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TRANSFORMATIONAL EFFECTS OF MUSEUM EXHIBITS UPON THEIR PATRONS: THE NATIONAL UNDERGROUND RAILROAD FREEDOM CENTER

A Dissertation

Presented to

The College of Graduate and Professional Studies

Department of Curriculum, Instruction, and Media Technology

Indiana State University

Terre Haute, Indiana

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

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May 2013

Keywords: Slavery, museum exhibits, affective learning, curricula, patron perspectives, race
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ABSTRACT

The focus of this research was on the affective learning experienced at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center—a museum that tells the history of slavery in the United States, the courage, cooperation, and perseverance enacted by many who overcame the challenges and consequences of the unfreedoms once practiced in America. Such a study is important in order to understand the challenges faced and how adversity was prevailed upon. The qualitative approach adopted in this study included focus groups, observations, artifact collection, and a review of literature. The findings from this research provide evidence that the participants in this study did experience affective learning, which led to a dialogue about societal concerns regarding racial tensions in America. Conclusions drawn from this study are the 21st century paradigm shift of how the Freedom Center advocates courage cooperation and perseverance in its mission; also, that history should be retold to understand present-day ideologies and circumstances. This study provides a solid foundation for further work investigating affective learning school-age children experience when visiting the Freedom Center. A longitudinal behavioral study to see if these children reach the fifth level of the affective domain is recommended.
In this study, I was in search of the impact a museum can have on its patrons when teaching the American history that is so closely related to historical and contemporary racism. I simply wanted to create a dialogue regarding America’s history of slavery and its consequences. Accordingly, if a dialogue is opened on racism in America, we can educate one another and get to the origin of racism by focusing on a solution, not the problem. To do this, we must educate ourselves as productive members of society and be aware of other perspectives to effectively get along. However, not to necessarily agree with everyone, but achieve an awareness of our individual beliefs and behavior. Therefore, themes of this research include American history, museum curriculum, museum patron perspectives, and racism so we can identify if patrons experienced affective learning.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Interdependence plays a considerable part in reaching your goals. The most comforting aspect of my life is my relationship with my husband, someone I depend on. I would like to thank him for being my partner, advocate, and friend. Finally, the long nights spent at the computer, which resulted in time away from him, have ended. Success consists of being truly happy in life, and my husband Ron has made this happiness possible. The constant support, encouragement, and perseverance throughout this process were essential components in the completion of this work. Second, my mother, Linda, who has spent endless nights reading my work, has been indispensable to the success of this paper. I have witnessed her invaluable work ethic throughout my life, which has instilled in me the ability to persevere. Third, I extend my appreciation to my sister Julie, who over the years has provoked impassioned conversations that have pressed me to contemplate the controversial issues that steadily face society, including the meaning of self-responsibility and accountability. Lastly, I would like to extend my gratitude to my dissertation committee, Dr. Larry Tinnerman (chair), Dr. Sue Kiger, and Dr. Christopher Olsen, whose guidance has been instrumental in this process.
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**FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS**

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The year 2008 marked the United States bicentennial of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. During this anniversary, scholars from around the world held and attended conferences to commemorate the event and create a dialogue on the impact and consequences of the Middle Passage and the institution of slavery. Presently, museums continue to emerge and carry on this dialogue as a form of public education. They tell the story of the Middle Passage and its impact with regard to the establishment of slavery. Concurrently, they tell of resistance through the Underground Railroad and, furthermore, create a dialogue on modern-day race relations in the United States. This epic part of history, represented through the slave trade and slavery exhibits in various museums, tells a story of captivity, culture, commerce, racial subjugation, class inequality, perseverance, assimilation, and resistance. Although stories of the trade and slavery are familiar, their impact on the recipient is not always clear. Therefore, the representations of the economically fertile yet dark history of the trade and the institution of slavery found in museum exhibits are presented in ways that allow patrons to think critically upon their own perceptions. It is hoped that by using the vehicle of public education via museum exhibits, the dialogue will continue on this part of American history and the consequences of its era. “Only through history can we grasp how things change; only through history can we begin
to comprehend the factors that cause change; and only through history can we understand what elements of an institution or a society persists despite change” (Stearns, 1998, p. 1).

Statement of the Problem

Museums are places of enrichment for all of those who find the desire to attend and browse the articulated and interactive exhibits, in this case, of the slave trade and the institution of slavery in American history. If Kammen (1991) was correct when he wrote, “we arouse and arrange our memories to suit our psychic needs” (p. 2), then how do we do this with regard to observing museum exhibits? What cognitive tools are used to create an affective awareness or change? This qualitative study examined the impact of the museum on its patrons and how it affected the attitudes and value patrons placed on this part of U.S. history in connection with modern day race relations. In this study, I was not in search of blame for race wars that continue in American society today but rather the changes a museum can have on its patrons when unmasking historical and contemporary racism. I simply wanted to understand the dialogue of America’s history of slavery and its consequences resultant from the museums curriculum embedded in the exhibits. Accordingly, if a dialogue materializes on race in America, society can educate one another and get to the origin of racism by focusing on a solution, not the problem. To do this, we must educate ourselves as productive members of society and be aware of other perspectives to be effective. We must achieve an awareness of our own personal beliefs and behavior that we have learned through family and society. Furthermore, the themes of this research, which include American history, museum patron perspectives, and racism, are all necessary to identify solutions to this ongoing issue in America today. Therefore, it is important to revisit the history of slavery in America: “Because history provides an immediate background
to our own life and age, it is highly desirable to learn about forces that arose in the past and continue to affect the modern world” (Stearns, 1998, p. 1).

Stories of American history are taught at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. Because museums and classrooms share common grounds of content and objectives within their learning environments, I felt the Freedom Center was a good place to start an inquiry of the effects of the museum’s exhibits on its patrons. For example, museum and classroom curricula share the Tyler rationale of a “prescriptive model of curriculum development” (Vallance, 2004, p. 3). Beginning with goals and objectives as the classroom environment does, museum curricula align the museum mission statement with their goals and objectives. According to Vallance (2004),

The Tyler rationale provides a lens through which to examine the museum curriculum, starting with the challenge of defining what “the curriculum” of a museum is, for it is far more than the educational programs themselves and hidden in ways different from what happens in school. If the subject matter of the museum is defined by its collection and presentation, then the task of museum educators becomes one of identifying the most important uses to which the collection can be put. Why is a collection arranged as it is, in the sequence and categories that organize the objects? (p. 343)

Although the classroom and museum may share content, classroom instructors use state standards to guide their instruction, whereas museum educators tends to align their objectives with the mission of the museum. Both forms may be private or public. However, we know that K-12 education targets specific ages, whereas museums are a form of education providing a free rein of interpretation that target the public and anyone who chooses to enter their doors.
This qualitative research focused primarily on the affective learning patrons experienced through the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. This particular museum presents exhibits on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, racial slavery, resistance, the Underground Railroad, and modern-day slavery. Upon examining the exhibits and considering the feedback from museum patrons, the resulting narrative revealed the connectivity between the two, as presented in Chapter 4. Therefore, prior to integrating patron perspectives into this qualitative research, I examined the exhibits reflected upon. This required an in-depth look at the exhibits and their presentation to the public. Each exhibit embrace themes directly related to the museums curricula.

Attention turned next to patrons’ experiences. Did the patrons experience meaningful learning at the museum by placing importance on the connection between slavery and its impact on American culture? This research sheds light on possible answers to these questions. According to a recent study, 80% of surveyed patrons at museums viewed exhibits “as having the power to challenge people’s ways of thinking and shift an individual’s point of view” (Cameron, 2008, p. 13). The exhibit is not to give an opinion but to supply facts and an unbiased narrative so that visitors can make up their own minds, interact in dialogue with other patrons, and find critical thinking and meaningful learning facilitated. I do not think patrons walk out of the museum so full of cultural awareness that they will be colorblind. In fact, the goal was just the opposite. The goal was to raise awareness of differences and to build understanding of the impact of historical and current influences.
Research Questions

Guiding Research Question

What is the impact, if any, of the museum exhibits on its patrons, and how do they affect the attitudes and importance the patrons place on this part of U.S. history in connection with modern-day race relations?

Specific Sub-Questions

1. What is the curriculum of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and how is it presented?

2. Will patrons experience meaningful learning at the Freedom Center?

Context of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the Institution of Slavery

The early African slave trade began in Africa long before European merchants discovered it and took advantage of its profitability by expanding the trade across the Atlantic to the New World, generating the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The need for free labor increased as Europeans in the New World sought to exploit the vast potential of the new lands. The result was massive, widespread enslavement of people involving four continents through four centuries.

Beginning in the 15th century, the slave trade developed and continued to economically thrive in the United States until 1860 when the last recorded slave ship, Clotilde, arrived in Mobile, Alabama, thus ending the systematic trade in the United States, even though it was made illegal in 1808 (Robertson, 2008). Nonetheless, the institutional consequence of the slave trade remained another 57 years when the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed ending slavery in the United States, making the ownership of human beings, as property, illegal. In addition to the 13th Amendment abolishing the institution of slavery, the 14th and 15th
Amendments reinforced the abolition of the peculiar institution by defining citizenship and voting rights.

The first critical aspect of the slave trade was the obtaining of African slaves, the second was the purchasing and selling of people within Africa by African kings and European merchants, the third aspect was the Middle Passage to the New World, and the fourth aspect was the arrival of slaves on foreign soil and the atrocities that continued thereafter. These four elements had a significant impact on West African societies and the New World. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was an outstanding factor in the history and growth of the Atlantic world, including the United States; however, the trade in humans influenced future generations as well in Europe and Africa.

The slave trade may have been indigenous to the regions in Africa, but the trade, which crossed the Atlantic, needed both Europeans and Africans to succeed. It resulted in decades of hatred and racism. Efforts to reverse these affects have been undertaken through subsequent generations. However, the results of this study indicate some believe the racial divide is widening. Although this topic contains a large amount of Atlantic history, for purposes of this study, my focus remained on examining how patrons perceived the exhibits of the museum and to what they related them. This allows a better understanding of our nation’s role in American cultural production within the historical context of early African and African American history and reveals perhaps a dichotomy of popular perceptions of slavery and its connection to modern day race relations.

**Slavery**

Slave labor existed in Africa long before the arrival of the Portuguese; in fact, along the coast of West Africa, kingdoms existed that practiced slavery for centuries. Prior to the arrival
of the Portuguese, there existed nearly four centuries of slave trade among other European nations during which Africans were traded within Africa to mine the Gold Coast (Reynolds, 1985). There is a distinct difference between indigenous African slavery and European slavery. For instance, African slaves had a chance at freedom and maintained certain liberties. With regard to procreation within their system, it was not certain a child would be born a slave. Therefore, within African slavery, being born free was possible. This was not the norm in the Americas, because when children were born to slaves, they became the property of their parents’ owners. Consequently, procreation increased the slave population in the New World, which meant more property for the owners without the expense of purchase. Nevertheless, with the arrival of the Portuguese, it became easier to purchase slaves and begin an intercontinental trade (Gates, 1999).

Upon European arrival and established residency in the New World, laws were enacted in the colonies that provoked a continuation of the trade and the recognition of the institution of racial slavery, thereby planting the seed of racial hierarchy in the New World. Stern (2007) summarized the African and African American experience:

For nearly two and a half centuries the overwhelming majority of black people in America were classified as “chattel slaves” (marketable property), denied the most basic human rights, and often treated with appalling contempt and cruelty—as documented in graphic detail in slave narratives and other historical sources on the “peculiar institution.” After the abolition of slavery, black Americans had to endure a century of segregation; the poverty and exploitation of share-cropping and peonage; organized terror from groups such as the Ku Klux Klan; decades of lynching and racist-inspired riots; and racial barriers that thwarted the chance to earn a decent living, get an education, shop or eat in a
public facility, and even vote. Not until the passage of civil rights and voting legislation in the mid-1960s did black Americans finally achieve full legal equality and the opportunity to think of themselves, at long last, as African-Americans. The eradication of racism, of course, remains an unfinished chapter in the story of American democracy.

(p. 17)

History reveals evidence that Western thought has created a hierarchy of color, and within the United States, generations pass down a color line. Demonstrated with the Civil Rights Movement, amendments to the United States Constitution, specifically the 13th and 14th Amendments, and ongoing movements for equality among the races validated its existence. As a result, centuries of learned behavior have instilled a deep-seated root of racial thought and prejudice. This deep-seated root has allowed intolerant attitudes to continue and remain rampant in today’s society. The modernity of multiculturalism and awareness of diversity has challenged ignorance among the hegemonic powers of racial hierarchy. However, to understand this conduct we must track the origin from which it grew and begin a dialogue.

A new norm integrated the cultural production of a society, one that has passed down from generation to generation of learned behavior and tolerant or intolerant ideologies and contributed to the struggle for equality among the races. Did racism advocate slavery or did slavery advocate racism in the United States? Although this is not the direct focus of this research, such questions may influence the ideological perspectives used in developing the museum’s curricula.

**Purpose**

If Americans can understand the cognitive domain and its relationship to the affective domain by studying the background and the history of the slave trade and its impact on the
United States via museum exhibits, we can figure out the systemic pattern of our own cultural production and explain why we place so much emphasis on race. “Cultural production creates an ideological climate that seems natural to those who are immersed in it, but also contains unchallenged assumptions about how the world is and ought to be” (Hall & Neitz as cited in Tator, Henry, & Mattis, 1998, p. 215). Furthermore, if cultural production is a way society gives a voice to its recycled beliefs, ideas, and images, we must concern ourselves with the origin of this phenomenon. Additionally, according to Hall and Neitz, “all forms of cultural production must be understood in terms of how they were produced, by whom, for whom, for what means, at what historical moment, and with what social, economic, and political impact” (as cited in Tator, et al., 1998, p. 215). Therefore, by examining how the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the institution of slavery are presented in museums, a relationship may be established between individual perceptions and historical representation of American cultural history.

In this case, with the established color line in the United States due to the institution of slavery, one can link racial ideologies of superiority to this context. If by linking discriminatory attitudes to this part of history, examining the story as presented in museums will perhaps establish a relationship between individual perception and historical representation of our cultural history. Moreover, “a key part of this effort is finding ways to link prior learning experiences to new concepts and ideas” (Ausubel as cited in Bonk & Zhang, 2008, p. 123). In other words, what are patrons learning from interactions with museum exhibits upon their reflections of the presented history based on prior knowledge?

When examining an historical event, placing it in its historical context is essential to interpreting its implication because one should not judge history’s events by today’s standards. Generally, slavery was a malevolent assault on humanity and the era’s cultural production is
what justified its purpose. After deliberate observations and interviews, an analysis of data has shown that “we are historical manifestations” (Burke, 1937, p. 423) of the time. Burke (1937) wrote, “We are nothing but the products of the particular age in which we happen to live” (p. 423). The statement identifies beliefs and ideologies as consequences or as outcomes of action; by examining patron interactions with slave trade exhibits, one may investigate further this phenomenon of cultural production.

Traditionally, museums symbolize learning through artifacts and their representation, creating a narrative. If one examines the exhibits’ impact on a multi-dimensional level such as the transformational aspects of influence upon the patron, one may conceptualize a link between patrons’ perceptions and the presentation of exhibits, closing a gap to allow interconnectedness among people meaningful learning and their present ideologies. This study examined the slave trade, slavery, and the notions of courage, cooperation, perseverance and how they are represented in the museum narrative for the public to view and learn; essentially, this study explored the museum curriculum and its impact on patrons. Furthermore, the research remained largely on the part of the affective learning of museum patrons after viewing the exhibits. First, an analysis of museum exhibits, supporting materials, and their use of instructional technologies revealed how museum exhibits presented the trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery. Second, a number of focus groups were conducted to examine any meaningful learning that may have taken place.

If we attempt to conceptualize social science knowledge, consistent with its origins, as the knowledge that is necessary to create a bridge between social research and the knowledge needs of society at large, then the disconnection between what currently counts as social science knowledge and what serves society’s needs is nearly complete.
We intend to create a different picture by expanding the understanding of what counts as knowledge to include bridging concrete practical intelligence and reflective and value-based reflectivity. (Greenwood & Levin, 2005, p. 49)

The documented theoretical frameworks provide an informative outlook on museum exhibits and what they comprise, as well as patron perspectives of exhibits and museum learning. Museum exhibits often consist of artifacts and tangible items from the past that tell a story; however, knowing who tells the story and for what knowledge is essential when critically viewing a museum exhibit.

Recent work by Eze (2007) discussed the first permanent slavery museum, with the literature addressing “ignorance and misunderstanding by looking at the deep and permanent impact of slavery and the slave trade” (p. 27). For example, Carbonell (2009) addressed an exhibit series by examining the “selective deployment of the phraseology, contextualization (syntax), and narrative platform (point of view) in the writing, revising, and potential reception of history” (p. 123). This demonstrates that there are specific elements that integrate an exhibit, such as the narrative, syntax, and expression. Other literary writers such as Frank Cushing from the Smithsonian used “Holmesian deduction,” which is tracing history through an object and finding out more about the object than “the maker knew himself” (as cited in Carbonell, 2009, p. 124).

Further historiography of this topic includes how curators and historians create an exhibit by using non-Western artifacts and their juxtaposition in the museum. Additionally, the objective versus the subjective is addressed to identify the origins of the narratives portrayed in the exhibits. Moreover, museum learning is also examined through this review of literature to assist in understanding the affective domain of patrons’ learning from museum exhibits.
Classification schemes of learning domains such as the affective domain of Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy played an integral part in this research. The cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains of Bloom’s taxonomy have been the theoretical frameworks for educational research for decades. The affective domain was defined in its simplest form this way: “Affective learning characterizes the emotional area of learning reflected by the beliefs, values, interests, and behaviors of learners” (Smith & Ragan as cited in Gano-Phillips, 2009, p. 3). A detailed literature review is incorporated in Chapter 2 of this study.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this research is to examine the impact, if any, of the museum exhibits on its patrons and how the exhibits affect the attitudes and importance the patrons placed on this part of U.S. history in connection with modern-day race relations. Perhaps this will contribute to the underpinning knowledge of American ideology on the foundation of the color line. If we as a people can acknowledge the origins of these specific beliefs (cognitive), it is then we can move forward (affect) to address learned behaviors of “us” and “them” with regard to race.

The topic of this study emanates from the tolerances and intolerances in race relations and the influences of cultural production in today’s society. It is essential to revisit America’s history because “consequently, history must serve, however imperfectly, as our laboratory, and data from the past must serve as our most vital evidence in the unavoidable quest to figure out why our complex species behaves as it does in societal settings” (Stearns, 1998, p. 2). Therefore, if we understand the information presented in museums and how museum patrons perceive the information conveyed, it will assist similar museums to create exhibits that will challenge its patrons so they will experience meaningful learning.
Limitations

1. Although race was recorded, it was not a factor in differentiating the dialogue that emerged in the focus group sessions.
2. Participants under the age of 18 were not considered in this study.
3. Due to the random selection of participants in this study, the diversity of the focus groups could not be controlled. I realized some discussions might have been inhibited due to possible uncomfortable feelings participants could have experienced in a discussion of slavery and race and perhaps may not have been forthcoming due to racial differences.
4. Participants may have been hesitant on sharing their previous ideologies on race.
5. Long-term attitudinal changes were not considered due to the time limit of this study.
6. Demographics of the participants were identified but not included in findings of the study. Demographics could provide a specific cultural lens through which the patrons viewed the exhibits.
7. The number of participants was limited to 31 for this qualitative approach.

Definition of Terms

Affective learning is demonstrated by behaviors indicating attitudes of awareness, interest, attention, concern, and responsibility; ability to listen and respond in interactions with others; and ability to demonstrate those attitudinal characteristics or values, which are appropriate to the test situation and the field of study. This domain relates to emotions, attitudes, appreciations, and values, such as enjoying, conserving, respecting, and supporting. Verbs applicable to the affective domain include accepts, attempts, challenges, defends, disputes, joins,
judges, praises, questions, shares, supports, and volunteer. (Bloom as cited in Schaber, Wilcox, Whiteside, Marsh, & Brooks, 2010, p. 2)

*Attitude change* is any alteration in the direction, degree, or intensity of an attitude. A change in one component of a given attitude may produce change in other components. Moreover, attitudes about one object may be connected to attitudes about another object, and change in one attitude may lead to change in others (Zimbardo & Leippe, 1991).

*Archivists* and *curators* “plan and oversee the arrangement, cataloguing, and exhibition of collections. They also maintain collections with technicians and conservators. They acquire and preserve important documents and other valuable items for permanent storage or display. They also describe, catalogue, and analyze valuable objects for the benefit of researchers and the public. They also may research topics or items relevant to their collections” (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010, p. 265).

*Baby boomer generation* refers to people born in the United States between the years of 1946 and 1964.

*Contemporary slavery* is defined as millions of men, women, and children around the world being forced to lead lives as slaves. Although this exploitation is often not called slavery, the conditions are the same. “People are sold like objects, forced to work for little or no pay and are at the mercy of their ‘employers’” (Anti-Slavery International, n.d., para. 1).

*Cultural production* refers to “the transmission of cultural form across the generations, as over determined either by deep structures of human thought or by the overarching frameworks of economy and society” (Auslander, n.d., para. 4).
Docents escort “groups or individual visitors through the museum, explaining the significance of exhibits and answering questions. Their efforts help to stimulate interest in the collections” (Torpey, 2010, p. 6).

Evaluators study the effectiveness and appeal of a museum’s programs and exhibits. They conduct interviews and administer surveys to determine what a museum’s audience likes, what it is learning, and which methods of presenting information work best. They analyze this information, often summarizing the results in written reports that offer suggestions for designing or changing educational programs and exhibits. “Evaluators work either directly for museums or as consultants” (Torpey, 2010, p. 9).

Freedom Center refers to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Generation X refers to people born in the United States between the years of 1965 and 1979.

Generation Y refers to people born in the United States between the years of 1980 and 2000.

G.I. generation refers to people born in the United States between the years of 1900 and 1924.

Institution of slavery, for the purposes of this study, is defined as an established systematic form of forced labor during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries in the United States, an era when people were legally considered the property of others.

Museum educators “refer to people who use their understanding of how people learn; museum educators suggest ways to structure an exhibit to optimize visitors’ experiences. These workers also help decide which information to share in the exhibits. Additionally, they assist in
developing supplemental materials, such as handouts or exhibit brochures that further convey an exhibit’s message” (Torpey, 2010, p. 8).

*Patrons* are the onlookers and the public who view the exhibits and examine the narrative of the mission statement of each museum.

*Presentation* is a demonstration or arrangement of an exhibition for spectator viewing.

*Representation* is perceived images that symbolize and exemplify a conceived notion of a concept. For example, with regard to a slavery exhibit, how does the exhibit symbolize the concept of a plantation?

*Silent generation* refers to people born in the United States between the years of 1925 and 1945.

*Trans-Atlantic slave trade* refers to the four-century long trade in human beings across the Atlantic that includes the capturing of Africans, the caravans across vast lands, the holding pens at one of the 70 coastal forts in West Africa, the endurance of the Middle Passage, the sale of human beings on auction blocks similar to cattle, the life of slavery where all freedom is oppressed, and the negative connotation of generations of hierarchical attitudes.

*Unfreedoms* refer to any type of life lived in bondage or slavery against one’s will.

*Visual literacy* is a perception conjured from images and symbols of representation.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The central focus of this study remained on the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, due to the theme of the museum. By examining how the exhibits are presented in this museum, and by examining patrons’ perspectives of the exhibits, one may better understand our nation’s role in this chapter of our history.

The major themes that emerged within the literature review are museum curricula and exhibits, cultural production and social responsibilities of museums, history and memory, learning theories, and racism. The identified themes discussed in this chapter assess the examined work related to the topic of the slave trade and the institution of slavery as they are presented in museums in addition to how they are perceived. Later in this dissertation, I link this review of literature with the results of this study in an effort to establish further scholarship on this issue.

Social Responsibility of Museum Curricula and Exhibits

This section of the literature review examines the historiography of the various museums and their exhibits that specifically focus on the slave trade and slavery. Literature about the slave trade and slavery was reviewed to identify how curators decided to present their information. For example, Carbonell (2009) examined the “historical consciousness” of three exhibits in New York’s Historical Society. He looked at the use of objects and their “indirect
testimony” (Carbonell, 2009, p. 123). For instance, by viewing an exhibit of a slave plantation, the patron would see a solitary community separate from the plantation owner’s residence. Viewing the slaves’ houses and gardens may indicate an “indirect testimony” that they were not part of the plantation owner’s personal life. He stated the exhibits “exert a significant ethical force” on a “rhetorical platform” for all patrons to “bear witness to injustice” (Carbonell, 2009, p. 122). Carbonell looked at the exhibit series by examining the selective deployment of “diction (contextualization), syntax, and narrative point of view in the writing, revising, and potential reception of history” (Carbonell, 2009, p. 123). This is an intricate procedure of examining exhibits within museums. It is a procedure the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center has taken into consideration when creating each exhibit and choosing the context, syntax, and narrative. Additionally, the dynamic relationship between the museum and visitor originates with the multiple literacies of museum dialogue.

Literature on emerging history museums and artifacts presents questions about the various contexts of the topic; specifically, Kriger examined the travelling exhibit “Captive Passage” in 2007 that represented the Middle Passage. Its aim was to reach a wide range of people throughout the United States and to educate them on this part of American history. Kriger further inspected the popular conception of histories, in addition to the portrayal of the historians’ perspectives. She found that the exhibit was effective in portraying how “slavery transformed societies all around the Atlantic Basin” (Kriger, 2004, p. 134). Kriger’s (2004) review of this exhibit indicated that the exhibit represented “several dimensions” including “a rich social and economic history, a traumatic human loss, and a dramatic and heroic triumph” (p. 135). The portrayal is similar in affect to what the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center intends to present to its patrons. This intriguing part of the research unites the popular
representations of the slave trade, slavery, resistance through the Underground Railroad, and the patrons’ perspectives of them.

**A Museum Paradigm Shift**

The history of museums dates back centuries. Museums in the 21st century differ considerably from those of the 19th century. For this study, I examined a more recent shift in the function of museums; for instance, moving from “classification to analysis, museums remain dominated by 19th century concepts of human nature” (Silverman & O’Neill, 2004, p. 1). There has been a shift from private collections to public exhibitions of curated objects. By the 19th century, private collections were more accessible to the public and became common places to visit to better inform and benefit society. Also in the 19th century the United States’s museums transformed to “establish a coherent past” (Silverman & O’Neill, 2004, p. 16), working to narrate an experience of the past. Between the making and keeping of views, Silverman and O’Neill (2004) stated that even more so today, museums struggle with objectivity versus subjectivity. The collection and preservation of artifacts is objective, but the presentation of exhibits with artifacts and a narrative is subjective because it is created by a person’s perspective, even if it is an informed one.

In the keeping a culture view, museums are seen as objective recorders, gathering accurate and well-researched information and delivering it faithfully. In the making culture view, every choice and product made in the museum is a subjective creation of one or more people. (Silverman & O’Neill, 2004, p. 3)

The roles of museums changed in the 20th century and this change is seen in many of the exhibits in participatory-based museums. For example, the Enola Gay exhibit is an exhibit that began as a commemoration but transformed to an analytical controversy among its
audience. According to Smithsonian Secretary Heyman, the political battleground of the Enola Gay exhibition was a “contest between commemoration and historical analysis” (as cited in Thelen, 1995, p. 1031). The controversy was over the museum not fulfilling its responsibility to “commemorate the achievements of aerospace history” (Thelen, 1995, p. 1032). This leads to the discussion of the changing responsibilities of museums. The historical narrative and commemorative agendas made this exhibit controversial. The tension regarded conflicting messages: the bombing of Japan as a commemorative message of “remember what we did and what it cost” or the message proposed by the museum, which considered the time a turning point in history of the “first use of atomic bombs” (Linenthal, 1995, p. 1097).

The shift in museum curricula leads toward the role of analysis and interpretation. It is no longer just the preservation of an artifact in the preceding case, the Enola Gay aircraft. Instead, museum curricula are the narratives conveyed to the public and the conversation that emerges and continues thereafter. The competing tensions consider if a dialogue of the past engages “both the voice of firsthand experience and the voice of criticism, both authenticity and scholarly detachment” (Thelen, 1995, p. 1032).

The Enola Gay exhibit signifies historical turbulence of sacrifice among our nation’s military and the actions engaged in to end the war.

It pitted veterans’ desire to commemorate their sacrifices--which would allegedly be diminished by a questioning of the need to drop the bombs or an exploration of the suffering those bombs caused civilians--against scholars’ desire to uncover truth and curators’ desire to present what curator Tom Crouch called an honest and balanced narrative. (Thelen, 1995, p. 1031)
These are issues of concern on the “museum community’s responsibility to research the past and present a balanced rendering of that past to the American public” (Mooney-Melvin, 1997, p. 1159).

The Enola Gay exhibit was displayed at the National Air and Space Museum, a Smithsonian institute. Even though the paradigm shift of museums incorporates a shift in presentation of artifacts to an interpretation of history, the presentation of exhibits can be influenced dependent upon whether the institution is a publically funded museum or a privately funded museum. The government funds the National Air and Space Museum. Therefore, the museum may be influenced to align its curriculum with a specific agenda, whereas a privately funded museum has more freedom to choose between a liberal or conservative itinerary. This exhibit instigated a conversation of “what ought to be the relationship between what happened in the past and how we interpret and present history in the present” (Thelen, 1995, p. 1033).

A second example of a museum transforming from preservation to thought-provoking displays and exhibits is seen at the Science Museum of Minnesota, when it opened an exhibit titled Race: Are We So Different? Part of the exhibition included a glass case featuring stacks of money. The money itself drew people to the exhibit, but

the real power in the exhibit was in the shocking disparity among the piles. People were compelled to point out of surprise. The powerful physical metaphor of the stacks made the information presented feel more spectacular without dumbing it down or over-dressing it. (Simon, 2010, para. 11)

The piles of money represented the average earnings of different races in America. This exhibit is an example of one that provokes dialogue and curiosity without reading an entire pane of text. However, the curiosity brought the visitor to the display and the presentation of it held their
attention. According to Simon (2010), for an exhibit “to work well, a provocative object must be genuinely surprising to visitors who encounter it” (para. 11). The preservation of objects in a collective area for viewing and interpretation has led to a more interactive experience of analysis by society. As stated by Silverman and O’Neill (2004),

Because most museums collect, preserve, and interpret artifacts, they have long defined themselves as “keepers” of culture. But the decisions museums make over what and how to collect, display, and interpret, shape the very culture they profess to guard. (p. 2)

Museology scholars “aim to benefit society” and must take the “complexity of people and their experience into account” (Silverman & O’Neill, 2004, p. 1). For example, the theory that we are born with a blank slate and then “the world imprints its meanings is the basis for many views of communication in museums” (Silverman & O’Neill, 2004, p. 1). Today, museums remain a form of public education but provide a more interactive experience for affective learning by patrons.

A fundamental change noted by Weil was that a shift was seen after World War II within museums; they moved “from being about something to being for somebody” (as cited in Silverman & O’Neill, 2004, p. 3). The fundamental shift in museums implemented a curriculum of not only the collection of artifacts, their preservation, and analysis but also their representation. Importance was attached to the patrons’ experiences of the exhibits themselves and the reflection stimulated by the exhibit. The exhibits of the Freedom Center tell a story of America’s past and present. The exhibits provide an interactive experience parallel to the described shift in the function of a museum. The Freedom Center, as with other history museums today, implements programs to help patrons critically think about the past and understand the present to create a better future.
Museum Types

Although museums have a variety of functions including preservation, interpretation, and memorialization, their presentation has changed over the last century. For example, a museum may be in the form of an original structure (house museums) or a living history museum, where patrons can interactively partake in the learning experience or observe museum staff implementing a living history.

Jay (2009) explored the development of historic house museums and focused on the “relationship between public presentations of slavery and popular perception of the institution” (p. 2). Although Jay incorporated house museums and their exhibits in the Deep South, she identified two separate historiographies that intersect presentation and perception in the review of literature. Jay’s example of conducting research by identifying the presentation of museum exhibits and patron perspectives of the exhibits assisted in guiding my research at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. Furthermore, because Jay indicated in her study that Americans were struggling with the dark sides while celebrating the American history narrative, I wanted to examine how patrons perhaps struggled with this dark side of American history (slavery) by exposing the impact the exhibits have on them.

Magelssen (2006) discussed the impact and the process of a living history museum such as the active participation used in museums like the Conner Prairie Follow the North Star Museum in Indiana. The patrons of this living history museum actually partake in events that may have emerged from the slave trade and the institution of slavery. For example, Bill Maxwell, a staff member at the Conner Prairie Follow the North Star Museum stated, “We want you to get out of your comfort zone—and learn something” (as cited in Magelssen, 2006, p. 24).
For some 90 rather intense minutes you are a slave on the run; cold, in strange territory, unsure of whom, if anyone, to trust. In the dark, following the North Star, you are trying to get to Canada. It can be quite frightening out there in the fields, facing up to people dressed in all manner of costumes, from Quakers to bounty hunters, and coming at you with unexpected suddenness. It takes a cast and crew of 40 to bring the whole thing alive, which they certainly do, with everything from shouting and intimidation to genuine acts of kindness.

(Magelssen, 2006, p. 24)

Although living history museums are not part of this study, Magelssen’s research examined patron perspectives and active engagement within museums, similar to this study. The patrons interviewed commented that their “physical discomfort was compounded by stress and anxiety, emotional and psychological discomfort” (Magelssen, 2006, p. 24). Although the topic of the two museums are similar, that is the Follow the North Star (living history museum) and the National Underground Railroad Museum, my research focused solely on the non-living history educational aspect of the museum exhibits, thus examining the impact of the exhibits.

Additional literature on museums includes Alderman and Campbell’s (2008) article, which focused on the Slave Relic Museum in Walterboro, South Carolina, near Charleston. Again, it contemplated the creation and the operation of the museum and its curator, Danny Drain. The authors considered how curators “reconstruct and represent the history of the slave trade in museums” by utilizing “symbolic excavation” (Alderman & Campbell, 2008, p. 344). Alderman and Campbell described symbolic excavation as “unearthing of difficult and long suppressed (and repressed) historical narratives” which “can only happen through memory work, the construction, and representation of the past” (p. 338). Therefore, the curator’s interpretation
must be taken into consideration prior to understanding patron perceptions. Consequently, even though there are historical slave narratives and other primary resources to assist in understanding the past, one still must take into consideration the exhibit developer’s perspective and the storyteller’s view because “the existence of a material legacy of slavery is still no guarantee of fairness in historical representation” (Alderman & Campbell, 2008, p. 344).

Another museum in Baltimore, Maryland, the Great Blacks in Wax Museum, was reviewed by Wood (2008) and is a privately owned museum. This museum’s main theme is African and African American history. Wood’s research is a case study on how museums represent the slave trade and, in this case, Wood asked if the exhibits were too traumatic for its viewers. For example, the study surveyed the exhibits of the Middle Passage and exhibits of lynching that are greatly detailed. The questions addressed were the rigorousness and asperity of the museum exhibits. With regard to the traumatic exhibits at the museum, Wood stated the exhibits needed to be traumatic to express truthfully the conditions and circumstances of this time in American history.

Oostindie (2010) reviewed the slavery museum that opened up in Liverpool at the bicentennial of the abolition of the slave trade. The museum first began as a temporary gallery displaying artifacts from the institution of slavery. Presently, it is a permanent museum in Liverpool with exhibits ranging from the Middle Passage to the institution of slavery. Judith Keilbach’s (2009) article “Photographs, Symbolic Images, and the Holocaust: on the (Im)possibility of Depicting Historical Truth” examined the limits of representation. Although the attention is on the Holocaust, it is relevant to this study because of the “different concepts of reality, history, and historical truth” (Keilbach, 2009, p. 54). Despite the lack of photographs, because there was no photography for most of the trans-Atlantic slave trade era, scenes and
people are depicted to help recreate the time in which it occurred. Therefore, once again, we have the artist’s perception of a phenomenon and how it is represented, stemming from the artist’s concept.

Considerations of artifacts and their connectedness to the museum display are considered, as Udvardy, Giles, and Mitsaze (2003) reported; precautions are taken when collecting artifacts to display in museums in the United States. They focused on what curators do when considering an exhibit, once again leading to the perception of the curator and the representation he or she devises. Another example of representation is Bruner’s (1996) study of the Elmina Castle, now a museum for tourists in Ghana. This is a historical site of the first European slave castle built on the west coast of Africa. Emotion and reflection on the part of the patron are stimulated by this site. It was “designated a World Heritage Monument under UNESCO with 17,091 visitors in 1993” (Bruner, 1996, p. 290). Bruner’s literature contributed to this “emerging discourse by describing the meeting in the border zone between African American tourists who return to mother Africa, specifically to Elmina Castle on the coast of Ghana, and the local Akan-speaking Fanti who receive them” (Bruner, 1996, p. 290). Bruner found a struggle over meaning as the basis for why tourists visit the castle and what they take away from it. Bruner’s literature is similar to this study of the representation of the slave trade and slavery in museums within the United States and the meaning patrons encounter.

Furthermore, with concern to representation and perspective, Gable and Handler (1994) stated, “bureaucratic form influences pedagogical content at American history museums” (p. 120). They asked the difference between “standard museum terms” such as interpreter and to interpret, which is key in understanding how things are presented. For example, employees of museums on the front line, once called guides or docents are now known as interpreters (Gable
This study showed how the main task of interpreters is “not to construct meaning out of evidence, but to enliven and embody meanings already established by their superiors” (Gable & Handler, 1994, p. 120). Therefore, it is taken into consideration how publicly funded museums are guided and influenced by the government. Gable and Handler concentrated on the museum employees’ understanding of the relationship of “fact, myth, and documentation,” (p. 120) while conveying knowledge of history to the public.

Carson (2008) also reviewed the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, the museum used in this study. This research described the theme and origins of the museum, the slave trade, and slavery and included an additional exhibit on contemporary slavery. Opened in 2004, the museum attracted much attention due to its mission. The exhibits in the museum range from a holding pen for slaves to representations of the Underground Railroad. The Freedom Center is further reviewed in Chapter 4.

**Museum Curricula**

The real meaning of curriculum and its obligations to pursue and present the content and all its truths to the learner is often controversial. The narrative of museum exhibits is the type of curriculum the museum wants to display to teach the public about specific content. Much consideration is involved with deciding the content of the exhibit, the objectives, and the course of action to display. The architecture of each exhibit is planned similarly to a lesson plan in a classroom. The museum is the classroom and the exhibit is the instructional method provided for museum patrons to consider. By reflecting on the content learned by viewing the exhibit, the scaffolding method of combining previous knowledge or experience with new content learned from the display will assist in finding a correlation. I approached this concept during the focus group sessions with the museum patrons. For example, what did they already know about the
topic before viewing the exhibit?

Wilson (2005) used words such as types, kinds, philosophical orientations, and psychological classifications to cover the numerous ways to implement curriculum. The exhibit’s responsibility is to teach a lesson in the form of public education using “anything and everything that teaches a lesson” (Wilson, 1990, para. 5). Therefore, to identify the curriculum of these exhibits, their content, and their representation are foremost in this research.

I certainly agree that building a curriculum is just that, building, creating layer after layer of sometimes-complex ideas that are eclectic yet aim for the same goal, which is to teach a lesson and, in the case of museums, convey a mission statement. Therefore, the question initially raised in curricular thought is what is worthy to teach? Ideologies of politicians, educators, and administrators in education conflict with one another, which lead to the assessment and evaluation of deciding what material is worthy to teach. It is the same with museums; the exhibit architect must decide what story to present and how. I think it heavily relies upon the type of curriculum dealt with, such as societal curriculum. Cortes (1981) defined curriculum as “massive, ongoing, informal curriculum of family, peer groups, neighborhoods, churches, occupations, mass media, and other socializing forces that educate all of us throughout our lives” (p. 24). No legislation can decide on the content for the societal curriculum. Curriculum is ingrained in the society in which one lives. Furthermore, the written and null curriculum dictates what to teach our children. Again, it is the same for museum curricula. The staff must decide what to include in each exhibit to make it interactive and meaningful for the visitors by identifying what they will teach and what they will leave out. In a classroom, this may be a controversial topic; however, in a museum focused on specific themes, the architecture of how to present the narrative and represent it accurately are the most sought out factors. With regard to
the museum exhibits, the instructional outcome is in the hands of the patron viewing the carefully articulated lesson plan seen in an exhibit. I inquired in this research as to what the patrons learned from their experience at the Freedom Center.

One theme that emerged from Kirylo (2010) was that “the makings of curricula are naturally rooted in a historical context, in which decisions are filtered through a blending of complex political, religious, and cultural influences” (p. 15). Similar to Kliebard’s (2004) thoughts on educational challenges, regardless of geographical location, communities face similar educational challenges. This is a valid approach because each community has an ideology of what sort of citizens they want their youth to be. This is similar to the Freedom Center and its mission as it has close ties to its geographical location on the Ohio River. On the south side of the river, slavery was legal, whereas on the north side of the river slavery was prohibited.

A mixed methods study (qualitative and quantitative) examined the “descriptive analysis of the Latvian’s experience with teachers and scholars at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum” (Hamot, Lindquist, & Misco, 2007, p. 157). This gave Latvian curriculum developers the opportunity to learn the complexities of teaching the Holocaust in a country still somewhat viewed as anti-Semitic. Furthermore, the authors examined if the subject of the Holocaust was appropriate for a Latvian curriculum. In the past, teachers were hesitant to teach the subject of the Holocaust due to the country’s history of anti-Semitic views. The topic was especially sensitive because there were a large number of bystanders and collaborators still present within the region. This is similar to the previously considered literature by Stern (2007) regarding how the history of slavery was integrated into the American History curriculum.
Presently the questions have evolved to “how” and “with what goal” instead of “if” with regard to integrating the Holocaust into the curriculum (Hamot et al., 2007, p. 156). Latvian curricula writers came to the United States to learn how to write Holocaust curricula into their middle school and high school social studies classes. They wanted to be introduced to the “pedagogy and politics of teaching the Holocaust” (Hamot et al., 2007, p. 156). The research revealed the need for in-depth guidance, values, limits of innovative teaching methods, cross-cultural benefits, and continued collaboration to integrate the Holocaust into their curriculum. Future research indicated the need for “post-Communist countries and American partners to develop a curriculum on teaching complex aspects of history” (Hamot et al., 2007, p. 156).

**Visual Rhetoric**

The umbrella term *visual literacy* and other multi-literacies play a large part in presenting information directed at the perceptual intake of the public. Visual literacy is a perception conjured from images and symbols of representation to portray a specific event. For example, “The most characteristic concern of rhetoric is the manipulation of men’s beliefs for political ends. The basic function of rhetoric is the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents” (Burke, 1937, p. 423).

Visual literacy is one of many forms museum exhibits use to communicate with patrons. According to Schwartz (2008), “Museum-based pedagogy uses five literacies” (p. 29), described as verbal, visual, technological, social, and critical. With these “plural forms of communication,” there are “ideological stances” (Schwartz, 2008, p. 29) for each patron who walks through the doors. A “historical consciousness” stems from a “dialogical situation” (Ricoeur as cited in Dauenhauer, 1998, p. 103), which allows an “indirect testimony” (Bloch, 1953, p. 61) of our historical past waiting to be interpreted. In addition, when interpreting
displays, a visual rhetoric emerges and the individual must decide how to construe the concept. How the dialogue of museum exhibits is presented by the curators and the impact it has on the patrons is the focus of this study.

Dondis (1973) defined visual literacy as “the ability to manipulate symbols in visual format for thinking and communicating” (p. 22). Because museum exhibits help people reflect, visual rhetoric is a key aspect of this reflection. It is not only the exposure of artifacts to the patrons, it is how they are presented to them. Therefore, visual rhetoric is a significant factor within the museum agenda. For instance, Schwartz (2008) focused on multi-literacies and argued that the museum has “plural forms of communication, more or less hidden ideological stances, and reciprocal interpretive activity, and that it is an excellent location for teaching students to understand multimodal ways of learning in a social, technological, and institutional context” (p. 29). Schwartz’s argument assumed that the “discovery and employment of the museum’s means of persuasion develop competence at analyzing and using forms of communication that are common to other spaces and texts” (p. 29).

Again, Burke (1937) reflected critically on cultural identities and their languages’ persuasive effects. He connected language to culture and aimed to bridge a gap between attitudes of history and life in the context of its time. More specifically, he applied the rhetorical literacy of an issue to a historical perspective of time and place, stating we are “historical manifestations” (Burke, 1937, p. 423) of our time. This is similar to Vygotsky’s (1978) thought of language as a primary connection between the child and others in the social environment. Gredler (2009) described Vygotsky’s cognitive development theory as a “complex dialectical process that is ever changing” (p. 4). The interactions between museum patrons and exhibits will identify if indeed we are historical manifestations. It is the knowledge acquired over time that is
enforced by our environment and is consistent with learned behaviors of our culture. Do we display a manifestation of the thoughts of our parents and teachers? According to Burke (1937), historical context is the platform to ideologies; therefore, we may be a product of our culture.

**Cultural Production**

Museums may transmit cultural values, but what do museum visitors perceive from these conveyed values? Will it fill the widening gap between races by discovering how slavery led to a cultural production of thought of racism in present-day society? A recent study indicated, “One of the fundamental fault lines in American society continues to be the ongoing racial disparities in economic well-being” (Washington University in St. Louis, Newsroom, 2009). If “we are nothing but the products of the particular age in which we happen to live,” can we legitimately say we are “historical manifestations” (Burke, 1937, p. 423) of our past? If so, by understanding the background and its impact on the United States we can determine the systemic pattern of our own cultural production, such as learned behaviors passed down through multiple generations. For example, did the societal ideologies of a particular era, such as the era of slavery, become the norms by which that society was established and were these norms transferred to future generations making our current ideologies of race a manifestation of our past?

What museums represent about American history is a reflection of our cultural heritage. If culture is the very nature of our beliefs, norms, traditions, and way of life, whose culture are we seeing? Coombes (1988) examined the extent to which museums indicate cultural identities. His scholarly research also examined the creation of exhibits and the perspectives of the patrons. Coombes’s study revealed how people have their own way of conceiving knowledge and applying it, as they will. Furthermore, Carson (2008) questioned cultural identity and if it is
fading. His research focused on how museums are becoming obsolete and that there is a new fad in presenting historical facts to the public about our cultural identity (Carson, 2008).

Cultural identity is an important topic with regard to American history because several dignitaries are now conversing about the new African American Cultural History Museum opening in 2015 at the National Mall in Washington, DC. It will be a Smithsonian museum focused on African American culture including the slave trade and the institution of slavery (Molotsky, 1988). For example, the Freedom Center teaches the courage, cooperation, and perseverance it took to break down barriers that once inhibited the chance for prosperity of Blacks.

Literature on historical construction identifies the story of our past and leads to consideration of the curriculum produced by museum exhibits and the critical thinking that may be engendered by patron analysis of museum artifacts. Museums are the frontrunners on how to incorporate visual literacy as the core conveyer of historical narration. What the exhibits present to the patron and how the patron perceives them lies under the concept of representation and perception of both the curator and the patron. Scholarly work is then presented on cultural identity, marking the conception of “How did we get here,” demonstrating a reflection of the past and how it relates to contemporary ideologies. Two examples are offered. The first is how the Freedom Center presents the past culture of slave plantations through scholarly research of slave narratives. The second example is of research presented on the Underground Railroad and its conductors. Much of what the Freedom Center discusses is courage, cooperation, and perseverance.

As stated in Bonk and Zhang (2008), “David Ausubel long ago pointed out that knowledge is hierarchically organized and that we need to find ways for new learning to be
subsumed under or anchored within prior learning experiences” (p. 123). Ausubel suggested that new information is going to be “meaningful to the extent that it is anchored (that is, attached or related) to what learners already know and understand” (as stated in Bonk & Zhang, 2004, p. 123). This is an essential element to encompassing the wide scope of information offered in today’s world. Furthermore, “a key part of this effort is finding ways to link prior learning experiences to new concepts and ideas” (Ausubel as cited in Bonk & Zhang, 2004, p. 123). By understanding the representation of the exhibits, noting their multiple literacies to convey the story, the visitor will interact in his or her own way to establish a new ideology of society’s infamous connections to the trade.

Because of the variety of scholarly research that has emerged from approaches regarding the study of museums and their representations, several concepts integrate the exploration and research to assist in its comprehension. Curators consider learning theories when creating museum exhibits. They also consider the cognitive development of museum patrons and the various types of learning style presented. Because this is often a constructivist approach, integrated scaffolding is used in the concept of teaching the public historical aspects of society through museum education. This is the frontrunner of the use of visual literacy, which is the core conveyer of historical narration. What the exhibit presents to the patron and how the patron perceives it lies under the concept of representation and perception of both the curator and the patron. The mission of museum exhibits and the story visitors actually perceive may be different for each individual. Sometimes it may rely on the cultural identity of the patron and previous knowledge of the slave trade. Various styles of narrative inquiry are appropriate to gain knowledge of someone’s experience. A narrative may be a story of an event, an extended story of a significant point in one’s life, or additionally a story of someone’s entire life. Furthermore,
oral history is a description of the experience in a larger context such as what was going on in the world and what the effect was. For instance, Hilden (2000) described her methodology in her comparison of two museums, a Native American museum and an African American art museum. Hilden deconstructs museum exhibits and analyzes the use of space within the museum. Hilden identified two issues:

Museologists have not succeeded in moving the center, not least because their well-intentioned efforts to deconstruct and thereby deracialize their museum practices have remained mired in a “universalist” discourse that remains hopelessly Euro-centered, despite the fact that their “universalism” and practices have assumed fresh shape. (p. 12)

A second dilemma mentioned in the research is the “new museums that emerge from the fact that some communities of color, the purported objects of such museological good intentions, have themselves sometimes ignored the ways in which participation with such museums collaborates in their own continuing colonization” (Hilden, 2000, p. 12). Moving the ideology of the European-centered thought to an African-or African American-centered ideology with their norms and their customs is the goal for some newer museums in communities of color. This leaves patrons with a perspective of Africans and African Americans rather than a European origin of ideology.

Testimonials are also an important aspect of oral history and fall within the umbrella term of narrative inquiry. Article testimonials give future generations accurate descriptions of experiences in history; experiences keep future generations from being uninformed and, better yet, from repeating tragic occurrences. The findings of this research indicate that curators give exhibits a voice that connects with the patrons. The presentation of exhibits is significant and, therefore, critically analyzed to capture the true narrative of the historical context.
The social responsibility for and discourse of museums is unanimously in favor of educating the public. This contemporary discourse “casts museums as socially responsible, as organizations with the capacity to sustain societal health and improve the human condition” (Cameron, 2008, p. 5). Certain topics such as the slave trade and slavery illuminate the values and norms of society. The dialogue of slavery in the United States may “engage the self in ways other topics may not, as they speak to values, beliefs and moral position” (Cameron, 2008, p. 5). Cameron’s (2008) research on social history in museums suggested “many history and science museums, when engaging contentious subjects, are inextricably political, acting as moralizing technologies for stakeholder values” (p. 7).

Although museums engage in controversial topics, “the concept of reform is centered on morality and the deployment of tools such as exhibitions for providing moral direction in reforming future conduct” (Cameron, 2008, p. 10). According to Smith (2006), museums can no longer confine themselves simply to preservation, scholarship, and exhibition independent of the social context in where they exist. They must recognize that the public dimensions of museums lead them to perform the public service of education - a term that in its broadest sense includes exploration, study, observation, critical thinking, and dialogue. (p. 4)

Furthermore, museum mission statements convey the central purpose of the museum. For education to be the goal of a museum visit, the patron must learn while experiencing the exhibits. According to Smith, this is a struggle for many educators because of the multiple styles of learning presented by patrons.
History and Memory

The use of technology, artifacts, and narratives told creates a dialogue that tells a story of our American past. However, memory of the past plays a large role in teaching history to museum patrons due to the influence of personally held perspectives when interpreting the past. How do we present the artifacts so they tell the truths about history and from what perspective are we telling this truth? Objects are often “witnesses in spite of themselves,” (Bloch, 1965, p. 61) they offer “indirect testimony” (Bloch, 1965, p. 63) unlike the direct address of annals, chronicles, or depositions, and our ears pricked up more eagerly when permitted to overhear what was never intended to be said. The exhibit must be intriguing enough to grab the patron’s attention and to initiate at least an internal dialogue considering underlying consequences derived from the choices of our past.

Current literature also revealed an examination of how slavery and the slave trade still encompass a significant part of contemporary society, but when portrayed in textbooks they are sometimes glossed over when teaching about the history of the United States. Stern addressed the content of textbooks and the curriculum of public museums with regard to educating patrons and students about the slave trade. Through Stern’s (2007) four decades of teaching American slavery, scholarship has progressed with new research on this particular institution. This research also examined the progression within education to eliminate the silence once found in the curriculum of schools in regard to not teaching about American slavery. Moreover, Stern stated “the ‘old’ history, much like the antebellum abolitionists themselves, stressed the cruelty of slavery, but often dismissed blacks as passive victims with no history of their own” (p. 17). Therefore, teaching about American slavery went from non-existent to conveying the cruelty of the institution, to the present strides Africans and African Americans took to maintain a culture
of their own through freedom. I have added to this literature in Chapter 5 by establishing what
the exhibits present about the institution of slavery and its consequence in present-day society,
including contemporary slavery and advocacy for its abolition.

According to Tibbles (2008),

Many events and activities were organized across Britain to commemorate the
bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade in 1807. However, unlike many
other historical events, the subject of the transatlantic slave trade and
transatlantic slavery is still highly charged and its social and political
implications continue to impact on present-day society. There is often reluctance
to recognize and address some of the issues that arise. In marking the
bicentenary, museums, cultural organizations, and even governments have been
at the heart of a debate, which encompasses memory, history, and politics. (p. 293)

Several articles appeared after the emerging dialogue of the bicentennial of the abolition of the
trans-Atlantic slave trade. Continued research and new museums, especially in the United
States, are now presenting the story of the slave trade and slavery to patrons. For example, a
new African American History Museum that will open in 2015 at the National Mall in
Washington, DC, will focus on the slave trade and the institution of slavery. What will they
make of it and how will they conceptualize the story?

In continuing with the context of this study, Bloch (1965) examined in his book, The
Historian’s Craft, the historical analysis and understanding of the present through learning the
past. His concern was “the more history we write the more we worry about the value and nature
of history” (Bloch, 1965, p. vii). Furthermore, Bloch asked, “what is the use of history when we
repeat our old errors over and over again?” (p. viii), such as contemporary slavery. Additionally, Bloch wrote, “even if we are sure that history has its uses; are we able to write the kind of history that can be used?” (p. viii). Writing the type of history incorporated into the study of past events, helps us understand present events. This is a task for history museums and their exhibit architects.

Blight (2004) considered the memory of history to understand the present. More specifically, in regard to our understanding of race, the meanings of the Civil War and slavery, the meanings of the Civil Rights movement of the 50s and 60s, and present day meanings have changed. Nevertheless, even though our knowledge has broadened, “essential issues in the public memory are roughly still the same; still asking questions about the legacy of slavery and race relations today” (Blight as cited in the Gilder-Jordan Southern History Lecture Series, 2012). Furthermore, Blight (2004) stated, “historical memory is always a contest, it’s always a battle, a debate over who gets to own it, control it, narrate it, and declare it” (p. 5). Blight’s work indicated that remembering the good and bad historical manifestations of history is often not the case. In the past, especially, only the good is celebrated. Represented at the Freedom Center are the good and the bad, in addition to hope and advocacy for future generations to end slavery and social injustice.

By understanding, the differences and similarities between history and memory, historians can examine historical relevance in connection with experience. What was an individual or society’s experience with a particular historical event? It depends on who is doing the remembering to determine the historical perspective. To further explain, Blight (2004) stated Memory resides at the heart of our humanity. As individuals and perhaps as societies as well, we cannot function in practical or moral terms without memory.
Memory provides a physical, and sometimes an ethical, compass in our daily lives. As individuals, we cannot live without it, but it is part of the human condition to live with its burdens as well. Moreover, memory can sometimes become a safe haven in the past; it can cast romantic and sentimental spells over our imagination. (p. 5)

Slavery and the Underground Railroad are significant times in history that must be remembered by asking the critical questions and reaching beyond present-day knowledge, delving into archives that may emerge to help us understand the past from memories of those who lived it.

**Learning Theories/Affective Learning**

Rhetorical multi-literacies help one examine the representations and perspectives portrayed through museum exhibits as they tell the story of the history of the slave trade and slavery. The two entities, perspectives and representations, integrate because you cannot have one without the other. For example, the perspective is twofold: there is the perspective of the curator/historian leading to what and how he or she will represent history and the perspective of the observer/patron of what he or she sees. The curators’ standpoint is rhetorical because their goal is for the observer to see something a certain way. Some exhibits, perhaps, are left for open interpretation, but certain objects juxtapose in a definite way for the sake of the patron’s perception. Some exhibits left for open interpretation for the sake of the patron’s perception, perhaps, correlate with Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD).

Social interaction is an essential component of cognitive development. Vygotsky (1978) stated, “Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside
the child (intrapsychological)” (p. 57). “When applied to museums as a form of public education, the first function in a person’s cultural development appears with their previously conceived ideas of the slave trade and the second with the exposed exhibits, similar to Ausubel’s Subsumption Theory” (Bonk & Zhang, 2004, p. 123). Nevertheless, Vygotsky (1978) understood social interaction as a part of cognitive development as it correlates to human interaction and it is not solely reliable upon cultural everyday activities.

Lave’s (1998) situated learning theory emphasized the transition from novice to expert, which is similar to Vygotsky’s. For instance, by learning from the environment a child inhabits, he or she absorbs guided assistance from those close by. The ZPD perhaps links to the cultural production of a person’s society and the ideologies that surrounded him or her as a child. This creates a personal hierarchical system of contact between child and adult, learner and teacher, and museum patron and museum curator (Berejkovskaya, 2006).

To examine the reflection of museum patrons, it is important to know that the “underlying assumptions” of cognitive theory influence the perceptions of the learner because “prior knowledge and beliefs play a major role in the meanings that people construct” (Smith, 2006, p. 12). Therefore, the narrative background of the exhibit being viewed by the patron must be compared to the patrons’ knowledge and understanding of their own beliefs. For example, what is the individuals’ previous understanding of race and society and furthermore, how does it compare to their reflection on a post exhibit interaction? This consideration addresses Vygotsky and his argument for a “nonindividualistic view of learning and behavior where cognition develops because of the individual’s social experiences” (Smith, 2006, p. 50). Although the purpose is to gain knowledge of patron perspectives of exhibits that associate with individual ideology of cultural production, there is a consideration of museum presentations and pedagogy.
Museum curators must remain conscious of the pedagogical presentation of an exhibit due to the numerous learning styles that may be presented by the diversity of patrons. Therefore, museum architects must consider the implementation of “knowledge of learning theories into designing exhibitions and programs” (Smith, 2006, p. 7).

**Affective Learning in Museums**

Affective learning is the emotional aspect an individual’s experiences while learning. Furthermore, affective learning is how “learning experiences are internalized so they can guide the learner’s attitudes, opinions, and behaviors in the future” (Gano-Phillips, 2009, p. 3).

Interviewing museum patrons and exploring the contextual model of learning within the affective learning domain after they view the exhibits will allow one to see the personal process described by Falk and Dierking.

The contextual model of learning, proposed by Falk and Dierking, addressed the range of learning that occurs in museums, which allows individuals to construct personal understanding and to learn in idiosyncratic ways. Falk and Dierking claimed that learning is always a highly personal process that is strongly dependent upon prior knowledge and experiences choice opportunities and self-control of learning. Learning occurs within a situated socio-cultural context through opportunities for interactions.

(Bamberger and Tal, 2009, p. 8)

The hierarchical system as reflected in Figure 1 is arranged beginning at the foundational level with the ability and willingness to listen and learn ideas. Next, the learner demonstrates the value gained through interactions with others by creating a dialogue and responding to the information received. Therefore, the first and second steps in the hierarchal system of the affective domain are to receive information absorbed from exhibits and then respond to the
experience of obtaining new information. The third step in the affective taxonomy hierarchy is valuing. In affective learning, valuing is “based on the internalization of a set of specific values or attitudes, where clues to these values are expressed in the learner’s stable overt behavior” (Gano-Phillips, 2009, p. 5). The fourth level in the affective domain hierarchy is organizing and conceptualizing. To organize, learners must arrange and synthesize by recognizing their own values and abilities. The final level of the affective domain is characterizing by value or value concept. In short, the learner acts as a result of learning.

![Affective Taxonomy Diagram]

*Figure 1. Taxonomy of educational objectives: Handbook II: Affective domain.*

(Adapted from Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964, p. 1)

The organization level of the affective domain “reflects the integration of a new value into one’s general set of values” (Gano-Phillips, 2009, p. 5). Gronlund (1991) stated, “As affective outcomes move from simple to complex, they become increasingly internalized and integrated with other behaviors to form complex value systems and behavior patterns” (p. 2).
The affective domain is essential in understanding the learning process of how we perceive information and how we use it.

**Millennial Generation and Technology**

Generation Y, often called the Millennials, represent a present-day population of 95 million, which is larger than the Baby Boomer generation. Technology has been deeply integrated into the lives of the Millennials in many aspects. Currently, teachers are trained to learn more appropriate ways to instruct this generation and better appeal to their learning styles. This has turned the educational institution upside down with regard to curriculum, instruction, and media technology. Technology has become an essential component within today’s society and, therefore, it must be intertwined within our public schools, museums, and other learning institutions. For example, the information, found literally in your pocket via IPhone, is described below.

If you enter into the Siri (or Wolfram Alpha) search box, by text or voice, “arable land in world divided by world population,” in less than a second the phone or computer will find the relevant data; do the calculations; provide the answer—in square miles, acres, square feet, and hectares per person—and cite you its sources. Today, technology like this puts many college-level questions with definitive answers within the reach of 10-yearolds. The technologies our students will be using in just a few years will be infinitely more powerful. (Prensky, 2013, p. 24)

On the other hand, people often attach themselves to their devices as if they were an appendage or a living, breathing element that sustains their lives. Toyama (2011) stated that technology should not be considered a shortcut to learning.
There are no technology shortcuts to good education. For primary and secondary schools that are underperforming or limited in resources, efforts to improve education should focus almost exclusively on better teachers and stronger administrations. Information technology, if used at all, should be targeted for certain, specific uses or limited to well-funded schools whose fundamentals are not in question. (Toyama, 2011, p. 1)

Other research has indicated that technology is a consistent innovation that advances with each generation. This presents a challenge for teachers in terms of classroom instructional strategies. In fact, it has become difficult to function without them. Research suggests “technology’s great boon to education is that it enables students to do powerful new things that they couldn’t do before” (Prensky, 2013, p. 25). For instance, the Freedom Center has an application you can download to your iPhone to view and listen to the exhibits without physically visiting the museum. These applications and search engines have made information easily accessible in the age of technology. Nonetheless, “ever-growing piles of data and information” as we have immediate access to, “do not equate to greater knowledge and better decision-making” (Greengard, 2009, para. 5). This immediate access to information is a concern, for some, to the process of learning. Although technology can prove to be beneficial, with its immediate access in education, T. S. Eliot stated the concern, “Where is the knowledge we have lost in the information?” (as cited in Skyttner, 2005, p. 276). Cognitive and affective learning must unite to not lose this knowledge in the plethora of information accessible through technology.

It is observation and meaningful learning through dialogue that takes place in museums that provides “greater knowledge and better decision-making” (Greengard, 2009, para. 6). Although technology changes the way we learn and may impact education with reference to
instruction, “the act of thinking remains decidedly the same” (Greengard, 2009, para. 8).

Though technological advances and resources to assist in gaining knowledge are vast, these advances not only allow an enormous amount of information to be obtained, they also actively engage the learner through the resources at their fingertips.

**Critical Thinking and the Millennial Generation**

If students are to use this vast array of technological information during their formal education, they must learn what is credible and what is not. Professors expect their students to utilize online resources and databases, anticipating a much deeper realm of information to be integrated and analyzed into their research or assignments. Because of the availability of resources in education today, more is expected from the student with regard to information

However, not all students take advantage of these resources. Instead, they do a quick search on their phones and its validity is not questioned; the answer appears and is now a portion of their knowledge. They do not take into consideration that the information may be from an editable web source such as Wikipedia. This type of available information does not qualify our learners as being information literate because they are not maximizing their research skills by utilizing correct resources.

According to Bradley (2011),

We need to and can teach the skills that are necessary to manage large amounts of information: an imperative in the information-rich environment in which we live. We also need to and can cultivate the single-focus skills that are necessary for deep learning, creative thinking, and problem solving that will be so critical today. (para. 4)

The Millennial characteristics are essential information in this study because the sizeable portion of participants were Millennials. Millennial characteristics are described as optimistic,
goal-oriented, civic-minded, confident, multicultural, collaborative, tech-savvy, and digital
natives, with strong parent advocates (Newburn, 2011). However, is it accurate to label 95
million people and their parents? It is impossible to place a label and mold on such a large
population. There are too many diverse qualities within the Generation Y population. Yes, they
may be digital natives, as they have known nothing other than gadgets that consume their daily
lives, but they have never used a card catalog or taken a trip without a DVD player or iPod
menacing their thoughts. Additionally, the 95 million future leaders tagged with these labels
have never survived on the traditional form of education involving lecture. What happened to
listening to an intriguing lecture and critically thinking about a lecture by engaging in
discussion? Presently, there are technological suggestions for teaching the Millennials. These
are classroom blogs, YouTube videos, Podcasts, videos, and web-based sources, anything to gain
their attention and maintain it because these are people who “have come of age during a time of
dramatic technological changes in our society” (Nevid, 2013, p. 1). I do agree that technology
assists in obtaining new knowledge, but these students need to acquire the skills to retain it,
which is where dialogue should be integrated.

According to Wolpert (2009), “parents should encourage their children to read and
should read to their young children” (para. 10). This is an age-old preparation for future critical
reading and thinking skills. Allowing the child to discover new information by reading a book
and then be encouraged to continue to evaluate that same information by critically thinking about
it. Moreover, “studies show that reading develops imagination, induction, reflection and critical
thinking, as well as vocabulary,” (Wolpert, 2009, para. 10) and that reading for pleasure helps to
ensure these skills. The Internet should be used with caution within the classroom; “wiring
classrooms for Internet access does not enhance learning” (Greenfield as cited in Wolpert, 2009,
Additional research has shown that when children are given access to the Internet during classroom instruction and are encouraged to utilize it, they “did not process what the speaker said as well as students who did not have Internet access” (Wolpert, 2009, para. 11).

**Racism**

Early in the 15th century, Iberians created a language of racial hierarchy with non-Whites and non-Christians being considered inferior (Sweet, 2003). By the 16th century, “ideas about centralized monarchy, governance, humanism, and Christianity were intrinsic to a much broader European identity and were utilized as tools for measuring humankind on other parts of the globe” (Sweet, 2003, p. 32). Because Africans lacked the already established identity of the European-style way of life through religion and governance, Europeans found the African way of life uncivilized. Furthermore, they identified them as “uncivilized Africans” who “were marked by their blackness” (Sweet, 2003, p. 32). Although Africa has always included a diverse range of cultures, ethnicities, and religions, Africans shared only a common blackness, whereas Europeans shared a common whiteness, religion, and government. Europeans were *us* and the Africans became *them*. Any ambivalence soon diminished when racial slavery became prevalent in the New World leading to a cultural norm of racial hierarchy.

In the rest of the world, the “idea of Africans as lustful, carefree, heathens quickly made its way into popular literature and theater” (Sweet, 2003, p. 13) and they soon became seen as heathens. Literature expressed that race and religion made the distinction that Africans were inferior to Europeans (Sweet, 2003). Although historians view race origins differently, literature indicated race was indeed a factor in the slave trade and slavery. On the other hand, Eltis (2000) stated, “race was not a factor, but African slavery was a function of political and economic forces more than any conscious antipathy to race” (p. 22). Perhaps in the European mind it was the
“bundle of norms” (Sweet, 2003, p. 21) associated with European civilization that separated Europeans from Africans.

In the mid-20th century, Jim Crow laws that once inhibited African American achievement and prosperity diminished and the Civil Rights Movement of the 20th century emerged. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s resulted in race-related riots, violence, and passive protests but was met with resilience among the African American race. Thus, society had traveled a long road since the days of the Ku Klux Klan, which emerged after Blacks gained political power during post-Civil War Reconstruction, including decades of lynching (Stern, 2007). Many undertakings helped to reduce racism in this country, but there is still much to do to end the learned behavior of racism and to create new generations embracing mutual appreciation and tolerance. Therefore, it is important that we continue a dialogue and educate ourselves on the history of the slave trade and slavery in the United States. By examining museum exhibits, a narrative may begin to explain the continuing effects of racial prejudice on individually and collectively held biases.

Today, the United States remains permeated with hierarchal attitudes of color. Since the days when the “overwhelming majority of black people in America were classified as chattel slaves, denied the most basic human rights, and often treated with appalling contempt and cruelty” (Stern, 2007, p. 1), they endured and persevered under the constant hope that they would attain the most “basic human rights” (Stern, 2007, p. 1). Although this research does not focus specifically on the origins of racial slavery, this is significant because of the relationship it has with today’s ideologies of race in American society. However, there is opposition to the belief that the trans-Atlantic slave trade was not based on race alone. Literature reveals that those who targeted Africa did so because of the differences in cultures of the established identities of
Europe. Africans, known as the *others* who had no religion or at least no Christianity, were thought to be uncivilized with no established government; in addition, their skin color was dark. In the eyes of the established European cultural norms, the people of Africa were heathens. Moreover, these “uncivilized Africans were marked by their blackness” and the “racial nation of Negroes that emerged from these cultural and phenotypical differences was a direct contrast to a European nation that shared a common civilization and a common whiteness” (Sweet, 2003, p. 32).

**Summary**

In this chapter, I examined the key points of literature based on the focus of this study. The specified main themes reviewed in the literature were museum curricula, history and memory, learning theories, millennial generation, and racism. The research of each topic referred to in this chapter either supported or failed to support the conclusions that stemmed from the results of this study. These results and conclusions are identified in Chapters 4 and 5.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research focused primarily on the exhibits and patron perspectives of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. This particular museum presents exhibits that focus on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the institution of slavery, the Underground Railroad, courage, cooperation, and perseverance and was, therefore, chosen specifically because of what the exhibits portray about the topics. The presentation style of the exhibits and the intentions of the curators and exhibit developers form the curriculum the exhibits communicate to museum patrons. Prior to integrating patron perspectives into this qualitative research, I examined the exhibits the patrons reflected upon. This required an in-depth look at the exhibits and their presentations to the public. Below is a list and description of main exhibits as described by the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

1. **Brothers of the Borderland.** Brothers of the Borderland immerses guests in a thrilling flight to freedom, showcasing the courage and cooperation of John Parker and Rev. John Rankin as they aid a woman risking all to flee slavery. The 25-minute film features a segment narrated by Oprah Winfrey that introduces the main historical figures John Parker and Rev. John Rankin, abolitionists in Ripley, Ohio. The film is shown in an experiential theater, complete with fog rising from the river and crickets chirping in the background. *This exhibit may not be appropriate for very young*
children, but it is ideal for ages eight and above. (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2012a, para. 2)

2. *The Slave Pen.* The Slave Pen, built in the early 1800s, was recovered from a farm in Mason County, KY, less than 60 miles from the Freedom Center. The structure was used as a holding pen by Kentucky slave trader, Capt. John W. Anderson, to temporarily keep enslaved people being moved further south for sale. The Slave Pen played an integral role in the greater story of the internal slave trade in America. (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2012a, para. 3)

3. *Escape! From Slavery to Freedom.* From Slavery to Freedom portrays three centuries of slavery from its introduction into the Americas, to its abolition at the end of the American Civil War. The exhibit describes who the enslaved were, why they were brought here, how they lived, how they worked, and also who their allies were, and how ultimately they became free! A 12-minute companion film provides a dramatic overview of this dramatic story. (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2012a, para. 4)

4. *The Struggle Continues.* The Struggle Continues examines the desire to fight for freedom around the world and reminds us that slavery in many forms and guises continues to exist in the world around us. Iconic and abstract images, on each of two long, facing walls, symbolize and evoke freedom and slavery throughout the world. The images are accompanied by audio that creates an intriguing yet reflective mood. The Struggle Continues explore six conditions or circumstances—which we call “unfreedoms”—that prevent people from achieving freedom and the protection of basic human rights. These unfreedoms are hunger, illiteracy, slavery, racism,
tyranny, and genocide. *The exhibit may not be appropriate for young children.*

(National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2012a, para. 5)

5. **Suite for Freedom.** Suite for Freedom is a brief orientation film that introduces the Freedom Center Experience. Suite features a trilogy of distinct but interrelated animated shorts tied together by a musical suite. It is remarkable for the artistry of three world-class animators and musicians combined with inspiring words create a unique visual experience. (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2012a, para. 6)

6. **Everyday Freedom Heroes.** Everyday Freedom Heroes celebrates individuals from all walks of life whose extraordinary choices at key moments paralleled the courageous actions taken by participants on the Underground Railroad. (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2012a, para. 7)

7. **Invisible: Slavery Today.** The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center presents the world's first museum-quality, permanent exhibition on the subjects of modern-day slavery and human trafficking. The exhibition is entitled Invisible: Slavery Today. What can visitors expect to see? The overall design and “feel” of Invisible is that of a dingy warehouse in an unfamiliar city, filled with wood, metal, and plastic containers—shipping cartons for human beings. Through a variety of techniques and media, including videos, sounds and touch-screen presentations, Invisible offers a comprehensive examination of slavery in the modern world through the life experiences of five individuals who were caught up in one of the five most common forms of exploitation: forced labor, bonded indenture, child slavery, sex trafficking and domestic servitude. The exhibition explores the causes of slavery, the
economic forces that have contributed to its growth, and the response of government, the justice system, and the public to this scourge. But Invisible is not just a grim walk through degradation and mistreatment. A major concluding section is devoted to antislavery activities underway around the world, especially by the Freedom Center's partners in the exhibition: Free the Slaves, Goodweave, International Justice Mission, and Polaris Project. Visitors are also asked to make a personal commitment to be 21st Century Abolitionists in the cause of freedom. (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2012a, para. 1)

**Qualitative Method**

The epistemology of human knowledge in respect to the slave trade and the institution of slavery may have an impact on current attitudes and intolerant behaviors towards race. I looked through the lens of museum patrons to create discussion and to interpret data. I gathered data through multiple methodologies such as observations, focus groups, and artifacts. This approach did not make me an expert but encouraged conversation and multiple methods of data collection to construct knowledge of the issue.

A constructivist theory recognizes that the viewer creates the data and ensuing analysis through interaction with the viewed. Data do not provide a window on reality. Rather, the “discovered” reality arises from the interactive process and its temporal, control, and structural contexts. (Charmaz, 2005, p. 507)

Therefore, as I gathered the data through focus group sessions, observations, and artifacts, I analyzed the interactive process to create the discovered reality to learn if there is a relationship between individual perception and historical representation of museum exhibits. Furthermore, Charmaz (2005) defined grounded theory methods and identified their flexibility. This
flexibility allows the researcher to focus on the data collection to conceptually develop and build a theory. Although a new theory did not emerge, the constructivist approach helped me to understand the prior knowledge patrons had and, in some cases, allowed me to observe how patrons changed their perspectives (Charmaz, 2005).

My Own Subjectivity

The American dream is one of freedom, prosperity, and the pursuit of happiness. This means U.S. citizens have the freedom to pursue their dreams whatever they may be; they have the freedom to prosper and grow as individuals and communities through diligence and perseverance. Although the founding fathers envisioned a country declaring rights for its citizens, there were unfortunate norms instilled due to the context of the time. For example, I believe within the development of the American dream, there was a deep seed of racial inequality planted in the newfound society of the colonies. However, even though the seed has largely been uprooted, its essence still lingers beneath and continues to blossom under current ideologies within the cultural production of society.

My own experience with the American dream has been full of opportunity, mistakes, and affective learning that have been meaningful and useful to my development. Meaningful in the sense that I have learned from past mistakes and will continue to learn from future mistakes by conceptualizing and organizing my thoughts of outcomes I experience due to the choices I make in my life. This is allowing me to achieve prosperity in my endeavors due to embracing mistakes rather than sweeping them under the rug. I hold that this correlates with mistakes of United States history, however on a larger scale. Thus, this understanding influences my interpretations in this study. Understanding the facts and players in history is important, but realizing the
consequences and long-term effects of the choices made in United States history with regard to slavery is essential to affective learning and moving forward.

Interpretations of history vary through each generation, and they affect the cultural production of a society. Therefore, using myself as the research instrument, I have my own biases, values, and beliefs due to the cultural production of society that I have experienced. When interpreting aspects of history such as the slave trade and slavery, certain ideologies may emerge to assist in finding the pattern or origin of our beliefs. A disclosure of my own beliefs is evident. I believe if we do not continue to confront our nation’s historical involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the institution of slavery, we cannot fully address continuing issues of cultural production that stem from the consequences of this phenomenon, established solely for exploitative purposes. For instance, I believe the consequences of the trade spawned norms and beliefs, generation after generation, that equate to the present-day views of intolerance and tainted ideologies. This research assisted in identifying perspectives and interpretations patrons have of history when presented in an exhibit format. After the analysis of the exhibits, observations, and interviews were complete, I found a link between the presentations of museum exhibits and present-day interpretations of our actions in a culturally produced society. I looked for the origin of intolerant ideologies of today and racial hierarchical attitudes. I observed for only emanated affective learning that perhaps provoked an attitudinal change within each patron who entered the museum. In addition, recognizing the patrons’ previous knowledge of the era assisted in identifying their interpretations of the exhibit and helped me to identify the cognitive in relation to the affective.
Data Analysis

“A qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (Creswell as cited in Spitzlinger, 2010, p. 5). This study undertook the perspective of visual literacy to understand the interpretation of patrons of museums and their personal reflections on what the exhibits meant to them.

There was an early and ongoing analysis throughout this study. I transcribed all interviews and observations in an organized color-coded format. Themes emerged during the coding process, which I then sorted into categories of focus. The categories of focus became museum curricula, social responsibility, history and memory, learning theories, racism, and contemporary slavery. These categories that emerged strongly tied to the themes of the review of literature in Chapter 2. The results identified in Chapter 4 include participant voices, which convey in their own words their reactions to the Freedom Center. I then compared and contrasted the results with the literature review, revealed in Chapter 2, to see how these new data fit into the emerging puzzle. Lastly, the findings and conclusions were objectively expressed in Chapter 5 along with suggestions for future research related to this topic.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

I examined the representation of the museum exhibits and what patrons reflected on after viewing the exhibits. Methods of data collection involved focus groups, observations, and collection of relevant documents such as museum pamphlets, artifacts, historical literature, photographs, art, and paintings. Additionally, I identified the certain aspects about the museum to familiarize the reader about the exhibits used in this study (see Appendix B).
To understand the presentation of history through the exhibits, I conducted a focus group with museum employees to establish their principles. After identifying the mission that curators follow, I noted a correlation between the mission statement of the museum and the exhibits on display; this is explained in Chapter 5. The exact questions presented are contained in Appendix A. Moreover, the instrumentation of this study relied on humans and their reactions to the visual representations.

**Population and Sample**

The population examined was 31 Freedom Center patrons and Freedom Center employees at least 18 years of age, after they had viewed the exhibits. I separated the 31 participants into three groups. Group 1 consisted of self-selected participant groups of Freedom Center patrons. The self-selected participant groups emerged when individuals randomly walked up to my table and I then discussed with them what I was doing as a researcher. Group 2 consisted of Indiana State University students who visited the Freedom Center during their semester course. The semester course Group 2 students were enrolled in was an undergraduate history course on slavery. Group 3 consisted of the four Freedom Center employees.

The demographics considered were region of origin, race, gender, and age. I identified the age demographic by generational markers identified as Generation Y (Millennial Generation), Generation X, Baby Boomer Generation, Silent Generation, and the G.I. Generation. Each generation is identified under the list of terms in Chapter 1. The form used to identify the demographics of the participants is found in Appendix E. Again, the museum chosen for the sample was the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio.
The self-selected participants of museum visitors, generations of Group 1 were more sporadic and mixed. The majority of Group 2 (the history class) was from Generation Y; on the other hand, Group 1 had someone from each of the mentioned generations, giving a broader perspective of the Freedom Center. Group 1 had not been in a history class discussing slavery for the past 13 weeks nor were they as open to discussing current ideologies of race in America. However, the older generations within Group 1 did bring to the table more experience with society and memories of times when inequalities were more open and protected by law. Therefore, among the three groups that participated in the focus group sessions, varieties of responses were offered. The content of the dialogues are addressed in Chapters 4 and 5.

**Focus Groups**

I conducted focus groups of one to five participants that lasted 30-45 minutes. I used a semi-structured format for the open-ended questions so that participants could share freely as thoughts occurred to them. I placed myself on the third floor of the museum in the open hallway, sitting at a table, and asked patrons if they would like to participate in my study and speak with me after their exhibit observation (see Appendix D). When the patrons chose to participate, they signed up for a focus group session at a specific time, returned to my table, and we conducted the focus group about their experience at the Freedom Center. Prior to the interview, I read the appropriate release form to the patrons and when they agreed, the patrons signed the form (see Appendix C). Only then did the focus group proceed. It was not a yes and no discussion, but rather one in utilizing intricate details given by the patron after observing the exhibits. The sessions were audio recorded with anonymity protected. When presenting the results in Chapter 4, the narratives were cited as Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3. Upon completion of the focus group sessions, I locked the audio device in a secure briefcase when not in use.
The sessions for Group 2 were conducted upon return to Indiana State University’s campus, where I then scheduled times to meet with the students. Although some sessions took place the same day the history class visited the Freedom Center, for some students, other sessions were conducted at a later date. I had completed all sessions for Group 2 and followed the same procedure that I described previously with regard to the participants signing the appropriate release form, audio recording each session, and asking the same protocol of questions within a five-day period. (Appendix A).

Group 2 had been students in a 16-week history course that met three times a week for 50 minutes a session. The class was a higher education lecture class. The reason for choosing this class is that I knew they were discussing slavery for 13 weeks prior to their visit to the Freedom Center. I also wanted to conduct the focus group session after they had completed several weeks of the class. This specific group differed from the other two groups because of their weekly discussions on slavery. Per the syllabus of the class, the conceptual content consisted of the following:

- What is slavery? Classical slavery in Greece and Rome.
- European expansion into the western hemisphere. Alternatives to African slavery: indentured servants; American Indians as slaves; and the transition to African slaves.
- The international African slave trade.
- Economics, Demographics, and Work Routines among slaves in the Americas.
- The slave community and slave culture: marriage, family, women and gender, and religion.
- The slave community and slave culture: resistance, runaways, and rebellions.
• Free people in a slave society: How did living in a slave society affect people? The defense of slavery.
• Abolition and emancipation.
• The legacies of slavery. Race relations after slavery, focusing on Brazil, the Caribbean, and the United States. What is the racial legacy of slavery? Contemporary Slavery. (Olsen, personal communication, November 10, 2012)

Observations

I observed the exhibits and the visitors within the Freedom Center, writing notes that I later coded and analyzed. I spent approximately two days at the museum for observations. I provided general and sometimes detailed information about the setting or subjects in addition to specific descriptions of the exhibits and their intended purposes. Additionally, I analyzed and interpreted following data collection rather than concurrent with data collection to better detect emerging themes. To further assist in my analysis efforts, I continued to explore the literature available in the field and used visual devices or analogies to help me understand what I was seeing. My formal observation included observing the patrons as they viewed the exhibits and recording actions or reactions they displayed.

Collection of Artifacts

Again, for purposes of this study, I obtained pamphlets and informative materials given by the museum about the exhibits utilized in this study. The artifacts I observed and/or collected, such as artwork, paintings, pamphlets, photographs, and historical literature, assisted with my understanding the narrative of the Freedom Center. For example, primary sources found in historical literature explained facts of the trade, historical perspectives, and presentation of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the institution of slavery. In addition, the pamphlets and readings
from each exhibit assisted in explaining what and how the curators and evaluators presented the story. All artifacts collected, observed, and analyzed were part of the Center’s curricula and helped answer the questions posed in this study.

**Summary**

What is the impact, if any, of the museum exhibits on its patrons and how do they affect their attitudes or importance they placed on this part of United States history in connection with modern-day race relations? This qualitative study focused primarily on the affective learning experienced by patrons who entered the doors of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. This particular museum presents exhibits on the trans-Atlantic slave trade through today’s modern-day slavery and tolerance. Upon examination of the museum exhibits and consideration of the presentation style and intentions, the resulting narrative revealed the intended curriculum. Therefore, prior to integrating patron perspectives into this qualitative research, I examined the exhibits patrons reflected upon. This required an in-depth look at the exhibits and their presentations to the public.

Attention turned next to patrons’ experiences. Did patrons experience meaningful learning at the museum by placing value on the connection between slavery and its impact on American culture? This research shed light on possible answers to these questions. The exhibit is not to give an opinion but to supply facts and an unbiased narrative so that visitors can make up their own minds and interact in dialogue with other patrons, facilitating critical thinking and meaningful learning.

I explored this relatively recent museum in the United States focused on the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the institution of slavery to reveal its intended purposes and the impact the exhibits have on patrons. An analysis of museum exhibits, supporting materials, instructional
technologies, and focus groups with museum employees and patrons revealed how these museum exhibits presented this important part of American history and the consequence that lingers. Generally, this analysis established a relationship, perhaps heretofore unknown, between the historical representations of our cultural history and patron perceptions. Specifically, the study examined how these exhibits impact popular beliefs.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The story of slavery and the courageous steps to overcome and progress out of the chains of oppression are told through the exhibits at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. In the past, this story may have been misconstrued, but its growing exposure and various perspectives continue to educate those unfamiliar with the topic. As we have heard repeatedly, “why bring up the past and why discuss something that had nothing to do with me?” There are reasons to understand history. An employee at the Freedom Center described why the curricula at the museum are so important.

It’s important because this is a story that has been little told in the past and is growing in exposure. I think sharing with the public ties in with the mission and the idea of allowing them to see what people have done in the past to achieve their freedom, and hopefully, then they will see and they will say, okay, well this is not just the past. There are a number of things going on. So what can I do to make it different? That is an important point as to why the museum is here and why I am here. I like to see that opportunity.

(Group 3)

In this section, I communicated the thoughts obtained in the focus group sessions, that is, thoughts of museum employees and museum patrons after visiting the Freedom Center. The populations examined were museum patrons at least 18 years of age after they had viewed the
exhibits and four museum employees. I split the participants into three separate groups. Group 1 consisted of 12 museum patrons, age 18 or older. Group 2 consisted of 15 Indiana State University students who visited the museum during their semester course. Group 3 consisted of four Freedom Center employees. In Chapter 5, I utilized the voices of Group 1 participants, Group 2 participants, and Group 3 participants and drew conclusions approving or disputing the literature review in Chapter 2 while answering the focus question of this study.

A dialogue emerged during the focus group sessions with the participants that allowed for elaboration on the Freedom Center and its mission. What museum exhibits present and the impact they have on the patrons was the focus of this study. The results indicated that when interpreting displays, a visual rhetoric emerged and the individual decided how to construe the concept.

**Freedom Center Description**

The Freedom Center combines technology and artifacts within their exhibits that tell a story of our American past. Exhibits contain objects that are often “witnesses in spite of themselves” (Bloch, 1965, p. 61) that offer “indirect testimony” (Bloch, 1965, p. 61) unlike the direct address of annals, chronicles, or depositions, and we may “prick up our ears more eagerly when we are permitted to overhear what was never intended to be said” (Bloch, 1965, p. 63). The exhibits not only enable the patrons to listen to the narrative of history but also to learn to think critically, synthesize the newfound information, and then to apply it to current real world issues.

The results of the dialogue created in the focus group sessions indicated a variety of ways the Freedom Center’s curriculum affects, challenges, and changes patrons’ views on this area of American history as applied to current issues. Because the patrons viewed these exhibits through
their own cultural lenses, perspectives varied and are described further in the conclusion section of this research. Therefore, in this chapter, the dialogue indicates how cultural ideas shape racial thinking.

**Instruments**

To collect data for this qualitative research, I spent time observing visitors at the Freedom Center. I also observed artifacts and the curriculum of the exhibits at the Freedom Center. I wrote down the information as it presented itself and later coded the information where themes emerged to assist in identifying answers to the proposed questions of this study. Additionally, I interviewed employees and museum visitors in focus group sessions. The number of participants within each focus group varied. I interviewed 31 participants; 12 were various Freedom Center visitors, four were Freedom Center employees, and 15 were from the postsecondary history class that toured the museum. The focus group sessions took place in an educational room on the third floor of the Freedom Center to uphold privacy, except for Group 2 that also met with me at the Indiana State University Commons area on campus. The three major focus groups used in this study were interviewed in subgroups that ranged from one to five participants in each group. The participants from all focus groups included people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. They also included people from each identified generation—Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomer Generation, and the Silent Generation—with various education levels, from various regions of the United States. Table 1 identifies the basic demographics of the participants.
Table 1

Demographics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomer</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent Generation</td>
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<td><strong>Region of Origin</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>South</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outside the United States</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organization of Data Analysis

The transcripts, artifacts (exhibits), and observations were organized by coding the transcribed material thus allowing recurrent themes to emerge. I coded them into six different themes. In this chapter, results of my data are expressed in participants’ voices describing their experiences. I connected the results with the themes from the literature review in Chapter 2. The findings were then separated into three groups. The first group (Group 1) identifies findings from the Freedom Center’s visitors. The second group (Group 2) identifies the findings from interviews with the students from a postsecondary history class on slavery. The third group
(Group 3) identifies the findings from the Freedom Center’s employees. I chose to separate the three groups because their backgrounds differ distinctly. The 15 students interviewed in the history class (Group 2) have been discussing themes of slavery with regard to world history and, therefore, have currently discussed the topic in detail. Although the focus of the class was geared toward the western hemisphere, it covered and visited contemporary slavery as well. Their prior knowledge inclined the history class students to think more critically about the museum exhibits. This can be seen in the dialogue of the history class because the students were more open to discuss how the exhibits related to current issues of unfreedoms. Furthermore, the majority of the history class was from Generation Y and the Midwest region of the United States.

Again, I felt the need to differentiate the results in this chapter by labeling the narratives Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3, and generationally specifically because the majority of Group 2 belonged to the Generation Y (Millennial). Generation Y are people born in the United States between the years of 1980 and 2000 and, therefore, they equate to the younger participants in this study. Their generational characteristics are noted to be upbeat, open-minded, and they have an increased sense of social awareness (Cone, 2006). This poses a possible justification for why they were more open to discuss the exhibits at the Freedom Center in relation to racial ideologies in society.

Generation Y (Millennial) present themselves as a more tolerant generation than previous ones. They tend to be more of a liberal mind instead of a conservative traditional mindset. This generation was born into a world with technological advances such as commercial media, YouTube media, cell phones, Facebook, marketing, internet, emails, iPods, iPads, and iPhones--a world of technology they have never lived without. Significant events such as global warming, gay rights, political correctness, and terrorism all contribute to their collective ideology.
Group 1 and Group 3 were a mix of ages. The 16 participants in Group 1 and Group 3 combined came from all four of the labeled generations—Silent Generation, Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Generation Y, but only one participant in Group 1 was from Generation Y, the Millennial Generation. Characteristics and significant events that contribute to each generation vary. For example, the Silent Generation would have spent more than 40 years living under the laws of segregation and would have experienced World War II and the Korean War. Likewise, the Baby Boomer Generation could have spent 20 years living under the laws of segregation; however, they would have experienced significant events such as the Civil Rights era and the Vietnam War. Members of Generation X are noted as an individualistic society, experiencing significant events such as the AIDS epidemic and soaring divorce rates (Cone, 2006).

The generations involved in the study are identified by the overall characteristics of each. Life experiences and social environment, such as wars, segregation, civil rights, the AIDS epidemic, and terrorism, contribute to our innate ideologies. Perhaps inherent values stemmed from experiencing these events. These values would certainly influence their interpretations of exhibits at the museum.

The questions asked during the focus group sessions centered on the impact, if any, the Freedom Center has on its patrons and how it affects their attitudes or values related to this part of U.S. history. The questions also sought to understand any connection patrons might make with modern-day race relations. As mentioned previously, I transcribed the audio-recorded responses, coded for similarities, and placed them in specific themes. Emergent themes included museum curricula and exhibits, social responsibility of museums, history and memory, learning
theories and affective learning, racism, and contemporary slavery. I identified the results of the conducted focus groups and placed them in correlating themes.

**Freedom Center Curricula and Exhibits**

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center educates its visitors on not only American slavery and the dedication to abolish it, but it celebrates those complex stories of courage, cooperation, and perseverance that made it happen. As one can see, “museum” is not in the title of this facility. This represents part of a paradigm shift museums have experienced over the past few centuries. The past president of the Freedom Center, Edwin J. Rigaud described the Freedom Center as “an educational institution that exposes people to history, but also gets them to begin to think about how you take those lessons from history and apply them today” (“More Than a Museum,” 2004, para. 4). Furthermore, Rigaud addressed the mission of the Freedom Center as well: “What we’re encouraging people to do is to relive those exciting stories and search within themselves for the same kind of courage and cooperation and perseverance to advance the cause of freedom today” (“More Than a Museum,” 2004, para. 4). The Freedom Center’s official mission says, “We reveal stories about freedom’s heroes, from the era of the Underground Railroad to contemporary times, challenging and inspiring everyone to take courageous steps for freedom today” (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2011, p. 1). The Freedom Center has taken a part of American history and made it an interactive learning experience for those who visit with the mission in mind. The Freedom Center’s pamphlet given to visitors states the motto to “Fan the Flame.” As stated in the Freedom Center *Visitor’s Guide*:

The stories memorialized within the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center should not be considered stories of tragedy. The stories of those whose
freedoms have been challenged or denied are complex. And, those who reveal these stories at the Freedom Center recognize not only the complexities of the stories themselves, but also the need to reveal the triumph of the human spirit to overcome great obstacles. At the Freedom Center we believe that there is a spark within each of us; a passion to make our communities and our world a better place for all. There is a spark within each of us, Fan the Flame. Whether the passion is to fight genocide, illiteracy, or hunger, the Freedom Center serves as a beacon of freedom and inspiration we are all personally responsible for the future. (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2011, p. 4)

An employee of the Freedom Center further reinforced this literature:

I think it is an important mission. Things that the museum does is to show people the strength and courage it took for this group of people to triumph over the institution of slavery and that it should be encouraging to everyone. It can be used to encourage people to take where they are, their circumstances that are not ideal, but ones you can triumph over and become better. That’s what the people who were enslaved did. Had to do.

(Group 3)

The previous statement emphasized the mission of the museum as described in the Freedom Center pamphlet:

During the turbulent decades of the early 19th century, a period when the United States was divided by law and custom into “free” and “slave” states, courage, cooperation, and perseverance took on increased significance in society. Conductors on the Underground Railroad, an informal, unstructured network, aided those seeking freedom. The study of the Underground Railroad is set
within the historical context of slavery in the United States; nevertheless, this period continues to affect modern society. With this foundation, the stories of triumph and tribulation, of courage and cooperation and of hope and commemoration unite under one roof where a focus on freedom brings relevancy to all generations, regardless of background. The stories represented here, and what they can mean for people today, truly distinguishes the Freedom Center from many traditional museum experiences. It is intended that visitors to the Freedom Center will view their experiences as positive, constructive, and future-oriented. (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2011, p. 3)

The pamphlet considers the continuously lit *The Eternal Flame* exhibit that sits outside and in front of the Freedom Center as a symbol to represent advocacy to end unfreedoms. The flame symbolically relates the center’s belief that it is essential to tell the story of slavery and the triumphs over it repeatedly because it “brings relevancy to all generations, regardless of background” (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2011, p.3).

There were six specific exhibits that were discussed by the participants of this study. These include *The Eternal Flame, The Slave Pen, The Struggle Continues, The Escape Gallery, The Brothers of the Borderland*, and *Music of Change: Hymns, Blues, and Rock*. Following are narratives on each exhibit as stated by participants in this study. One participant described the necessity of the Freedom Center by discussing *The Eternal Flame* exhibit.
The Eternal Flame was deep. Many people probably do not know about The Eternal Flame. There is so much violence and the world is not at peace. A lot of it is because people have no clue what is going on. (Group 2)

Another exhibit at the Freedom Center is The Slave Pen on the second floor. It is one of the first exhibits you see. The Slave Pen was built in the early 1800s and looks like a one-room cabin with an upper level. It was used as a “holding pen by a Kentucky slave trader, Capt. John W. Anderson, to temporarily keep enslaved people before being sold and moved further south” (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2012a, para. 3). The Slave Pen was an essential factor with regard to the internal slave trade. Although the chained slaves that were piled in the pen are no longer there, the narrative presented by the docent and iPod tour is disturbing to hear. Between the cramped conditions, chains, heat, smell from lack of proper sanitation, and lack of nutrition, the image is a gruesome one. This proved to be one of the more inspiring exhibits, as summed up by one patron:

The Slave Pen exhibit was visual for me. Until now we just learned it in textbooks, to me it was more visual. Seeing the exhibits at the Freedom Center put it into perspective and it was moving. I found that really being there sets the scene and it puts you back in that time and how terrifying that must have been to literally be running for your life. I got chills. It is one thing to read about things but to visualize it makes history come to life. (Group 2)

Another museum visitor’s experience at The Slave Pen exhibit really brought history to life.

Walking into The Slave Pen with its chains and history gave me a feeling of apprehension. It helped me visualize what it must have been like for the inhabitants. But, I think if it had been darker in the Pen itself and the floor made of dirt (if that was
the case where it was originally erected), the effect would have been more intense. Also, people had stayed in that room for periods of time. Some signs of human habitation other than the chains would have enhanced the experience. If some of the types of old clothes, benches or beds or furniture or cups that must have been used in there were present, the effect would have been again, more intense. And I think the placing of that Pen in that well lit area reduced the scariness that could have been represented in the exhibit. (Group 1)

When asked what exhibits affected them the most, The Slave Pen was cited several times. As one visitor expressed,

I would say *The Slave Pen* is the most inspiring exhibit at the Freedom Center because it symbolizes some of the brutalities of slavery. It was a building that was used to house people who were being traded from one location to another as part of the internal slave trade and there were men held there at all times in chains on the second floor and women and children on the first floor. It symbolizes what slavery was like for people in this country. (Group 1)

A third exhibit noted frequently as having an important impression on visitors of the Freedom Center was *The Struggle Continues* exhibit. This exhibit “examines the desire to fight for freedom around the world and reminds us that slavery in many forms and guises continues to exist in the world around us” (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2012a, para. 6). *The Struggle Continues* exhibit demonstrates six types of circumstances of what the Freedom Center calls “unfreedoms that prevent people from achieving freedom and protection of basic human rights and labeled as hunger, illiteracy, slavery, racism, tyranny, and genocide” (National
Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2012a, para. 6). This Freedom Center employee described the exhibit in his or her own words.

I think *The Struggle Continues* movie for me because it takes the period between 1865 to today. There is a gap in this, but we are not a civil rights museum and I understand the gap. I think *The Struggle Continues* is kind of my motivation when things get a little rough for me. I have walked into that movie and it refocuses me because as I said it takes me from the period of 1865 through today. I mean for example, if you are a woman (and I have three daughters), you got your right to vote 75 years after an African American male that was enslaved got their right to vote. It is amazing to me. Therefore, there was a struggle there that continued into the Civil Rights thing where there was no equality for African Americans in America. So I think we talk about those courageous steps in which people still fought on even after slavery to achieve some level of equality. We are not at it now by any means, but that is why I like *The Struggle Continues* exhibit because there is so much work to still do. Probably more work now everywhere globally so that is kind of a more inspiring place for me. (Group 3)

Additionally, another participant described two exhibits, *The Slave Pen* and *The Struggle Continues*, and made a metaphorical connection describing a current issue in contemporary society.

*The Slave Pen* and *The Struggle Continues* exhibits touched me the most. I know there is something about trying to understand the story of *The Slave Pen* because you know you can, but you can’t because a lot of it is missing, because you have that imagination and let it build up and you try to tell that and explain that but it is hard. It’s very powerful. Walking into a room you may not know a person is enslaved or being abused at home,
they hide it really well. Their *Slave Pen* may be their home, own home, so we don’t always know. Being able to start to recognize that these things are still going on and there is still work to be done. (Group 3)

A worthy connection was made between *The Slave Pen* and *The Struggle Continues* exhibits and how American slavery of the past can equate to slavery today. Visitors also seemed to take the exhibits and the messages conveyed personally by using the term *we*. “I didn’t realize it was to the point where we were taking people from Africa then we stopped and then it became the slave trade within the United States.” (Group 1)

A fourth exhibit mentioned was *The Escape Gallery*. *The Escape Gallery* is one of many interactive exhibits at the Freedom Center. The exhibit focuses on the period between 1830 and 1865. The exhibit “teaches the brave and clever actions of men and women who resisted slavery” (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2012a, para. 4). A participant described *The Escape Gallery*.

*The Escape Gallery* influenced me. The gallery on the second floor concentrates on the Underground Railroad history, but it tells the story of many different people from all different walks of life who finally realized that the power was being used wrongly and abused. They were all working towards a common goal. So I think that is a great exhibit to show how so many types of different people helped out the same way, it’s a human condition to feel that way. (Group 3)

A fifth exhibit discussed by participants was *The Brothers of the Borderland* film. This is a 25-minute film that presents the “courage and cooperation” of two abolitionists as “they aid a woman risking all to flee slavery” (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2012a, para. 2). The experiential theater is used to present this film. It includes additional features such
as “fog rising from the river and crickets chirping in the background,” so the patron can experience a truly “thrilling flight to freedom” (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2012a, para. 2). *The Brothers of the Borderland* film is described by a visitor.

*The Brothers of the Borderland* film was good in that it brought out factors the viewer might not have thought about like possibly not ever seeing your family again if you chose to escape especially if you were successful or even unsuccessful because if you drowned in the river crossing or were shot and killed, your family would never know about it. But other things could have been included. I would think there were probably repercussions by outraged slave owners or family members of the escapee who were left behind or who chose not to risk fleeing. Maybe more of these details were brought out in the film *Escape* about freedom seekers and the Underground Railroads. I didn’t get to see.

(Group 1)

A sixth exhibit that was specifically discussed was the traveling exhibit, which at the time of the study was *Music of Change: Hymns, Blues, and Rock*. The music exhibit described how history assisted in the creation of music explaining the “talent of weaving sound and silence into artistic expression. Its definition is unique to time and social context. An article from the Freedom Center explains the exhibit as the mixture of elements such as rhythm, pitch, and timbre intertwine” (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2012b, para. 9). As one participant described,

It added on to the Civil War about how music was influenced by racisms. The music exhibit does a nice job of explaining that there was cooperation and that it wasn’t always Black and White separate, there has always been some cooperation of the human condition, the humanity. It shows you how we got Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, and other
artists like the Beatles, but then you see the music that they were singing and where it came from. Who inspired it and that bluegrass wouldn’t be bluegrass if African culture hadn’t come over here and brought a banjo with it. So you begin to see that there are tools and ways to better cultural relationship that racial divide. We just need to incorporate those better. (Group 1)

**Social Responsibility of Museums**

The social responsibilities of museums are to present cultural identities and their origins to clarify validated facts and truths and to convey meaning from the narratives and perspectives within the context of the time. In this case, the Freedom Center has the responsibility of holding true to its mission by portraying the ideology of courage, cooperation, and perseverance to overcome unfreedoms of all kinds. Several comments in the narratives below imply that the exhibits had an impact on the visitors. This is validation that the Freedom Center is adequately fulfilling social responsibilities museums have when conveying history and promoting positions of advocacy to the public. For example, a visitor mentioned the movie in *The Brothers of the Borderland* exhibit:

> In the movie they talked about abolitionists, both races coming together for a cause to try to end slavery getting both groups at the same time, I liked that. You know Whites were enslaved too. Why don’t they come together now? There are still many prejudiced people that never had to deal with it. People just step back and people don’t want to let that go and say we are all walking as one now and it’s hard to keep sticking your hand out to try and do this together. (Group 2)
The social responsibilities of museums are to get the visitors to constructively think about the information conveyed. In the mission of the Freedom Center, this is to advocate courage, cooperation, and perseverance. These are heard in the narratives of the participants.

**History and Memory**

With regard to the history and memory of slavery in the United States, a dialogue emerged about the impact the Freedom Center had on its patrons. Although it is a disturbing part of history, the museum effectively conveys its message regarding the struggle and strides of courage, cooperation, and perseverance to overcome the adversity of inequality in America. The influences of the museum affected patrons’ willingness to critically consider history and their particular history and memories. Below is a direct quote from an employee of the Freedom Center discussing that individual’s own history and memory.

> It’s amazing that in our lifetime, we had segregation as a consequence of slavery, where they couldn’t go in the bathrooms, couldn’t drink water from the same fountains, couldn’t sit in the bus where you wanted to. I’ve went to stores where there were colored bathrooms and white-only bathrooms. I’ve been to movie theaters where African Americans sit on the second floor in the balcony and whites sat on the main floor until one day the African Americans got tired of that and burned the balcony so that they integrated that theater. You know that was yet in our lifetime. (Group 3)

This critical thinking emerged after thinking back to the individual’s own childhood experiences and remembering the historical consequences of slavery. Furthermore, in relation to personal experiences other visitors remembered what they learned as children.
I think most of us learned the history of slavery the same way and by the way African Americans were enslaved in this country and Harriet Tubman she helped take people across the river and Abraham Lincoln wrote the Emancipation Proclamation and that’s what we get. (Group 1)

However, not all participants walked into the museum with the same educational background. Previous knowledge seems to be polarized in the sense that many knew the story of slavery in the United States and had learned this in school; in contrast, there were those who were oblivious to this part of United States history. “I have a terrible education about any of this. I never knew anything until I was out of college probably and then I think I just learned myself” (Group 1). This contrasted with “I have taught U.S. history and so I roughly know the story of American slavery and I think it’s portrayed pretty well” (Group 1).

Another visitor was flabbergasted at the role the United States played in the slave trade and slavery.

I didn’t realize it was to the point where we were taking people from Africa then we stopped and then it became the slave trade within the United States. I didn’t realize there was a point, it was commerce, the biggest commerce in slaves. It was incredible. (Group 1)

Therefore, many still do not know the story of slavery and the courage, cooperation, and perseverance it took to overcome. A participant stated why we should never forget the issue. I think it’s important to never forget. Many people just want to forget. Even some African Americans feel like it’s not important to remember. The point is that you don’t want history to continue and repeat itself. That is a mindset. In order to be able to treat
humans as equals you have to have a certain mindset. If you are not educated and you
don’t know about the history then you exist in a sense of ignorance and that is dangerous
because you will have the same situation in the future and history will repeat. (Group 2)
The visitor below was astounded at her ignorance of the topic of slavery.

I am amazed at how ignorant I am of so much I’ve learned the last two hours. I think,
admittedly, it’s kind of a dark subject; it’s a little hard but interesting all at the same
time. It’s kind of enlightening to see the different faces of slavery and our history of this
country. Compared to other countries that part is nice how they have that exhibit of
modern day slavery, it connects the dots of how it is a problem in the human condition.
(Group 1)

Other participants said it is important to know your history, thus we should tell the story
repeatedly.

It is important to know your history because many of the African Americans today are
lost. For example, the reason I want to vote is that my ancestors fought for the right to
vote. Many people do not realize that. They do not understand how fortunate they are to
be able to vote or be in school to have equality. They have no idea. (Group 2)

Many participants indicated this need to understand the past to move forward and progress.

I feel like in order to move forward you have to learn about your past. You can’t go
anywhere if you don’t know where you came from. Especially the generation I see
today, they feel like they have to be so dependent on guns and nonsense. They do not
know where they came from and no one is teaching them. They do not know that people
fought for them to go to school and be able to vote, but they are not taking advantage of
it. Even if you are not African American, it is still worldwide with many races. For
example, they have *The Eternal Flame* here, and they say it’s not going out until slavery is over. Therefore, I think it’s not going out because people think because it’s not the African Americans being chained up and working in the cotton fields and on plantations they think it’s over. (Group 2)

When focusing on what happened with slavery and the struggle to overcome it and move on, many felt we are still struggling with slavery. When asked the questions such as “how do you feel about the relationship between slavery and racism today?” and “do you think we have moved on?” “What are your thoughts about it and have we actually moved on from racial slavery and issues of racism?” A museum employee responded,

I’m not sure we’ve moved on from racial slavery, the race has just changed. I mean you know there is all kinds of slavery in India, I mean it’s not the blacks, but as far as racism, I think we’ve come a long way since when I was a kid. As an African American, I was never protected from the stuff. I came from slavery and I am a descendant of slaves. You know it’s almost offensive when somebody says what am I going to see, but then I also understand that they are protecting their child and I’m not sure from what, they may see it as a nightmare. But if you tell the right story of courage, cooperation, and perseverance between races that working together we can accomplish anything, that’s how we reverse it at the desk; but people do come and if they complain, it is somebody that had a chip on their shoulder who didn’t have an open mind to begin with. (Group 3)

One can see the transmission of cultural values in various museums depending on their content focus and the mission they want to convey. We know the mission of the
Freedom Center is to fan the flame that is within each of us to advocate inhibiting freedoms in the world today. As one participant conveyed,

It’s important because this is a story that has been little told in the past and it’s growing exposure. I think sharing that with the public ties in with the mission and the idea of allowing us to see what people have done in the past to achieve their freedom and, hopefully, then they will see that and say okay, well this is not just the past. There are a number of things going on and again so what can I do to make a difference? For me, that is an important part as to why the museum is here and why I am here. I like to see that opportunity for kids and adults alike.

(Group 1)

**Learning Theories/Affective Learning**

The social responsibility for and discourse of museums is educating the public. How does the Freedom Center integrate the affective learning domain of Bloom’s taxonomy when conveying its mission to the public? Affective learning is the emotional aspect an individual experiences while learning. It helps visitors to learn through experience and internalize their attitudes, opinions, and behaviors in future predicaments. Affective learning provokes the individual to ask questions and critically think about the experience. Below is a response from a Freedom Center employee about the impact the museum has on its visitors.

Yeah, I think people leave the museum after spending a few hours feeling enlightened and empowered from what they learned and put it to use in their daily life. I think each one of us you know the story of courage, cooperation, and perseverance is a story that transcends and gets broader as you move on, so I think it helps because it teaches a lesson
of working together and teaches the lesson that if we just keep working at it together you can pretty much accomplish anything. (Group 3)

More specifically, an employee of the Freedom Center focused on an exhibit entitled *The Struggle Continues*, an exhibit on contemporary slavery.

The visible slavery exhibit [*The Struggle Continues*] is one of the more inspiring ones because with that knowledge we can make a connection to the past. However, many people come away with a sense of what should I be doing in my life to try and make a difference in the lives of other people? Then even though we talk about stories from around the world, you begin to understand that it’s not happening somewhere else all the time. It is happening here, too, and so I think there is that social justice sense that you come away with, that okay now I’m beginning to see this and understand that there is still work to be done. I think that is why people need to do a dialogue zone and have a place you can go after your tour and have people who were trained to lead sessions such as psychologists. To just sit and debrief and talk about everything and what they had experienced, what they went through. I think it would be amazing to just sit down and talk. (Group 3)

The emotional learning that took place at the Freedom Center for some visitors included feelings of pain, emotion, challenge, sadness, success, and triumph. For example, one museum employee described the viewing of a movie exhibit *Escape! From Slavery to Freedom*,

I think the *Escape* movie is kind of my motivation when things get a little rough around here for me. I would walk into that movie and it refocuses me because
like I said it takes me from that period of 1865 through today and the things they went through. (Group 3)

Other visitors stated, “It’s not all that emotional for me” (Group 1). Again, a Freedom Center employee described affective learning as an essential part of the Museum’s mission.

It’s important because this is a story that has been little told in the past and its growing exposure [the story of American slavery]. I think sharing that with the public ties in with the mission and the idea of allowing us to see what people have done in the past to achieve their freedom and hopefully then they will see that and say okay, well this is not just the past. There are a number of things going on and again so what can I do to make a difference. For me, that is an important point as to why the museum is here and why I am here. I like to see that opportunity for kids and adults alike. (Group 3)

The museum is to “tell us and to educate us on how to not have it happen again” (Group 1). For this particular visitor, the docent made quite a difference in what was learned by the tour. For example, a museum visitor stated,

When I was in high school many people knew they were black, but African Americans come in many different shades. What I learned from the docents is that we come from different tribes and that was fascinating because if you look at different African Americans we have different features. Some have squinty eyes, some have big eyes, some have different shades of skin, and that was interesting to know. (Group 1)

The docent explains each exhibit as a personal story and relates it to other events in history and in the present day. Additionally, another museum visitor described her encounter
with a docent-led tour of the museum. The first visit by the participant was without a docent; the second visit to the Freedom Center was more enlightening because of the docent-led tour.

We picked up so much and I think it is thanks to the docent actually. I never turned the audio on the whole time. Plus, I’ve been here before with my college-age daughters and no offense, but their generation doesn’t read and I don’t read well anyways and so the things that were kind of easy to look, at even *The Slave Pen*, you know kind of had some meaning, but even having a person tell the meaning. So before when I was here without a docent, I didn’t nearly get the understanding out of it. (Group 1)

Meaningful learning was experienced when this participant described the behavior element on the pyramid of Bloom’s taxonomy affective domain. Gronlund (1991) stated, “As affective outcomes move from simple to complex, they become increasingly internalized and integrated with other behaviors to form complex value systems and behavior patterns” (p. 2).

The comment below, by a museum visitor, truly captures the third level in the affective taxonomy of learning, which is valuing. Valuing is “based on the internalization of a set of specific values or attitudes, where clues to these values are expressed in the learner’s stable overt behavior” (Gano-Phillips, 2009, p. 5).

It’s the theme of many of the exhibits I think. They want you to remember, but they don’t want us to dwell on the past, but to do something about the future and make sure it does not happen again. (Group 1)

Additionally, another participant discussed taking action against inequalities in the future after visiting the Freedom Center. “I think I would probably speak out against injustices against people in general. Even if someone was being treated unfairly or bullied” (Group 2).
Not all patrons experienced a similar affective change. When I asked about the impact of the museum, a participant replied:

It has not. It has not. If you go to Yad Vashem, which is the Holocaust Museum in Israel, there’s a room that has one candle burning, it has mirrors all over the place, and then you see the reflection of that candle in the mirrors all over the place and it represents that if you sniff out that one candle all these lights. I mean I walked in there and I got a lump in my throat thinking, okay, you snuff out that one candle, all those reflections are gone. I’ve seen nothing here so far that grabbed me like Oh my God! Oh my God! I haven’t got that yet. Um, I can also say I know it is very hard to display this topic to the general public. They need to use more derogatory terms. Well, I imagine if you did that some people would get all fired up and then other people would get fired up and what you would have to do is come to a common ground, and then you’re going to get the story that I think was told. It doesn’t at least form a grip on my emotions. What you want to do is teach the emotions. I don’t care if they know September 1st, 1939.

(GroupName 1)

This visitor went on to say that “there were some very deep and heavy topics I found myself asking what freedom means. And why it is important” (GroupName 1). When asked to elaborate on the impact the Freedom Center had on him, he stated,

This museum has the potential to be educational, meaningful. I heard a term used earlier this summer overseas called “dark tourism,” which is being used by a person organizing a former prison in Northern Ireland and I had never heard that term before, so I would have to say that this museum is an example of that. Since we don’t live here, this is interesting. Initially it hits you as kind of a dark theme, but then you realize that it’s
kind of enlightening and encouraging that we are talking about it. So it’s kind of a little bit dichotomous. I would say don’t judge yesterday’s actions by today’s standards. But that doesn’t mean you can’t judge yesterday’s actions, just don’t do it by today’s standards. In going back there to The Slavery to Freedom exhibit, I didn’t see myself brought back into the mindset of Thomas Jefferson. I just saw something that oh my God, Thomas Jefferson was president of the United States, he had slaves, and he was a racist. Isn’t that horrible! Again, don’t judge yesterday’s actions by today’s standards. For example, what do you think of that car you drove to school today? Well I think it was great. So what do you think they are going to think 200 years from now when we talk about combustible engines and how we destroyed the environment? You have to look at it from the context of the time period. So, gasoline engines are bad. Plastic is bad. Are you evil because you drove to school in a car today? Well maybe you are and maybe you aren’t. I think the museum needs to show a little more of the concepts.

(Group 1)

This patron went from cognitively contextualizing the exhibits of the museum to the emotional impact the exhibits should have on patrons for meaningful learning to take place. For example, the patron continued to elaborate on how the content of the exhibit should describe “how the whole fabric of the society was economically dependent upon this [American slavery], I don’t think it showed that well” (Group 1). The patron elaborated,

I’m probably not your typical person to visit. I lived two years in Haiti and I’ve lived a year in India and I’ve seen a lot. I’ve lived a year in Mexico, where I’ve seen obviously lots of slavery. I’ve seen it, you know, child labor, there’s a display over there where [The Struggle Continues Exhibit] kids make gravel. I’ve spent two days in a quarry in
India. My school was maybe ten miles away, but some of the kids came from that and so then I went to see the local people I was working with and they were trying to fight the working conditions in the… I’ve worked in garbage dumps in Latin America where you see it’s slaves, I mean it’s like little kids like this big picking garbage. Mothers picking garbage with their kids in the box, what’s the bird that picks garbage, the buzzards picking at the kids, a buzzard is flying above them. And, ah, then two years in Haiti, a good chunk of that I lived right on the border of the Dominican Republic and Haiti. You can see Haiti. You can go down to the port and you can sit there and watch it, you can see the trafficking. Oh, my God, it’s just awful. I mean it’s just absolutely awful. So human trafficking, the modern-day slavery is, I think that’s a very good display of it. (Group 1)

The same visitor expounded further on the museum and its portrayal of content.

Here’s another thing I would say about this museum. Not every museum but many museums fall into this. There’s too much writing. When you look at a display and I just did this. I started reading and if the first line doesn’t grab me, I don’t read that. I walk away. (Group 1)

I think this participant believes that to make change, you must reach the viewer affectively. In his dialogue, he contextualized the information prior to judging it for emotional components. Furthermore, the participant implied that the cognitive component has to be the basis for validating the exhibit and the affective effect/change it is seeking to stimulate. For example, the same patron referenced the originality of the exhibits in the museum, specifically the KKK uniform in *The Slavery to Freedom* exhibit.
That is the only one that’s not an original thing. You have original Civil War clothes. You can’t get an original, I know you didn’t do this museum, but you can’t get an original KKK suit? I mean, you could probably go to Indiana and get about 15 of them in the attics like that [snaps fingers]. (Group 1)

He then proceeded to describe an affective component by including judgments and actions of those receptive of the exhibit.

_The Struggle Continues_, but what are the things today that 200 years from now they’re going to look back and say Oh, my God. I can’t believe that Americans did that. What were they thinking? I would like to see a little more of that tied in. (Group 1)

The comments of this museum visitor justified the transformation of cognitive to affective learning. He transitioned from reasoning with the content of an exhibit to the emotional experience of an exhibit. Therefore the patron was saying that the (cognitive critical thinking—higher levels of the cognitive domain—analysis, synthesis, evaluation) guides a “justifiable” value to be supported through the levels of the affective domain; thus justifiably valuing, internalizing, to the point of being characterized by the value (taking action on it).

**Racism**

The centuries old concept of the other has slowly come to a point where we have legal equality among the races and opportunity is on an even playing level. However, one can adequately argue there are still issues to be resolved to achieve equality in today’s society, not only legally but mentally with regard to racist ideologies. Van Dijk (2000) identified the concept of racist ideology thus: “both racism and ideology are prominently reproduced by social practices and especially by discourse” and “text and talk are involved in such processes…of societal reproduction” (p. 92). For example in the present-day media, claims of racism are
spreading rapidly. It is common to hear of the integration of race as a factor in many of the media stories whether about politics, immigration, crime, or even in reality shows. Because of this, the endeavor of freedom to pursue life, liberty, and happiness, could be more challenging than ever before, whether the media-driven accusations prove true or false. However, data suggest we must begin with a dialogue to educate ourselves and erase the ignorance of racism.

A museum employee commented on the importance of dialogue.

I think we have reached a point in time in America that it is okay to talk about race. You see my mother did not want to talk about slavery when I was growing up. We knew who owned us and we did not talk about it. I mean I am 50 years old and the first five years of my life was lived in segregation and after that as we started to come out and be able to intermingle with each other, um, I think then we started to ask questions about each other and find out about the difference between the races. You know culturally I grew up differently than she did. I grew up different than she did culturally in the black neighborhood. At any rate, I think that the times have changed and allowed us to be able to have a dialogue since we are having one now. A dialogue to be able to enact changes through dialogue that our differences are many, but we share humanity. (Group 3)

After being asked about their experiences at the Freedom Center, visitors brought up childhood memories and experiences they had. These fell between two themes that emerged in this research: history and memory and racism. A museum patron elaborated on a childhood experience.

Now I lived in the country, where we never had anything to do with blacks and it was odd to see a black person. Then when I moved to Lebanon, there were always blacks around and they were talked about. They were said to be dirty people and we didn’t like
to eat what they were going to make because their hands were dirty. We felt like that when we were young. (Group 1)

This response led to an additional question of whether it was just about the color of skin that these experiences occurred.

There is definitely drastic cultural difference between whites and blacks affluence and otherwise, but the race card specifically doesn’t rest in socioeconomic terms. I think there are things that you learn in certain socioeconomic groups that you don’t learn in other places. I would put money down that my experiences and Eminem’s experience both as white males would be very, very different. He grew up in Detroit in the ghetto and I grew up in Boston in the burbs. (Group 1)

When elaborating on skin color and its societal ramifications a visitor contemplated if skin color provoked monetary greed in the context of slavery.

It’s interesting that the drivers of slavery, which really didn’t occur to me before, that it’s money. I mean I didn’t see it as that. When I grew up thinking of it as disrespect of others and racisms, but I think, it’s more about money that started the whole thing, in addition to disrespect of others. My vision growing up was more about race than money. Honestly, it didn’t occur to me that that was the deal. Even though I come from a place that has plantations and has not slaves, but very underpaid workers from the Philippines who live with a lot of the same problems. They die alone separated from their family, poor and it’s really similar to what this museum represents and shows. (Group 1)

Another visitor in the same group elaborated further on skin color.

I grew up in North Boston, so we didn’t have the same racism there, or at least it wasn’t as blatant. It exhibited, but it was a lot of Irish stuff because we are fourth generation
Irish; however, there are many similarities of those who first come to this country. There were all kinds of struggles the Irish had a “Irish don’t need to apply for jobs,” etc. But we moved beyond it and I think black and white racism has moved beyond it too.

However, I deal with many children who are African American and (they are black, but they may not be from Africa) whenever they want their way, they play the race card and these are little kids. We are talking 10-12-year-olds and it works sometimes, but not with me. They do try and pull that and it’s disturbing that a 10-year-old has been indoctrinated into the mindset that you can get your way by saying to a person you are a racist. (Group 1)

Slavery in the United States brought up much discussion of racism and prejudice. For example, one visitor described how prejudice is a learned behavior and provided an example from current political proceedings.

Prejudice can be a learned behavior. With the presidential election that just ended, people claim that we (African Americans) only voted for President Obama because he was African American, but what they forget is that he is African American and Caucasian. We could have said the same thing that people only voted for Romney because he is white. (Group 2)

Another museum visitor chimed in to reiterate that racism is a learned behavior.

I believe racism is a learned behavior. Racism sentiment runs deep in families and it takes a lot to get people not to be that way. I think it’s just how you are brought up. It goes back to your parents and brothers. You learn off what they know until you are able to learn it on your own. (Group 2)

Another visitor continued further discussion of colorblindness being a real possibility.
I think there are different ways of handling it. It depends on the person. It’s in your heart, your character. I think you are never colorblind. You know what the history is, you have to decide how you want to view it or handle it. It’s what you feel in your heart. (Group 2)

On the other hand, an additional visitor stated that racial ideologies are getting worse. The visitor did not imply that inequalities are getting worse, but that intolerance is on the rise. The racial divide is too far-gone. For example, in this past election, people based their vote on President Obama because of his skin color not because of what he stands for, but the fact that he is black. I think that tells you it’s never going to stop. He’s the first black president because of the color of his skin. Black or white, we are still seeing color. (Group 2)

To elaborate on the previous statement of the racial divide, a visitor discussed President Obama and the election of 2012 as an instigator of dividing America even more. I think President Obama being elected opened up the racial divide. People were very upset about the election results. I would say many people with dormant ideas and older views of African Americans and how they should not have the same rights, awakened. (Group 2)

Lastly, in contrast to the previous dialogue on race in America, a visitor explained her ignorance behind the race tensions in the United States. I knew there was this tension, but I did not know the origin behind it. I learned a lot about it through the class and the Freedom Center. Now I feel I can educate others about it. I feel more comfortable talking about it. Now I know about the origins of the racial tensions. (Group 2)
Discrimination

According to a visitor of the museum, feelings are sensitive when discussing a critical topic such as race regardless of the skin color of the conversant.

But some of the visitors, they get really touchy they’re just like, we don’t have equal rights. I respond by saying that you can. I know there are still people who are bigots and stuff, but those people are bigots against White people too; especially White girls. This is what really bothers me. Did you know that when you are a white female (that’s the majority of people that are going to college, White females) and I’m a middle class White girl, you can be discriminated against. You just wish you had higher grades to get in because you are nothing special. You don’t have the diversity aspect that the schools are looking for. I had a college admissions person tell me that. I worried about getting scholarships and stuff because I know that there is a lot for diversity and I’m not a minority, obviously, I’m just White. They say that colleges need diversity and there’s nothing that’s going to help, so it will be harder for you. I feel like we should not count it anymore (diversity). Other countries don’t, people from other countries get into schools and it’s not a diversity thing anymore. They look at you, “Are you a good person?” So I feel like we should just move on. Personally, I do not like to dwell on things. (Group 1)

Some participants felt that if apologies or reparations transpire for slavery it may inhibit the progress made toward equality. One participant expressed an attitude toward apologies or reparations, indicating that a sense of hierarchy emerges if apologies and reparations were indeed made.

We can’t still say “Oh my gosh, I’m so sorry that my great, great, great, great grandpa might have owned slaves.” It’s not anything that we can change it’s not going to help it.
It doesn’t make sense because Black and Whites are the equal and it’s almost like saying that they are still beneath us somehow and it makes it worse I think. (Group 1)

Furthermore, the dialogue on race is not only Black and White. It is all colors of the human race. A museum employee describes her moment of learning when realizing racism is not solely a Black and White issue.

I think about being African American and being here and about race relations and how people of color are treated, but then I realized I knew it before, but it really came home to me that other people in this country go through it not just African Americans. There are people from the Middle East, Native Americans we need racial healing, and you know you have to talk about it before you can fix it. (Group 3)

**Language**

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center wants to make people aware of the history and present-day conditions of slavery and to advocate becoming a conductor to abolish the institution for the last time. Language and dialogue play an important role in the presentation of exhibits, how the patrons perceive them and what patrons do with the information. The interconnectedness of language and racism has allowed society to assimilate negative connotations into the English language. For example, the use of the word *nigger* has a demeaning effect on a human being. We dehumanize others by using the term nigger and other terms that people choose to label negatively.

I saw the n word written once here, in this museum so far and it was on a record [in the traveling exhibit on music]. In this sense, it was very casually used. Very casually used and I think what needs to be shown is if you can casually put people in a category that is
not human, whatever you call them whether it is rats, or for example in Rwanda cockroaches. (Group 1)

This participant elaborated further on the evidence of using language as a vehicle for dehumanization.

The Holocaust is a good example to use when you show that the gradual dehumanization of people referring to them as vermin or rats or whatever. Then they eventually get so used to dehumanizing that they are not human anymore. I don’t think that this museum quite hits home to that as well showing how casual they saw blacks as nonhuman. (Group 1)

One visitor identified the wrongs of dehumanizing language.

I knew racism was wrong the first time I heard the n word. I just knew that it was not a very good thing to say and it made me feel wrong and gross. I think it is ignorance why people still use that word. (Group 2)

The Rwandan Genocide took place in 1994 between the Hutu and the Tutsi. Over 1,000,000 people were killed and the dehumanization over the public radio enhanced the hatred and killing of the Tutsi people (Rusagara, 2010). A Freedom Center visitor elaborated on the genocide that took place by comparing it with the language used to develop and continue the ignorance of hatred in American race relations. A museum visitor responded to the language used in the exhibits indicating the exhibits require more of the casual language used in every day dialogue to identify the culprit of continued racist ideologies.

With regard to the genocide over there, they were called cockroaches! Ok. So they called them cockroaches. Why do they keep calling them cockroaches, cockroaches?
Well eventually, you’re going to think of them as cockroaches. And their casual use of language becomes hurtful. I don’t see that shown here. I’d like to see that. (Group 1)

Another visitor described having a deeper understanding of the ramifications of race and prejudice in contemporary society,

Yes. I’ve always believed that racial prejudice was not an inherent American trait, but rather something learned from ignorant ancestors. Now I can understand how people in the 17th and 18th centuries became accustomed to seeing the imported slaves treated as lesser human beings and by being exposed to this kind of acceptance from an early age is awful. How it would translate into the rampant prejudice that produced and created the mindset that became an integral part of our culture especially in the southern states. I think the beautiful painting or mural of the slaves on the pier being guarded as goods while the other commodities were being unloaded from a ship and other people witnessing this with an attitude of complete normality shows this mindset very expressively. And then what was learned as being normal was just passed down to future generations, I can understand how this, for some, has become almost an inherent trait. I’m sure that exhibits such as these, and ongoing conversation and education on this subject, will continue to slowly but surely change the abhorrent thinking that still goes on today. (Group 1)

A museum visitor responded when asked if the exhibits in this museum agree or contradict personally held worldviews of racism and prejudice in contemporary media.

I think this museum nicely represents the history of racism and prejudice in this country and I do think that sometimes our media today gives more favor to some religious and racial activities than others do, but I don’t see that reflected in any of the exhibits I’ve
seen here. I feel there is racial prejudice or favoritism in other areas such as job applications, or school acceptances, or educational grants but that is another story. I didn’t look closely at all exhibits and may have missed some of the information that was available on this particular subject but on the whole, I don’t think any of the exhibits have changed my worldview of racism and prejudice in contemporary media. I believe it still exists but not overwhelmingly so. I think that today’s public has become more sophisticated and educated and can tell when a news item is biased or prejudicial more so than previous generations could. (Group 1)

**Contemporary Slavery**

Even though the Freedom Center focuses on the history of slavery in the United States and the courage, cooperation, and perseverance it took to overcome the challenges, it also strives to educate its visitors on the continuing struggle of contemporary slavery that endures throughout the world. There are approximately 27 million people enslaved in the world today (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2012b, para. 8). However, identifying and understanding contemporary slavery is difficult not only in acknowledgement but as a necessity in order to intervene and advocate inhibiting its existence. An employee responded to contemporary slavery and the message of the Freedom Center.

What the difference is from *The Slave Pen* of the past and *The Slave Pen* of today is your invisible slavery. There are people around the world that are enslaved and they are right there, right there. But you can’t see it. See that is invisible slavery. You can literally walk into that building and not know that those individuals are enslaved. You have the invisible slavery today, but *The Slave Pens* you just don’t see. (Group 3)
Another employee at the Freedom Center added to the message of the Freedom Center by stating that being aware of those around oneself and acknowledging that perhaps others are working at places under coerced or forced conditions is the first step to becoming aware.

I look at people working from different countries and I wonder how many of them were there in a form of enslavement whether it was being underpaid or forced to work or paying off a debt or whatever, but it really made me more conscious of people around me. (Group 3)

Other exhibits besides Invisible Slavery provide a metaphorical analogy to understanding contemporary slavery by comparing it to American slavery. For example, an employee of the Freedom Center compared the often-mentioned Slave Pen exhibit to invisible slavery.

The John W. Anderson Slave Pen was kind of a hidden thing if you think about it. He put his name in there for a reason so he could claim it as his property. People built a tobacco barn around it to hide it because they did not want to remember by having it there in its original spot. By having it here, we are remembering, we know that it happened, so now we can make sure that it doesn’t happen again. It has become a place to promote advocacy for wrongdoings. (Group 1)

Again, an employee discussed past experiences where an encounter with slavery was apparent through hindsight.

I spent 24 years in the military and I know that I have been exposed to modern day slavery and never knew it was right there in front of me. So, I kind of look back on my experience and say man that guy was enslaved. It’s kind of a weird thing you look back at your life and say man you may have tripped over slavery. (Group 3)
This is an example of an employee’s prior experiences with contemporary invisible slavery.

Another example of modern slavery, visible but often overlooked, is seen in a museum visitor’s experience in Haiti. The visitor discussed the discernibility of contemporary slavery and that people often overlooked or simply ignored it.

I spent two years in Haiti and a good chunk of that I lived right on the border of the Dominican Republic and Haiti. You can see Haiti. You could go down to the port and you can sit there and watch it, you can see the trafficking. (Group 1)

After the visitor stated this scenario, I asked if it was accepted in those countries or overlooked. The visitor then stated, “it’s overlooked” (Group 1).

A visitor discussed The Invisible Slavery exhibit and the influence it had.

I am glad they put the invisible slavery exhibit because I never knew slavery still existed. I never knew, I’ve heard young women and men being pimped and all that but in other countries being forced to work and they do not even make enough. But I’ve heard of clothes made in China and I hear how they are making one cent an hour. (Group 1)

The modern-day slavery exhibit (The Struggle Continues) certainly seemed to provoke a dialogue of awareness about modern-slavery and human trafficking. Awareness of the issue was the influence the exhibit had on this visitor: “It was disturbing to think that happened years ago and not realize that there are people still being kidnapped, stolen, bought and sold and taken to different countries so that is still pretty disturbing that it is still happening” (Group 1).

Summary

This qualitative research observed The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and its curricula to reveal if it had an impact on its visitors. Presented in this chapter were the narratives of employees and visitors’ reactions to the Freedom Center, elaborative thinking about
the exhibits viewed, and how exhibits may relate to present-day societal issues. The themes discussed in this chapter curricula and exhibits, social responsibility of museums, history and memory, learning theories/affective learning, racism, and contemporary slavery. The implications for the findings are discussed in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The cultural production of society is accomplished in how its members accept, produce, and transmit ideologies of the world. With regard to the historical context of slavery in the United States, our exposure to its story through our school curriculum, teachers, family, museums, books, and media may vary. Various perspectives emerge when contemplating the consequences of this history. As principal investigator, I inquired as to what the impact, if any, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center had on its patrons and how it affected their attitudes or values placed on this part of United States history in connection with modern-day race relations.

Upon completion of several dialogues that included 31 participants, it appears that for the majority, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center has an affective impact on its visitors when conveying the story of courage, cooperation, and perseverance with relation to United States history of the slave trade, the institution of slavery, and contemporary slavery. I wanted to understand the extent to which the exhibits transformed patrons both cognitively and affectively. In short, I wanted to know if meaningful learning occurred at a level that might impact the values and actions of the patrons. The results suggest the majority of visitors’ experiences at the Freedom Center were impactful, but others were not as influenced. However, with reasonable assurance, all of the participants related the Freedom Center to real life scenarios
of overcoming challenges of adversity. This chapter reveals the findings of the research from the results in Chapter 4.

**Findings**

Critical thinking, synthesizing information, being able to apply lessons to the real world, innovation and creativity, teamwork and collaboration are all essential core skills museums should integrate into their curricula, according to Farrell and Medvedeva (2010). The ability to apply analytical reasoning is an essential skill in the world today. This research looked at ways museums are confronting these challenges. More frequently, skills that are taught by museum educators are the following:

- critical thinking skills; the ability to sift through a tremendous amount of data and synthesize information to correct abstract concepts with real world relevancy; solve complex problems that apply to real world issues; communicate effectively; and collaborate with a diverse group of co-workers. (Farrell & Medvedeva, 2010, p. 8)

The Levine Museum in Charlotte, North Carolina, acts as a “catalyst of community dialogue” (Farrell & Medvedeva, 2010, p. 21). Farrell and Medvedeva (2010) acknowledged this museum as a “model institution for using history as a catalyst for a deeper understanding of contemporary community challenge” (p. 21). This model institution parallels the Freedom Center by the way their missions relate to the visitors. Advocacy to understand the past and synthesizing that information with present-day issues of racial unfreedoms of the world is crucial. For example, “concepts of race and ethnicity are so weighted down by the political, cultural, and emotional baggage of history,” (Farrell & Medvedeva, 2010, p. 10) we sometimes forget the origin of our ideologies as was seen in the results in Chapter 4. Black and White have always been the readily identified racial categories in the United States (Farrell & Medvedeva,
Within the labels of black and white, there are specific categories of diversity that are often overlooked.

**Museum Curricula**

As indicated in Chapter 2, emerging 21st century history museums convey popular concepts of history through their exhibits from several dimensions. Other similar type museums state facts, preserve artifacts, and tell a story. A theme that emerged in my findings correlates with this concept, but goes a step further and validates the 21st century museum paradigm shift. For example, as stated in the literature review there is a collection and preservation of artifacts, which is objective, and then there is the presentation of a narrative, which is subjective and integrates perspective. The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center conveys the story of the past and subjectivity portrays the struggle of people. The Freedom Center’s curriculum personally tells the story of courage, cooperation, and perseverance. As stated by a museum employee, “This museum does show people the strength and courage it took for this group of people to triumph over the institution of slavery and that in it should be encouraging to everyone” (Group 3). This validates the paradigm shift of the 21st century with its fundamental change that museums evolved from “being about something to being about somebody” (Silverman & O’Neil, 2010, p. 13) representing ideas such as courage, cooperation, and perseverance. This fundamental shift in museums makes it more about connecting with the visitor and implementing affective learning when visiting a museum, as the Freedom Center practices.

Visitors truly experience the exhibits at the Freedom Center. For instance, *The Slave Pen* was an exhibit that not only preserved a piece of history but the Freedom Center took it a step further to inspire those who entered it. “Walking into *The Slave Pen* with its chains and history
gave me a feeling of apprehension. It helped me visualize what it must have been like for the inhabitants” (Group 2). This is a part of affective learning, to experience the story.

Additional comments by participants of Group 2 (those in the history class) stated that the Freedom Center allowed them to experience what they had been discussing in class.

What we’ve learned over this course went hand in hand with the Freedom Center as far as bringing reality into what we’ve read about. I mean we could actually see things like the shackles, *The Slave Pen* that was there, and man you could smell it. I mean it was real because it had all that stuff that had soaked into the wood and you could feel it when you stepped in the pen. So the class and the Freedom Center kind of marries well. (Group 2)

The impact of the Freedom Center on visitors can be difficult because Americans seem to struggle with these dark sides of history while celebrating American history. In connection with all types of museums noted in the literature review, Jay’s (2009) historiography of presentation and perception is an example of the story of the Freedom Center and its dark part of American history, one that continues through to the present day with contemporary slavery around the world. However, the Freedom Center’s presentation of the history takes a different direction. As stated in their mission statement, the Freedom Center reveals stories of the challenges and denials of freedom. However, the Freedom Center does not consider them stories of tragedy; rather, these are stories of triumph. A museum employee added to the mission of the Freedom Center: “Those who reveal these stories at the Freedom Center, they recognize not only the complexities of the stories themselves but also the need to reveal the triumph of the human spirit to overcome great obstacles” (Group 3).

The curricula of the Freedom Center relayed this message to its visitors. There were no negative experiences suggested from the data. Although some participants described exhibits as
“deep, powerful, enlightening, and chilling” (Group 1), others described them as “dark, too much reading, and not influential” (Group 1) compared to previously visited museums that had “gripped their emotions” (Group 2). However, the data were conclusive when they suggested that all the participants associated with what they learned from the Freedom Center, the challenges and triumphs, because they applied it to real-world situations of how to overcome perhaps undesirable situations or the relational impact of contemporary racial issues. For example, one participant believed that racism still exists out of ignorance of the past.

I still think people are fighting. The Trevon Martin case, people are still fighting for those rights of equality. The way people are looking at it just because a Caucasian killed an African American kid. If it were the other way around the African American would have been put in jail quickly. I don’t think people should automatically think about color.

That’s why we should know our history. (Group 2)

This participant discussed a current event in the United States about a murder case. However, the murdered victim was indeed Black, but the accused perpetrator was Hispanic. Because the Hispanic color of skin is somewhat lighter and closer to the Western European color, the participant automatically assumed the perpetrator was White. The same participant continued,

I think the Freedom Center is advocating colorblindness. But being colorblind, I think it just matters where you were brought up. Some people are brought up in that prejudices where they think this is right and that is wrong, they need to open their minds. I do not think being colorblind is a safe place to be because you’re not really educated on what you’re supposed to know. You just see one side; you do not see the whole picture. (Group 2)
The story is told and the cognitive emerges. However, the affect takes critical thinking to the next level to experience meaningful learning, which is what the visitors concluded they experienced. The cognitive and the affect were integrated to create meaningful learning at the Freedom Center. Although, as mentioned previously, even though every participant did not experience the “aha moment” at the Freedom Center, all of them relayed a message of applying what they learned to present-day issues.

**History and Memory**

Usually, what we remember about slavery in the United States is what we learned in school. The curriculum has certainly changed and slavery now integrates the curriculum of public education differently. Stern (2007) described a gradual and progressive look at how slavery integrated the curriculum and how the objectives within the curriculum have changed over the years. One employee of the Freedom Center described his education as a child.

I think most of us learned the history of slavery the same way. African Americans were enslaved in this country and Harriet Tubman helped take people across the river and Abraham Lincoln wrote the Emancipation Proclamation and that’s what we get. (Group 1)

Presently, the curriculum has changed to integrate a more positive outlook, one we can learn from as a society, as the Freedom Center portrays. This represents Stern’s (2007) research of the incorporation of slavery into the curriculum in public schools. First it was non-existent, then it presented the cruelties of the institution and represented slaves as passive, and now it conveys the strides of Africans and African Americans and their perseverance to overcome. This shift toward highlighting strides towards freedom and the perseverance to overcome also is embedded in the curriculum of the Freedom Center. The courage, cooperation, and perseverance of all
those who have been and still are enslaved are paramount. Furthermore, instead of remembering facts, there is now a dialogue. “I think we have reached a point in time in America that it is okay to talk about race” (Group 3). This dialogue is about history, memory, and present-day issues, a strategy Blight (2004) used to bring history and memory together to understand the present. How we process the meaning of the two closely correlates with the mission of the Freedom Center. Presented are the good and the bad, leaving some with a feeling of advocacy and others with a feeling of guilt. The memories that the Freedom Center divulges are the struggles and adversities that met challenges head on. This is an example of meaningful learning

Blight (2004) indicated that sometimes memory can be a burden, but in the case of the Freedom Center, results show they encourage visitors to remember the struggles and persevere to overcome challenges. Furthermore, as the findings conclude, visitors feel we should not forget, nor dwell in the past, but move forward to improve the human condition. Linking this to the affective domain, higher levels must be built upon receiving and responding. Therefore, meaningful learning begins with challenging prior knowledge of how we have processed the memory of slavery in United States history. Due to the reliance on memory, “memory provides a physical, and sometimes an ethical, compass in our daily lives,” (Blight, 2004, p. 5) this ascribes to the beginning levels of the affective domain of Bloom’s taxonomy.

**Learning Theories/Affective Learning**

As noted in Chapter 2, Ausubel’s subsumption theory is hierarchically organized knowledge that is essential when finding ways to learn new information (Bonk & Zhang, 2004). The new knowledge, such as that learned at the Freedom Center, joins prior learning experiences suggesting a connection with the affective domain.
It is suggested that during the initial phase of learning the individual typically acquires isolated facts that are interpreted in terms of preexisting schemata and added to existing knowledge structures. Gradually, the learner begins to assemble these pieces into new schemata that provide him or her with more conceptual power until a level of automaticity is achieved. (Shuell, 1990, p. 531)

The data revealed several instances where participants conveyed prior experiences and connected them to the curriculum of the Freedom Center. For example, one visitor stated, “I feel there is racial prejudice or favoritism in other areas such as job applications, or school acceptances, or educational grants” when discussing applying for college (Group 1). Another visitor discussed her childhood and where her family lived: “Now I lived in the country, where we never had anything to do with blacks and it was odd to see a black person” (Group 1). As noted by Bonk and Zhang (2008), Ausubel suggested that new information is meaningful as long as learners relate it to what they already recognize and understand. The results validate Ausubel’s assumption because most of them related the Freedom Center experience to personal experiences. I agree this is an essential element to encompassing the wide scope of information offered at the Freedom Center. For example, “the stories of triumph and tribulation, of courage and cooperation and of hope and commemoration unite under one roof where a focus on freedom brings relevancy to all generations, regardless of background” (National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, 2011, p. 3). The results also suggest, overwhelmingly and regardless of view on race, that visitors indeed linked new information learned at the Freedom Center to their own experiences and prior knowledge. For example, this museum visitor alluded to the history of women’s suffrage and that “it is important to know your history because many of the African
Americans today are lost. For example, the reason I want to vote is that my ancestors fought for the right to vote” (Group 2).

The affective learning that took place in the Freedom Center varied. Some participants displayed an affective aspect of their experience by understanding more about the slave trade and slavery and how it affects present-day society (receiving level of the affective domain). Deeper affective learning is the “learning experiences that are internalized so they can guide the learner’s attitudes, opinions, and behaviors in the future” (Gano-Phillips, 2009, p. 3). For example, a participant discussed the difficulties of change:

One person cannot do it alone. It’s one thing to realize there is a problem, but it’s another to be the one to step out and do something. The reason why our generation does not accomplish things is that we are only worried about today. Things may not change right now, but we need the perseverance to see them through. (Group 2)

The personal understanding can depend on “prior knowledge and experience,” to allow learning to occur within a “situated socio-cultural context through opportunities for interactions” (Falk & Dierking as cited in Bamberger & Tal, 2009, p. 3). One museum employee painted a picture of her experiences:

It’s amazing that in our lifetime, we had segregation as a consequence of slavery, where they couldn’t go in the bathrooms, couldn’t drink water from the same fountains, couldn’t sit in the bus where you wanted to. I’ve went to stores where there were colored bathrooms and white-only bathrooms. I’ve been to movie theaters where African American’s sit on the second floor in the balcony and whites sat on the main floor until one day the African Americans got tired of that and burned the balcony so that they integrated that theater. (Group 3)
An additional reference was also conveyed and discussed in relation to building upon a prior experience:

I was taken off guard when I stopped. I was down in Mississippi near Jackson and I stopped to get gas and it just boggled my mind that I, and I’m not being prejudice with this, but this humongous black dude, big dude, said as soon as he got out of his truck hey man, how are you doing? And it just caught me off guard because you’re not used to seeing that around here. You know you don’t get people really associating too much with each other if you don’t already know them a lot cause of racism. He didn’t know me from Adam and here he is saying Hey, man, how are you doing? And you could tell the sincerity in his voice when he said it and it felt like, actually it made me feel really good to just sit there and know he did not see that color barrier. We could just sit there and look at each other as men and everything was good. (Group 2)

The data revealed that prior knowledge and experience does play a role in synthesizing the information gathered at the Freedom Center by relating to concerns in society. The results also specify that the visitors interacted in their own way to establish how societal ideologies today connect with slavery. On several occasions, visitors mentioned the racial tensions in America. For example, a museum visitor identified racial tensions within her job as a teacher between the teacher and the students: “I deal with many children who are African American and they are black, but they may not be from Africa, whenever they want their way, they play the race card, and these are little kids” (Group 1).

The hierarchical system of Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy of the affective domain begins with the learners’ ability and willingness to listen and learn ideas. In this case, the participants,
visitors at the Freedom Center, have willingly visited the museum on their own. “We came to the museum because we are visiting friends in town and they have never been here” (Group 1).

The next step in Bloom’s (1956) taxonomy is the responding. It appears the participants of this study demonstrated attitudes of their values by creating a dialogue and responding to the information received in focus group sessions. Therefore, the participants absorbed enough information to discuss the impact the exhibits had on them. For example, “I’m not sure we’ve moved on from racial slavery” was a comment by a patron who understood the United States’ role in the slave trade and slavery and was comparing it to current issues (Group 1). We can build upon that knowledge by adding to present-day issues of race. However, some participants were on a different level concerning previous knowledge of slavery. For example, one museum visitor stated, “I didn’t realize it was to the point where we were taking people from Africa, then we stopped, and then it became the slave trade within the United States” (Group 1).

The third step of this domain is the valuing of attitudes and the behavior expressed by these attitudes. This is a limitation due to the longevity and methodology of the research. I am able to establish how participants responded to the Freedom Center and its exhibits through the data collected during the focus group sessions. Some stated particular behavior they would enact, as one visitor said, “I think I would probably speak out against injustices, against people in general. Even if someone was being treated unfairly or bullied” (Group 2). However, many only expressed the need for verbal communication to represent a beginning solution for closing the racial divide and overcoming adversities in society. For instance, a museum employee stated,
At any rate, I think that the times have changed and allowed us to be able to have a
dialogue since we are having one now. A dialogue to be able to enact changes through
dialogue that our differences are many, but we share humanity. (Group 3)

Because the fourth level in the affective domain of learning is organizing and
conceptualizing, the data also cannot suggest reasonable assurance that participants will heed to
the necessity of organizing their thoughts into action. However, the results did indicate that the
Freedom Center’s mission motivated participants, but it is inconclusive if they will actively
engage themselves in applying the mission to their own present-day concerns. The Freedom
Center initiates a “moral direction in reforming future conduct,” as Cameron (2008, p. 10) stated,
as a fundamental change in the 21st century paradigm shift of museums. For instance, a museum
visitor stated,

I think there are different ways of handling it. It depends on the person. It’s in your
heart, your character. I think you are never colorblind. You know what the history is,
you have to decide how you want to view it or handle it. It’s what you feel in your heart.

(Group 2)

A second example is from another museum visitor describing that because he understands the
origins of racism in America, he can educate others:

I knew there was this tension, but I did not know the origin behind it. I learned a lot
about it through the class and the Freedom Center. Now I feel I can educate others about
it. I feel more comfortable talking about it. Now I know about the origins of the racial
tensions. (Group 2)

On the other hand, a museum visitor stated that it was no use, that
the racial divide is too far gone. For example, in this past election, people based their vote on President Obama because of his skin color not because of what he stands for, but the fact that he is black. I think that tells you it’s never going to stop. He’s the first black president because of the color of his skin. Black or white, we are still seeing color.

(Group 2)

Racism

The results show reasonable assurance that racism still exists in American society and that a dialogue is the first step in conquering this adversity, although one should not assume it is the traditional hierarchy of white over black. Racism is any visual differentiation we can establish as humans and then one group is chosen as having authority over another. The results present an inherent predisposition of visual ideologies, which lead to stereotypical beliefs that transfer through the generations. A visitor stated that even if we were all grey, we would find something to isolate or ostracize one another about such as being too tall or too short, a difference noted and later categorized by rank of superiority.

Museum visitors also related the exhibits at the Freedom Center to socially constructed views of race and its origin and permeation in society. Some results indicated that some believe the racial divide is too wide to be narrowed and that having a black president is a violation of black stereotype. Instead of seeing racism as a problem in America, some participants see it as a manipulation of the power structure and that an accusation of racism is now a powerful tool that is commonly used in today’s society.

Racism has preferentially justified inequalities, which has led to injustices throughout United States history. Historically, race has determined the builders of the New World with the institution of slavery and justified the genocide of Native Americans, the detention of Asian
immigrants, and the confiscation of Mexican land and native territories, all of which were justified and carried out through legal and systematized ideologies. These legal and systematized ideologies, although not legal anymore, are still seen in today’s social norms through racism.

It is pertinent to include the population of various races in the United States to get an idea of the percentages. Keep in mind that depending on your belief, the origin of race varies as to whether it originates from a religious perspective or an evolutionary perspective. This is up to the reader to establish. I simply want to advise the reader of the various races used in the Census that identifies this non-biological or social construct that categorizes people based on skin color and ancestry. For example, a participant related an account of questioning race:

I met a young lady who was born and raised in Egypt. She said color was not important in Egypt. There were so many different shades in Egypt it was not something they focused on and when she came here into the country, they wanted her to sign a document stating what race she was. She said she was just Egyptian. I pray that labeling is something we can get away from. At the end of the day, we are all human beings and I think labeling perpetuates the idea of race because you are different. It would be wonderful to live in a place where color of the skin is not a big deal. (Group 2)

Furthermore, although some would only say there is one race, the human race, society tends to label humans based on visual construct. Nevertheless, Table 2 is a more intricate categorization of the races known worldwide, which more broadly characterized are known as Negroid, Caucasoid, and Mongoloid, terms not used in the census of the United States. Therefore, I felt the necessity to discuss further the population and definitions of race in the United States as represented in Table 2. The table conveys racial categories embraced and perpetuated by the government as determined by the U.S. Census in 2011, which indicates purpose.
Table 2

_U.S. Population Breakdown_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population in the United States</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All races</td>
<td>311,591,919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>196,817,552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino origin</td>
<td>50,477,594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, African American</td>
<td>39,189,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>15,020,419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>506,017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source.* U.S. Census Bureau (2011)

The results of this study indicate that language is a large part of dehumanizing and placing those races in a hierarchical order. Participants repeatedly mentioned discriminatory behavior brought on or enhanced by language such as the Rwandan Genocide and the Holocaust. The participants associated the derogatory terms used to heighten hatred among races and carry out appalling acts and ideologies. The results specify that participants hold the term nigger as an inexcusable word in the English language. It is inexcusable, according to the results, because most people know its history and the ramifications of learned behavior as it passes down through the generations. For instance, a museum visitor stated,

_I knew racism was wrong the first time I heard the n word. I just knew that it was not a very good thing to say and it made me feel wrong and gross. I think it is ignorance why people still use that word._ (Group 2)
The term only deprives society of moving forward because of the ignorance perpetuated by use. The data from this study validate this. However, limitations of this study reveal inconclusive results when considering all those who inhabit the United States. The participants in this study willingly came to a museum to learn of courage, cooperation, and perseverance. Only 31 participants do not represent the entire population of the United States and the racist views that may prevail. Therefore, the source of these results includes only the population and setting of this study.

Language was significant in discussing the relational concepts between the Freedom Center and racial ideologies. This further created a dialogue about various aspects of modern-day race relations, which became an essential part of this study and a theme derived through the results. For example, a dialogue in Group 2 emerged when discussing slavery and the origin of racism.

When African Americans and poor white moved north, well a lot of them moved into the Gary area and that is when Gary, Indiana, became desegregated; it’s called the white flight period. My grandparents are just some not nice white people. They have many racist sentiments. They moved from Gary because of it and that’s all I’ve heard my entire life. It is just hate speech and it’s disgusting. My area of study is African American music and you know I can’t even go to holidays anymore and sit for more than a little while. I was raised to think that way, but I don’t think that way and that is why I think a lot of the time it’s not how you’re raised, but what you do with what you learn. I was raised in a prejudiced family and I said no that’s not right. Now I actively fight against it. I’ve never held the same sentiments as my grandparents. Personal experience, education, the people I hang out with, those are things that really influence the way I
think about things. So although I think racism is a deep-seated family kind of trait, it can be overcome and it has to be.

The fact that a dialogue was opened about racism, and the origin of the dialogue due to the Freedom Center visit, provides validation of affective learning the museum seeks to achieve. Burke (1937) argued that language connects to culture. Its use is to bridge the gap between attitudes of history and the context of the time. However, other narratives from participants validate the opposite. Results show that the racial gap in America stems from the historical context of slavery and the use of language promotes the widening of the gap, regardless of the target of the deprecating language. A museum visitor illustrated the use of language in his classroom

I will talk about language and how when language just becomes a regular part of, an accepted way of using the n word which is every day in our school. It’s common among African Americans. And I would say then how is it that you can say something and if I said it, I would get fired? Like that [Snaps fingers]. (Group 1)

**Contemporary Slavery**

The United States has a dark history on one hand but a triumphant one on the other. The results present an understanding of this history and the tainted ideologies that have transmitted through the generations to contemporary society. Many of the participants stated it is necessary to reiterate the story of slavery so history will not repeat itself; however, history has repeated itself through permitting contemporary slavery to continue.

A participant described the astounding human trafficking that is an integral factor in contemporary slavery.
I was glad to see that current human trafficking was included in the museum theme. I’ve heard many times that there are more slaves in the world today than at any other time in history. I don’t believe the majority of people know this. And they probably would doubt it if they were told. So I like the inclusion of that exhibit. (Group 1)

An additional visitor commented on learning about contemporary slavery at the Freedom Center. Well on the surface, you think it’s all the stuff you’ve been learning since the third grade, but when you start to hear the stories that’s when it emotionally hits you. I know this actually happened and it’s, for me, it wasn’t so much that this actually happened, it was more of this why it can’t happen again. That is why I really like the invisible slavery exhibits. Those are my favorite because I think it’s not always about race, it’s not always about gender, it’s about people in general who think that they are better and they need this and so it turns into a slavery thing. (Group 1)

Conclusions

The findings resembled Ausubel’s theory of “linking prior learning experiences to new concepts and ideas” (as cited in Bonk & Zhang, 2008, p. 123) because many of the participants applied their learning experience at the Freedom Center to real-world scenarios. This was the most conclusive finding of the study. My data reiterated the affective learning experience of the participants in this study after visiting the Freedom Center. My data supports that the Freedom Center aimed to bring patrons to the level of characterization by value with regard to the affective domain. However, due to the time limitation of this study, data can only document patrons reaching at least the third level of valuing because of their willingness to engage in discussion. More specifically, most of the exhibits proved interactive and provided an affective connection to the information conveyed by the Freedom Center. Patrons were challenged to
connect the information to their own experiences. This inspired patrons at least to value the information. One may hope that it will propagate what patrons will do in the future. The challenge to connect the cognitive with the affective emerged as a result of the nature of the knowledge acquired at the Freedom Center and understanding that slavery still exists in the world today.

**Implications**

Based on the data of this study, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center is successfully advocating courage, cooperation, and perseverance through meaningful learning that visitors experience. The findings indicate that even though not all participants experienced a significant heartening moment when viewing the exhibits, they concluded there is a realized importance of the Freedom Center’s mission.

Many patrons experienced meaningful learning through the curriculum of the Freedom Center. What allowed the participants to be impacted by the Freedom Center was specifically the curriculum. The cognitive elements of the curricula provided a higher level of critical thinking such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, which contribute to affective levels of valuing. For example, The *From Slavery to Freedom* exhibit transformed patrons cognitively and affectively by providing for analysis of the events of the slave trade, the institution of slavery, the strides taken for freedom, and the abolition of slavery. The exhibit took the visitors through each element, allowed them to synthesize each aspect of the exhibit, and relate to them. The patrons then evaluated the exhibit by critically considering the reasons for, and consequences of, what they observed. Therefore, the cognitive aspect of the curriculum is an integral aspect of affective learning at the Freedom Center. The patrons’ experiences of viewing the exhibit allowed them to link their experiences with real-life scenarios allowing a transition in
the affective domain from receiving and responding to valuing. For example, this patron broke down what he learned from The *From Slavery to Freedom* exhibit and how he linked it to present-day racism.

I think it stems from slavery. The southern slave owners considered them property. A person wasn’t a person, but property. When you categorize a person like that, you dehumanize them. So then I think, it’s transferred over from generation to generation. Even when slavery was abolished, it just keeps going on and on and on until someone stops it. (Group 1)

On the other hand, for some patrons the cognitive experience was there but not the affect. For example, patrons mentioned the facts that were presented and the story that was told, but affective learning was inhibited by the presentation of the exhibit. For example, a patron described an impactful experience at a Holocaust museum in Israel. The patron described the exhibit and stated, “Chills ran down my spine” (Group 1). This is what I wanted to understand—if the exhibits could transform patrons both cognitively and affectively. I believe when considering the results, the exhibits at the Freedom Center impacted patrons. What the results did suggest is the curriculum of the Freedom Center provoked them to acquire at least the third level of the affective domain. The participants responded because all were willing to engage in a dialogue and discuss their values. The Freedom Center curriculum provoked cognitive and furthermore, affective learning in the aspect of creating a dialogue and relating what they have learned to experiences, building upon previous knowledge. A change in the cognitive component (the presentation and narrative of the story) will provide new information and deliver a powerful model for presentation. The Freedom Center has accomplished this with its
interactive presentation style, but there are always new ways to enhance an exhibit to reach the visitors.

Due to what the results suggest, in an effort for every patron who enters the Freedom Center to have an affective experience, an uncensored portrayal of history and its correlation to the present is essential. Additionally, the results indicate that patrons enjoyed discussing the affect created through their responses to the curriculum portrayed. The results suggest a need for a place Freedom Center patrons can go to discuss what they just observed and learned. Many of the participants expressed life experiences and current events by associating them with the Freedom Center’s curricula. Therefore, a place where patrons can go to conduct discussion sessions prior to leaving the Freedom Center would be beneficial, creating a more meaningful learning environment and learning experience. The data revealed patrons achieved the third level of the affective domain because of their willingness to have a dialogue. This can be enhanced by having a space in which to initiate a dialogue while still at the Freedom Center.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

The scope of this study was to identify the curriculum of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and to learn the impact on its patrons. The results revealed the curriculum of the Freedom Center educates its visitors about the history of slavery and the heroes of its time. The Freedom Center wants visitors to discover how courage, cooperation, and perseverance advocates people to take action against wrongdoings and to persevere to overcome adversity. This study provides a solid foundation for further investigating the following areas.

Recommendations for future research are broad. Qualitative studies on various museums, such as the National Blacks in Wax Museum in Baltimore, Maryland, and the Follow
the North Star at Conner Prairie in Fishers, Indiana, could provide a wider and deeper knowledge of affective learning in museums. These studies could provide data that would perhaps indicate what type of exhibits have more of an impact on its visitors with regard to affective learning. For example, the National Blacks in Wax Museum in Baltimore, Maryland, offers life-size wax exhibits that bring the horrors of the trade, slavery, and their consequences alive. Additionally, the Follow the North Star Living History Museum integrates its visitors into the learning process by actually having visitors play a role in the story of slavery and the escape to freedom. It would be beneficial to compare and contrast the types of museum exhibits by asking the same questions posed in this study at other museums that encourage interactive role-playing and docent-led tours.

Another recommendation for further research is to conduct a quantitative study on the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, having visitors complete a survey after their visit. An additional recommendation is to complete a survey prior to the visitors’ experience to gain basic knowledge of what they already know about the slave trade and slavery. In this way, a pre- and post-survey could demonstrate a change in understanding. It would be beneficial to identify what the visitors already know about the topic, and it would allow the researcher to gain more insight as to how the visitor reflects and perceives the museum exhibits dependent upon previous knowledge. A quantitative approach would encompass a larger number of participants to gain a more general view of their experience at the Freedom Center. This would also benefit the knowledge base because of the larger number of participants allotted for a quantitative approach, whereas in my study only 31 participants were used. A mixed method approach of quantitative and qualitative analysis would allow deeper understanding of patrons’ affective experiences at the museum.
A third suggestion for future research is a longitudinal study of behaviors among children and adults. The affect needs cognitive consistency or an unbalanced state occurs when attitudes are inconsistent with knowledge. Therefore, because attitudes are inferred by behaviors, a longer study could track participants to see if there is indeed a change of behavior because of the affective learning that took place at the Freedom Center. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, thousands of primary and secondary schoolchildren visit the Freedom Center annually. It would be of great benefit to understand the interactive affective learning process the children experience on their field trips to the Freedom Center. Knowing how children connect their experience at the Freedom Center with present-day life would allow us to understand what affect their experience encompasses. Focus group sessions with school-aged children and adults to promote understanding of their experience at the Freedom Center, accompanied by a longitudinal behavioral study, will indicate if the top level of the affective domain is reached. The longitudinal study of behavior with school-aged children and adults will indicate if the Freedom Center can reach the full consistency with the fourth and fifth level of the affective domain.

Furthermore, with a quantitative method, the demographics of the participants could play a larger role in analyzing the results. The scope of my study did not include identifying race for each participant in the results. Although I acknowledge the demographics of my participants, the data were not included in the results portion of my data; therefore, I could not include it in my findings. I only displayed a table of demographics to get a general view of the participants. Although my research was limited in this manner, I believe demographics of the participants may have been essential when interpreting the results.
Summary

The curricula of the Freedom Center were in plain sight, but identifying the impact it had on its visitors was intricate as I examined the data from the 31 participants. However, limitations of this study reveal inconclusive results when considering all those who inhabit the United States. The participants in this study willingly came to a museum to learn of courage, cooperation, and perseverance. Thirty-one participants do not represent the entire population of the United States and the racist views that may prevail with any color; therefore, the source of these results includes the population and setting of this study only.

The literature review found the need for continued public museums to continue conveying their information via the current paradigm shift of interactive, meaningful exhibits because the results have shown an affective impact on their visitors. I wanted to find out the impact, if any, of the museum on its patrons and how exhibits affected the attitudes and values placed on this part of U.S. history in connection with modern-day race relations. The results indicated that the patron experiences were indeed impactful, positive, constructive, and future-oriented, which is the initial mission of the Freedom Center. A dialogue did emerge discussing participant attitudes and the values that they placed on this part of history and how those values influenced patrons’ perceptions of race and racial issues in America. Even though slavery is a dark subject in American history, the Freedom Center wants to create a positive experience for its visitors by showing the courage, cooperation, and perseverance it took to overcome the grim circumstances. Lastly, the Freedom Center hopes to convey future-oriented advocacy to fight injustices, such as contemporary slavery around the globe.

The focus of this research was geared toward affective learning at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. This museum told the history of slavery in the United
States and of the courage, cooperation, and perseverance enacted by many who overcame the challenges and consequences of the unfreedoms once practiced in America. Such a study is important in order to understand the challenges faced and how adversity was prevailed upon.

The research approach adopted for this dissertation included a qualitative method, using focus groups, observations, artifact collection, and a review of literature. The findings from this study provided evidence that participants did experience affective learning, reaching the third level of the affective domain. Much of the dialogue in the focus groups was about societal concerns regarding racial tensions in America.

The main conclusions drawn from this study are that the 21st century paradigm shift in museums’ missions does contribute to affective learning. Second, history should be retold to understand present-day ideologies and circumstances. Third, history should be remembered so we can move forward as informed citizens knowing how to act, not simply dwell in past inequities. Affective learning can be used as a vehicle to accomplish such a task. Finally, previous knowledge assists in scaffolding new ideas, thereby modifying old conceptual constructs of inequalities.
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APPENDIX A: PATRON QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What kind of an emotional effect, if any, did you have after viewing the exhibits?

2. Out of all the exhibits, which was the most powerful and why?

3. How was the representation of this part of United States history different from your previous knowledge on this part of history? Were you surprised about anything that represented United States history?

4. How did any of the exhibits lead you to move in your attitude about the reality of race relations in today’s society? Has your attitude changed with regard to prejudice and racism in our society? Do you have a deeper understanding of the ramifications of race and prejudice in contemporary society?

5. What are your feelings of the “Struggle Continues” exhibit?

6. Do the exhibits in this museum agree or contradict your worldview of racism and prejudice in contemporary media?
APPENDIX B: MUSEUM EXHIBIT ANALYSES

I identified the following about the museum to familiarize the reader about the museum exhibits that are used in this study.

1. Identify museum and location.
3. Artifacts used in the museum exhibit.
4. Target audience—the general public and/or specific communities.
5. Present smaller themes or one larger complex topic.
6. Interaction: Does the exhibit/museum allow for patrons to experience and learn by tapping into their emotion.
7. Integrated Technology: Does the technology enhance visitor’s experience
APPENDIX C: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Cassandra Caruso-Woolard (and faculty sponsor Dr. Tinnerman), from the CIMT Department at Indiana State University. The study is being conducted for a dissertation. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

You have been asked to participate in this study because it is essential to obtain patron perspectives of the museum exhibits. There will be approximately 30 participants in the study, including museum patrons and employees as participants. All participants in the study must be age 18 or older.

Brief explanation of study: Because museums are a form of public education, which provoke our thinking, the central focus of this study is on the exhibits of the slave trade and slavery and on patron perspectives of the museum. This will provide insight that will allow similar-type museums to better understand their patrons’ perceptions of the impact of exhibits. By examining how patrons perceive them will allow us to better understand how we relate history to present day issues of race relations.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

You will have the choice to join a focus group of three to five participants that will last approximately 20-30 minutes. If you volunteer, at the time of your focus group session we will enter the room (next to the entrance), sit in the chairs provided, and I will begin asking open-ended questions for you to respond. We will conduct this in a discussion format; therefore, you may interject your opinion anytime during the focus group session, while maintaining consideration and respect for other members in the group. If you choose to volunteer as a participant your view of the exhibits and what they mean to you is essential for this research. The questions I will ask in the focus group will be about what you think of the museum and the exhibits. Essentially, I would like to find out what impact, if any, the museum had on you. Upon completion of the focus group, the session will end and the participants are free to go.
POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Risks are not greater than minimal risk, (i.e., the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests). However, if a participant is feeling discomfort in any way they are able to withdraw themselves from the focus group. There is no physical risk due to the methodology of this study. Only verbal conversations will take place during focus groups. There is also nothing greater than a minimal risk to cause harm psychologically to the participants due to the voluntary nature of the focus group sessions and the content of the questions asked.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

By understanding the background and the history of the slave trade and slavery and its impact on the United States, we can begin to understand the systemic pattern of our own cultural production. If cultural production is a way society gives a voice to its recycled beliefs, ideas, and images, we must concern ourselves with the origin of this phenomenon, more specifically, to help understand race relations in modern American society. Therefore, by examining how the trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery is presented in this museum, and discussing what this history means to people today, a relationship may be established between individual perceptions and historical representation of our cultural history. This will benefit the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and others with regard to understanding the impact the exhibits have on their patrons from discussions obtained from the focus groups to create a dialogue of perspectives on race relations.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I will audio record the focus group sessions so I can transcribe the collected data (of discussion) from the group sessions. I will use numbers to identify the focus groups, not their real names. The demographic data will not be directly linked to the individual responses, but only the overall focus groups that are conducted. All information, audio tapes and consent forms, will be locked in a briefcase when not in use insuring all confidentiality of participants during transport. Furthermore, during my analysis all collected data will be locked in a filing cabinet in my home office. No one except me will have access to the collected data. If subjects formally withdraw, by informing me they would like to withdraw their participation in the study, I will keep their records in a lock box with no one having access except myself for at least three years after completion of the research. After that time lapse I will erase all recordings I will not maintain a master list of IDs and pseudonyms. I will only maintain the identification of each focus group by identifying it by numbers (1, 2, 3) and write the date and time it was conducted. This paper in addition to all other paperwork will be locked in a briefcase in my possession at all times separate from the recordings and notes. There will be no computer used during the focus group sessions.

The confidentiality between participants in the focus group sessions will be maintained by not addressing participants by their names. Therefore, no one in any of the focus groups will know one another’s names.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether or not to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.
There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. *The PI, may discard a subject’s transcription if the information is not relevant to the study.*

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact Cassandra Caruso-Woolard: *(Principal Investigator)* ccaruso@sycamores.indstate.edu, 812-243-9945 or Dr. Tinnerman *(Faculty Sponsor)* larry.tinnerman@indstate.edu, 812-237-2937

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at Indiana State University, Office of Sponsored Programs, Terre Haute, IN 47809, by phone at (812) 237-8217, or e-mail the IRB at irb@indstate.edu. You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with ISU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

________________________________________
Printed Name of Subject

________________________________________
Signature of Subject                       Date
APPENDIX D: FLYER

Transformational effects of museum exhibits upon their patrons: The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center

Who? Anyone 18 years of age and older…

What? Focus Group discussion of 1-5 people for 20-30 minutes…consisting of your viewpoints.

When? Every hour, on the hour, today.


Why? To provide insights that will allow similar-type museums to better understand their patrons’ perceptions of the impact of exhibits.

How? After viewing the exhibits…on the time sheet, simply mark an x on a time slot and take the card for that particular time. Return at designated time to the same table you signed up at (the museum entrance).

(You must read and sign a consent form to participate in the focus group session, as the forum will be recorded).
APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

1. Focus Group #__________ (Will be indicated by the primary investigator)

2. Race: __________

3. Region of origin: ____________

4. Gender: __________

5. Generation: Please choose one of the following:
   - Silent Generation- born in the United States between the years of 1925-1945.
   - G.I. Generation- born in the United States between the years of 1900-1924