation in use, as well as different corresponding ideologies. These, according to Sears, Clarke and Hughes (1999), fall on a continuum between elitist and activist. For elitists, participation in public affairs beyond voting is not only undesirable, but also potentially dangerous. In this conception, the good citizen is knowledgeable about mainstream versions of national history and the ways in which public institutions work. The good citizen has a loyalty to the state, knows national "myths" and defers to authority. On the other end of the continuum under the activist conception, the good citizen has a deep commitment to, and

¹ See Andrea Bear-Nicholas' article *Citizenship Education and Aboriginal People: The Humanitarian Art of Cultural Genocide* for a discussion of the manners through which government policy initiatives worked towards assimilating aboriginal people and destroying their culture.

investment in democratic values, “including the equal participation of all citizens in discourse, where all voices can be heard, and power (political, economic and social) is relatively equally distributed” (Sears, Clarke & Hughes, 1999: 124). Under this conception of citizenship, it is critical for citizens to be knowledgeable about *how* institutions and structures privilege some people and groups while discriminating against others, and to become skilled at uncovering how those structures of power work. In effect, a citizenship that is critical, participatory and emancipatory.

If we are to conceive of citizenship as not merely a legal category but an active, contested and political practice, then it is necessary to examine how citizenship education is used for the purposes of national inclusion and exclusion. Behind the rhetoric, citizenship education represents our aspirations for ourselves and our society. It tells us who we are and where we, as a given country, wish to go (Kaplan, 1993: 246). Citizenship transforms the individual into a member of the nation; from “teacher, trader, corporate executive, child, sibling, worker, artist ... into a citizen among other citizens” (Dietz, 1989: 14). With membership come rights, responsibilities, and opportunities as well as the expectation of loyalty and commitment to a national entity (Morton, 1993: 50).

Critical citizenship and critical citizenship education are imperative for democracy. By critical, here, I mean citizenship education that tells a history that includes conflict and encourages learners to examine our constructed collective reality as a series of narratives rather than a singular history. Leon (1987) contends that in order to critically engage an audience in an exhibit it is necessary to give them something to think about, such as comparative stories or objects in comparative settings, or different versions

of the same event. He argues that we need to find ways to encourage museum visitors to really think about what they are seeing, to challenge their assumptions about the subject matter and objects that they are seeing. When confronted with direct and bold challenge to their assumption, he argues, museum-goers may actually think about what they are seeing rather than merely trying to absorb information (1987: 134-135).

An important part of critical citizenship is examining the practical character of our collective reality. Social critique from this point of view, as Maxine Greene argues, entails an ongoing effort to overcome false consciousness by rejecting an absolute and static view of reality. It involves creating new interpretive orders that have the potential to change or transform our intersubjective worlds (1995: 61). With this in mind, I undertake this research as an act of participation. By criticizing the history presented at Pier 21 and uncovering the institutional relations at work in orchestrating and funding the exhibit, I am proposing to examine how a particular world-view is disseminated and reproduced and a particular conception of the nation created.

(Re) constructing National Narrative

A persistent issue for citizenship education has been the search to discover or create some sense of national identity (Epstein and Johnson, 1999: 117). For a country like Canada - colonized by immigrants from all over the world, many of whom maintain hyphenated identities; a persistent duality between the French and the English; and public resistance and dissent on the part of aboriginal people - a common sense understanding of the nation is illusive. Part of the project of constructing the Canadian nation is

constructing and representing the interrelatedness of its different components and identities in a cohesive way.

Epstein and Johnson (1999) argue that we can analyze any version of the nation as a structure of recognitions; in which some social groups and identities find themselves plentifully recognized and endorsed, others marginalized and stigmatized. Constructions of nation or the national, they contend, function as a kind of meta-narrative. These texts nationalize - name and regard as national - some groups and experiences and exclude or punish others as foreign or alien (1998: 18). In their book, Epstein and Johnson critically examine the ways in which the British media construct national and thus "acceptable" sexuality. Another example of the nationalizing of particular experiences as acceptable to the social whole is evident in Folkloramas and other government sponsored "ethnic" festivals where cultures are represented in a palatable and entertaining form and "experienced" through food and music².

Within immigration history, the example of Ellis Island is also cogent. The vision of immigration history at Ellis Island effectively distorted the real experiences of immigrants coming to the U.S. while cultivating a superficial plausibility. It flatters now comfortable immigrants by lionizing their ancestors as rugged and successful individuals and obscures those immigrants who did not experience immigration to the U.S. in this way (Wallace, 1987: 53). Frisch and Pitcaithley, in their analysis of the exhibit at Ellis Island, ask, "Should we deliberately avoid a history that traces back to the nation's bias

² In her discussion of Folklorama in Winnipeg, Cynthia Thoroski argues that simplifying the intersections of cultural identity into about an hour's worth of dinner, drinks and dancing, Folklorama's visitors exit pavilions with a soothing satisfaction of having experienced the world as a politically neutral, easily understandable, smaller place. Like living museums or the fast food services of McDonalds, she argues, this homogenized brand of multiculturalism provides visitors with the illusion of a cross-cultural encounter with the security of imagining the "other" from a safe distance (1997: 106)

against immigrants and its recurrent political intolerance?" This, they argue, "is evidence that immigration was frightening and traumatic not only for immigrants, but for the U.S. as well." (1987: 159-160). The universalizing and sterilizing of immigrants' experience is typically justified through the rhetoric of promoting "understanding" among different groups in society, but it also provides an ideological frame through which to understand culture and society. These processes of nationalizing historical narratives establish particular (and typically hegemonic) understandings as "common sense" and therefore shape public debate around issues of immigration history. Through the process of museum representation, the complexities of both "national" and "non-national" narratives are subverted.

The production of national culture through history education exhibits, then, is a whole body of efforts made by the people involved in creating an exhibit, to describe, justify and praise the actions through which that people has supposedly created itself and kept itself in existence. Within liberal capitalist democracy, in order for dominant political positions and institutions to maintain their base of support, they need the citizenry to identify their interests with the political economic and social climate of the nation as a whole. Identifying with the political climate of the whole is part of what Benedict Anderson calls 'imagined community'. Nationalism, he argues, has to be analyzed not in relation to self-consciously held political ideologies, but in the context of the larger cultural systems, languages, frameworks and identities that precede them (1983: 15).

Invented Tradition

Museums do the ideological work of inventing traditions – juxtaposing the social being and social consciousness, representation and social life. Invented traditions are particularly relevant to the historical innovation of the “nation,” with its associated phenomena: nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, and national history.

Invented traditions, according to Eric Hobsbawm (1983) are responses to novel situations that take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own history through repetition. Hobsbawm defines invented traditions as a set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate hegemonic values and norms of behavior by implying continuity with the past. Invented tradition, then, describes the practice of locating and historicizing novel political and social phenomena (1983:1). Invention of tradition occurs more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which ‘old’ traditions have been designed. New nations or nations undergoing a great deal of change have historically invented tradition in order to develop a certain level of cohesiveness and support for the hegemonic social order (Walsh, 1992). Hobsbawm argues that invented traditions belong primarily to three different types: those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or membership of groups, real or artificial communities; those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority; and those whose main purpose is socialization (1983: 9). All invented traditions, so far as possible, use history as a legitimator of action and cement for group

cohesion (1983: 12). A new history museum is an example of a purveyor of invented tradition.

Like other forms of non-formal public education, museum exhibits can be read as physical manifestations or fusions of current-day political philosophy and practice. Like history textbooks, public history museums offer an authoritative, legitimate and hegemonic view of both historic and present-day social and political relations. In this way, they reify a dominant form of citizenship and citizenship education. Leon argues that many people assume that historians study universally agreed-upon “facts” and then write an objective truth about the past. Like history textbooks, he suggests, museum exhibits have a style that reinforces the notion that there can be one interpretation of a historical subject (1988: 135). Unlike history textbooks, however, the exhibits of public history museums imply a sense of their coming out of the “public” or the community – a product rather than a construction of mass culture. In the 1970’s Adorno and Horkheimer coined the term “culture industry” in an attempt to make explicit that the products of mass culture do not necessarily originate from the people themselves but are a system administered by a central hegemonic authority working to legitimate ideology (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979 in Walsh, 1992: 64). Public history exhibits, precisely because of their legitimated position within education and the sense that their stories come out of the public or community, stand in a powerful position to reify or challenge dominant understandings and constructions of the nation.

Museums, National Narrative and Public Memory

The development of the modern day history museum was centered on the development and dissemination of capitalist culture and the indoctrination of the public in the social whole. Scholars have traced the transformation of the early modern private collections to the modern public museum in terms of the creation of the bourgeois public sphere in Europe, with reforming and controlling impulses mixed with the goals of education and preservation³. Since the 19th century, representations of the past have contributed to a form of institutionalized rationalization. As people have been distanced from the processes that affect their daily lives, the past has been promoted as something that is completed, and no longer contingent upon our experiences in the world (Walsh, 1992:2)

History museums, as exhibitors of the past, store and construct collective memories. Memory of cultures and nations is set to trigger memory in and for multiple, diverse collectives. These memories then become components of identities – even for individuals who would in no other way feel connected to particular historical objects (Crane, 2000: 3). Like an archive, the museum holds the material manifestation of cultural and scientific production as records, articulated memories removed from the mental world and literally placed in the physical world. Preservation in the museum fixes the memory of entire cultures through “representative” objects by selecting what “deserves” to be kept, remembered, treasured, what artifacts and customs are saved over time (Crane, 2000: 3). Susan Crane argues that collections and individual objects, in their relation to each other and their relations to anyone who encounters them, are used to

³ See Susan Crane (2000), Museums and Memory, Chapter I.

create meaningful messages about us, the “other,” and the museum. Museums, she writes, “provide us with objects that are being preserved, saved as memory triggers and archival resources, not only for entire cultures but at the same time for each individual in that culture” (2000:5).

Museum exhibition, whatever its overt subject, draws on the cultural assumptions and resources of the people who make it. Decisions are made to emphasize one element and downplay others, to assert some truth and ignore others (Lavine & Karp, 1991:1). Decisions about how cultures are presented reflect deeper judgments of power and authority and can, indeed, resolve themselves into claims about what a nation is or ought to be as well as how citizens should relate to one another (Lavine & Karp, 1991: 2). Public history in particular is intended to serve and interpret particular elements of the past as embodiments of shared values and aspirations (Heron, 2000:74). Whether those narratives are dominant, or subversive of existing power structures, public history exhibits typically work to interpolate the viewers – position them within the framework of the exhibit.

The museum, like all education, can be considered both an ideological tool which reinforces the held conceptions of order, time and progress and a tool of emancipation, opening people’s eyes to a world other than their own and helping to maintain a sense of place. Walsh argues that museums have both of these affects. However, he argues, “there can be no doubt the emancipatory potential of the museum has never been entirely realized and that now, more than ever, this potential needs to be articulated” (1992: 38). Through museum education, learners participate in a process of life long learning that takes them beyond their immediate realities and positions them in relation to different

political, social and cultural practices and institutions. Because of its relative accessibility and its position within adult education, the museum is a highly powerful and political institution with the ability to effectively disseminate ideas about both society and its component parts.

Hegemony and Public Education

Gramsci reasoned that an existing system's real strength does not lie in the violence of a ruling class or the coercive power of the state apparatus, but in the acceptance by the ruled of a "conception of the world" which belongs to the rulers – one of the functions of elitist forms of citizenship education. The problem for Gramsci was to understand *how* the ruling class managed to win the consent of the subordinate classes. (Gramsci in Carnoy, 1984: 68-69).

Hegemony in civil society is a process whereby a faction of the dominant class exercises control through instances of moral and intellectual leadership over the allied factions of the dominated class. The leading faction, precisely because of its access to economic and cultural resources, has the power and ability to articulate its interests to others. These interests, however, are not dictated as imperatives. Rather, they are represented through pedagogic and politically transformative processes whereby the dominant class articulates a hegemonic principle that brings together common elements drawn from the worldviews and interests of allied groups. Hegemonic principles incorporate common elements from dominant and competing views - thereby demonstrating an allegiance to subordinated groups while never actually doing anything that would promote significant change or undermine the establishment. Thus hegemony

involves the successful attempts of the dominant class to use its political, moral, and intellectual leadership to establish its view of the world as all-inclusive and universal, and to shape the needs of subordinate group.

Ideology is negotiated constantly. Part of any system of negotiation is the articulation and dissemination of worldviews –both dominant and subversive. A major component for maintaining a hegemonic vision of society is the production and popular representation of social and political ideas. Most broadly, hegemony is defined as the active leadership of a particular class or political alliance. Leadership is based on the economically central role of the leading class, but is secured politically by the willingness of one class to make concessions and sacrifices to its allies. Hegemony is cultural, moral and ideological leadership over allied and subordinate groups, *as well as* the consent of communities in civil society. In this sense, it is rooted in the economically dominant class but is defined precisely by an expansion beyond economic interests into the sphere of political direction and legitimation of existing politics. Citizenship education is one of the ways in which support for hegemonic ideas and institutions is generated.

Gramsci's theories of hegemony are advanced by Foucault (1978) who asks us to abandon the idea of power as simply possessed by one group and leveled against another, and instead to think of power as a dynamic network of non-centralized forces (practices, institutions, technologies, etc.) that sustain positions of domination and subordination. In this sense power is played out by discourse, not monolithic institutions. Like Gramsci, Foucault requires us to recognize that the central mechanisms of this power are not repressive but constitutive "a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding them, making them submit, or

destroying them” (Foucault, 1978: 94 as quoted in Bordo, 1989: 15). Furthermore, these forces are not random or static, but rather they assume particular historical forms within which certain groups do have dominance. Dominance is maintained through multiple processes, whereby it becomes enmeshed in our day-to-day understandings and practices; constructing our conceptions of deviance and normalcy. Power, then, is integrated into all levels of society including perceptions of self and subjectivity. Because of its highly ideological nature, those who have power are caught in power relations even as they dominate others. As Butler argues, it would be reductionist to think of power and conflict as a struggle between the powerful and powerless. Power works in ways that are much more intricate and ambivalent (1999: 46).

One of the main roles of the modern state and other hegemonic institutions, such as business and other social, political and cultural institutions, is legitimating and naturalizing the rules and frameworks within which social life is structured. Because civil society, as Gramsci argues, is a site of consent, hegemony, and direction (Forgacs, 1988: 224), there is concern on the part of the state and other dominant institutions for maintaining legitimacy and assimilating other groups into the hegemonic order. These institutions participate in preserving hegemony not through indoctrination or coercion, but as increasing numbers of people come to interpret their own interests and consciousness of themselves within the “unifying discourse”. As Althusser argued, “ideology is the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser in Vovelle, 1982:3). Through cultural representations such as Pier 21, ideology constructs and represents society in a way that both subsumes and incorporates the issues of subordinate groups.

Museum Education in Canada

In Canada, as the political ideology of society has shifted from a welfare-state model to a neo-liberal⁴ one through the 1980's and 1990's, so has the content and exhibitionary style of Canadian museums. The shift in exhibitionary style – to displays that are more engaging and technologically sophisticated – has been geared towards entertainment, profitability and the tourist dollar. A focus on entertainment and exhibition has limited the complexity with which the history of the nation could be told while the devolvement of government responsibility for the this aspect of citizenship education made room for private political interests and increased the need for private funding. Reforms to national museums and their exhibits were a product of two major forces in this time period - free market logic in private and government decision making, and the increasing representation of a consensual Canadian identity based on an uncritical celebration of cultural diversity.

In addressing economic and social issues, the Canadian state has carved a role for itself that is more interventionist than the American model, but less so than many European states (Sears, Clarke & Hughes, 1999: 121). Under liberalism, social policy emphasizes the individual, freedom of choice, market security, laissez-faire, and minimal government (Walsh, 1992: 46). The politics of participating in democracy within this environment are elitist, where most occasions in which people become conscious of their citizenship are connected to symbols and semi-ritual practices (such as elections) that are

⁴ Neo-liberalism represents a theoretical and practical rejection of the *active* state that had emerged in the post-war era and its replacement by *laissez-faire*, free-market ideological dominance and practices. Fundamentally, neo-liberalism can be understood as a process of shifting decision-making power to the marketplace and establishing a government policy environment which is driven by corporate priorities (McBride & Shields, 1997: 14)

historically novel and largely invented: flags, images, ceremonies and music (Hobsbawm, 1983: 12).

Under a neo-liberal agenda, the state has been active in shifting decision-making power and the social agenda to the marketplace – to which people have different levels of access depending on their social position and economic status. Conceiving of, negotiating and disseminating a vision of citizenship is an ongoing political process, a continuous activity. Under neo-liberalism however, democracy in Canada has developed away from a focus on provision for the social whole and collective political activity, towards an increasingly individual market activity (1989: 5). The stories, images and voices contained within a particular instance of citizenship education are persuasive. They enter into a larger discourse within which the direction of social change is shaped.

In the post war era, an emphasis on public education in the museum was a development of the Canadian welfare state (Hudson, 1975). Expanding and modifying the task of preserving, expanding and classifying the material culture of the past, Canadian public museums began to make the education of citizenry their primary operation. Modern welfare states funded and directed public museums to educate the citizens of national and regional polities in state-sanctioned discourses of culture and history (Harper, 1993: 39-40). The Welfare State of the post-war decades, which was legitimated by a period of consensus politics during the 1950s and 1960s, came under the close scrutiny of the emerging New Right during the 1970s (Walsh, 1992: 41).

In order to make the museum sector a self-sustaining industry, in the 1980's, the federal state implemented museum reforms that were market oriented and shifted policy focus to exhibitionary display. Driving the use of exhibitionary technologies in the

1980's was a neo-liberal state agenda that oriented museum operations, through federal policy, to tourist markets. Throughout the 1980's, federal cultural policy commissions reoriented federal policy from a heavily subsidized history/citizenship education sector to a for-profit cultural industry (Grant, 1992: 34-44).

Although the history of federal museum policy is beyond the scope of this research, I want to highlight that the major forces and ideologies of neo-liberalism and globalization have affected both the role and the structure of museums in Canadian society. Like other social and citizen oriented services in Canada, museum policy in the 1980's and 1990's was increasingly oriented to the marketplace. History and heritage became industries among other industries, susceptible to market forces and oriented towards profit. Although federal government policy is directed specifically towards national museums, the official position of the government demonstrates that there was a shift in pressure and ideology that took place in public history education through museums over this period of time.⁵ Over this period, two major shifts took place – namely market oriented citizenship education through museums, and the framing of Canadian society within the rhetoric of uncritical multiculturalism. These have affected the political environment in which the history of the nation can be told. These factors have fundamentally affected the content and institutional relations that produce this form of citizenship education.

⁵ In the mid-1980's, a series of cultural policy reviews - such as the Neilson Review (1986), the Bovey Report (1986) and the Richard-Winthrow Report (1986) – affirmed the need for museums to respond to market-logic and profit-driven ventures. The Bovey Report, a task force with the mandate “to inquire into the means by which the arts in Canada can be more effectively funded”, particularly supported the charging of admission fees, the “better use” of museum shops to raise funds, and the Petitioning of corporate sponsorship. See Lawrence Grant, *Museum Policy, Museum Practices and Cultural Change*, pp.38-44.

Multiculturalism as Ideological Frame

Multiculturalism is a development of liberal ideology and policymaking, and was at its inception, an attempt to diffuse the demands of increasingly militant and diverse minority groups in Canada by recognizing their distinct ethnic identities (Forbes, 1994 & Ng, 1995). It served to acknowledge the presence and contribution of the increasing numbers of people who are outside of the “two founding peoples” – the English and the French. Since the 1970s, Multiculturalism has become a vague, but ‘common sense’ understanding of the composition of Canadian society. As Forbes argues, official Multiculturalism does not refer to any coherent theory or set of principles – rather the term denotes an assortment of policies and practices that act as an ideological frame. The only discernable principle is liberal tolerance or neutrality (1994: 95) – which are in their essence ‘values’. The values contained within the ideological frame of multiculturalism have become normalized through public discourse– taken for granted as ‘that’s how it is’ or ‘that’s how it should be’ (Ng, 1995: 36) – and the concepts and experiences for public debate about the nation have been shaped. That is, through the rhetoric of Multiculturalism, the government has effectively shifted public discourse to address the ethnic differences of groups without acknowledging structured power differences.

Reproducing Hegemony

Dorothy Smith (1990) argues that there is a division of labor that takes place in the reproduction and maintenance of hegemonic practices and understandings. Hegemonic practices and understandings must constantly be affirmed and reproduced both structurally and individually in order for them to remain dominant. This division of

labor, as Smith understands it, is a dialectical process through which the generality and intersubjectivity of social phenomenon are accomplished – how ideology is produced, reproduced and disseminated. It is a process of actual activities in a temporal sequence. Its different moments are dependent on one another and are articulated to one another, not functionally but as a sequence in which the foregoing intends the subsequent and in which the subsequent “realizes” and accomplishes the social character of the preceding. The key then, is to attempt to understand how a particular instance of power or ruling relations “works”.

Applying the idea of the dialectic to the reproduction of national culture acknowledges that culture - as it is negotiated through history education in this case -- is simultaneously created through the hegemony of dominant belief systems and legitimating tactics such as national narratives, and reproduced through civic participation and action in relation to those narratives. There is, therefore, a constant negotiation that takes place in public spaces, as can be shown tangibly in museums. This negotiation is encountered and reconstituted in our everyday lived experiences of our social world and in our encounters with ideologically formed factual accounts of both the past and the present. Unpacking the reproduction of dominant or ruling relations involves making connections between cultural hegemony and legitimation as it takes place through the representation of national narratives for citizenship education.

Because of their dialogic nature, hegemonic ideologies are constantly being negotiated, reproduced and reinvented in conversation with social structures as well as individuals in the community. Approaching ideology in this way directs attention to how it works to organize and sanction the social relations that maintain the domination of a

ruling class. Like Smith, many scholars (Kingsman, 1995, Ng, 1996 & Walker, 1995) do not conceive of a ruling class as a collection of individuals standing in an identical relation to the means of production. Rather “a ruling class is the basis of an active process of organization, producing ideologies that serve to organize that class itself, and its work of ruling, as well as to order and legitimize domination” (Smith, 1987: 57). This is not to oversimplify the complexities of class in society⁶. Rather, the emphasis here is placed on examining the power of particular groups of actors in articulating and disseminating their view of the world by virtue of their access to resources.

Although there are strong institutional and ruling relations in the reproduction of a hegemonic vision of society, in the case of citizenship education through museums and their exhibits, it would be simplistic to argue that exhibitors or museum founders or even government or corporations are intentionally or maliciously reproducing oppressive social relations while museum visitors are passively accepting them. Rather, as Foucault (1978) has argued, everyone is involved or implicated in maintaining existing power relations just by virtue of their membership in a given society. The people creating, maintaining and learning from museum exhibits are caught up in the same dynamic sets of power relations.

⁶ For a discussion of the multifaceted and fluid relations that produce class positioning as well as the interconnections between class, race, gender and sexuality see Anthias, Floya & Yuval-Davis, Nira. *The Concept of 'Race' in Racialized Boundaries: Race, Nation, Gender, Color and Class and the Anti-Racist*, (pp 1-21), (1993), Ng, Roxana. *The Politics of Community Services: Immigrant Women, Class and State*, (1996), Clement, Wallace & Myles, John. *Relations of Ruling: Class and Gender in Postindustrial Societies*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994 and Panitch, Leo. “Elites, Classes, and Power in Canada”, in *Canadian Politics in the 1990's*, Whittington, M & Williams, G. (ED) (pp.152 – 175), 1995.

Conclusions

History can be a powerfully subversive and liberatory form of knowledge. Historicizing the present robs it of its sense of inevitability and restores a sense of human agency (Wallace, 1987: 40). Historicizing the present is a valuable educational practice. The work done at Pier 21, namely that of tracing the history and contribution of immigrants to Canada is relevant and important. Immigrant and immigration history speaks to the experience of everyone in Canada. Its judicious representation is an important part of constructing collective understandings of national history. In museum exhibition, as Stephen Weil argues, we face the possibility that the assumptions and biases of larger political and social views color a curator's simplest and most basic acts of classification and identification. The issue, however, is not how to purge museums of values but rather the task of how to make those values manifest, how to bring values to the consciousness of both curators and visitors (Weil, 1990:52). Because the history represented through museums is ideological, the work of making the ideology of a particular exhibit explicit as well as offering counter or conflicting narratives is an integral part of critical public education. A museum's set function is to provide an important public benefit, to have an impact on the lives and collective understandings of people, not merely to provide a custodial or scholarly service. It is from this point that we can proceed to inquire into what the nature of that benefit and impact might be in the case of Pier 21.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Methodological Approach

The data that I use in this thesis, and which will be discussed in later chapters, was obtained primarily from public government and Pier 21 documents, museum exhibit content, and interviews that were facilitated by the Pier 21 research director. The museum plays an important role in forming and informing understandings of immigration history and immigration issues in Canada. As the only immigration history museum in Canada, the site plays an important role in both the formal multicultural curriculum for Nova Scotia, and the non-formal citizenship education curriculum for Canadian and international visitors to the exhibit. In addition, its location, near a Pier that is currently used by cruise ships crowded with large numbers of international tourists, and the position of Halifax, Nova Scotia as one of Canada's most "toured" cities, helps to make the museum one of Canada's top tourist attractions.

I have several years experience researching immigration policy, integration initiatives and stories of immigrant experiences. During this time I have also developed a strong interest in the socializing of power and institutional relations. As such, in doing my thesis research, I have chosen particular points of entry for their ability to make visible how particular conceptions of citizenship and society that inform the practices and construction of the museum, into relief. The texts that I examine exemplify particular relationships between different organizations, ideologies, and histories.

Inception of the Study

My interest in immigration stems from my own experiences of immigration, and my interest in the ways in which immigrant history and immigrant experience are represented. I chose Pier 21 because it is the only immigration history museum in Canada, and therefore an important site for citizenship education. The museum exhibit seeks to offer an “understanding” of the immigrant experience. In this particular understanding are the underpinnings of hegemonic ideology, and the affirmation of dominant frameworks and social structures. As a site that has the funding and endorsement of both the state and the private sector, it is in a powerful position to communicate to the public. As a public museum, it has the responsibility to tell a history that is representative of the development of Canadian democracy, a process that was full of conflict and contestation

In undertaking this project I am attempting to understand and chronicle how the museum and its exhibit came into being as well as what messages are being communicated by the exhibit content. Working with the understanding that the representation of immigrant history is an important part of Canadian national history, I examine what I understand to be political messages in the exhibit, as well as their institutional underpinnings.

In the fall of 2000, I made e-mail contact with the Research Director at the Pier 21 Resource Center, explaining to her who I was and letting her know that I was interested in doing my Masters thesis on the Pier 21 Exhibit. I contacted her again in the spring of 2001, and sent a letter discussing my thesis project and asking permission to conduct my

research on the exhibit. I was granted permission. My fieldwork began in June of 2001 when I spent a month in Halifax in order to conduct my research.

Basic Research Plan

To implement the research process and facilitate my research questions I developed a list of issues/questions that acted as a guideline for interviews and a list of questions for the exhibit materials and documents that I would collect. These were focused on uncovering how institutions and individual actors were involved in planning and organizing the exhibit, as well as uncovering the process through which the exhibit content was selected (see Appendix A & B). I thought that it would be difficult to predict what I would find in the public documents so I used an emergent approach. I suspected that these documents would tell about the hands involved in shaping Pier 21, and therefore reveal some of what shaped both the exhibit content and structure. In terms of museum content, I was interested specifically in one aisle of the exhibit, the only section that actually addresses aspects of immigration history or barriers to immigration. This section talks about why immigrants came to Canada and addresses some of the pull factors (The Canadian state's interest and initiatives in immigration policy), and it is at least partly narrated by "immigrant" testimonials. Here, I focus on the stories told in these testimonials and history boards as a means of eliciting information about, and reconstructing immigration history as it is told through Pier 21.

Due to time constraints I decided to only conduct two interviews. I interviewed Dr. Ruth Goldbloom – the past president of Pier 21 and its main fundraiser and public

representative – and one of the designers of the exhibit¹. Goldbloom has been named as the visionary behind Pier 21. As for the second interview, I had intended to interview the original research director, Erez Segal, who had been responsible for researching and selecting the content for the exhibit; unfortunately he left the organization and declined to participate in my research. Instead, I selected Jacques Saint-Cyr, one of the designers for the exhibit. This proved very productive as he had a different understanding of the intentions and the content of the museum exhibit than did the media and Dr. Goldbloom. Saint-Cyr's input lent some technical insight into the making of the exhibit. As he is based in Montreal, my conversation with him was conducted through e-mail.

In March of 2001, I requested documentation of the correspondence that took place between Pier 21 and the Privy Council Office and Heritage Canada through the Access to Information Act. The purpose of this Act is to make public bodies more accountable to the citizenry by allowing the public to request documents that have been produced and disseminated by government². I received both sets of documents in July of 2001. I was interested in these documents because Pier 21 is a National Heritage Site and I thought that the documents would reflect the government's role in the making of Pier 21 as a facility, as well as the selection of exhibit content.

The Pier 21 Society produced the third set of documents that I was interested in. These proved difficult to gain access to; although original proposals and business plans would be illuminating, they are not public documents; in addition, the museum has had considerable staff turnover during the past 5 years, and as a result there was much

¹ I am using the names of interview participants because they have given me permission to do so, and also because the individuals have become public figures through the exhibit and have had their names and connections to the museum published repeatedly in the newspapers.

² Under the Act the government does, however, have the right to withhold any documents that are deemed confidential.

disorganization and misplacement of files³. I draw on those documents that I was able to find, specifically brochures, web pages, annual reports, and a tour guide information booklet.

I also spent a four weeks (approximately three hours a day) at the museum, following several tour groups and receiving a personal tour from a museum guide. My goal here was to get a feel for what people did there, how they interacted with the space and the museum content. In addition, I examined local and national newspaper articles from 1995-2001.

I focused on both the exhibit content and the day-to-day workings and happening of the museum. I learned a great deal through participant observation; studying how individuals, tour and school groups encountered the exhibit and how site interpreters did their work. I also spent several hours a week at the Pier 21's resource center doing research and writing, and as a result was able to observe the work that went on there and the visitors that came through.

Methodology

Employing several qualitative methodological techniques, I have attempted to create a mosaic-like portrait of the themes and concepts that most frequently are associated with Pier 21. This combination of formal written sources, my own field experiences, museum exhibits, and the opinions and observations of others, offers an understanding of the complexities involved in the Pier 21 project, and specifically aids in elucidating the concomitant interstices of power and representation involved in such

³ It should be noted that this is partly a result of an inability of research staff to organize old files because of understaffing and research priorities.

projects. And, by making use of these methodological tools – content analysis, participant observation and interviews – I am able to triangulate the data, thus increasing the validity of my findings.

Content Analysis

This perspective looks at the apparent meanings and prevalence of themes or concepts in texts or other communication forms, and also examines the interrelatedness of a number of themes together as a system. In doing this, content analysis is able to identify the complexity of themes and to reveal the associated relationships contained within communication content.

Several factors influenced my decision to employ content analysis as a methodology: First, content analysis allows for a structured, formalized and rigorous analysis of communication; and second, it is an unobtrusive method as individuals are neither asked to respond to surveys or interview situations, nor are they directly observed. The researcher takes the communications and texts that people have produced and asks questions of those communications and texts, thus permitting greater insight into the perspective(s) of the producers of the words. As a result, content analysts can cross-examine what can be central aspects of social interaction. One of the major benefits of this technique is that access was granted to documents that stretch back over time, allowing me to analyze documents that were several years old and related to the inception of Pier 21. Furthermore, content analysis allowed me to handle huge tracts of text, particularly when using sampling – this proved particularly beneficial, especially when dealing with newspaper articles.

In employing content analysis as a methodological technique, I made the decision to use a blending of manifest content and latent symbolism strategies⁴. I did, however, rely more heavily on latent symbolism, thus to maintain the reliability and validity of my analysis I include detailed excerpts of statements in order to give the reader the opportunity to better understand my interpretations. The data derived from these strategies was analyzed using a form of initial coding. As themes began accumulating it became apparent that certain themes/topics began occurring with more frequency than others. At this point, I made the decision to “drop” the less frequent, and therefore less productive, themes in favor of focusing my analysis on those themes that occurred again and again.

1. Exhibit Content

At Pier 21, history is communicated through multimedia interactive kiosks and audio-visual equipment, as well as through soundscapes, static displays, and film footage from the National Film Board and Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. On a general level, I was interested in how the exhibit is spatially organized, its main content as well as the forms in which the content is exhibited. I also took photographs of exhibit materials in order to give a visual representation to my written description. My data gathering focused on immigration history as it is presented in static displays that address immigration as a phenomenon from the perspective of the Canadian state and citizenry, as well oral history kiosks which act as history boards telling the stories of who came to

⁴ See *An Introduction to Content Analysis in Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* by Bruce Berg (1998).

Canada, why, and how in their individual voices. I examined the content of these particular exhibits with an interest in the representation of the three frameworks that exhibit curators present as being central themes to the exhibit - namely, citizenship, immigrant experience and Canadian history. I was interested in examining how the museum represents these three aspects of Canadian nationality and national history. In looking at the content of these exhibits I had a series of guiding questions in mind. I was interested in how immigrant experiences were constructed, and whether I could identify a thesis or theses in this museum content. I was interested in examining which features of immigration history were addressed by the exhibit texts. Were questions about both the push and the pull factors in Canadian immigration history addressed? Were both the stories of immigrant workers who struggled and workers who prospered featured in the exhibit? I was also interested in whether the exhibit drew connections between the past and the present.

2. Newspaper Articles

I reviewed both national and local Canadian newspaper articles from June 1996 - to July 2001 in order to gain some insight into how Pier 21 was both representing itself, and how it was being represented in the press. I was looking specifically for any articles that featured the Pier 21 society, the Pier 21 museum or Ruth Goldbloom, president of the Pier 21 society and the major fundraiser for the exhibit. I examined approximately one hundred newspaper articles. These were primarily from local (Nova Scotia) newspapers but I also found considerable coverage in the *Toronto Star*, and in the *Globe and Mail* as

well as in magazines such as MacLean's and Nova Scotia Business. I organized the media coverage into themes that I will discuss in the following chapters.

The Pier 21 museum received a considerable amount of newspaper coverage in the 5 years of news articles that I examined. I was interested in the newspaper articles for a number of reasons. Firstly, I thought the newspaper articles would help to reconstruct the institutional relations that helped produce the exhibit. Specifically, I was interested in coverage of major funding events/moments for the exhibit. Secondly, I was interested in discovering public coverage and public debate about the exhibit. Namely, how the exhibit and the history represented at Pier 21 were constructed by the newspapers for the general public, as well as any sites of debate about the content of the exhibit.

Participant Observation

The use of participant observation permitted the establishment of a multi-faceted relationship with the exhibit and its visitors, and aided in developing an understanding of the events and structures of the exhibit. By becoming an active participant in this interactive display I gained access to first hand experience of how Pier 21 worked to form and inform those in attendance. I spent alternate mornings and afternoons sitting in, and walking around the exhibit. I spent a great deal of time studying the exhibit and transcribing texts from storyboards so I was able to observe the work done by guides as well as the ways in which visitors moved through the exhibit. I also did some of my research using the resources of the Pier 21 resource center so I had ample opportunity to observe the work that went on there as well as the ways in which visitors used the center.

In so far as it was feasible, participants were informed that research was being conducted. However this was not always possible due to the large numbers of people attending. I chose to use participant observation as a research technique for practical reasons; the only way that I could attend the exhibit was to participate in it. Experiencing the museum with other visitors allowed me to develop a fuller understanding of the complexities of the exhibit.

Interviews

The interviews were designed in to shed light on the history, vision and positioning of the exhibit at Pier 21. I conducted two semi-structured interviews that were designed to allow participant to share insights as well as to answer concrete structural questions. I selected two participants in particular who were instrumental in envisioning and realizing the museum and its exhibit. Interviews were pre-arranged by telephone and took place in mid – June. The semi-structured interview format allowed these participants the space in which to guide our discussions as well as to act as resource people for documenting the making and maintenance of the exhibit. The participants had been sent letters requesting their participation in this research project and interviews were arranged over the telephone. One interview took place through a meeting with the participants at Pier 21. This interview was tape-recorded and later transcribed. The other was conducted as an e-mail dialogue. Both participants were asked to sign consent forms and both signed consent forms. One interview was conducted with a past president of the Pier 21 society and another with the museum’s designer in order to get an overview of the groups and initiatives involved in orchestrating the exhibit (See appendix C and D).

I was interested in the dialogue that took place between various voices and institutions in the making of the exhibit. I was interested in how the exhibit content and funding was negotiated and how it is currently maintained and supported.

I chose to interview Ruth Goldbloom because the media had constructed her as the visionary voice behind Pier 21. Through her very public fundraising campaign Goldbloom successfully worked to not only get the funding to have Pier 21 opened as an exhibit, but she also was instrumental in constructing the exhibit as symbolic of the history of Canadian nation building. I chose to interview Jacques Saint-Cyr because I was interested in addressing how he, as the designer of the exhibit, understood and described the functions of different exhibit components. I suspected that his approach to explaining the exhibit would be more functional than ideological, and that he would therefore lend some of the insight that was missing from ideological and rhetorical construction of the museum in the media.

Conclusions

In this research I conduct an open-ended exploration of emergent themes from the data that I collected. Drawing on dialectical objectivity, as defined by Megill: "...which holds that objects are constructed as objects in the course of an interplay between subject and object: thus, unlike the absolute and disciplinary senses, the dialectical sense leaves room for the subjectivity of the knower" (1994:1), I adopt a lens that views the analysis and interpretation of knowledge as a process of gradual induction. This process has been polyvocal (i.e. participation from research participants) and guided by data triangulated from a variety of methodological techniques. This study provides snapshots of historical

moments in time used as representations of Pier 21 in order to analyze the dynamic processes of citizenship education. Like Donna Haraway (1978), I perceive the development and exposure of these snapshots as dependent upon, and in dialogical relation to, the locations of the researcher and the researched in framing the experience. My own location as a white woman, an immigrant and a feminist influences the ways in which I read the exhibit and perceive the social world.

This thesis reflects many of those themes identified by the research participants and data sources as relevant to the experience of Pier 21. As such, this study reveals how museums negotiate and shape cultural landscapes. These processes of negotiation and shaping speak to the dialectical nature of the construction and performance of citizenship, and reveal the complex interstices between complicity and resistance to hegemonic social structures. By taking into consideration the multiplicity and fluidity of cultural production and reproduction, this approach seeks to elucidate how the nexus of social relations work to form and inform popular understandings of immigration and citizenship.

Methodological Limitations

Although the use of a variety of methodological techniques allowed for a triangulation of data, this study does have several limitations. Because of time constraints, it was impossible to conduct interviews with visitors to the museum. I think that a study of visitor reaction to, and participation in the exhibit could be an important site for future research. Future research might look at what kinds of understandings visitors take away from the exhibit as well as their feelings about its content. Second, I

only spent what amounted to about 4 weeks visiting the exhibit on a regular basis. Had I spent a longer time conducting fieldwork, the quantity of data would be greater. Third, and possibly the greatest limitation, was the lack of access to the original research director for the exhibit. Since it's opening on the first of July 1999, there has been considerable staff turnover at Pier 21. The original research director could have lent considerable insight to both the content of the exhibit and the museum's history, since he had been responsible for making the majority of the selections for the content of the exhibit.

Chapter 4: The Construction of Pier 21

Introduction

Since its inception, Pier 21 has been framed within two important discourses – namely, nation building and Multiculturalism. Pier 21 has been presented as a “symbol” of Canada and a tribute to “Canadians” and Multiculturalism. In this way, the history presented there has been constructed as an opportunity for visitors to learn and celebrate not only “their own” heritage but also the history of diversity in Canada. In analyzing the data, there were many recurrent themes that emerged. It is impossible to address all of the themes that came up in this research. Rather, I focus primarily on the evolution of Pier 21, and its construction both as an “experience” in immigration history and a symbol of the nation. I address the evolution and construction of Pier 21 through an analysis of the manners in which it has been constructed and positioned by exhibitors, the state, and the media; I then explore how these discourses inform constructions of nation and multiculturalism. In addition, I examine the content of the exhibit, focusing on testimonials of workers, volunteers and immigrants from the “People” section of the exhibit and how those inform narratives of the nation and Multiculturalism.

Pier 21

The restoration of Pier 21 was conceived as a project in the 1980’s by the Pier 21 society, under the vision of J.P. Leblanc, the former director general for Nova Scotia with Employment and Immigration Canada and the co-author of Pier 21: The Gateway that Changed Canada (Leblanc & Duivenvoorden-Mitic, 1988). In early 1990’s Ruth Goldbloom took over the position of president of the Pier 21 Society, established a

national advisory board of directors and an explicit mandate, and began campaigning to get the pier reopened as an exhibit¹. The Society's mandate was to "revitalize Pier 21 as a permanent testament, designed to celebrate the profound contributions of Canadians" (Executive Summary, Pier 21 Society, received by the Ministry of Heritage Sept., 15, 1997). In communiqués with the Ministry of Heritage, the Pier 21 society stated that their purpose was to create "a national and international center to extol the Canadian experience" (Executive Summary, Pier 21 Society, received by the Ministry of Heritage Sept., 15, 1997). As a "center" Pier 21 would contain both a history exhibit and meeting facilities for government and business. The society proposed to create an exhibit that would capture some of the "essential dimensions" of the immigration experience and cast those under the light of praise and celebration. Specifically, the Pier 21 society intended to look at those aspects of immigration that could be shared and understood by visitors – the common denominator being personal connection and emotional empathy:

It will recapture the essential dimensions of experience felt by children and adults; the journey from home to the unknown; the anticipation of life in a new land, mingled with fond remembrance of the old; the anxiety and discomfort of arrival; the journeys to new beginnings; and the ultimate impact of new arrivals on the face of Canada" (Executive Summary, Pier 21 Society, received by Heritage Canada Sept., 15, 1997).

The society conceived that the changing ethnic and cultural composition of the nation (the exhibits understanding of Multiculturalism) could be understood and accepted by visitors if it was conceived through the representation of two essential parts of immigration. The first is the emotional and personal experiences of immigrants coming to Canada. The second is the personal connection of all Canadians to immigration, and

¹ The Board of Directors consisted primarily of government and business representatives

their role in both changing the face of the nation to one that is “Multicultural,” as well as accepting those changes. According to the Pier 21 society, by representing immigration history in this way, Pier 21 would be a “catalyst” for Canadians to take greater pride in their heritage, to understand and celebrate the place of cultural diversity in their history, and to recognize the central role of immigration in Canada, past and present. It would bring Canadians to a deeper understanding of the nation and contribute to the unity of Canada (Pier 21 Society, Received by the Ministry of Heritage, June 3, 1999).

It was with these intentions and frameworks in mind that the Pier 21 society, under the leadership of Ruth Goldbloom, began a national fundraising campaign. The Society consulted with a Montreal design firm and came up with a proposal and vision for the Pier 21 museum exhibit. What the Pier 21 society had planned and envisioned for the exhibit in the mid-1990’s would cost nine million dollars. Goldbloom, a well-known fundraiser and career volunteer worked during (and in anticipation of) the G7 Summit in Halifax to arrange a meeting with the G7 team with a proposal that a financial contribution to Pier 21 be the G7 legacy to Canada:

I really used a lot of pressure and networking to talk to the G7 team about Pier 21 and what a wonderful legacy it would be. Finally, the night before [the Summit] was about to end, I was told to be in the audience for the Prime Minister’s final remarks. His final remarks were that the legacy of the G7 would be 4.5 million of the 9 million that we needed. (Goldbloom Interview Transcript, Jun 13, 2001, p2).

The G7 funding came from all three levels of government and amounted to half of the money that the society needed to open Pier 21 as an exhibit. The rest of the funding would be raised through contributions from private individuals and corporations. With the announcement of the G7 contribution to the exhibit, Pier 21 began to be publicly

constructed as a national symbol. The museum would be both a representation of, and a “legacy” to the nation.

Goldbloom’s subsequent fundraising campaign and the resultant media attention focused on two major aspects of the Pier 21 project. The first was the exhibit’s potential for teaching about immigration history and the roots of Multiculturalism, thereby contributing to the project of nation building and national cohesiveness. A description of the significance of the future exhibit in *Maclean’s Magazine* stated that, “we have virtually no monuments to the Multicultural nature of Canada; to salute those who came seeking a fresh and better future – which when you think about it, includes just about all Canadians” (July 22, 1996). The history that would be represented there was constructed as an opportunity for visitors to learn and *celebrate* not only “their own” personal heritage of immigration, but also the history of Multiculturalism. As the only immigration history museum in Canada, Pier 21 would provide the quintessential immigration history lesson by personalizing immigration history and linking it to the present-day policy of Multiculturalism. In this way, Pier 21 would become constructed as a symbol of Canada: “All Canadians have been touched by immigration and there is no other place in Canada that symbolizes our immigration past like Pier 21 does” (*Montreal Gazette*, June 27, 1999). As a symbol, Pier 21 was intended to serve both to unify Canadians in a particular historical narrative and to universalize understandings about immigrant experience.

Symbolizing the Past

Part of what makes Pier 21 particularly lucrative and visionary has been its exhibitionary style. Personalizing immigration history at the exhibit takes place through the exhibit's use of interactive displays to communicate immigration history in a way that makes it experiential. The displays literally speak to the visitors, and the bustle of an immigration shed is recreated through announcements made over a central PA system. In addition, voices that are piped in from ceiling and wall fixtures. The exhibit visionaries and designers believed that people would be more affected by the exhibit if they were reached through their emotions rather than through historical facts or statistics. The museum would not act as a museum in the traditional sense. The facts and chronology of immigration would be less important than having visitors imagine the feeling of immigrating,

Pier 21 is not a museum, and its exhibit was not conceived, as it would have been for a museum of national history for example. These exhibit components are only tools to inform and incite further research or exploration. We believe that the educational impact is bound to last longer if the visitor is reached through his/her emotions (Jacques Saint-Cyr. Interview Transcript, June 5, 2001, p.1)

That the exhibit is meant as an "experience in immigration," rather than a lesson in historical facts, is what in part leads to the universalizing of the history told there.

The technology of the exhibit has been an important part of its construction and positioning. The innovative use of interactive displays for the representation of this history was one of the factors that made Pier 21 especially marketable and attractive as an idea. "the museum will be interactive, so that visitors can recreate not just as images but through computers, the *feeling* of being quizzed by officials and admitted to the promised

land” (original emphasis, *Maclean's Magazine*, July 22, 1996). This was later echoed by Pier 21 in a statement of general objectives to the Ministry of Heritage, “through interactive technology, visitors will come to understand and appreciate a vital component of Canadian history (Pier 21, Statement of Objectives, received by the Ministry of Heritage May 11, 1999). It was proposed that through the use of technology to recreate the “feelings” of immigrants, visitors would better be able to understand and empathize with immigrant and immigration history.

The marriage of technology and education defines Pier 21 as not only an important historical learning experience, but also an attractive entertainment experience appealing for this reason to a broader audience and a larger market. This feature is consistent with the government’s agenda of supporting museums that do not need to be heavily subsidized by the state. In June of 2001, Pier 21 was named Canada’s number one tourist attraction by *Attractions Canada*:

It is extraordinary how Pier 21 has struck a chord in the consciousness of the nation. What captivated the world are the stories of immigrants captured at the new interactive multi-media center. From a virtual reality theatrical experience highlighting the people who passed through Pier 21, to taped testimonials, this piece of history is brought to vivid life. And its true, no one, even those for whom the immigrant experience is a dim relic of an unexplored past, can leave the place dry-eyed (*Where Magazine*, August 1999).

It is through the technological and innovative use of exhibitionary display, as well as the exhibit content that emotion and the feeling of a “real” immigration experience is conveyed. Visitors are engaged at every stage of the exhibit. There are buttons to press, suitcases to pack and unpack, muffled voices, and announcements made over a central PA system. There are site interpreters that act as immigration officers, recorded

testimonials from immigrants, workers and volunteers, and passport stamping stations. In a sense, the exhibit proposes that the “living” of the immigration experience happens when visitors walk through a highly stimulating environment in which they are inundated with the sights and sounds of an “authentic” immigration shed. This feeling was described by Senator Al Graham at the Pier 21 opening day ceremony, “We can hear their voices. Feel their strengths. The walls behind us whisper,” (*The Halifax Chronicle Herald*, July 2, 1999). In this sense, the museum is constructed as not only embodying experience but also “giv[ing] life to the collective memories of so many Canadians who have passed through its doors” (*The Halifax Chronicle Herald*, July 1, 1999). By positioning the exhibit as giving “life” to the memories of the collective, this vision of immigration and national history is both authenticated and legitimated.

The exhibitors were trying to stimulate feelings of understanding, empathy and connection through Pier 21, rather than rendering a more historically accurate or balanced representation of immigration as a phenomenon. Connecting to the “feeling” of immigrants and immigration was conceived of as transferable to imagining the “feeling” that immigrants may have had in immigration centers across Canada.

Creating the Nation – The Exhibit

It is this representation of memory and life that is conceivably the transferable element of the Pier 21 story, as the exhibit enables participants to empathize with the “universal” immigrant experience. It is *how* Pier 21 “represents all ports of entry and all experiences that have culminated in a modern country” (*The Halifax Daily News*, July 3, 1999). This description is partially accurate as it is conceivable that immigrants in

different processing centers across Canada had similar feelings. These statements, however, also imply that not only did immigrants experience similar feelings but also that they experienced and participated within the state and Canadian society in a homogenous way. By constructing the Pier 21 as a site that "holds memories and experiences" (*The Halifax Daily News*, July 3, 1999), the story told there is authenticated and legitimated, and also universalized.

On its Canada Day opening ceremony, Justice Rosalie Abella expressed a sentiment that had become a popular description of Pier 21, "The story of Canada is the story of immigrants, and Pier 21 is their proud celebratory symbol" (*The Toronto Star*, July 1, 1999). The exhibit and the public discourse surrounding it not only regard Pier 21 as a symbol of the nation but also symbolizes a particular hegemonic understanding of immigrants and national experience. As a symbol of Canada, like the Canadian Flag or the National Anthem, Pier 21 is less concerned with historical accuracy and representativeness than with presenting an ideal for Canada and Canadians. Indeed, the above statement by Abella has been echoed since the inception of the Pier 21 project. Part of the Pier 21 project of historicizing the nation is constructing the history of Canadian social change. The period in history that the museum addresses is one of tremendous social and political change. It marks years of explicitly racist immigration policy, the poverty of the Depression, WWII and the Holocaust, tremendous labor and political unrest and a consequent shift to a Welfare State model for Canada. Changes to the racial and ethnic composition of Canada (those changes addressed under Multiculturalism) are only a small part of the larger changes made to the political environment in Canada. These were an important part of the Canadian "nation building"

project. Immigrant Canadians played a crucial and active role in making of social change in Canada.

The exhibit constructs immigrants as irrelevant or virtually passive in relation to the social changes that took place between 1928 and 1971. It presents the social conditions in Canada as relatively constant and as occurring as a result of social and economic “evolution” rather than struggle and conflict. This vision of history has been actively endorsed by both the private sector through considerable financial contribution, and the Canadian state.

Although Pier 21 does not fall under government jurisdiction like other national museums, it has nonetheless been constructed as a national museum by both the state and the media. The museum has been presented by these accounts as “Canada’s newest national museum, a shrine to multiculturalism and the millions of immigrants who have created one of the world’s most diverse societies” (*The Toronto Star*, June 24, 1998). The history told there has been legitimated by government through various plaques and signs on the building, through citizenship ceremonies that take place in the Multicultural Hall, through speeches by the Prime Minister and Minister of Heritage, and through a cooperative working relationship with the Ministry of Heritage. In October of 1999, Pier 21 officially became a national historic site. To commemorate this event a Ministry of Heritage Plaque was erected at Pier 21:

We, today’s Canadians owe much to [immigrants’] commitment, hard work and loyalty. The heritage which they bequeathed to us, is a unique multicultural nation committed to full and equitable participation of individuals from all origins bound together by citizenship and the common values of Peace, respect for diversity, and adherence to the rule of law.

The Honorable Hedy Fry, P.C., M.P.

The Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women)

Here it is conceived that not only are Canadians bound together through citizenship but that the values of Canadian Citizenship are peace, respect for diversity and adherence to the rules of Canadian law. These values are historicized by the exhibit through its construction of immigration and social change in Canada as a process of smooth development, economic growth and prosperity. “The contributions of this wave of immigrants led to the prosperity of the 1960’s, making Canada rich enough to start programs including Medicare and social security” (*The Montreal Gazette*, June 27, 1999). The Pier 21 exhibit, by making a connection between all Canadians and immigration and social history constructs the history of Canadian citizenship. The exhibit does far more than simply allow visitors the opportunity to experience the feelings of immigrants in their journey to Canada, it constructs the nation and Canadian citizenship.

Inventing Multiculturalism

Values of tolerance and acceptance, smooth integration, diversity and peaceful, progressive and evolutionary social change have especially been highlighted by the discourse surrounding the exhibit. These have largely been framed under the rubric of multiculturalism. As stressed by Governor General Adrienne Clarkson the project of teaching tolerance is a part of instilling the Canadian value system in both old and new Canadians, “what makes us special as Canadians is the ability to welcome people and make them Canadian and give them Canadian values we appreciate so much,” she said. (Clarkson in *The Halifax Daily News*, February 20, 2000). The idea of Pier 21 as teaching tolerance and alleviating ethnic tension and xenophobia is echoed in a statement made by a man who encountered several of the 170 Sikh refugees who entered Canada

illegally through a small fishing village outside of Yarmouth. The article states “Malone was asked where he had learned to accept foreign culture, given that he was a man who had grown up and spent almost his entire life in a small, Yarmouth county fishing village?” He unhesitatingly responds, “the bible, of course, but also, Pier 21” (*The Toronto Star*, January 23, 1999). The above sentiment is particularly interesting because the article and the subject are looking retrospectively. It is reflective of the ways in which the ideology of Pier 21 has entered into the national consciousness and is being reproduced on an individual level.

Framing Pier 21 under the rubric of Multiculturalism works to define both Canadian society and Multiculturalism Policy. The framework of Multiculturalism is both defined and reflected onto the past in such a way that it appears to have been a fact in the history of Canadian society. In effect, a framework developed in 1970’s and implemented in the 1980’s and 1990’s to a representation is imposed on a history that ostensibly ends in 1971. Multiculturalism, which is actually a series of policies, is reframed and in the process redefined. The policy is given a history that is part and parcel of the history of immigration. Through this process it is defined.

The People

This history of immigration told at Pier 21 does part of the work of narrating the nation. As a symbol, Pier 21 represents a history through which national social cohesion developed as a natural progression over time. It is a symbol not only of the composition of the nation, but also of the development of Canada’s political and social climate. Descriptions of why immigrants came to Canada, as well as the reception that they

received are especially reflective of this. Through the exhibit at Pier 21, visitors learn that those who immigrated in the past came for the freedom available to them in Canada. They immigrated and continue to immigrate with little expectation except for those “values” that are accorded to all Canadians – namely Canadian opportunity and democracy: “Whether you came in 1700 or 1900 or this century, we all came for the same reasons - because of poverty, persecution, religious wars, the need to make a better home for your families. Nothing has changed” (Goldbloom Interview Transcript, June 13, 2001, p.1).

In addressing who these immigrants were and why they came to Canada, Pier 21 is constructing the nation through the politics of immigration and immigration history. Pier 21 serves to symbolize Canada’s nation building past, its present, and projections for the future through its representation of those immigrants who came to Canada and continue to come to Canada. It is a construction of the people who came to Canada and became Canadian citizens (which the exhibit establishes as virtually all Canadians at some point in history) because of the opportunities available here and the society of that Canadians have built, “Pier 21 is about our history and our people. It is about Canada” (*The Halifax Chronicle Herald*, July 1, 1999). The exhibit’s vision of immigration and nation building in Canada frames and defines particular social relations. These can be explored through the testimonials of immigrants, workers and volunteers.

Testimonials²

The exhibit materials and newspaper clippings construct who immigrants to Canada were as well as their reasons for coming to Canada. The testimonial section of the exhibit portrays immigrants as the poor, downtrodden people who came to Canada in search of a life that would be better than their lives in their countries of origin. They affirm many dominant stereotypes about immigration policy such as immigration as a policy centered around humanitarianism, and of multiculturalism as centered on the showing or teaching of Canadian values to immigrants. The immigrants represented in the exhibit came from war-torn and often undemocratic countries, they were poor and many had endured violence and persecution.

In constructing the people of immigration history through testimonials, the exhibit is simultaneously representing the values of Canadian citizens and the value system of Canadian society:

We came from Holland; there everybody was out for themselves because of overpopulation and war, nothing to eat, nobody gave you anything because everybody fight for themselves to stay alive. [Canadians] gave me a shower and they brought me presents and they gave me pots and pans and dishes all kinds of things for my new housekeeping. And they gave them to me for free and I didn't know these people. I was flabbergasted, I started to cry at the shower, I was sitting there crying. I had never seen that before, this generosity of people. They helped us, and they wanted to do things for us, and they were fantastic (*The Heyday*, Testimonial)

² These testimonies were transcribed verbatim into field notes over the course of the research. The testimonies discussed here were those selected by the museum for display. They are composites of the hundreds of interviews conducted by the CBC with immigrants of the era. Some testimonials are based in what were identified by museum organizers as the "themes" of the exhibit and were written and recorded for the purposes of the exhibit by a Halifax-based audiovisual production firm. (Interview Transcript, museum designer, June 15, 2001, p.3)

Here, the values of Canada are constructed and contrasted to those of Holland. Visitors learn that unlike the Dutch, the Canadian people are generous, the Canadian state welcoming, and the immigrants are thankful. Visitors learn that immigrants came to Canada due to conditions such as overpopulation and hunger. This testimonial communicates that not only was it difficult to survive individually in Holland in this era, but Dutch social systems (contrary to Canadian ones) were structured in such a way that people had to compete with one another for the few available resources.

Who the Immigrants were

In the sound prairie railway station, you could spy like herrings in a keg tightly packed a crowd of woman, so gaunt and pale you want to cry. Like wheat stalks hit by hail, broken, wilted bound the children hardly clothed without a smile. With scared and tortured dreams. Those are the immigrants. (*New Beginnings*, Testimonial)

What I remember are dark, gray, very somber people, very sad and anxious eyes. Children who were bundled up, the only things that they had with them was a suitcase or maybe just their belonging wrapped up in dark fabric like a blanket. And we could tell by their eyes that they had been through hell (*Volunteers*, Testimonial).

There are a number of important things to note in the above testimonials. The desperation of immigrants, here, and the construction of the desolation from which they presumably arrived, focuses visitor conceptions of immigration on Canadian humanitarianism, rather than on other important factors in immigration policy and history such as the global movement of workers. The above constructions are especially problematic if we consider that the exhibit has been framed to represent both the

experiences of immigrants in the past, and their experiences presently. Although there may be some accuracy in the descriptions above of post-war European immigration, these constructions are limited and limiting of the immigrant experience. They certainly do not reflect all immigrant experience, nor do they account for immigrants who did not come to Canada as poor and frightened peasants.

How the State Responded

Agents of the state – namely customs and immigration agents are portrayed as caregivers. “kindly” representatives who did everything in their power to ease the immigration experience. Agents of the state largely worked to give assistance to and process newcomers. In the stories, visitors are told that some immigration officers would even lend money to families when they didn’t have enough to get into the country (oceans of hope). They are portrayed as being understanding and as empathizing with the immigrants that came through the doors of Pier 21.

We were more or less ambassadors then customs officers. We did everything that we could to help that family. I often think about those people. Those poor people coming. Do you understand why they were nervous? They didn’t know what to expect. We did everything that we possibly could. That’s what we were there to do. (*Workers, Testimonial*)

These sentiments are echoed in the testimonials of volunteers to Pier 21,

We were there for those in need. We took great joy and satisfaction in helping others. It took a team of 20 Red Cross volunteers to work around the clock. Parents could relax in a hot bath while we washed their children. We would change them and give them clothing free of charge. Babies could be watched in the crib to allow parents and children to enjoy lunch. If a mother was tired she could rest on a cot near here babies crib. Sigh, our services were available at no cost. It was our way of welcoming these new Canadians. (*Volunteers, Testimonial*)

The testimonials affirm already existing notions about immigrants, as the people for whom there were no alternatives. They construct the relationship between immigrants and the Canadian State and Canadian society as smooth and uncontested. Visitors are shown that historically both the Canadian state and its citizenry welcomed, rather than resisted immigration, and that this process was one that was relatively free of conflict and based on the impulse of humanitarianism. The voices of the contained within these accounts testify to the fact that immigrant's experiences of immigrating to, and arriving in Canada were overwhelmingly positive.

Conclusions

In many ways this exhibit is a tribute to the historic benevolence of the Canadian state and to the Canadian people. Because the nuances of immigration history - namely the economics of immigration or the particularities of immigration policy - are not addressed, the Canadian state and "Canadians" are simply represented as being humanitarian in their immigration initiatives, both historically and in the present day. These assumptions are largely based on the representation of Canada as admitting and settling large numbers of immigrants, more than many other states, in the post war era. Constructions of immigration history and policy at Pier 21 exclude significant references to historically racist Canadian immigration policy (until 1961) and more implicitly discriminatory policies that were enacted with the advent of the Point System. Interestingly, the "Canadian people" that are referenced by the exhibit are not those who were in Canada at the time that the largest waves of immigrants came through, but rather

the people who are in Canada now. The apparently “accepting” nature of Canada’s immigration “experience” reflects well not only on the Canadian state, but also on the Canadian people, historically and today. The exhibit feels good, a pat on the back for Canadians.

Chapter 5: Positioning Pier 21

Introduction

As the only immigration history museum in Canada, Pier 21 is powerfully located for not only communicating, but also framing Canada's immigration "experience." It is in the position for setting the frame for thinking about and debating immigration history issues and policy, as well as broader issues such as Canadian citizenship and democracy. The construction of immigration as a phenomenon that can potentially be understood through emotional and entertaining stories of ocean crossings and culture shock, as well as the definitive use of Multiculturalism at Pier 21, undermine contesting constructions of Canadian society, immigration history and immigrant experience by producing and reproducing a dominant discourse.

I argue that theatrical displays of Pier 21 produce a dominant discourse, of and about the Canadian nation, nationality and Multiculturalism, and that the museum's unique positioning works to enforce a kind of legitimation and reification of these discourses. The representations of history presented at Pier 21 form and inform perceptions and conceptions of nationality, nation and Multiculturalism. I suggest that the way in which the museum represents itself and is represented by the media, as well as the way it represents immigration experiences shapes how the public understands immigration and how they define Multiculturalism.

Locating the Pier 21 – Creating a Unifying Discourse

The exhibit at Pier 21 is powerfully located for disseminating its view of immigration history for a number of reasons. In part, the positioning of the museum is due to its overwhelming presence in public discourse as a symbol of Canada and the “Canadian” experience. As a symbol, the exhibit is used not only to represent immigration history but also to convey a shared sense of national narrative and emotion.

The fact that the history represented at Pier 21 is purportedly connected to one in five Canadians, that all Canadians are themselves immigrants or can trace their personal history to immigration, and that immigration and national history are explained and presented at Pier 21 makes this exhibit definitive of the immigration experience.

The structure of the exhibit also contributes to its definitive nature. The story of immigration, as told at Pier 21, is presented through the authoritative voice of the state, and then confirmed and legitimated by the testimonials of immigrants. Testimony, here, is used to affirm the narrative at Pier 21 through the individual voices of immigrants. In this sense, the individual “evidence” of immigrants supports the narrative at Pier 21. As expressed by Goldbloom, “It is the stories that visitors remember. If I can’t reduce an audience of 400 to tears then I have failed in telling the story of Pier 21. I know it is developing an awareness of how lucky they are to have been born here. We take our freedom for granted” (Interview transcript, June 13:4).

Important to its legitimacy as a national symbol, the exhibit has been endorsed and supported by both the government and the private sector. The state has lent legitimacy to the story of immigration told at Pier 21 from the beginning of the project, through its public announcement that Pier 21 would be the legacy left by the G7 to

Canada. This support has continued through the participation of government representatives in Pier 21 activities such as Canada Day Celebrations and Citizenship Ceremonies. It has been through the active and continuous participation of the Canadian state and government officials that Pier 21 has been legitimated as a symbol of Canada. The involvement of the state has stated both implicitly and explicitly that the exhibit does speak for Canada and that the view of history represented there is consistent with the official and legitimate view of history. It is in this way that the government purports the idea that Pier 21 speaks for Canada and thus Canadians.

As well as receiving a large amount of government support, the Pier 21 museum has also consistently received the support of the private sector. Through financial support from major Canadian corporations such as Sobeys, Chrysler Canada as well as powerful individuals such as Rudolph Bratty and foundations such as the Bronfman foundation, the Pier 21 museum has been legitimated by the private sector. These private corporations and foundations have funded the exhibit in exchange for naming opportunities – plaques in and on the building. Through these opportunities, the names of private organizations are “immortalized” alongside the history represented at Pier 21. For corporations and private foundations, this serves to affirm their status as good corporate citizens and active members of the Canadian community.

The support of the government and private sector has been significant to legitimating this particular representation of history and positioning it as hegemonic. The seemingly cooperative relationship between the public and the private sectors in the production of this exhibit also serves to affirm the shift in public policy in recent years to focus on viability in the marketplace and serves as an example of the potential for public

private partnerships. Nowhere is the relationship between the public and private sectors made more explicit than the brochure for Pier 21's meeting center – the “Kenneth C. Rowe Heritage Hall”. The present-day Pier 21 “complex” has a number of features and facilities. These include the Rudolph P. Bratty exhibition hall where the main exhibit is housed, a gift shop, and an art gallery. Pier 21 is also equipped with a meeting center. Some of the features listed in the brochure that indicate why Pier 21 is a desirable place for meetings are as follows: national historic site; a gracious and inviting space appropriate for a variety of functions; multi-purpose room equipped with banquet table and chairs; exceptional food and beverage service; major hotels in the immediate vicinity; harbor front location offering an unparalleled view of the Halifax Harbor; and floor to ceiling windows¹. This location is especially desirable for holding meetings because “One in five Canadians have a relationship to Pier 21 which means that your event in the Kenneth C. Rowe Heritage Hall will be very unique and unforgettable” (Kenneth C. Rowe Heritage Hall Brochure, 2000). Events held at the Hall can be enhanced and made “more memorable through a tour of the Rudolph P. Bratty Exhibition hall interactive displays, the touching Oceans of Hope cinematic experience and a seven minute modern train ride across Canada through the magic of multimedia” (Kenneth C. Rowe Heritage Hall Brochure, 2000.). Unlike the majority of museums, Pier 21 is in fact part museum, part corporate meeting center.

In this sense, at the same time as the state and the private sector are legitimating the Pier 21 exhibit, the exhibit structure and content are legitimating both the policies of the state and the directions taken by the private sector. This relationship is dialectical – the representation of the past at Pier 21 constitutes dominant social forces while at the

¹ See the Kenneth C. Rowe Heritage Hall Brochure, (2000) for other features.

same time being a product of them. Through the exhibit, the state and private sector are cast in the light of “celebration” and current day initiatives – such as the direction of the economic market, the predominance of neo-liberal thinking, and present-day social policies - are historicized and reified.

Legitimation of existing social, political and economic structures is a major part of maintaining the dominance of existing political and social systems. The material dominance of one class over another as well as the dominance of some sets of social practices over others, takes place precisely through the reproduction of power at *both* the economic and social level. The Canadian state, as well as the dominant groups in society, need to legitimate themselves and their institutions constantly, in order to maintain positions at the center of power. The process of legitimation takes place through the production and dissemination of a particular worldview, but is reproduced and established through the acceptance of a hegemonic view of the world by subordinate groups. One of the ways through which the hegemony of the state has historically been maintained is through citizenship education. Under the neo-liberal state, citizenship education becomes a place where the regulation of class struggle under market capitalism occurs (McBride and Shields, 1997: 21). One of the main roles of the modern state is that of legitimating and naturalizing the rules and frameworks within which social life is structured (Gramsci in Forgacs, 1988: 224).

Creating the Nation

“Pier 21 will celebrate what may be the central unifying fact of Canadian Experience: Immigration and Multiculturalism” (Toronto Star, Jan 23, 1999)

Gramsci claimed that the state preserves hegemony not through indoctrination or coercion, but as increasing numbers of people come to interpret their own interests and consciousness of themselves as within a “unifying discourse” of nationalism. This discourse is exemplified in a statement made about Pier 21 in the *Toronto Star*, “The spirit of Canada’s fabric lives within the museum” (July 4, 1999). The political “spirit” of Canada, as it is embodied by the exhibits, then, is representative of the Canadian social fabric. Nationalism as a unifying discourse is a legitimating narrative through which citizens can understand themselves and construct their collectivity in relation to an existing narrative. The unifying discourse identifies and implicates members of the society by encouraging the understanding that the narratives of Pier 21 originate and are reflective of the community: “The museum is like a giant family photo album and home movie show” (*Toronto Star*, July 1, 1999). Visitors are encouraged to identify with the Canadian family, thereby identifying with the history at Pier 21. Legitimation through narratives that construct the Canadian state as equitable and non-discriminating, democratic, free of structural barriers etc., are essential to maintaining popular consent and setting societal direction. Through a “unifying discourse,” in this case the narrative presented by Pier 21, the dominant ideology of the state and the private sector becomes identified with individuals of the social group. In its reproduction, nationalism becomes an element of active culture that serves a situation in which individuals inform and govern themselves. The sphere of public education is a natural site of hegemonic reproduction. Through socialized and internalized self-regulation, individuals maintain their class position (and the positions of others) in the already stratified society, as well as reify a dominant narrative. In light of the fact that citizens play an active role in setting

the direction of the Canadian state, current conditions need not be conceived of as perpetual. Rather, they must be criticized in order to develop and produce new forms of state life.

The Discourse at Pier 21

In historicizing the nation through a particular ideological lens, Pier 21 communicates not only experience, but also a worldview. What had initially struck me about the exhibit is that it appeared to reflect and then universalize only one side of the immigration experience. The history of immigration and immigrants in Canada is represented as overwhelmingly positive and relatively free of conflict. The exhibit portrays immigration history and policy as developing through a kind of natural evolution. Immigration is shown as largely occurring in response to external pressures or push factors. These are focused on why people came to Canada and they work to construct immigrants' countries of origin as consistently oppressive. In this way, Canadian Democracy is juxtaposed with the undemocratic politics and policies of other countries. Immigrants are portrayed as people who needed or wanted to come to live in Canada largely on the basis of their experiences of persecution, poverty, war etc. - push factors in Europe – that resulted from the Second World War and the Holocaust², “Pier 21 stands for Canada’s best self. It is a Canada that let us in, the Canada that took one generation’s European horror story and turned it into another generations Canadian Fairy

² This in part can be attributed to the fact that the exhibit was originally conceived as a testament to the history of Pier 21 – which did receive the majority of its immigrants from war torn Europe – and then was framed and represented as reflective of all immigrant experience.

tale" (*Toronto Star*, July 1, 1999). Canada, at Pier 21, is portrayed as having an altruistic interest in immigration.

The Nation

"Pier 21 is about our history and our people, it is about Canada" (*Halifax Chronicle Herald*, July 1, 1999).

The nation and the nation state are portrayed as having a cautious, progressive and humanitarian immigration policy that focused on the project of "nation-building." The actual objectives of "nation-building" within the exhibit are opaque and elusive. Nation building is constructed as a relatively passive activity for Canada, in its relation to immigration and immigration policy; the actions of the state are largely constructed as based on Canadian humanitarian impulses. The only explicit references to Canadian pull factors in the exhibit refer to early immigration policy that recruited workers for the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Canadian National Railway, as well as farmers and farm laborers. In this way, the exhibit treats Canadian immigration history as essentially separate from other historical movements within the nation such as labor movements, and parliamentary politics. The actual history of immigrant settlement and experience of Canada is not addressed directly, but is implied. This revolves around representations of immigrant experience in relation to the state and to volunteer Canadians through testimonials. Within these testimonials, immigration officers, customs agents and Canadian volunteers are viewed as kind and welcoming, they provide financial, educational and emotional support. These representatives of Canada serve to embody and represent "Canadian" values.

The ideology of the hegemonic class can be communicated rapidly and efficiently, precisely because of its access to economic and cultural resources. The content of the exhibit at Pier 21 is consistent with the present-day neo-liberal value system. Through the exhibit, visitors are taught that anyone can overcome the most hindering of hardship including extreme poverty or racism by hard work and perseverance because of the existence of equality and democracy in Canada. Visitors are encouraged to believe that “Canadian” society has a universal value system and universal experience: that it is embracing of all its members, that it is a society in which people are motivated to succeed within the existing structure. This obscures the establishment as a whole and obscuring the structural nature of the oppression and stratification of social groups. The reproduction of universal ideas about Canada is the “work” of hegemonic ideology. It is necessary for the hegemonic class to continually work to maintain its power because hegemony is not static; rather it changes in reaction to the changing society. As we have seen from the postwar transition from a Welfare to a Liberal state model, the dominant class has changed in accordance with the changing values in society, as well as the need to maintain legitimacy within the state.

Imagining Community

The exhibit at Pier 21 historicizes the nation by constructing itself as the place “where a lot of the soul of Canada was created” (*Halifax Chronicle Herald*, October 16, 1997). The nation, at Pier 21, is imagined as ethnically diverse but politically and socially cohesive. The nation is constructed within a particular “Canadian” value system, the values of which are defined through the exhibit. The fact that national history and the

nation are constructed as free of conflict; that immigration is seen as undisputed; that immigrant settlement is smooth and unproblematic; that Canadians as welcoming, and that the state as non-discriminating and non-oppressive places Canada within a particular narrative. As was written in the *Halifax Chronicle Herald*, “the Pier 21 museum is a symbol of the freedom and opportunity seized by so many new Canadians” (July 2, 1999). In order for freedom and opportunity to be seized by newcomers it needs to already be available within the nation. Romantic and universalizing understanding of Canadian history, the absence of conflict and exclusion as well as those experiences that do not fit into the ideological framework of the exhibit both constructs immigrants as one dimensional and delegitimizes experiences that are contrary to those represented by the exhibit. The nation, as an imagined political community, needs a national narrative, a narrative that instills and inspires nationalism, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that prevails. This representation of the past, in informing Canada’s political direction for the present and the future, seeks to make Canada a more cohesive society.

Embodying National Values through Multiculturalism

One of the ways in which the state and dominant groups in society legitimate both themselves and existing social structures is by inventing tradition for present day politics, social phenomenon and ideology. Inventing tradition, in this case, represents a process of historicizing a particular ideology of Canada and Canadians. It is a process at Pier 21 that involves formalizing and ritualizing social change by referencing the past and positioning novel political ideas as continuity (Hobsbawm, 1983:4). In this case, Multiculturalism has been imposed on Canadian history and Canadian history and

politics have been framed within this concept. In this way, the history and meaning of Multiculturalism has been invented. Invented traditions are inherent functions, Hobsbawm argues, of the construction of the nation. They symbolize social cohesion, establish or legitimize institutions and social relations and they inculcate beliefs, value systems and conventions of behavior. The exhibit invents tradition by identifying the nation as multicultural, and then giving multiculturalism a meaning and a history. The exhibit uses that meaning and history to reshape or revision Canadian history and social relations, consequently reshaping understandings of present day social relations as well as setting projections for the future.

The treatment of, and construction of Multiculturalism at Pier 21 is used to define a particular kind of democracy. The history represented at Pier 21 has been framed as a testament to Multiculturalism, "Canada's newest national museum a shrine to multiculturalism and the millions of immigrants who have created one of the world's most diverse societies" (*Toronto Star*, June 24, 1998), when in fact, the exhibit content does not deal with the advent or practice of Multiculturalism. The only content that can be associated with Multiculturalism is that the exhibit mentions some of the ethnic groups that came through Pier 21 as immigrants, and displays a variety of flags in the meeting hall. Multiculturalism policy, at its inception, was a way through which government dealt with increasing conflict over unequal power distribution in Canada. The exhibit at Pier 21 effectively defines Multiculturalism as a set of social practices while inventing its traditions through the historicizing of the Multicultural frame. Interestingly, Multiculturalism here is defined not in terms of culture and ethnicity, but largely in terms

of Canadian values. The manners in which Pier 21 defines the Canadian nation are reflected in the exhibit's application and representation of Multiculturalism.

Discussion

The history of immigration and Canadian "nation building" at Pier 21 is whitewashed and sterilized; it is constructed as harmonious, cohesive and evolutionary. These constructions are made under the rubric of Multiculturalism. In this sense, Pier 21 gives a history and meaning to Multiculturalism by inventing its tradition and revisioning history through its lens. In the process, it is reconceptualizing and revisioning the past by conceiving of it through a Multicultural frame. More than anything else, the exhibit defines a set of "Canadian" values. There is no cohesive history represented at Pier 21. There is no analysis of immigration policy, nothing to do with the labor movement, nothing of parliamentary or political process, no concrete information on settlement and integration. In this sense, the exhibit does not address anything in Canadian society that can be recognized as structural. History at Pier 21 is addressed primarily through experience – not the experience of Canadian structures or institutions, however, but the experience of emotion. It is in this way that Canadian values are both conveyed and universalized.

The values of both individuals and the collective Canadian society are defined repeatedly in the exhibit as tolerance of difference, as well as equality of opportunity, freedom, and democracy. Individual values include kindness and generosity. As expressed by Governor General Adrienne Clarkson: "Pier 21 teaches tolerance towards immigrants. If we don't remember that we will lose part of what makes us special as

Canadians; the ability to welcome people and to make them Canadian and give them Canadian Values we appreciate so much” (*Halifax Daily News*, February 20, 2000). The construction of Canadian values, and in effect Canadian citizenship is consistent with liberalism – freedom of the individual, equality under the rule of law. The exhibit content produces, historicizes and institutionalizes a particular brand of citizenship by excluding the conflict and political work involved in making democratic change in Canada – both historically and presently. Clarkson’s statement reaffirms an emphasis on tolerance that was central to Multiculturalism as it was conceived in the 1970’s (Ng, 1995). In this way, the exhibit at Pier 21 creates a common sense understanding of the policy by historicizing and defining it, as well as removing the politics of conflict. The exhibit, then, informs visitors’ understandings of both Canadian citizenship and Canadian democracy. It is the “Multicultural” society that is created and celebrated with all of its incumbent value systems and history

Multiculturalism in the 1970s was a form of passive revolution. This framework came into effect as a way to respond to, reconceptualize and reorganize changing social, political and economic realities. The policy framework particularly responded to a diverse minority community that had become increasingly vocal and militant in their demands for equitable or special treatment (Ng, 1995: 35). Multiculturalism was not a freestanding phenomenon; it was developed within a framework of national unity to contain the competing claims of different groups that emerged at a particular time in Canadian history (Ng, 1995: 36). It was, in its usage and its effect, a form of passive revolution. Passive revolution, as theorized by Gramsci, is meant to draw attention to the constant reorganization of state power and its role in the preservation of dominant class

hegemony. Implicit in this definition, is a democratic state in which the masses have organized themselves and have, for the first time, a potential for self-government. The presence of the non-dominant masses in politics is a precondition for their autonomy, but also results in an extended state that can respond to the threat of mass political movement (Showstack-Sassoon in Carnoy, 1984: 76). For Gramsci, the lesson of passive revolution was to make explicit the difference between reformist and revolutionary politics, where reformism is a version of the passive revolution (Gramsci in Carnoy, 1984: 76.). Faced by the potential active masses, the state institutes passive revolution as a technique that the bourgeoisie attempts to adopt when its hegemony is weakened. The “passive” aspect consists of “preventing the development of revolutionary adversary by decapitating its revolutionary potential” (Showstack Sassoon in Carnoy, 1984: 77). This was effectively the work of Multiculturalism when it came in as policy in the 1970’s. Pier 21 historicizes Multiculturalism in a way that is fundamentally different from its actual history. In this way, it institutionalizes Multiculturalism as a historical practice in Canada, and invents its traditions as part and parcel of the history of Canadian democracy.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Introduction

In this thesis, I have addressed some of the issues and rhetoric of the Canadian “nation” and nation building in the context of public history education as it takes place at Pier 21. I have been particularly concerned with how the exhibit at Pier 21 has been framed within public discourse, as well as addressing the exhibit content. Pier 21 is a site that informs notions of citizenship and identity as well as the social and political composition of the nation as a whole. Every representation of history is ideological. My project was to make the ideology at work in the narratives represented by Pier 21 explicit. Hegemonic ideology serves the agenda of groups that are in power at particular moments in history. What I was concerned with in this research was exploring and identifying how the exhibit at Pier 21 was framed and constructed within public discourse. I was interested in how, Pier 21 as a site, became symbolic of Canada and Multiculturalism. Specifically, the ideology of Multiculturalism was both constructed by the exhibit and entered into the public discourse, and “Multiculturalism” both framed and informed the exhibit content. What I have shown here, is that more than representing immigration experience, the exhibit at Pier 21, and its framing within public discourse, provides visitors with a “way of seeing” the social and political geography of Canada.

The Exhibit

More than one million immigrants entered Canada through Pier 21 in Halifax, and then were transported to different parts of the country by train. Many of these immigrants are still alive today, and many of their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren have strong emotional connections to the history of immigration. It is difficult to conceive of an interpretation of immigration history that would not invoke this emotional connection as a resource. The Pier 21 exhibit, and its guided tour have ample historical content but are essentially dramatic in their construction of immigrant experience. The exhibitor's intent was to have visitors recreate the feelings and experiences of immigrants in their own minds, by listening to stories and reconstructing the steps that immigrants would have taken upon arrival to Pier 21. The actual historical happenings of immigration, immigration policies and practices of different times, and the treatment of different groups of people under changing social and political circumstances are not addressed. This, in part, can be attributed to the singularity of the exhibit's focus on communicating the emotional experiences of immigrants coming through its gates.

The Pier 21 exhibit accomplishes its intent of representing the emotion associated with immigration. Pier 21 is a moving experience; it is difficult not to feel empathy for the immigrants that were processed at the Pier 21 immigration center, as well as to empathize with those immigrant's experiences of displacement and upheaval. In communicating the stories and experiences of immigrants, their emotion certainly comes across. Visitors are drawn in by the exhibit precisely because of its emotional content and the interactive nature of its display. However, the construction of immigrant

experiences as general, rather than specific, the absence of conflict and the exclusion of stories that do not fit the ideological framework of the exhibit render immigrants as one-dimensional and delegitimizes those experiences that are located outside of the narrative represented at Pier 21.

In addition, the exhibit affirms many existing stereotypes of immigrants and immigration while feeding and recreating the discourse of Multiculturalism. By representing the history of Pier 21 as the history of Multiculturalism, the exhibit at Pier 21 affirms many of the dominant narratives about the social change in Canada - informing visitors about, and shaping citizenship activities for the present and the future. The history of Multiculturalism at Pier 21 is represented as a history of social and political cohesiveness, rather than a history of social and political conflict and change. In this way, Pier 21 teaches dominant and hegemonic politics by representing history through this ideological frame.

Locating a Disjuncture

In doing this research, I have discovered a disjuncture between what the museum actually does and what it is purported to do; what the exhibit content is purported to represent and what it actually was intended to represent. It is partially through this disjuncture that hegemonic ideology is reproduced. The history represented at Pier 21 is constructed as being representative of all immigrant experience across Canada and also across the span of time, when in reality the exhibit at Pier 21 only addresses those immigrants that came through the immigration shed, and specifically those who came between 1928 and 1971. The history of immigration that is represented through the

exhibit is not the history of all immigrants. Rather, it is very much a history of European immigrants during the years 1930 -1970. It is a story of a very particular group of immigrants and of particular and historically tumultuous times – The Depression, WWII, and post war refugee movement. The museum does not necessarily misrepresent the immigrants that came through Pier 21, rather the experience that is presented there cannot be generalized to all immigrants of that era, nor can it be transferred as an understanding of the experiences of immigrants today, or used to represent present day immigration. Today's immigrants come to Canada largely as professionals who are seeking to live in a different country but are not necessarily “fleeing” devastating circumstances. It is inaccurate to transfer the experience that is represented at Pier 21 to all immigrants across Canadian history.

Framing the Exhibit and Reproducing Ideology

The frame for the exhibit in public discourse as a history of Multiculturalism is revisionist. Visitors are encouraged to look at the past, and impose the present-day framework of Multiculturalism on immigration history. The exhibit has been constructed and infused with this meaning by the government, the Pier 21 Society and the newspapers even though it was not meant to act as a narrative for Multiculturalism. Its project was to produce empathy in visitors so that they can understand that it was/is difficult for immigrants to leave their homelands and come to Canada and to adjust to life here.

In the construction and invention of Multiculturalism at Pier 21 are notions of citizenship and democracy; about Canadians as people and as political actors; about Canadian institutions and structures. In this sense, there are two primary aspects of

citizenship that are constructed by the exhibit. The first is the construction of membership. Here the exhibit and the rhetoric surrounding it make a connection between all Canadians and their personal history of immigration. In this sense, membership in Canadian society is both inclusive and universal. Secondly, the exhibit constructs the history of citizenship participation in Canada. There is very little conflict in this telling of history; social change is constructed as a result of nation prosperity and political evolution rather than a result of conflict and political struggle. The struggles of women, workers and immigrants; their experiences of racism and sexism, as well as the prevalence of xenophobia and forms of institutional discrimination are not exhibited.

The representation, nationalization and legitimation of a history that is free of conflict and resistance is a particularly powerful and hegemonic view of Canadian society. As we continue through a historical period of rapid political and social change, this representation of history can potentially have a powerful impact on public constructions of citizenship and citizenship activities. When we look back through this exhibit to how citizens addressed social change in the past, we see that citizens handled it passively. Or rather, social change virtually happened without the participation and action of Canadian citizens. This relationship, therefore, is dialectical. Exhibit visitors inform our understandings of the present with the memories and understandings of the past presented at Pier 21.

As I have demonstrated in this thesis, there is a contradiction between the initial aims of the Pier 21 project, and what the project has actually developed into. While contradictions are not inherently problematic, in this particular case, they become politically dangerous in that Pier 21 has, whether intentionally or unintentionally, become

both a symbol of immigration to Canada and a symbol of Canadian democracy.

Canadian democracy has been framed by the public discourse surrounding the exhibit within the rubric of Multiculturalism. Through the exhibit content, the values and history of Multiculturalism – as a history of social and political change – have been invented.

Through its privileged location, Pier 21 has become a metaphorical lens through which Canadians view and historicize social and political change.

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Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol/Questions

Ruth Goldbloom

How did you become involved in the Pier 21 project? What were the intentions of the Pier 21 society when members began working on recreating the exhibit and rebuilding the Pier? What did members want to tell about Canadian history?

Pier 21 documents state that there are three main frameworks within which the museum is to be contextualized: Family history/geneology, Canadian History and Canadian Citizenship – how do you understand these frameworks and what are some of the main things that you see the museum exhibit contributing to education around these issues?

How was the content of the exhibit negotiated with different groups such as Ministry of Heritage, private funders, historians, immigrants, residents etc.? Who were the main groups involved in creating the content of the exhibit?

How have public private partnerships (such as the matching grant from the Prime Minister's Office) shaped the process through which the exhibit came into being? Who were some of the major private sector funders?

What were media reactions to the pier like? What have visitor responses to the exhibit been like?

Do many visitors come through the pier every year? How many school groups? Is the exhibit an informal part of the Nova Scotia curriculum?

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol/Questions

Jacque Saint-Cyr

What do you think this exhibit tells us about Canadian immigration history specifically and Canadian national history more generally?

Pier 21 documents state that there are three main frameworks within which the museum is to be contextualized: Family history/genealogy, Canadian History and Canadian Citizenship – how do you understand these frameworks and what are some of the main things that you see the museum exhibit contributing to education around these issues?

How has the use of technology and interactive displays contributed to the making and communicating of history at Pier 21?

How was the content of the exhibit negotiated with different groups such as Ministry of Heritage, private funders, historians, immigrants, residents etc.? Who were the main groups involved in creating the content of the exhibit?

What have media responses to the exhibit at Pier 21 been like? What have visitor responses like?

When did pier 21 become a national historic site?

Have audience evaluation been conducted ever? Have they been conducted throughout the process of putting the exhibit together? What results did it produce?

What was the selection process for autobiographies?