In Pursuit of Connection:

Exploring Visitors' Empathy in Culturally-Centered Museums

Stephanie M. Morrison

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Committee:

Jessica J. Luke

Jeanine Pollard

Shirley J. Yee

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Stephanie M. Morrison

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Abstract

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Stephanie M. Morrison

Chair of Supervisory Committee:
Jessica J. Luke
Museology Graduate Program

Empathy cultivates the social bonds that hold us together. Yet at a time of great need for mutual understanding, research has shown a decline in this critical capacity. This study explored the nature of adult visitors' empathy in museums that focus on the history, culture, and art of a particular ethnic or cultural group. The researcher interviewed 60 visitors in three culturally-centered museums in Seattle, Washington. Results showed that the majority of study participants perceived feeling a high level of empathy during their visit. Study participants most frequently referenced a specific historical moment, person, or group in the description of the empathy they felt. Emotional responses were nuanced and varied – visitors reported positive, neutral, and negative sentiments. Study participants attributed a range of aspects from the museum experience to empathy elicitation, including: viewing specific objects and artifacts, interacting with the design of the physical space or exhibition, and absorbing particulars of historical information presented. Empathy was found to be deeply personal, derived from the visitor's

personal experiences and from their close relationships. These findings suggest that culturally-centered museums can and do foster empathy in their visitors.

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I am grateful to the courageous people who led grassroots efforts to build this country's culturally-centered museums. I am continuously inspired by these sites that share the stories, ideas, and life experiences of the very common, very exceptional people through which we understand what it is to be an American.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The term "empathy" has many definitions, as it describes a range of experiences. Psychology researchers studying emotion define empathy as "the ability to sense other people's emotions, coupled with the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling" ("What is Empathy?," n.d.). There has been an increasing amount of research centered on this phenomenon, specifically on the many benefits to cultivating empathy: it diminishes prejudice and racism (Todd, Bodenhausen, Richeson, & Galinsky, 2011), reduces bullying (Stavrinides, Georgiou, & Theorfanous, 2010), and motivates pro-social behavior (Batson et al., 1991) Fortunately, is it also contagious (Nook, Ong, Morelli, Mitchell, & Zaki, 2016). While empathy is clearly valuable, some have argued that there is an "empathy deficit" in this country that needs to be addressed (Krznaric, 2014).

Museums are increasingly interested in empathy. For example, the 2018 American Alliance of Museums conference featured interactive demonstrations and sessions dedicated to the topic of empathy ("AAM Event Schedule," 2018). *Measuring Empathy: The Collaborative Assessment Project* launched by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, focused on building and measuring empathy towards wildlife (Schofield & Khalil, n.d.). In 2017, the Minneapolis Institute of Art received grant funding to create the first center on empathy and art, "to explore practices for fostering empathy and global awareness through the power of art and to share these findings with the field" ("Center for Empathy and the Visual Arts," n.d.).

Research suggests that empathy can be cultivated in museums (Gokcigdem, 2016). Within the field, zoos and aquaria have remained the vanguard of non-human animal empathy development. Through studying human-animal relationships, zoos use empathy as a tool to affect pro-environmental behavior and motivation for conservation (Young, Kathayoon, & Wharton,

2018). Eliciting differing types of empathy in museum visitors has also been explored. The visceral and vicarious experiences prompt "empathic unsettlement" in visitors to the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool (Arnold-de-Simine, 2012) and increases in historical empathy result from school group tours to Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art (Greene, Kisida, & Bowen, 2014).

Museums with missions focused on a particular cultural group may offer unique opportunities for fostering empathy. These "culturally-centered" museums are identity-driven institutions that "collect or exhibit objects related to a particular ethnic or cultural group, focusing on art or historic objects, but often also highlighting the histories, accomplishments, or struggles of the featured culture" (Herz, 2017, para. 1). For example, at the Wing Luke Museum, in Seattle, Washington, visitors learn about the Asian Pacific American experience through community-based exhibitions and programs. They can step inside a restored 1910 shop that sold imported goods to recently arrived immigrants. In the historic hotel, visitors enter the former living space of a Chinese woman who raised her family in 20th century Chinatown. Across the country, the National Museum of African American History and Culture provides context to powerful objects. Harriet Tubman's shawl and Certificate of Freedom papers with first person accounts are displayed in the exhibition on slavery and freedom, *The Paradox of Liberty* ("Slavery and Freedom," n.d.).

Given the focus of these culturally-centered museums, it seems likely that they provide visitors with a chance to imagine what differing cultural experiences might have felt and do feel like. Yet empathy research has yet to be conducted in this type of institution. Some critics bemoan the threat of balkanization, wherein culturally-centered museums foster fragmentation across racial or ethnic lines (Conn, 2014). Yet, as the field's priorities shift towards becoming

increasingly diverse and inclusive, it is these types of institutions that can lead the conversation on how to be more community-centered.

The purpose of this study was to understand the nature of visitors' empathy in culturally-centered museums. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do adult visitors perceive that they have experienced empathy during their visit to a culturally-centered museum?
2. In what ways do adult visitors describe the empathy they experience during their visit to a culturally-centered museum?
3. What aspects of the museum experience do adult visitors attribute to empathy elicitation?

Efforts to foster empathy are evident throughout the museum field. This study helps to illuminate what factors contribute to this elicitation, as well as visitor's awareness and perspectives on empathy in their museums experience. Museum professionals with foci in exhibit design, research and curation, and educational programming can benefit from this study. The results help professionals better understand empathy as a potential impact and outcome of the museum experience, which could lead to examining or changing interpretation strategies. This research also serves as a starting point to determine which exhibit elements are most likely to elicit empathy in museum visitors. Additionally, researchers can build on this study to determine other methods of measuring empathy during visitors' in-gallery experience.

More broadly, as the field strives towards integrating culturally competent organizational practices in its museums, "there is a need to acquire knowledge awareness, and skills for successfully navigating cross-cultural encounters" (Garibay & Huerta Migus, 2014, p. 21) The findings have implications for museums professionals who believe that empathy is both an

emotion and skill to be cultivated. Understanding the nature of empathy in culturally-centered museums can help facilitate this larger conversation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to understand the nature of visitors' empathy in culturally-centered museums. The three key bodies of literature that supported this research are: i) the study of empathy across philosophical, psychological, and social neuroscientific literature; ii) empathy as a point of discussion among museum professionals and practitioners; and iii) the historical context of culturally-centered museums and their current role within the field. An exploration of this literature demonstrates that the concept of empathy in culturally-centered museums is an increasingly relevant yet understudied area of museological research.

i) Empathy

Definitions & Related Terminology

Empathy is a multidimensional, yet relatively recently conceived phenomenon. It is considered a psychological state, an attitude, an emotion, and a skill; its variety of form is exemplified by the multiplicity of definitions and related terminology across scientific and non-scientific literature. The term "empathy" was coined in 1909 by British psychologist Titchener (Wispé, 1986). In *Elementary Psychology of the Thought Processes*, empathy was translated from the German word *Einfühlung* (or "feeling into") through the Greek word *empatheia* (Titchener, 1909). Wispé asserted that the concept had emerged earlier through the works of aesthetics by Vischer (1873) and promoted in psychology by Lipps (1903). Lipps' described empathy as a response to art that brought objects to life from human feeling. On this contribution, Wispé wrote:

> Lipps maintained that it was from one's feelings of various inner activities in connection with both social and physical objects of perception that one became aware of such experiences as the ponderousness of the huge object, the nobility in one's bearing, and so forth. These subjective qualities were experienced by the

> person as being *in* the object rather than *about* it. Objects were felt as well as seen (p. 316).

Lipps claimed that empathy "should be understood as the primary epistemic means for our perception of other persons as minded creatures," (Stueber, 2013, para. 7) which proved influential to many early 20th philosophers. By 1915, Titchener had moved away from the concept of self-projection into objects towards the notion of "the subject's awareness in imagination of the *emotions* of another person" (Wispé, 1986, p. 316, personal emphasis).

There was a movement towards recognizing two different components of empathy that included the affective (feeling) and cognitive (knowing) processes (Hoffman, 2007). Cognitive empathy, often referred to as perspective-taking, is defined as "our ability to identify and understand other people's emotions" ("What is Empathy?", n.d., para. 2). Affective empathy refers to "the sensations and feelings we get in response to others' emotions [which] include mirroring what that person is feeling" ("What is Empathy?", n.d., para. 2). Goleman (2006) proposed a third component called 'empathic concern' wherein one is moved to help those with whom they are empathizing. Goleman's claim that "concern reflects a person's capacity for compassion" (p. 97) echoes psychologist Paul Eckman's proposal of 'compassionate empathy.' Both imply that one must *act* upon empathic responses.

The multidimensionality of empathy has been examined extensively in the literature. In one review, Batson (2009a) offered eight different dimensions of empathy: (1) knowing another's thoughts and feelings; (2) adopting the posture or neural response of the other; (3) feeling as another feels; (4) projecting oneself into another's situation; (5) imagining how the other is thinking and feeling; (6) imagining how one would think and feel in the other's situation; (7) feeling distress at witnessing the suffering of another; and (8) feeling for another person who is suffering. Batson proposed that empathy researchers have been searching for answers to two

different, but related questions: “how can one know what another person is thinking and feeling?” and “what leads one person to respond with sensitivity and care to the suffering of another?” (p. 3). Cognitive scientists, primatologists, and developmental psychologists interested in the theory of mind have gravitated towards the first question, whereas those interested in understanding and promoting prosocial action have focused on the latter.

Few scholars have attempted to survey the range of terminology and definitions of empathy. Cuff, Brown, Taylor & Howat (2016) examined 43 existing definitions/conceptual summaries and identified eight themes to formulate a new definition of empathy. The themes that emerged ranged from distinguishing empathy from other concepts such as sympathy, to arguments over the self/other distinction. There has been contention over whether empathy necessarily results in any behavioral outcome, and ample discussion surrounding empathy as a cognitive or affective concept. The authors concluded in their review,

> Empathy is an emotional response (affective), dependent upon the interaction between trait capacities and state influences. Empathic processes are automatically elicited but are also shaped by top-down control processes. The resulting emotion is similar to one’s perception (directly experienced or imagined) and understanding (cognitive empathy) of the stimulus emotion, with recognition that the source of the emotion is not one’s own (p. 150).

This study used the Greater Good Science Center’s definition of empathy: “the ability to sense other people’s emotions, coupled with the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling” (“What Is Empathy?,” n.d., para 1). This definition integrates both the affective and cognitive components of empathy.

Empathy Measurements

In addition to a multitude of definitions, researchers have created many different instruments to measure empathy (Gerdes, Segal & Lietz, 2010). Empathy measurement can be

divided into three categories: behavioral measures, neuroscientific measures, and self-report measures (Neumann, Chan, Boyle, Wang & Westbury, 2015). The majority of empathy measurements incorporate self-administered scales.

Measurements are commonly distinguished by which aspect of empathy they seek to measure. The Emotional Empathic Tendency Scale (EETS) was developed to measure emotion-based empathy and utilized Titchener's definition of the construct (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). Mehrabian (1996) later updated the EETS to create the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale. The Toronto Empathy Questionnaire also conceptualized empathy as a primarily emotional process (Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009).

Alternatively, the widely-used Empathy Scale (Hogan, 1969) was employed as a measure of cognitive empathy. More recently, it has been supplanted by the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) (Davis, 1980) that measures basic empathy and contains four subscales: a) perspective taking; b) fantasy; c) empathic concern; and d) personal distress. As stated by Spreng et al. (2009), the "*Personal Distress* [subscale] may be more related to the personality trait of neuroticism," and "the most robust components of empathy appear to be represented in the *Empathic Concern* and *Perspective Taking* subscales" (p. 3, my emphasis).

Empathy measurements have also been developed for specific populations. For example, the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (SEE) has four-subscales: a) empathic feeling and expression; b) empathic awareness; c) acceptance of cultural differences; and d) empathic perspective taking (Wang, Yakushko, Davidson, & Savoy, 2003). The SEE has been found to be highly reliable (Albiero and Matricardi, 2013). Yet it has been debated whether basic empathy (as measured by IRI) and ethnocultural empathy (as measured by SEE) are actually separate constructs (Rasoal, Jungert, Hau, & Andersson, 2011).

Perspective-Taking

Within the literature is an area of research that examines the conditions for empathy elicitation. There are many different methods to elicit empathy, including similarity manipulation, emotion-specific misattribution, and perspective-taking (Batson, Duncan, Ackerman, Buckley, & Birch, 1981). Perspective-taking – the ability to recognize another person's point of view – has been recognized as an essential component to proper social functioning. It has been positively correlated with social competence and self-esteem (Davis,1983), and with altruism (Batson et al., 1981; Batson, C.D., Batson, J.G., Slingsby, Harrell, Peekna, & Todd, 1991), and has been negatively correlated with stereotyping (Galinsky, 1999) and in-group biases (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Perspective-taking has also been linked to museum practice (Herz, 2015a).

Perspective-taking is a multifaceted sociocognitive process and has been conceptualized in many ways across different areas of study. In his research on adopting another person's perspective, Batson (2009b) concluded that there are two distinct ways of perceiving the other's situation:

> First, you can imagine how another person sees his or her situation and feels as a result (an *imagine-other perspective*). Second, you can imagine how you would see the situation were you in the other person's position and how you would feel as a result (an *imagine-self perspective*) (p. 267).

This work builds from Batson, Early & Salvarani's (1997) work on perspective-taking, emotional effects, and motivational consequences. The study explored two distinct forms of perspective-taking by studying undergraduates who listened to a false pilot radio interview with a young woman in serious need. Participants were divided into three perspective-taking conditions: one third were told to remain objective, one third were told to imagine how the woman might have felt, and one third were told to imagine how they would have felt in her

position. Their research showed that the *imagine-other perspective* produced "relatively pure empathic emotion," (p. 757) which has been found to evoke altruistic motivation (Batson et al., 1981). Whereas the *imagine-self perspective* produced both other-oriented empathy and self-oriented personal distress, "which has been found to evoke egoistic motivation" (p. 751). The distinction between egoistic and altruistic motivation has often been blurred.

Limitations of Empathy

While most perceive empathy as generally positive, there are academics within scientific philosophy that warn against the intensified focused on empathy. Critics of empathy assert that the phenomenon can have deleterious effects on people as it can be manipulated, is prone to in-group biases, and is highly selective (Bloom, 2016; Prinz, 2011). Research shows that cognitive empathy can illustrate the "too cold to care" phenomenon: "When people try to understand another person's point of view without internalizing his or her emotions, they can be so detached that they're not motivated to do anything to actually help that person" (Goleman, 2006, p. 172). Bloom (2013) echoed this worry, namely in what he considered empathy's individualistic 'spotlight effect.' This narrowing focus is problematic for Bloom, as our inability to empathize with more than one person at a given time leads to inaction on behalf of the larger group (Bloom, 2013).

Bloom's primary criticism is centered around the affective component of empathy as it pertains to moral decision making. Similarly, Prinz (2011) considered empathy as a vicarious emotion and takes contention with the notion that empathy is necessary to motivating moral judgments, moral development, and moral conduct. Prinz argued that empathy (which he distinguished from empathic concern) is not motivating, lead to preferential treatment, itself is selective and easily manipulated, and subject to bias, proximity effects, and salience effects.

Prinz suggested a need for "a mechanism for determining moral considerability," (p. 17) which focuses more on *what* has happened rather than of *who* it has happened to, to avoid impartiality and personal bias. When it comes to groups, one cannot empathize with large numbers of people without considering each person individually. If it is possible to empathize, one would be unable to move to action as the experience of vicarious pain would be paralyzing (Prinz, 2011).

Benefits of Empathy

By contrast, there is an abundance of research that suggests that empathy is a critical factor for moral action. Todd, Bodenhausen, Richeson & Galinsky's (2011) study revealed that empathy elicited via perspective-taking significantly reduced unconscious biases and outgroup prejudices. Empathy has been found to improve intergroup relations' attitudes and thereby produces more positive intergroup interaction (Dovidio, Johnson, Gaertner, Pearson, Saguy, Ashburn-Nardo, 2010). Through meta-analytic testing on three mediational processes of the intergroup contact hypothesis, Pettigrew & Tropp (2008) explored how prejudice is reduced from contact. They developed from their earlier theory that intergroup contact typically diminishes intergroup prejudices (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). The three mediators between contact and prejudice examined were knowledge, anxiety, and empathy/perspective taking. Pettigrew and Tropp concluded that empathy and perspective taking yielded strong mediational effects.

Studies by Batson (2011a) have been instrumental in demonstrating the positive benefits of empathy. The empathy-altruism hypothesis, which suggests that "empathic concern produces altruistic motivation," (p. 2) has been tested repeatedly against egoistic alternatives. Batson defined empathic concern as "other-oriented emotion elicited by and congruent with the perceived welfare of someone in need" (p. 3) and stated that humans are in fact capable of

valuing another's welfare. The summarized results of over 30 experiments were "remarkably consistent and clear in their support of the empathy-altruism hypothesis" (Batson, 2011b, p. 5). The capacity to value another's welfare is supported by other studies by Batson et al. (1997) and Eisenberg & Miller (1987). In the experimental study on the empathy-attitude relationship, Batson et al. (1997) concluded that feeling empathy towards an individual member of a stigmatized group improves attitudes towards of the group as a whole. The experiments included people living with AIDS, those experiencing homelessness, and people convicted of criminal offenses. Batson et al. suggested an "emotional strategy based on empathy" (p. 117) is needed to improve attitudes towards stigmatized groups, which are notoriously difficult to shift.

ii) Empathy and Museums

Museums have often positioned themselves as community anchors, functioning as sources of cultural identity, sites to bring communities together, and places to explore ideas of personal relevance. As professionals across the field have argued, empathy serves as a key component in building relevance in museums (Anderson, Anila, Cook, Gardner, Murawski, Machida, & Potter, 2017; Simon, 2016). In the 2017 issue of *TrendsWatch*, the American Alliance of Museum's Center for the Future of Museums forecasted empathy as an important topic for the field to consider, asserting that "museums' inherent strengths position them to be effective 'empathy engines' helping people to understand the 'other' and reinforcing social bonds" (Merritt, 2017, p. 8). Select history museums, art institutions, and zoos and aquaria have embraced the study of the phenomenon, while more research remains in development.

Discussion Among Practitioners

Museum practitioners have come to embrace empathy as a potential salve for the increasing divisiveness and inequality that impacts the country (Gokcigdem, 2016; "Center for

Empathy and the Visual Arts," n.d.). At the 2018 American Alliance of Museum conference, sessions were dedicated to the building, activation, and encouragement of empathy via exhibitions, educational programming, and hands-on experiences in museums. These sessions illustrated the fields' active interest in incorporating or nurturing empathy practices across institutions. Still, there has been critical discussion about if and how museums do and should prioritize this work.

Discussion among museum practitioners has been explored through many departmental lenses: from interpretive practices (Forrest, 2013), institutional body language (Jennings, 2013), to design thinking strategies (Silvers, 2013). Most emphasize the importance of and the ways in which museums elicit empathy. Herz (2015a) suggested that "museums provide immersive, personal experiences. Looking at a portrait of someone or visiting an exhibition about a historical figure or moment, these distant people are palpable and present" (para. 7). As a consultant for the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, Herz identified types of connections visitors had made in the museum, wherein "empathy […] defined as 'exhibiting a response that indicated that visitors understood what someone else might have been thinking or feeling' – was the most common" (para. 10).

Practitioners have generally viewed empathy as a positive outcome of the museum-going experience. Simeone (2016) interviewed museum professionals about the potential of empathy at the Kidsbridge Tolerance Center, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, and the Center for Civil and Human Rights and determined that "the outcomes of empathy were believed to be enriching to visitors and a society" (p. 38). Simeone's study revealed however, that "the concept of empathy is not fully articulated by some museum professionals, which may also bring into question what is being identified as empathy" (p. 35).

This inarticulation is reflected in many practitioners' questioning of empathy and its a) inherent morality – "is empathy always good?"; b) character — "what is empathy, and why should museums care about it?"; and c) measurement —"how do we know if people are experiencing empathy?" (Herz, 2015b, para. 5). Empathy researcher Nilsen (Herz, 2015b) suggested that drawing on extant empathy research could improve understanding of the impact of cultivating empathic responses. Other professionals have expressed more skepticism on the focus on empathy in museums. Anderson (2013) questioned whether the inclusion of empathy necessarily creates positive outcomes for museum visitors. While empathy research is still emerging within the context of museums, practitioners have offered tips for its elicitation (Herz, 2015a; Gokcigdem, 2017). Gokcigdem (2017) outlined the ways in which museums can foster empathy in their visitors that suggest: to hold a mirror to society by creating opportunities for dialogue with those who are different than us; to tell stories in which we can engage emotionally; to provide experiential learning opportunities to stimulate our senses; to inspire awe and wonder; and to offer a safe space and slower pace for contemplation.

Gokcigdem (2016) explored these topics in her book, *Fostering Empathy Through Museums* using fifteen museums as case studies. Gokcigdem regarded empathy as a powerful tool for social progress that museums are uniquely situated to employ. The central themes that emerged were: the use of art and storytelling to elicit empathy; empathy as a developed skill and its educational role; conceptual discussions of the phenomenon; and describing museums that often address social and political issues. Examples were primarily derived from museum professional's perceptions of the value empathy and from visitors' experiences within their institutions. The majority of examples came from science centers, history institutions, and children and art museums, but not places that center on a particular ethnic or cultural group.

Historical Empathy

Much of the research on historical empathy has been conducted within the context of a school classroom rather than within the informal learning environment of a museum (Cunningham, 2009; Endacott & Brooks, 2013; Rantala, Manninen, & van den Berg, 2016). Savenije & de Bruijn's (2017) article sought to explore the understudied role of historical empathy in museum practice. They used the concept of historical empathy to examine the interplay between cognitive and affective dimensions of history learning in museums. Savenije & de Bruijn employed Endacott's (2013) articulation of historical empathy as

> Involv[ing] the reconstruction of people's perspectives through the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of the broader historical contexts in which figures have acted and an analysis of the possible motives, beliefs and emotions that guided their actions (p. 3).

The ways in which history museums construct temporality – the degree of distance or proximity from the past – and conceptualize the notion of historical distance effects historical empathy as an outcome. The analytical framework of temporality is fostered through the narrative structure of historical representations. Through a case study approach, Savenije & de Bruijn found that through a singular, personal story with associated artifacts, people could identify with the thoughts and feelings of historical actors. They also discovered that by providing multiple perspectives in efforts towards contextualization, students could "affectively engage with the subject matter through their identification with particular narratives based on a shared cultural background" (p. 12). They suggested that if museums want to support the development of historical empathy, they must "be aware of the ways in which they implicitly provide various layers of interpretation" (p. 12) and remain mindful of the contextual background and authoritative voice of the institution.

Aesthetic Experiences

Research shows that historical empathy is also an outcome of aesthetic experiences. For example, the landmark 2012 Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and University of Arkansas Department of Education Reform study found that students who attended the museum's school tour demonstrated stronger critical thinking skills, displayed higher levels of tolerance, exhibited greater historical empathy, and developed a taste for arts and cultural institutions (Greene, Kisida, & Bowen, 2014). The Crystal Bridges Museum study was the first large-scale randomized-control trial designed to measure what students learn from school tours in an art museum. The system of matched pairs included a treatment group that received the tour and a control group that did not. Researchers administered surveys to 10,912 students and 489 teachers at 123 different schools three weeks after the treatment group received its tour. The survey assessed knowledge about art and included measurements of critical thinking, historical empathy, tolerance, and sustained interest in art museum visitation. During the one-hour tour, groups discussed five works of art where conversations were largely student-led. Results of the study showed that students retained factual information from their tours, displayed demonstrably stronger ability to think critically about art than the control group, and scored significantly higher in historical empathy and tolerance measures.

Greene, Kisida, & Bowen (2014) defined historical empathy as "the ability to understand and appreciate what life was like for people who lived in a different time and place" (p. 6). Three statements on the survey were combined in a scale to measure historical empathy. Students in the treatment group experienced a 6 percent of a standard deviation increase in historical empathy; among rural students there was a 15 percent of a standard deviation gain. Both survey items and behavioral measures were employed to gauge student interest in visiting art museums. They

found that students who received a school tour, and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to have positive feelings of visiting an art museum. Additionally, students with less exposure to culturally-enriching experiences had a larger benefit of receiving a school tour. This is significant because rural, high poverty, and families of color are less likely to substitute the experience if schools do not offer field trips.

Similarly, Arnole, Meggs, & Greer (2014) used the context of an art museum for their study and found that student participants developed empathy and aesthetic understanding through their multiple learning experiences. These experiences included a week of exposure to thread and fabric artist Deidre Scherer's work, where students discovered and expressed 'deep empathy and strong emotion' which translated into a more profound understanding and ability to analyze art. The educational strategy of immersion exposure to a singular artist "allowed students to connect vicariously with the subjects depicted in Scherer's images in order to experience their feelings" (p. 14). This recalls Lipps' interpretation of empathy, in which objects were felt as well as seen. Arnole et al. (2014) concluded that "this connection to the feelings of others is a form of empathy" (p. 14).

Zoos & Aquaria

Zoos and aquaria have long been invested in research surrounding the relationship, development, and impact of empathy towards wildlife. In 2015, the Association of Zoos & Aquariums launched *Measuring Empathy: The Collaborative Assessment Project* (MECAP) (Schofield & Khalil, n.d.). The Seattle Aquarium, Woodland Park Zoo, and Pt. Defiance Zoo & Aquarium worked collaboratively to gain a shared understanding and definition of the construct and how it develops during childhood. They reviewed existing research on the link between

empathy and positive behaviors and actions that benefit wildlife and summarized findings on best practices in developing empathy towards wildlife (Owen, 2015).

In reviewing literature on empathy for animals, Young, Khalil, & Wharton (2018) conducted semi-structured interviews with leading experts in the field of conservation psychology and affect in relation to animals. They concluded that empathy towards animals' functions in the same way as towards humans, which incorporates three distinct yet related abilities – affective empathy, cognitive empathy, and empathic concern. The literature suggested that empathy has the potential to be an "effective affective motivator and predictor of helping behavior towards others, although it may not directly lead to the uptake of complex conservation behaviors" (p. 6). Young et al. outlined the barriers to empathy development, which included physical and behavioral characteristics, as well as language choice and cultural narrative framing. The elicitation of too much empathy, which stems from being overloaded with emotionally triggering experiences, can result in disengagement. Additionally, the tendency to project our own experiences onto others and anthropomorphize animals challenge educators "to encourage the development of accurate cognitive empathy by recognizing similarities and differences between human and non-human animal experiences" (p. 10).

Wharton, Khalil, Fyfe, &Young (2019) detailed best practices for fostering empathy towards animals that can be employed in both informal and formal learning environments. Such practices included: to promote awareness of language and how conversations are framed; to encourage appropriate modeling techniques; to increase knowledge surrounding similarities and differences between humans and animals; to facilitate direct interactions and experiences; and to use imagination during perspective-taking activities. Wharton et al. suggested that with the

"intentional employment of the practices, educators can facilitate empathy development learning as a core outcome of education, instead of a fortunate byproduct" (p. 166).

Limitations of Empathy in Museums

Within the past fifteen years, many theorists and researchers have problematized the generally positive notion of museums fostering empathy. Arnold-de-Simine (2013) questioned the assumption that empathy can bridge divides between religion, ethnicity, and nationality and calls to question the idea that empathy precedes "ethical behavior, tolerance and deeper understanding of contemporary conflicts" (p. 46). For instance, Arnold-de-Simine considered the use of family stories in history museums as problematic because the visitor does not have enough critical distance to relinquish personal memories. To properly do so would require to "recall painful recollections, in an affective investment beyond a purely identificatory relationship" (p. 46). Yet the museum field has experienced a rise in interest in witnessing, trauma, and navigating 'difficult' histories (Arnold-de-Simine, 2013; Bonnel & Simon, 2007).

The District Six Museum in Cape Town, South Africa, for example, is a site for engagement between the community's past, present, and future. Markham (2018) posited that empathy, "rather than a tool for critical engagement with District Six's history, is increasingly becoming the means through which alternative memories of District Six are silenced" (p. 2). Formed by those directly affected by apartheids' Group Area Act, the museum is "dedicated to preserving and fighting for the rights and memories of those who were forcibly removed from the District Six homes between 1966 and 1982" (p. 1). The museum seeks balance between empathy with 'critical non-racialism,' which in practice means

> That whilst the Museum acknowledges the impact that racial classifications had on residents of District Six, it refuses to reproduce these within its displays, engaging instead in an imaginative process that re-fashions post-apartheid

> identities, and attempts to bring them together within the Museum along non-racial lines (p. 6).

Markham examined the impact of District Six Museum had on visitors' ability to empathize and critically engage with material on display.

The impact of tourism and subsequent alteration of its visitor demographics compromised the museum's non-racial project. The Museum's status as an International Site of Conscience attracts a global audience that effects the affective experience and inadvertently reinforces suppressive dominant narratives about District Six and its residents. Markham cited Boler (1997) and his observation of empathy's inherent irony, "whilst it is often diagnosed as a universalizing condition that brings the world closer together, 'empathic identification' is actually predicated on the Westernized need to 'consume' difference" (p. 3). District Six Museum is in a precarious situation between balancing the commitments to the founding community and supporting the newer, international community of visitors that requires more robust interpretive scaffolding.

Measuring Empathy in Museums

While empathy has been discussed and explored across many institutions, few have endeavored to empirically measure visitors' levels of empathy as a result of their museum experience. In 2017, the Minneapolis Institute of Art received grant funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which functioned as seed money to develop the first Center for Empathy and the Visual Arts (CEVA) (Greenberger, 2017). The Mellon Research Project will "explore the impacts of the museum in fostering awe, wonder, and empathy among a general museum audience as well as school-aged visitors" ("Center for Empathy and the Visual Arts," n.d., pg. 6) through a general visitor study and an in-depth youth study. Additionally, in her forthcoming book, *Designing for Museums: Perspective on the Museum Experience,* Gokcigdem (2019) will detail how museums can "intentionally innovate and design for empathy, while continuing to

foster empathy by utilizing your institution's existing strengths." The research conducted through CEVA and Gokcigdem's new work will likely have implications for the future of empathy studies in museum practice.

iii) Culturally-Centered Museums

Terminology

Museums that center on ethnically-, racially-, or culturally-defined group experiences have been collectively termed in various ways within various contexts. Cultural critics have often defaulted to the term "ethnic museums" or "identity museums" while professionals and practitioners in the field have favored the use of "community-based museums" or "culturally-specific museums" (Kurin, 1997; Farrell and Medvedeva, 2010). While the use of "culturally-specific museums" is most common, this study seeks to problematize the term. The word "specific" reinforces the ostracization of the "Other" through its lineal ties to "species" and "specimen." The reiteration of usage allows for the narrative to be continuously constructed by the dominant Eurocentric representation of power (Golding, 2009). The impreciseness of a common definition allows for new insertions into the literature, in which I offer "culturally-centered" in its stead.

Museums and Communities

Culturally-centered museums were created in response to the omission or misrepresentation of marginalized groups in mainstream museums. Today, the museum field has experienced a movement towards community engagement strategies, inclusive educational interpretation, and diversifying its exhibitions and museum staff. There is a recognition that as cultural and social institutions, museums bear some responsibility of responding to the needs of the communities in which they are situated (Duron, 2018).

The proliferation of literature that centers on museums and their work with and for communities reflects, in part, the attitudinal shift of the role that museums fulfill in society. The field has seen a shift towards a focus on education and the involvement of the public in particular. However, many museums struggle with conceptualizing and understanding who and what constitutes their communities. The challenge for many museums is the attempt to equalize the historical imbalance of power in the relationship between institutions and community members (Witcomb, 2007). The idea that "communities can feel that museums are not relevant to them if they do not find within them a sense of their own history, identity and belonging, because they have not been invited to contribute to the collecting and exhibiting process or because museums are geographically distant" (Watson, 2007, p. 11) is reflective of the formation of many culturally-centered museums.

Formation of Culturally-Centered Museums in the United States

The 1960s and 1970s was a period characterized by social and political turbulence. During this time, marginalized groups that previously felt unrecognized, undervalued, and disadvantaged as a result of ethnicity, indigeneity, age, gender, or sexual preferences vocalized and protested against social inequality and government policies. This era of change influenced identity-based liberation movements, including the black civil rights movement, Black Power, women's rights, the American Indian movement, gay pride, and the Chicanx movement (Simpson, 2001; Moreno, 2004). The movement towards ethnic identity as linked with American nationality "brought an end to the concept of the melting pot of US culture and established the importance of maintaining cultural diversity within a national framework" (Simpson, 2001, p. 9). Multiculturalism and the notion of pluralism in American society was embraced, although *who* gets to constitute an American is still debated.

Marginalized groups fought for greater representation in political and social arenas, as well as greater representation in American museums. Civil rights groups criticized museums for the inaccurate representation of displayed racial and ethnic groups, the lack of representation of nondominant cultural groups on museum staffs, and the unequal opportunity for artists of non-European origin (Simpson, 2001). By the 1970s, the social and political pressures had initiated a reevaluation of museology ideology and practice. In part, the "new social history" movement challenged traditional historical scholarship to include experiences from everyday people: racial-ethnic minorities, women, immigrants, and laborers (Filene, 2017). Historians' interpretive authority – "the right to decide who and what 'counts' as history and what it means" – began to shift (p.1). Filene (2017) asserted that while museums began to focus less on a single, unified narrative of the American experience, the fundamental relationship between museums and their visitors remained unchallenged. Curators and historians still held interpretive authority; a top-down approach conceived audiences as passive receivers of knowledge.

By the 1990s, museums started to embrace a multi-perspectival approach to exhibition curation and cultural education. The diffusion of interpretative authority came at a time of cutbacks in federal and state financial support: "to survive, museums realized, they needed to make themselves essential to their audiences in a more visceral way" (Filene, 2017, p. 5). Museums looked to grassroots organizations for guidance on how to take a more community-focused approach. Community involvement was increasingly seen as critical "to the successful implementation of programs of exhibitions and activities which better reflected the cultural composition of society and the issues of relevance to the communities in which the museums were situated" (Simpson, 2001, p. 11).

Claudine Brown, the late director of the National African American Museum Project at the Smithsonian Institution regarded the omission or misrepresentation of the history of racial-ethnic minority groups as a catalyst for the creation of 'community-focused museums' (Kurin, 1997). They were formed, in part, in reaction to the grand narrative model employed by American history museums. In building her case for publicly-funded, culturally-centered museums, Brown argued:

> In fact, calling these museums racially or culturally specific places them in a negative category. It is not that people from such groups are trying to avoid being seen as part of a larger whole. It is rather that in the face of exclusion, they seek something positive to sustain them. These museums should more properly be called *community-focused* museums. People need to see something of themselves in their museums, to feel that it is their history, art, culture, or interest that is somehow important and worth preserving (p. 102-103).

Brown asserted that culturally-centered museums have done the work that public museums had not up to that point: they preserve the artwork, artifacts, stories, and objects of marginalized cultural groups.

Foundational Culturally-Centered Museums

There are many examples of museums that developed directly out of the communities they serve. For example, the DuSable Museum of African American History was founded in 1961 in Chicago, Illinois by a group of area residents. It was formed largely in response to how uneven the preservation of African American history and material culture, which resulted in a dearth of artifacts for educators to draw upon. As the demand for African American studies grew, the museum offered courses to teachers and outreach programs for community groups. The amassed collection derived directly from the community and thus "the lives of ordinary black people" (Simpson, 2001, p. 98). Similarly, El Museo del Barrio was founded in 1969 in New York City's historically Puerto Rican East Harlem neighborhood. The Puerto Rican artists,

activists, and educators sought to recover identities that had been suppressed in daily life, the efforts towards "cultural recovery" became a "cultural resistance" (Duron, 2018).

The Anacostia Museum of African American History and Culture is considered a catalyst for the development of culturally-centered, community-focused museums in the United States (Simpson, 2001). Devoted to the interpretation of African American history and culture, the museum served the low-income, inner-city residents of color of the Anacostia neighborhood in Washington DC. The museum (previously named Anacostia Neighborhood Museum) opened in 1967 and was the first federally funded community museum in the United States.

The ethos of museums as central to building community identity was largely influenced by John "Jack" Kuo Wei Tchen. In 1989, Tchen wrote *Towards a Dialogic Museum*, which reflected on his tenure as a cofounder of the New York History Project (NYHP), later the Chinatown History Museum (now the Museum of Chinese in America). As part of the new social history movement, NYHP challenged the dominant Eurocentric narrative of history museums. He coined the term "dialogue-driven," in relation to museum work to describe "a work process where documentation, meaning, and representation are acknowledged to be co-developed with those whom the history is of, for, and about" (Tchen & Sevcenko, 2011, p. 82).

Tchen called for multidimensional, cross-cultural dialogues between museum professionals and scholars; between museum planning groups and Chinese and Chinese American community representatives; between museum planning groups and non-Chinese American community representatives; and between the museum staff to train community members on humanities scholarship (Tchen, 1992). The core question of NYHP centered around how community experiences and consciousness related to historical discourse.

Tchen's dialogue-driven philosophy informed the work of many culturally-centered museums. The 1980s through 2000s saw a proliferation of museums dedicated to the preservation, promotion, and education of a specific culture and/or ethnicity. Such museums include: The Wing Luke Museum of the Asian American Experience (founded 1967, relocated 1987 and 2008); National Museum of Jewish History (1976); Japanese American National Museum (1992); National Museum of the American Indian (2004); Arab American National Museum (2005); and National Museum of African American History and Culture (2016). The landscape of these museums continues to represent the interplay of different articulations of the American experience.

The National Museum Debate

Museums that focus on a particular ethnic and/or racially-defined group are not necessarily situated within the geographic context of their source communities. The highly visible and visited sites on the National Mall in Washington D.C. have become a physical and symbolic platform for amplifying voices. The inclusion of culturally-centered museums as part of the Smithsonian Institution's network of federally-funded national museum has prompted significant debate into the "questions of national and ethnic identity and the role of national museums in forging shared narratives of the past," (Bunning, 2019, p. 570) which has persisted up to the present.

In 2012, the Smithsonian Institution held a special symposium entitled "(Re)Presenting America: The Evolution of Culturally Specific Museums," which was prompted by the proposal for a National Museum of the American Latino. The proposal reignited previous philosophical and governmental debates over the value of national culturally-centered museums. Scholars have used culturally-centered museums on the National Mall as ways to examine ethnic institution-

building (Ruffins, 1997); to trace complexities of race and heritage within the United States (Bunning, 2019); and to investigate the uncertain future of new museums (Reiner, 2013).

The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) was authorized by Congress in 1989 and became the first national institution devoted exclusively to the interpretation of native cultures in North America (Simpson, 2001). Support was not unanimous, however, in part from concerns raised by Native American nations over the repatriation of human remains and sacred objects. Other public supporters of the Smithsonian rebuked the notion of a museum as a platform for Native voices, as it allegedly privileged identity politics and degraded scholarship (Bunning, 2019). Various dissenters' desire for the 'apolitical' interpretation of the past aligned well with embedded American mythos of indigenous peoples.

Ruffins (1997) argued that Americans developed a myth of the 'vanishing Indian' to "elide knowledge of direct genocide" (p. 95) to inherit native land 'legitimately,' and "in their vanishing, concerned, conscientious white Americans could rush in to preserve (and study) their artifacts, customs, songs, legends, beliefs, and bodies" (p. 95). The result were massive collections of indigenous objects and materials housed in major museums. After the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) laws were passed, NMAI's policy was adopted by the Board of Trustees in 1991. Exhibitions at NMAI represent the extant First Nations cultures to signify that, contrary to popular belief, they have not 'vanished.'

The controversy continued as the proposal for an African American museum on the Mall came to light in 1991. Many members of the public and advisory boards were uncomfortable with the idea of separate institutions that highlighted a particular cultural group over another; while others felt that ethnic programming at existing institutions (such as the National Museum of American History) would be ignored. In this era, Bunning (2019) argued that "race was a

difficult concept to address directly and, for many institutions, a 'colorblind' approach to addressing perceived difference or divisions in society was preferred" (p. 577). It took over one-hundred years to secure congressional approval, but in 2003 The National Museum of African American History and Culture was established by an Act of Congress (Reiner, 2013).

There are many that hold the belief that culturally-centered museums are too narrow, prone to balkanization, and even 'un-American' (Bedard and Huey-Burns, 2011). Conn (2014) postulated that the central challenge for culturally-centered museums was mediating the distinctiveness of a particular ethnic group while not portraying it as separate from American life. He argued that while museums are "predicated on the notion of ethnic difference and particularity, taken together, there is a remarkable sameness to the all" (p. 8) and maintains that museums too often conflate celebrating heritage with communicating history. As 'ethnics' have learned to assimilate into American life, they have "embraced their ethnicity in an attempt to hold onto an identity which is already slipping away" (p. 9). Conn predicted that without genealogical ties, museums audiences will be disinterested. He remains dubious of the belief that culturally-centered museums can convey Ethnic American history as American history (Conn, 2014).

A place for all of America's racial and ethnic groups has been envisioned into reactionary proposal for the National Museum of the American People (NMAP). In direct opposition with culturally-specific museums, NMAP is "modeled on the monolithic 'melting pot' style of multiculturalism against which the ethnic museum movement implicitly argues" (Reiner, 2013, p. 34). The central permanent exhibition will seek to tell the full story of American peoples, divided into four chapters. Its critics argue that the portrayal of a 'coherent' and 'assimilated' history and identity "glosses over so-called difficult histories in favor of a unifying effect" (p.

35). The NMAP legislation arose within the context of the aforementioned National Museum of the American Latino proposal. During the Smithsonian's symposium, panelist and scholar Clement Price highlighted the tension between culturally-centered museums in a national context yet called for both "a national and a culturally specific depiction of ethnic experiences" (Bunning, 2019, p. 579).

In response to Kennicott's (2012) remarks that culturally-centered museums are unable to adapt to future conceptualizations of ethnic identities, Bunning (2019) argued that "such critiques appear to essentialize museums themselves as simplistic vehicles for culturally-determined political interests rather than as places for complex intercultural connections" (p. 580). Having separate culturally-centered museums does not obviate the need for broader, more inclusive, national, regional, and local museums. They can bridge differences rather than exacerbate them and actually increase the ability of people in a society to work out their differences.

Current Roles of Culturally-Centered Museums

The discussion about the role and relevance of culturally-centered museums persists today (Duron, 2018). Many museum professionals are focusing less on questioning their relevancy but determining the ways in which they are. Culturally-centered museums can function as spaces to talk about controversial topics including race and identity within museum educational programming (Brown, Gutierrez, & McCullough, 2017) and promote a multicultural image of the contemporary museum where art, history, and culture of nondominant people are made visible (Loukaitou-Sideris & Grodach, 2004; ("The Cultural Museum 2.0 Engaging Diverse Audiences in America," 2009). Culturally-centered museums exist to invest marginalized groups with the power of representation.

Yet, each culturally-centered museum is distinct. The study by Loukaitou-Sideris & Grodach (2004) concluded that 'ethnic museums' are not monolithic or homogenous entities. The study examined the mission, scope, and facilities of twenty Los Angeles-area culturally-centered museums in contrast to six 'renowned mainstream' museums. While not mutually exclusive, the perceived roles of 'ethnic museums' included: (1) serving as an advocate of a particular culture, (2) as interpreter of the culture and history of the ethnic group, (3) a zone of contact between the ethnic culture and the culture of others, (4) as the keepers of ethnic traditions, and (5) a site of contest (p. 59). Loukaitou-Sideris & Grodach found that "all ethnic museums aspire to highlight and display elements of one or more ethnic cultures" but "vary considerably in the ways they perceive their role in the community, the city, or even the nation" (p. 56). While smaller institutions may be vested in a particular neighborhood community, larger museums look towards the larger regional and national communities as part of their audiences.

Kennicott's (2012) comments reflected the perception of culturally-centered museums as static spaces, yet this has claim has been frequently interrogated. Cabrera (2008) challenged the common interpretation that 'community-based ethnic museums' are 'gloomy' and 'trapped in the past.' Her study on four culturally-centered organizations in Chicago found that museums help shape communities' identities "according to what they believe are their communities' concerns and needs" (p. 228). They assumed the role of an intermediary space; assisting their members' integration while neutralizing the effects of assimilation. Through a dialogic process, these organizations engaged their public that fostered a "commonality to cultivate or maintain recognition as members of the American collective" (p. 223). Cabrera highlighted the museum's shift away from being a 'culture broker' towards becoming agents of social change.

Culturally-centered museums have made efforts to re-examine themselves as adaptive spaces to ensure their relevancy for the next generation of supporters. The Japanese American National Museum (JANM) for example, aims for their stories to be "seen as a reflection of everyone's stories" ("The Cultural Museum 2.0," 2009, p. 4). Through its multi-year *Re-Envisioning + Engaging Multiethnic Audiences in America* audience evaluation project, the museum identified a newer target audience who are younger than their core-constituency and identify themselves as multiracial/multiethnic. The findings impacted how the museum plans and presents its programming; the content and focus of its exhibitions, and its marketing and engagement strategies. Demographic changes across the United States have significant implications for culturally-centered institutions like JANM. The JAMN report pointed to a larger tension of finding the balance between addressing the needs of their core constituency out of which they originated, and the needs of "an expanding audience that no longer identifies itself based solely on cultural or racial categories" (p. 8). JAMN recommended that all culturally-centered museums could benefit from a reevaluation of their practice to reflect the needs of their rapidly changing audiences.

Chapter 3: Methods

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to understand the nature of visitors' empathy in culturally-centered museums. The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent do adult visitors perceive that they have experienced empathy during their visit to a culturally-centered museum?
2. In what ways do adult visitors describe the empathy they experience during their visit to a culturally-centered museum?
3. What aspects of the museum experience do adult visitors attribute to empathy elicitation?

This study used a descriptive survey design in which data were collected from a random sample of museum visitors with the goal of generalizing findings to a larger population. Data were collected using in-person, semi-structured interviews with adult museum visitors. This chapter describes the sampling, data collection, participants, analysis procedures, and addresses the methodological limitations of the study.

Research Sites

Data were collected at three culturally-centered museums in Seattle, Washington. Research sites were selected because their mission was focused on promoting the history, cultures, and art of a particular racial/ethnic American group, and because they were located in the Puget Sound area. Specifically, research sites included the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience ("the Wing") located in Seattle's Chinatown-International District; the Northwest African American Museum ("NAAM") located in Seattle's Central District; and the Nordic Museum ("The Nordic") located in the Seattle's Ballard neighborhood. All three

museums are located within the geographic area that historically has been distinct to each respective racial/ethnic group.

Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience. The Wing has the following mission statement: "We connect everyone to the dynamic history, cultures, and art of Asian Pacific Americans through vivid storytelling and inspiring experiences to advance racial and social equity" ("What We Do," n.d.). Data collection took place in the *Honoring Our Journey* exhibit*,* which the Wing describes as "the 'heart' of [the] galleries, this permanent exhibition showcases the pan-Asian Pacific American immigrant and refugee experience with five themes: Home, Getting Here, Making a Living, Social Justice, and Community" ("Honoring Our Journey," n.d.)

Nordic Museum. The mission of the Nordic Museum is to "share Nordic culture with people of all ages and background by exhibiting art and objects, preserving collections, providing educational and cultural experiences, and serving as a community gathering place" ("About Us," n.d.). Data collection took place in the "Perspectives Forum" gallery within *Nordic Journeys*, the permanent exhibition that "expands the Museum's classic immigration story to include a broader understanding of Nordic life and culture as it has evolved over the last twelve thousand years" ("Nordic Journeys," n.d.)

Northwest African American Museum. The mission of NAAM is:

> …to spread knowledge, understanding, and enjoyment of the histories, arts and cultures of people of African descent for the enrichment of all. We accomplish our mission by working with others to:
>
> - Present and preserve the connections between the Pacific Northwest and people of African descent; and to
> - Investigate and celebrate Black experiences in America through exhibitions, programs and events ("Mission and Vision," n.d.).

Data collection took place in the *Our Journey* exhibit, which NAAM promotes as a "dynamic, interactive exhibition [that] takes visitors on a multi-faceted journey through time, exploring the history, culture, and art of the region's African American community. Beginning with the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the chronological timeline encompasses three centuries of challenges and opportunities that were experienced by people who settled in the Pacific Northwest and called it home" ("Journey Gallery," n.d.)

Sampling & Data Collection

The researcher utilized convenience sampling, wherein every individual who appeared over the age of 18 years was approached for participation as they exited the primary exhibition space. All participants were informed of their rights as research participants and verbal consent was obtained. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Each interview consisted of four parts (Appendix A). Part one offered visitors a definition of "empathy" and asked if they had experienced this phenomenon during their visit. The answer to this question functioned as a filtering question. If visitors answered "yes," they were asked about the nature of that empathy, which constituted parts two and three of the interview. If they said no, the interview was finished. Part four collected basic demographic information from participants.

Items presented for rating in parts two and three were adapted from validated scales in the literature, used to measure cognitive and emotional empathy, including: Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983); Feeling and Thinking Scale (Garton & Gringart, 2005); Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009); Emotion Specific Empathy Questionnaire (Olderbak, Sassenrath, Keller, & Wilhelm, 2014); and Empathy Quiz (Greater Good Science Center, n.d.).

Participants

Data were collected from 60 visitors, with 18 participants interviewed at the Wing Luke Museum, 22 participants interviewed at the Nordic Museum, and 20 participants interviewed at the Northwest African American Museum. Overall, 88% were first-time visitors (n=53) to the museum where they were interviewed. The majority of study participants identified as female (70%, n=42), and 23% (n=14) identified as male. The largest age group represented was between 25-34 years old (27%, n=16) followed by 55-64 years old (19%, n=11). Study participants had visited the museum either in a group of adults (72%, n=43), by themselves (20%, n=12), or in a group of adults and kids (8%, n=5).

Across the three sites, the majority of participants identified as White/European American (63%, n=39). The second largest group identified as Asian/Asian American 15% (n=9) and the third most represented were African American (12%, n=7). 8% (n=5) identified as Latinx/Latinx American; 7% (n=4) as multiracial; 7% (n=4) as Jewish; and 3% (n=2) as Indigenous.

Data Analysis

Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, and interview content was emergently coded. Responses to open-ended questions were analyzed using an emergent content analysis procedure in order to identify themes across participant responses. Closed-ended responses were quantified and analyzed using descriptive statistics. All interviews were coded and analyzed using a coding rubric (Appendix C).

Limitations

Limitations of the study derive from the design itself, as the study relied on data collected through self-report measures. Researchers have created self-report, behavioral, and

neuroscientific instruments to measure empathy – the majority of which are self-report and are subject to various biases and limitations. Study participants might not have had the introspective ability to accurately assess themselves and each interview question was subject to the biases of each previous response.

Additionally, the nature of the interviewing process itself had potential for social satisficing from participants. Participation in the study, besides age, was predicated on the visitor's own perception of experiencing empathy. Considering the dynamic between researcher and participant, visitors might have expressed the more socially acceptable answer rather than being honest to their experience. In which case, the 94% (n=60) of study participants who responded 'yes' to experiencing empathy might not be an accurate portrayal of the average visitor. The rating statements were designed to mitigate this potential limitation.

Relatedly, the statements that participants rated were pulled from existing empathy measurement scales. Currently, there is no single intact scale to measure visitors' empathy in museums, so items were adapted from four validated scales. Scales were validated in their intact form; as such, forming a new scale has limitations because the validity is unknown. The use of numerical scales might also be inexact because participants are inclined to give extreme or neutral responses. The development of resources to measure visitors' empathy in museums created by the Center for Empathy and Visual Arts at the Minneapolis Institute of Art will aide future research.

Chapter 4: Results

This study explored the nature of adult visitors' empathy in culturally-centered museums. The results provide answers to the following research questions: (1) To what extent do visitors perceive that they have experienced empathy during their visit to a culturally-centered museum?; (2) In what ways do adult visitors describe the empathy they experience during their visit to a culturally-centered museum?; and (3) What aspects of the museum experience do adult visitors attribute to empathy elicitation? Data were analyzed according to the coding rubric found in Appendix C.

1. To what extent do adult visitors perceive that they have experienced empathy during their visit to a culturally-centered museum?

Of the 64 visitors in this study, 94% (n=60) felt that they experienced empathy during their museum visit. The visitors who felt they had not experienced empathy (6%, n=4) were not subsequently interviewed in this study. Those who had experienced empathy were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed with six statements assessing the specific dimensions of empathy they may have felt. Table 1 shows visitors' average ratings on these six statements.

Table 1: Visitors' ratings on empathy statements, on a 1-7 scale where 1=completely untrue and 7=completely true (N=60).

Statement	Median Rating
I felt happy when I came across images, objects, stories of accomplishments	7.00
I saw things from someone else's perspective	6.00
I tried to understand someone better by putting myself in their shoes	6.00
I felt upset when I came across images, objects, stories where someone was treated disrespectfully	6.00
I felt protective of someone who is represented in the museum	6.00
I saw how visitors might have different opinions about the same thing	5.00

2. In what ways do adult visitors describe the empathy they experience during their visit to a culturally-centered museum?

Moments of Empathy

Study participants were asked to describe a moment in which they experienced empathy during their museum visit. Responses were coded into 8 emergent categories. Forty-three percent (n=26) recounted a specific historical moment, person, or group in their description. For example, one participant remarked,

> "There were a couple of exhibits down on the other side that talked about George Washington Bush having to travel farther and farther out to find a place where he didn't feel racially oppressed. I've had situations like that happen to me – not as extreme- so it's easy for me to see from someone else's shoes."

Another participant described, "I would say the exhibit downstairs by the cartoon artist about wearing turbans. I didn't know anything about the pogrom in India in the 1980s, so that was super fascinating to see it from his perspective since he lived through that."

Thirty-two percent of study participants (n=19) related their moment of feeling empathy to the general history or story of a culture. For example, one participant expressed,

> "Being able to see something from someone else's perspective – that's partly what today was about. Looking through my own perspective and then imagining what it must have felt like to have been born in maybe 1920, you know and you're traveling across the country and you get to the Oregon border and you realize they have such racist standards that you can't stay there."

Speaking generally, another participant said,

> "Just that the experience of the immigrants was not, well it was not unlike other immigrants – the basic desire to come to a different country is the same as anyone who's ever come here. They came here because they were leaving something that wasn't good, and hoping for something better."

Other study participants connected the empathy they experienced to the present moment (25%, n=15). This was often expressed in mentioning aspects of the recent or current political climate. In the voice of one visitor,

> "You look at how vulnerable people are, and you think, why couldn't these people [have] been protected or live the life that I have? We're so fortunate in Washington state and [to be] American, when you think about it, compared to the rest of the world. You realize now why so many people desire to live in the United States of America – for the freedoms, for everything that we have that we tend to take for granted."

While referencing an art exhibit, one study participant expressed that "[the artwork] made me think about the election of Barack Obama and how big that was for our community. And I like the use of a crown, to symbolize king, a presidential king and the inauguration – that struck a chord with me."

Twenty-three percent of study participants (n=14) specified first-person narratives when describing the moment of feeling empathy:

> "The one that struck me the most, I mean it just brought me to tears along with her tears, when you first walk in you're right across from the screen that greeted you. It was running a loop, and it had various people, but it had one woman with a picture of her years before. She was talking about starting a job as a cashier […] she had mostly a positive experience, but that there was something that she would never forget, that some man came through- it brings me to tears even saying it."

Another person described this moment while watching a video in the exhibit: "There was a video bit on the Japanese internment camps; the speaker was talking about a time of going to a [swimming] pool, and his friends got to go in but he was sent away and how shocking that was. If you expected it, that is one thing, but if it comes out of nowhere that is a complete shock. And it's something that would carry with you for a long time."

Seventeen percent of study participants (n=10) mentioned other visitors in the museum as related to the empathy they experienced. One person shared,

> "I don't know how to explain it, but there was a lady [visitor] in there in the Jimi Hendrix [exhibit], and I kinda felt what you were talking about – the empathy for people – I felt like I was seeing some of what she was seeing."

Fifteen percent (n=9) noted the timeline presented in the gallery when identifying the moment when they felt empathy. Specifically, one participant said, "In this room, I'm a lawyer, so reading the legal cases [on the timeline], and just thinking about it a little bit more and seeing it all aggregated together I think was powerful." Whereas thirteen percent (n=8) described moments related to the physical experience of the museum. For example, one study participant voiced, "Yeah, that was pretty powerful actually walking up to the hotel, and the smell." Lastly, 7% (n=4) mentioned other responses outside of these categories in their description.

Empathy Emotions

Forty-three percent of study participants (n=26) said they experienced positive feelings when describing the empathy they felt in the museum. For example, one participant explained,

> "I think you really have to have it in your heart, coming here. I'm sure there are people that come here, and they just walk through, you know, it just depends on what's in your heart. Maybe it doesn't touch them, maybe it doesn't move them because they don't have that attachment, that sense of empathy. I could see that with a lot of people, but if it's something that touches you to the core, then you're going to be fascinated by this. By the stories, and what this all means."

Thirty-three percent of participants (n=20) reported negative feelings when describing the moment or moments of empathy they experienced. In the words of one participant, "It made me feel sad. I'm a creative person and I would like to enjoy that in my profession as well – having such a limited choice would make me feel angry and sad." In the words of another, "Living in Ballard you see these Nordic thoughts of sharing and giving, and yet I find people with a lot of worlds of tolerance but not actions of tolerance. I'm just going through a period myself where I'm feeling very hurt by that."

One quarter of participants (25%, n=15) described neutral feelings relative to the empathy they experienced in the museum. One participant commented, "A little bit of relief, but I think it's more there have been so many stories that haven't been told, but slowly but surely things are changing." Another stated, "I think it's more about the universal human experience, especially in this day and age where we're more connected about immigration and otherness. That's where my head went to."

Finally, 7% of participants (n=4) cited being disappointed in the educational system as part of their negative feelings. One participant explained, "I didn't really know much about African American history in this area so to see the mural in the beginnings and the travels. That's just a part of history that isn't taught in my schooling, and so I didn't know about this migration. I feel a little frustration, like why wasn't I taught? But happy that I found this today, and that I can educate myself."

3. What aspects of the museum experience do adult visitors attribute to empathy elicitation?

Empathy Prompts

Forty-two percent of study participants (n=25) specified design-related aspects of the museum when describing the empathy they experienced. For example, one participant described,

> "The placards and writing on the wall – the way that they're written is very first person and direct and obviously not from the present moment, but in an imaginable present moment. Certainly, a past moment that was very true but could be again. And I thought that that was, let's see, like a direct speaking to experiences of injustice."

Another participant mentioned design-aspects of a tour they attended:

> "I was thinking about the smells that would be there and the no personal space and having to negotiate with people I barely knew, which the guide brought up. I

> had thought it being bunk beds, but he said there were no beds, so everyone would have been on the floor."

Forty-two percent of study participants (n=25) expressed that the empathy they experienced was related to the presentation of particular information. Of this group, twenty-three percent (n=14) described coming across information that was new to them. For example, one participant commented, "The information about Gary Locke and how successful he was. There was someone else, I think he was a city council member that was instrumental in getting rid of redlining, and I thought that was great. I didn't know that." Whereas twelve percent (n=7) described connecting to particular information that they were already familiar with. In the words of one participant, "So we kind of knew how things have evolved there [in Nordic countries] but not all the underpinnings and why and how it all works in the different countries. So I think it's more content. I absorbed a lot of history."

Forty-percent of study participants (n=24) noted that particular objects prompted empathy during their visit to the museum. One participant described,

> "Just reading the announcement [Executive Order 9066] letting people know they needed to report on this date, in this place and what they could bring and imagining what, as a mother, that might have felt life to figure out what do you take? […] Honestly that huge [announcement] blown up for me was very compelling because I took time to read through it."

In the words of another participant, "I think I would've liked it no matter how it was laid out, it's just my heritage. It's cool to see this stuff. My mom and dad went to Norway before he passed, they dressed up in [those] outfits – we still have the portrait of my mom is one of those dresses."

<u>Empathy and Personal Experience</u>

Study participants were asked to describe if and how they connected the moment when they experienced empathy with their personal experience or relationships. Responses were coded

into 10 emergent categories. Twenty-seven percent (n=16) of study participants noted that their empathy was related to their experience with a geographic place. For example,

> "Just seeing the contributions of African Americans to this region, to this country, you don't get a lot of that – I'm from Chicago, so this is the first time I've been to the Pacific Northwest so it's very interesting to learn about some of the history of the people in this area and what they contributed. Most of my knowledge is of the South, Midwest, and East Coast […] So it's a learning experience for me, cause the culture is so big and diverse."

Another visitor articulated her "Connections to actual places that were mentioned like the Upper Peninsula of Michigan – I'm originally from Michigan so I had a sense of place. Also, we've been to Stockholm and I've been to Denmark, so I had a connection already to some of the places that were being talked about."

Twenty-three percent (n=14) associated their empathy with relationships with various family members. In the words of one participant,

> "One of the shows is on Executive Order 9066 – the Japanese American incarceration. And my mom personally was incarcerated in Minidoka, Idaho and so every time I see a display like that it always touches me. Cause I think of her existence, and it makes me so sad to think of what she had to go through."

Another visitor shared, "Thinking of empathy – my dad went to a residential school [in Canada], so I wouldn't want him to have to see that…the last residential school closed in 1996 so there are still a lot of people where it would be difficult for them to see – and ultimately, their perspectives on it are the most important."

Of the group of study participants, seventeen percent (n=10) described their empathy as specifically related to their experience as a person of color. As one visitor offered,

> "Being a minority, even if not Pacific Asian, especially being African American and coming from a culture as an African American where your history, whatever it may be, is not one that is particularly well told. And if at all, maybe not well articulated and growing up in an environment where you don't necessarily have a

> sense of tradition or sense of what your culture, as a person from an ethnic group is, is a lot easier to empathize for me knowing that."

Another person expressed that, "It's important. Whether you're Japanese or Asian at all. Or like me, I'm Mexican. I know what it's like to be different. In a world where people don't always celebrate those differences that you have, whether because you speak a different language, or have an accent, or look different." Eight percent of participants (n=5) mentioned their experience as an immigrant in particular. One person said, "I come from India, and a lot of our history has the same sort of oppression. So I see the parallels of history, different, but parallels."

Thirteen percent of study participants (n=8) spoke about their empathy as related to their personal experience more generally. For instance, one visitor said, "It's not deeply specific from my own life –but continuing to understand how I'm situated as an individual in the larger context of our country. In that way, it feels personal." While ten percent (n=6) explained that their empathy did not relate to aspects of their personal experience. When asked about this connection, one participant expressed, "No, no. I mean only personal experience to the extent of reading about it [here]."

Twelve percent (n=7) expressed that empathy was related to their career or profession:

> "I'm on the East Side, in Bellevue, which has a larger Asian population, so I think this is really important space that I think a lot of teachers in the area should be a part of to really understand their students."

While 8% (n=5) said empathy was related to their relationships with friends or colleagues. One visitor shared, "One of my best friends has survived the Khmer Rouge period but he didn't leave the country." 7% (n=4) as related to their relationship with a spouse or partner, "My wife is Japanese, and both her mom and dad were interned. And so I have that perspective."

Finally, ten percent of study participants (n=6) offered other responses when ask about their empathy as it related to personal experiences. One visitor stated,

> "It's going to be silly, but the only thing I can relate it to, is because I read mystery novels where Chinese immigrants were living 12 to an apartment, and that's what came to mind."

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this study was to explore the nature of visitors' empathy in museums that center the history, culture, and art of a particular ethnic or cultural group. Data were collected through facilitated interviews with 60 visitors to three culturally-centered museums in Seattle, Washington. Quantitative responses to Likert scales were analyzed to determine the degree to which visitors agreed with statements that assessed specific dimensions of empathy. Open-ended responses were analyzed through emergent coding to identify the ways in which visitors describe the empathy they felt and what aspects of the museum experience they attribute to empathy elicitation. As the field's interest in empathy continues to develop, this study contributes to the larger discussion on empathy from the perspective of a particular museum type.

Conclusions

Overall, study participants reported experiencing high levels of empathy during their museum visit. This is consistent with previous research demonstrating that visitors experience empathy – defined as "the ability to sense other people's emotions, coupled with the ability to image what someone else might be thinking or feeling"— during their museum visit (Arnole, Meggs, & Greer, 2014; Herz, 2015a; Greene, Kisida, & Bowen, 2014; Gokcigdem, 2016; Savenije & de Bruijn, 2017; Wharton, Khalil, Fyfe, &Young, 2019).

Study participants rated statements that considered both the affective (feeling) and cognitive (knowing) processes of empathy equally. The statements that visitors rated were six items adapted from five validated self-report empathy measurement scales (Davis, 1983; Garton & Gringart, 2005; Greater Good Science Center, n.d.; Olderbak, Sassenrath, Keller, & Wilhelm, 201; Spreng, McKinnon, Mar, & Levine, 2009). This finding is consistent with previous research which asserts that empathy is a multidimensional emotional and cognitive response (Batson,

2009a; Cuff, Brown, Taylor & Howat, 2016). In particular, study participants rated the affective statement, "I felt happy when I came across images, object, and stories of accomplishment" the highest on average.

When describing the moments in which they felt empathy, study participants most frequently recounted a specific historical moment, person, or group of people. This finding is consistent with Savenije & de Bruijn's (2017) study on the ability to engage in historical empathy in a history museum, which found that visitors could identify with the thoughts and feelings of historical actors through personal stories with associated artifacts. It expands on Savenije and de Brujin's study, however, to include empathic responses from learning about collective group experiences. Study participants who cited individualized first-person narratives in their description represented a smaller portion of overall responses.

The moment in which study participants reported feeling empathy prompted a range of emotional responses. While the majority of study participants said they experienced positive feelings, others reported negative feelings, and still others described neutral feelings. The decision to code responses on a positive-to-negative spectrum is consistent with psychology literature on emotion (Cambria, Livingstone & Hussain, 2012), however, it should be acknowledged that emotions contain both positivity and negativity (Sieun, Li-Jun, Marks & Zhang, 2017). One's emotional response *to* feeling empathy has been less examined in the literature. Study participants rated the cognitive statement, "I saw things from someone else's perspective" the second highest on average. This is consistent with Batson's (2009b) framing of perspective-taking, although this study did not explore the distinction between the *imagine-other* perspective, which translates to imagining the thoughts and emotions of the other person and the

imagine-self perspective, which is imagining what one's own thoughts and emotions would be if one were in the situation of the other person (Batson, Early & Salvarani, 1997; Batson, 2009b).

Study participants attributed a range of aspects from the museum experience to empathy elicitation, including referencing particular objects, design elements, and specific pieces of information nearly equally. This finding draws parallels to the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, a case study in *Fostering Empathy Through Museums* (Gokcigdem, 2016). For example, the theme of 'purposeful walking' is captured in the institute's architectural design, "infusing every aspect of the visitor experience and making it a reenactment, to the extent possible, of the progress embodied in the Civil Rights Movement itself" (p. 268). In a timeline style, stories of success are punctuated by accounts of tragedies; evocative images and text about the period from 1955 through the present is provided through facts, figures, dates, and names. The interplay between the immersiveness of design, established facts, and singular artifacts allows for visitors to respond emotionally to what is presented to them.

The majority of participants described the empathy they felt as related to their personal experience in some capacity. In particular, participants cited an experience with a specific geographic place or their relationships with family members most on average. While there has been an abundance of opinion pieces contributing to why museums are positioned to elicit empathy (Forrest, 2013; Gokcigdem, 2017; Herz, 2015a; Herz, 2015b; Jennings, 2013; Merritt, 2017; Murawski, 2018; Silvers, 2013), there has been less research conducted about visitors and the empathy they experience in museums. This study contributes empirical data that shows more specifically which aspects and elements of the museum might actually elicit empathy.

Implications

Practice

Given the extent to which study participants reported feeling empathy during a single visit, culturally-centered museums are uniquely situated to translate this human-centered connection towards collective social action. In accordance with research conducted by the Association of Zoos and Aquaria, which develops and measures visitors' empathy towards wildlife to encourage pro-environmental behaviors (Owen, 2015; Schofield & Khalil, n.d.; Wharton, Khalil, Fyfe, & Young, 2019; Young, Khalil, & Wharton, 2016), culturally-centered museums can prompt and guide visitors to act on the issues most salient to their respective communities. By conceptualizing empathy as an outcome of the museum visit, culturally-centered museums can be more intentional about how it is elicited, measured, and evaluated. This work may begin internally by integrating empathy into the core values statement. From there, empathy can be made a more explicit part of their external messaging to the public.

Visitors who experience empathy often draw connections between presented subject matter to their own lived experience. In consideration of this finding, museums can more directly engender emotional connections to a sense of place, relationships with family members, and their own position in society. Purposely promoting empathy during the museum visit could mean: educators explicitly asking tour groups to share out what parallels they see between their own experience and information presented; didactic labels prompting visitors to directly question if a particular story of object reminds them of something in their lives; response stations cueing people to reflect on their own definitions of empathy; and exhibit designers creating spaces to encourage differing visitor groups to talk and respond to one another. Empathy is an

interpersonal skill that can be developed, and museums have the capacity to provide opportunities to exercise such ability.

Research

This study focused on adult visitors who self-reported having experienced empathy during their visit to a culturally-centered museum. Further research into the nature of empathy from visitors who both do and do not identify with the centered ethnic or cultural group could be a valuable point of comparison. This particular examination relates to Batson's (1997) proposed empathy-attitude relationship, which suggested that feeling empathy towards an individual member of a stigmatized group improves attitudes towards of the group as a whole. This would require research into visitors having an awareness of their own social positionality across race, nationality, gender, and ability to explore if visitors can empathize across those who are in disparate social positions.

Culturally-centered museums may also contribute to existing research that indicates empathy as motivational to prosocial behaviors (Batson et al., 1991). Goleman's (2006) research in particular offered a tertiary component of empathy called 'empathic concern.' Empathic concern, or compassionate empathy, advances the notion that people should act upon their empathic responses. If culturally-centered museums were to adapt measures to encourage their visitors to take mission-related social actions, an analysis into the relationship between the museum visit and actions taken would be important. Relatedly, the type of feelings visitors have towards the empathy they experience in relation to what inspires visitors to act would be a valuable relationship to explore. While this study examined empathy elicited during a single museum visit, as most study participants were first-time visitors, continued research on the long-term effects of empathy initiated from museum visitation would be significant for the field.

In considering these implications for practice and future research, culturally-centered museums can become not solely places of stored memory and established facts, but as living institutions that are committed to social values in which visitors are inspired to move towards active, compassionate empathy. In the words of *Museum Geek* author Suse Anderson:

> Empathy is paradoxical. We cannot think ourselves into the mind or emotions of everyone and still maintain our sense of self. But if we never attempt to move from our own position, which necessarily privileges those concerns and people that have personal meaning, can we ever create institutions that are appropriately inclusive and sensitive to others? (Anderson, 2013, para. 14).

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Part 1: Filter question.
Hi! My name is Steffi Morrison and I am a graduate student at the University of Washington. For my thesis I am conducting a study on how visitors felt during their time in the museum today. It will only take about ten minutes; would you be willing to chat with me?

Okay, great! Thank you. Is it okay that I record our conversation? I will be the only one to hear it, and while I may use quotes in my research, your identity will remain completely confidential. Your participation is completely voluntary, and I really appreciate it. But I also want to let you know that you may leave at any time without any consequences or repercussions.

Great, let's get started. I'm interested in one emotion in particular, which is empathy. The definition of empathy that I am using is "the ability to sense other people's emotions, coupled with the ability to imagine what someone else might be thinking or feeling."

1. Do you think this is something you experienced during your visit to the [museum] today?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

Part 2: Rating statements.

Part 3: Follow-up questions.

Looking at your responses, it seems that you've experienced some type of empathy today.

A. Can you tell me about a moment or moments during your visit in which you felt empathetic thinking about [Statements 1,2,3]?

Can you tell me more about that? How were you feeling?

B. Do you think this moment resonated with you because of <u>the content</u> of the information presented or because of <u>how</u> the information is presented?

Is it related to your personal experience? Someone close to you? Something else?

A. Can you tell me about a moment or moments during your visit in which you felt empathetic thinking about [Statements 4,5,6]?

Can you tell me more about that? How were you feeling?

A. Do you think this moment resonated with you because of the content of the information presented or because of how the information is presented?

Is it related to your personal experience? Someone close to you? Something else?

B. Overall, has there been anything about your experience today that has particularly resonated with you?

Part 4: Demographic section.

Appendix B: Statements

Please rate the extent to which the following statements are true for your experience at [the museum]:

Today, at [the museum] …

1. ***I saw things from someone else's perspective.***

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely untrue Neither true or untrue Completely true

2. ***I saw how other visitors might have different opinions about the same thing.***

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely untrue Neither true or untrue Completely true

3. ***I tried to understand someone better by putting myself in their shoes.***

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely untrue Neither true or untrue Completely true

4. ***I felt upset when I came across images/objects/stories where someone was treated disrespectfully.***

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely untrue Neither true or untrue Completely true

5. ***I felt happy when I came across images/objects/stories of accomplishments.***

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Completely untrue Neither true or untrue Completely true

6. ***I felt protective of someone who is represented in the museum.***

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Completely untrue			Neither true or untrue			Completely true

Please fill out only what you feel comfortable answering.

1. Is this your first visit to [the museum]? □ Yes □ No
    a. If not, many times have you visited [the museum]? _____.

2. The [museum] is part of larger network of culturally-centered museums. These identity-driven institutions focus on a particular ethnic or cultural group that often highlight the histories, accomplishments, and struggles of the featured culture.
    a. Not including today, how many times have you visited a culturally-centered museum in the United States? _____.

How do you describe your gender identity?

_____.

How do you describe your racial and/or ethnic identity?

_____.

What is your age range?

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65+

What is your zip code or country?

_____.

Are you visiting with anyone today?

☐ By myself ☐ In a group of adults ☐ In a group of adults & children

Thank you for your participation! Your input is greatly appreciated.

Appendix C: Coding Rubric

The codes presented in this rubric emerged through extensive review of all of the data. A code was assignment to a theme or idea that was mentioned by at least three different visitors. Within some codes, responses were broken down into sub-codes that were mentioned by at least two different visitors.

Question 1: Can you tell me about a moment or moments during your visit in which you experienced empathy?

Code	Category	Examples
1	**General history/story of a culture**	"I actually can't think of one particular moment, but the general exhibit and the way it tells the history of folks." "Just seeing the contributions of African Americans to this region, to this country, you don't get a lot of that […] it's very interesting to learn about some of the history of the people in this area and what they contributed." "Looking through my own perspective and then imagining what it must have felt like to have been born in maybe 1920, you know and you're traveling across country and you get to the Oregon border and you realize they have such racist standards that you can't stay there."
2	**Specific Historical Moment, Person, or Group**	"The parts of the exhibit about the Vietnam War and the perspectives especially about the Secret War in Laos." "I'm a member of the Delta Sigma Theta, so I actually came to the museum specifically to see the display of the founder of my sorority […]" "I think whenever they mentioned the Sami people – the indigenous people – I think for me in any museum or really any area where indigenous or less represented people are mentioned it strikes a chord more."
3	**Connection to Present**	"You look at how vulnerable people are, and you think, why couldn't these people been protected or live the life that I live?" "And it made me think about the election of Barack Obama and how big that was for our community." "I found myself looking around at the people who were

		visiting this museum to see if they were people of color, or if they were with people of color, and wondering possibly how they were interpreting the same statement. […] Given that we're in such a racist country with white supremacist culture, I wonder sometimes when I see someone who is not a POC if they are able to begin to grasp the ways in which racism impacts our lives."
4	**Timeline**	"In this room - I'm a lawyer - so reading the legal cases [on the timeline], just thinking about it a little bit more and seeing it all aggregated together I think was powerful." "Think about the timeline, I think really realizing how hard it was for those who came out and settled early." "Definitely over at the timeline on that end. Spending more time supplementing my understanding around restrictions on black communities in the region, […], thinking about specific neighborhoods and moments as I was looking through the timeline."
5	**First Person Narratives/Stories**	"Quotes about how people were feeling before they came to the U.S." "For one there was the video bit on the Japanese internment camps [...] the speaker in the video was talking about a time of going to a pool, and his friends got to go in, but he was sent away and how shocking that was." "I think it's personal stories about struggle and triumph and belonging, finding your place in a new land. There were few of those - some were positive, some were more challenging, and I think the empathy part is about the human condition and those repeated stories that we all either experience ourselves, and are close to other people who experience, so I think it's the universal nature of those stories that's a big connect."
6	**Physical Experience**	"The woman's apartment, it was interesting when they were saying that it was how her granddaughter remembered it in the 60s." "That was pretty powerful actually walking up to the hotel, and the smell." "I guess I felt like I related a little to what was happening just because I'm indigenous in Canada, I kind of having thought

		since I got here that this whole building looks like a residential school from the outside."
7	**Other Visitors**	"I don't know how to explain it, but there was a lady [visitor] in there in the Jimi Hendrix part, and I kinda felt what you were talking about – the empathy for people – I felt like I was seeing some of what she was seeing." "People were talking about China [ware] is the case, and how their grandma used to use it and the emotions being brought up with that." "It was interesting, there were two women on the stairs looking at the art and their discussion was entirely different from what I had experienced, it was a really interesting moment."
8	**Other**	"I had in mind some of the artwork that I saw, especially from refugee camps and some of it is gorgeous - it's fantastic work. And to make that in those situations I think is...yeah." "It's funny, some of my favorite things here are just opening up briefcases but also speaking to someone in the library – the genealogist- while looking at the bookshelf. It's all very important and comes together." "My father was adopted, and we just did his DNA analysis and found out we're Scandinavian which no one ever knew. […] I didn't know anything about this history so it's sort of overwhelming and I'm trying to take it all in."

Question 2: Can you describe how you felt during that moment or moments?

Code	Category	Examples
1	**Positive**	"Seeing that we [immigrants] bring a lot of good, but not always. It's good to see other stories and understand that at the end of the day, it's for the better." "It was cool because everything is connected, which is what I love about coming to cultural museums." "Proud but that doesn't really make sense because I don't have a personal connection to it. It's just sort of humbled maybe."
2	**Neutral**	"Reflective of people's experience."

		"It's more analytical to me." "Relieved."
3	**Negative**	"It's disgusting to me." "Embarrassed." "Part of it, it makes me angry."
3a	Education System	"It reinforced how our public education system is very whitewashed in terms of what cultures we learn about." "I feel a little frustration, like why wasn't I taught? But happy that I found this today, and that I can educate myself." "I don't think I was given the tools for empathy for all kinds of people and sad for the lack of education."
77	**Did not answer**	

Question 3: Do you think this resonated with you because of the content of the information or how it was presented to you?

Code	Category	Examples
1	**Objects**	"So it [objects in the historical room] brings life to the space more to see things that were touched and utilized." "For example, these garments you just see the beauty of craftsmanship and seeing what each are for and you can imagine, [...], some person in some time period wearing this garment - and you can transport." "They actually had a uniform that the prisoners were given that was hanging on the wall […] You realize it's representative of an individual, then you think of 1.5million people that died."
2	**Design**	"The way they exhibit it is perfect, it's very simple. It's not cluttered, you can get up close to see the beading on the wedding dress. Can you imagine how many hours it takes to do that kind of work?" "I think I respond better to audio/video, as opposed to a block of text."

		"I think it was both; having it presented not perfectly clean, like how people actually live. There was also a lot of pictures of how the apartment actually looked."
3	**Information**	"Information given from the tour guide." "The information about Gary Locke and how successful he was. […] I didn't know that." "Thinking back to that timeline, there were so many moments I didn't know about […] the fellow that, mid-20th century or maybe even earlier, talked about opening the second hotel in Seattle and that burnt down. Then he moved to the then outskirts of Seattle which became the Central District. It talked about how he would then buy land and sell it to other African Americans. Some of those very specific, and how directly the economics – how economic and social justice and inextricably linked."
4	**Other**	"Because he had us do a roleplay"
77	**Did not answer**	

Question 4: Is this moment related to your personal experience? Someone you know? Something else?

Code	Category	Examples
1	**Personal – General**	"More of gaining more knowledge of a culture that I'm a part of, a history that I've studied." "I think it's because I grew up here, and I had no idea this museum existed 2 weeks ago." "It's not deeply specific from my own life but continuing to understand how I'm situated as an individual in the larger context of our country. In that way, it feels personal."
1a	Personal – Immigrant Experience	"So probably more or less what the Sikh's felt like, maybe less -- nobody is identifying me as a Jew out on the street [...] So I see the parallels, but I can pass." "I came here from Malaysia to study so I think that experience, coming to a new place, trying to adapt, find a place…" "I relate to it personally just overall being not an Anglo-American and recognizing [...] an immigrant story - it resonates regardless of where you're migrating from."

1b	Personal – POC Experience	"It's important. Whether you're Japanese or Asian at all. Or like me, I'm Mexican. I know what it's like to be different. In a world where people don't always celebrate those differences that you have, whether because you speak a different language, or have an accent, or look different." "Being a minority, even if not being Pacific Asian, especially being African American and coming from a culture as an African American where your history, is not one that is particularly well told." "It was the 60s and they [parents] were an interracial couple, so this stuff is very important and relevant because it was important and relevant to my family. It's not just a history book, it's real life for me."
1c	Personal – Related to Profession	"I'm on the East Side, in Bellevue, which has a large Asian population so this is a really important space that I think a lot of teachers in the area should be a part of to really understand their students." "I have a lot of students who are Hmong, whose parents or grandparents came over during or after the Secret War." "And that [being an educator] was my professional background, so when I read those stories I could really relate on a personal level."
1d	Personal –Related to Place	"We've been to Stockholm and I've been to Denmark, so I had a connection already to some of the places that were being talked about." "Back at home, thinking about of Oberlin and Oberlin College, we were a part of the Underground Railroad and it was a nice reminder that African American students were allowed to go to school there in the 1800s and that was not common unfortunately. I guess seeing that link reminded me of where I live." "Most of my knowledge is of the South, Midwest, and East Coast so I haven't really been introduced to the contributions our here. So it's a learning experience for me, cause the culture is so big and diverse."
2	**Relationship – Family**	"And my mom was incarcerated in Minidoka, Idaho so everything I see a display like that it always touched me."

		"My great-grandmother came over at 16 myself, to think of a 16 y/o getting on a small boat and going across the ocean. She was probably not in great accommodations, but it was nothing like the slave ship I came across. I was really struck by that one picture." "[…] But also thinking of empathy – my dad went to a residential school, so I wouldn't want him to have to see that […] ultimately, their perspectives on it are the most important."
2a	Relationship – Friends and Colleagues	"A lot of my friends are Jewish." "I work for a family that owns the Shoreline and Ballard Country Market chain, and they were put in camps." "One of my best friends has survived the Khmer Rouge period but he didn't leave the country."
2b	Relationship – Spouse or Partner	"My wife is Japanese, and both her mom and dad were interned. And so I have that perspective." "My husband is Norwegian, and his grandmother immigrated, and she passed away at 103, they were a pretty long generation." "My partner is not a POC, as much as she is a staunch supporter […] there's still a side that she won't be able to – she cries tears because she feels […] She gets to walk away, I don't get to walk away."
3	**Other**	"It's going to be silly, but the only thing I can relate it to, is because I read mystery novels where the Chinese immigrants were living 12 to an apartment, and that's what came to mind." "As a visitor. A visitor to the location and the history, to the NW in general."
4	**Not personally connected**	"No, no. I mean only personal experience to the extent of reading about it." "It's sort of an independent interest."
77	**Did not answer**	