# Understanding How Museum Visitors Perceive Antiquities Repatriations

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## Abstract

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Repatriation within museums continues to be an important topic widely discussed by museum professionals, as legal frameworks and guidelines such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and the 1970 UNESCO Convention continue to emphasize the importance of cultural heritage to their original communities and governments. Although visitors are major stakeholders in nonprofit museums, there is little research regarding visitors' attitudes towards repatriation, including how visitors respond to various repatriation practices. As such, this study explored visitors' attitudes to repatriation, specifically focusing on responses to high-profile antiquities repatriations. Using a descriptive survey design, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 40 participants via Zoom. Findings suggest that a majority of museum visitors have some general foreknowledge of repatriation. Study participants attributed repatriation awareness to various avenues, including popular culture references and educational programs. A majority of participants supported the repatriation of certain objects based on several factors and expressed interest in museums engaging their visitors in repatriation conversations. This study paves the way for future research on visitors' attitudes towards repatriation, from which museums and researchers alike will continue to benefit.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Nonprofit museums have a long and varied history within the United States. Evolving out of European cabinets of curiosities, these institutions continue to adapt to 21st century expectations, including new techniques for educational and entertainment value. However, as museums change, so too must their collections. Repatriation within museum collections, which is defined as the return of cultural heritage objects to source communities and countries (Falkoff, 2007; Wunderlich, 2017), has become a more prolific topic, one that has the potential to change how museums continue to acquire and exhibit certain objects within their collections.

Interest in building up museum antiquities collections increased in popularity throughout the mid to late 20th century as the wealth of western countries grew after World War II (Gerstenblith, 2007). During this expansive period, museums occasionally acquired objects which lacked detailed or accurate provenance histories. The lack of provenance that these objects showcased – especially those that came to museums through outside donors – was indicative of a widespread issue within the museum world: a growing number of looted antiquities ending up in museum collections (Amineddoleh, 2014). With the passing of such guidelines as the 1970 UNESCO convention on looted objects, which developed both a framework and proper methodology for dealing with looted antiquities, many museums began repatriating suspect objects back to their source countries (Falkoff, 2007). However, because UNESCO is unable to enact legal retribution, the repatriation process remains time consuming, and repatriation requests often rely, not on goodwill, but on factual evidence that proves looting and illegal exportation of objects took place.

Museums have responded in varying ways to the moral and legal merits of repatriation. Universal museums, which represent all time periods and cultures through their acquired

collections ("Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums," 2004), remain a popular museum framework throughout the world. These institutions rely on frequent and varied acquisitions, and some institutional leaders such as James Cuno – President and CEO of the J. Paul Getty Trust – view calls for the repatriation of antiquities from countries such as Italy and Egypt as nationalistic and narrow-minded, and a threat to this popular type of museum (Cuno, 2001; Cuno, 2014; Forbes, 2014; Posner, 2007). Others involved in the debate emphasize museums' moral obligations to repatriate, and not only call for the repatriation of looted antiquities, but any object important to a community's or country's cultural heritage (Falkoff, 2007; Wunderlich, 2017). This argument often emphasizes the benefits that repatriation can bring their source countries and communities, while also stressing the creation of mutually beneficial repatriation agreements, which can lead to long-term loans that benefit museums.

Although discussions around repatriation continue to grow in importance, public response to this prolific issue remains overlooked. While there is a lack of research focusing on how individual visitors have responded to repatriation, high-profile repatriations such as the Getty Aphrodite or the Euphronios Krater are popular subjects with media outlets. These articles tend to focus on the repatriation of both individual objects and large collections, and they often sensationalize repatriation discussions and tend to focus on legal mishaps rather than successful stories. While visitors are major stakeholders in nonprofit museums, with museums focusing their missions and visions around visitor impact, there is little research regarding visitors' attitudes towards repatriation aside from these articles.

As museums continue to evolve in the 21st century and incorporate new outreach techniques like social media and open access, it is important to look at how visitors react to collections, which can inform how museums proceed with repatriation discussions. Open storage

and open access are becoming increasingly popular museum techniques that are designed to increase accessibility to museums' large collections, which often are not on display (Caesar, 2007; Dawes, 2016; Orcutt, 2011; Villaespesa, 2019). While both approaches aim to create a museum space for 21st century audiences, who rely in part on technology-based experiences, visitor responses to open storage and open access vary by museum, while the strategies vary in efficacy (Bohlen, 2001; Orcutt, 2011; Vankin, 2015). In addition to collections storage methods, another aspect of visitor response to collections revolves around what objects are displayed. Human remains, which in the past were collected by museums largely for their scientific research value, are now often removed either from display or collections in order to respect the people and their descendants.

While museums continue to repatriate antiquities – often leading to improved cultural relations amongst museums – there is little research conducted on how visitors respond to repatriations. As such, the purpose of this study was to explore visitors' attitudes to high-profile antiquities repatriations. The research was guided by three key questions:

1. What is the nature of museum visitors' awareness and understanding of repatriation?
2. What positive or negative feelings do visitors have about the topic of museums repatriating antiquities?
3. What factors seem to influence visitors' positive and negative feelings about repatriating antiquities?

As the literature suggests, there is currently a gap in understanding how visitors react to this incredibly important issue. Museum professionals, particularly directors and curators, who work with collections and objects that fall within the framework for repatriation will benefit from this study, especially those working with antiquities. Understanding how visitors respond to both

the concept of repatriation and specific instances of repatriation will help guide institutions to engage with the public on this issue. This may include enabling greater transparency around repatriation and utilizing this study to formulate ways to better inform the public, which may perhaps result in stronger ties with source communities.

Furthermore, this study will act as a starting point for further research in the field of audience evaluation with an emphasis in response to repatriation. While this study will work to fill the gap in audience evaluation, it will also assist in further research by other individuals.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to better understand the context for investigating visitors' attitudes towards high-profile antiquities repatriations within American museums, it is necessary to look at the literature on this topic. For the purpose of this study, three main bodies of literature are considered: 1) repatriation; 2) public response to repatriation; and 3) visitors' attitudes towards museum collections and collecting processes. Looking in-depth at the research surrounding both repatriation and museum collections will allow for gaps in the literature to be identified.

### Repatriation

Repatriation within the context of museums is defined as the return of cultural objects to their country or community of origin (Falkoff, 2007; Wunderlich, 2017). In the United States of America, many of the objects that are commonly repatriated fall under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), the creation of which provided a legal framework to guide the return of Native American pieces to their original communities. While NAGPRA only applies to American institutions that receive federal funding, museum repatriation as a general concept and practice extends to the return of other objects to their owners or countries of origin. These types of objects include Nazi-acquired artworks, unlawfully exported artifacts, and pieces that were illegally looted or acquired during a period of colonial control. To better understand how museums came to acquire suspect objects, especially antiquities (pieces originating from before the Middle Ages, i.e. before the sixth century CE), it is helpful to look at the history of museum collecting.

#### A Brief History of Museum Collecting

The practice of looting art and cultural objects from other countries has been in existence for millennia and was often used as a symbol of political domination and superiority. The

Romans took objects of cultural heritage and displayed them as proof of their victories, often through the pomp of the Roman triumph (Beard, 2009), or the "triumphal processions" of Roman generals returning from foreign conquest, intent on displaying their plunder from foreign lands (Beard, 2015, p. 201). This practice continued in a more contemporary setting in western culture, as colonial nations removed objects from source countries without permission. One of the most notable examples is Napoleon Bonaparte, who removed artistic and archaeological pieces from places like Egypt, bringing them to Paris to display in the Louvre in the hopes of making Paris an artistic hub (Gilks, 2013). However, in recent decades looting has taken on a greater and more organized scale (Amineddoleh, 2013). This is in part a response to increased market interest in museums and amongst private collectors for certain types of art, including antiquities, a phenomenon that developed out of the growing wealth of many western countries (Amineddoleh, 2013).

During the early part of the 20th century, the archaeological discipline had yet to fully develop scientific methodologies. As such, many excavations largely focused on excavating objects of high-interest and high-value (Gerstenblith, 2007). However, the end of World War II saw an increased growth in the wealth of many western countries. This economic boom coincided with the development of archaeology as a "truly interdisciplinary field" of scientific discipline, which introduced the utilization of such research methods as radiocarbon dating in conjunction with art history research and linguistical analysis (p. 171). As Western nations became wealthier as the hardships caused by World War II lessened, private collectors again turned to acquiring impressive and valuable antiquities, leading to a growth in the international art market. However, the increasing scientific rigor in archaeology produced slower and more methodical approaches to excavations. This scientific evolution, combined with the development

of cultural heritage laws both during and after World War II, led to a smaller number of antiquities on the market. To keep up with the growing demands for excavated antiquities, opportunists took advantage of this need, leading to an increase in the looting of archaeological sites (Gerstenblith, 2007). As looters increased their activities based on the desire exhibited by private collectors, looting evolved from disorganized opportunism into well-run organizations (Gerstenblith, 2007).

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, objects were acquired often with the agreement of source countries, many of which were under colonial rule at the time. One famous example is Lord Elgin's donation of the Parthenon Marbles to the British Museum in 1817 ("The Parthenon Sculptures in the British Museum"). Lord Elgin received permission from the ruling Ottoman Empire to remove sculptural work from the Parthenon in Athens starting in 1801. Greece later gained autonomy in 1830. Objects acquired in similar circumstances, where countries were unable to speak for themselves as a subjugated nation, or which were acquired at a time when governmental agreements were spoken arrangements that would not stand to modern standards, are found throughout the museum world. However, the passing of the 1970 UNESCO Convention (to be discussed in greater detail later), which was designed to stem the tide in looted antiquities by creating international guidelines for countries to follow, attempted to end past acquisition practices. Countries that signed the Convention were obligated to research objects, including their provenance and legality, prior to acquisition, which made it more difficult to acquire suspect antiquities. The Convention also gave countries the power to request the repatriation of certain objects.

One result of these increased acquisition standards was that a complex and sophisticated web of middlemen who emphasized in selling looted antiquities formed, many of whom became

main points of contact for (potentially unsuspecting) museums interested in acquiring objects (Felch & Frammolino, 2011). Starting in the 1970s, the Getty Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art often acquired antiquities through Robert E. Hecht, who was later persecuted for knowingly selling looted antiquities. Hecht received many antiquities through Giacomo Medici, another middleman who dealt in looted antiquities and who was sentenced by an Italian prison to ten years (Brodie, 2015). In order to give these antiquities a semblance of legality, these individuals often fabricated provenance and provenience histories for objects, which provided acceptable reasons for the separation of artifacts from their source countries (Amineddoleh 2014; Amineddoleh 2013; Felch & Frammolino, 2011), thus avoiding the strict export laws on cultural heritage objects that many countries, such as Italy, have enacted.

Some antiquities dealers are openly suspected of having ties with the looted antiquity trade, with some having had criminal charges brought against them for past dealings (Amineddoleh, 2014; Brodie, 2015; Lunden, 2012). Phoenix Ancient Art, an antiquities dealership located in Geneva, New York City, and Brussels, has supplied prized antiquities to both private collectors and museums alike, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Louvre Museum. While the Geneva-based antiquities dealer is still an active and well-known supplier of Greek, Roman, and Byzantine (to name a few) artifacts, there have been many instances in which the objects that this dealer supplied to museums have been scrutinized as potentially looted (Faucon & Kantchev, 2017; Litt, 2019; Meier, 2017). Some institutions choose to overlook these reputations, even if fellow museums and investigators recommend against the purchasing of objects from these organizations (Falkoff, 2007; Felch & Frammolino 2011; Weiss, 2007). If institutions do choose to purchase items from dealers who are suspected of dealing in looted antiquities, these pieces are often immediately viewed as potentially looted

(Amineddoleh, 2014).

Repatriation Practices

In the past few decades, repatriation has become a more commonly discussed topic within museums, both in terms of creating more stringent acquisitions regulations, and in terms of how institutions and communities work together to repatriate objects. Western museums previously held the belief that objects acquired during colonial expansion had become a part of their own national identity (Bohlen, 2002; "Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums," 2004). While this mindset is still prevalent in many institutions, it is now more commonly recognized that these objects should be repatriated as a step towards rectifying past injustices. Two such regulations that have led to repatriations are NAGPRA and the UNESCO Convention. While NAGPRA only applies to indigenous American objects, it is an important addition to the repatriation conversation, as it has clearly affected American institutions and the repatriation conversation.

*NAGPRA***.** In 1990, NAGPRA was created as a legal framework for museums to repatriate Native American and tribal pieces back to their communities. Objects that are covered under this act include "human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony" ("Archaeology Program," p. 1). In the United States, NAGPRA empowered previously disenfranchised communities to claim ownership over objects that had been taken from them. While this act provides the legal framework for indigenous communities to reclaim their ancestral heritage, there are certain requirements in place that often make it difficult, if not impossible, for these communities to prove their claim. NAGPRA only applies to federally recognized tribes, a status which is difficult for many tribes to attain, and therefore keeps many from claiming their cultural heritage. NAGPRA also requires tribes to provide tangible evidence

that they can trace their lineage back far enough to show relation to the objects in question, which can be difficult for communities that rely on oral tradition rather than written histories (Malaro & DeAngelis, 2012). In addition, NAGPRA only applies to certain institutions in the U.S., including U.S. departments or agencies, state and local governments, and institutions that receive federal funding. This precludes private institutions or museums from taking part in these repatriations. NAGPRA is also only a national framework, so while some international institutions have chosen to repatriate Native American pieces, they are not legally obligated.

*1970 UNESCO Convention.* In light of the realization that looted antiquities were inundating the art market and ending up in some of the largest and most respected museums in the world, in 1970 the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (the 1970 UNESCO Convention) was created. Before the creation of UNESCO, countries calling for the repatriation of objects that they felt were illegally removed struggled without an acceptable method of fulfilling these claims between governments. The UNESCO Convention is a framework that applies to all governments that ratify the convention. The Convention can result in a legally binding domestic agreement if sufficient legislation is passed (Gerstenblith, 2017). Once it has been signed by a member state, countries that have joined the convention (to the best of their abilities while keeping in line with their own laws and constitutions) are meant to follow the terms and regulations laid out (Falkoff, 2007; Malaro and DeAngelis, 2012). Although the U.S. ratified the UNESCO convention in 1972, it proved difficult to pass the necessary legislation to put into effect the convention's stipulations, only doing so in 1983 ("United States Implementation of the 1970 UNESCO Convention"). Although this convention is important in that it recognizes the rampant issue of looted antiquities, legislation implemented by the United States, known as the

Convention on Cultural Property Implementation Act (CPIA), states

> "No article of cultural property documented as appertaining to the inventory of a museum or religious or secular public monument or similar institution in any State Party which is stolen from such institution after the effective date of this title, or after the date of entry into force of the Convention for the State Party, whichever is later, may be imported into the United States" (p. 10).

This legislation was implemented by the United States Government in order for UNESCO to be viewed as a legally binding agreement. However, because the U.S. only implemented specific aspects of the Convention, the framework only applies to pieces imported after the U.S. ratified the Convention (Gerstenblith, 2017; Wunderlich, 2017). Because of this limitation, the convention does not offer repatriation guidelines for objects that source countries believe were inappropriately taken from them during colonial conquest, a limitation that some museums have attempted to rectify with their own acquisition policies.

While many have agreed that the convention has been fairly ineffectual in stemming the flow of looted antiquities to museums (Falkoff, 2007; Posner, 2007), one achievement is that some of the convention's language has now been adopted into the acquisition policies for a number of U.S. institutions, one of the most notable being the Getty's acquisition policy (Felch & Frammolino 2011). These changes have made the rules behind acquiring objects more stringent, especially antiquities from countries that have an extreme problem with looting, resulting in museums acquiring fewer looted antiquities.

Obligations to Repatriate

As museums continue to receive repatriation claims for antiquities in their collections, there have been various opinions as to what the correct course of action should be. Many countries rich in cultural artifacts, such as Italy and Greece, have their own export laws that attempt to stem the flow of looted antiquities by making any discovered or undiscovered artifact

of cultural heritage property of the state (Posner, 2007). While guidelines such as the 1970 UNESCO Convention are in place, there are still calls from museum officials and communities alike for repatriation to become a more common and accepted protocol in the museum world (Falkoff, 2007; "Of Marbles and Men," 2012; Wunderlich, 2017). These pleas reach beyond the scope of export laws and international conventions, and focus not just on objects that violate any legal framework, but on objects that would satisfy either "moral or political" requirements as well (Posner, 2007; Wunderlich, 2017). This has led to ongoing discussions on how museums and other institutions should reevaluate their approach to antiquities acquisitions and repatriations in order to make them more ethical. This conversation extends to all manner of objects, including possibly looted or illegally exported antiquities such as the Getty bronze (Fincham, 2014; Pianigiani, 2018; Povoledo, 2019); objects acquired while the source country was under colonial control, as Greece was under Ottoman control when the Elgin marbles were acquired with Ottoman permission (Banteka, 2016); and religious objects intrinsic to the culture in their source country, such as the Benin bronzes (Weale, 2016), which were also often acquired under colonial conditions.

Because legal requirements for international repatriation are either lacking in the United States or do not provide much structure, many instances of repatriation – even of objects that were illegally looted – have had to rely on museums' ethical decisions (Wunderlich, 2017). This has forced both countries and communities to rely on the goodwill of often western museums, rather than the support of legally binding laws. In many cases, only once the pressure from source countries has become too strong do these museums choose to return problematic antiquities, often after these institutions have ensured that they receive long-term loans in return (Falkoff, 2007). In this instance, proponents of repatriation argue that many objects that have

been removed from their source countries are necessary for the preservation of their cultural identity, and that the ethical obligation rests on museums to recognize this necessity and comply with requests (Bohlen, 2002; Wunderlich, 2017).

### Mutually Beneficial Repatriation Agreements

As the idea of ethical repatriation grows in strength amongst source countries and communities, so too does the idea that repatriation can create lasting relationships between museums and communities. As more museums enter into discussions over the appropriate method of repatriation, there has been some comment over whether this could be detrimental to universal museums, or museums that strive to represent all of human history in one collection ("Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums," 2004). However, in many cases amicable repatriation with source countries can lead to such things as long-term loan agreements for future exhibits, in addition to an increase in research opportunities (Wunderlich, 2017), both of which are a benefit to source countries and museums alike (Falkoff, 2007). This has led to what many classify as mutually beneficial arrangements, or as Falkoff coins them, "Mutually Beneficial Repatriation Agreements (MBRAs)" (Falkoff, p. 265). While this can be viewed as an incentive for museums to take part in what may have previously been viewed as inconvenient repatriation agreements, even those who have touted the benefits of these relationships recognize that they can perpetuate a lack of reform from museums (Falkoff, 2007; Wunderlich, 2017).

### Repatriation Summary

As museums continue to focus on the repatriation of collection items to source countries and communities, the benefits that are associated with recognizing claims to objects will continue to be scrutinized. While there are many in the museum community who call for an

ethical basis to repatriation, and for repatriation beyond objects that have been illegally looted and exported (e.g. pieces acquired during the era of colonialism) to include pieces that are culturally important to a particular community, there are those who decry such a limitless repatriation policy. Many who oppose this sweeping reform are in favor of universal museums, and fear that complying to every repatriation request would be a detriment to both museums and society as a whole ("Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums," 2004; Cuno, 2001; MacGregor, 2004; Posner, 2007).

Universal museums, such as the Louvre, the British Museum, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, are home to art and archaeological artifacts from all over the world and boast the ability to show visitors all of human history in one institution. This desire to expose the museum audience to diverse cultures and perspectives is key to their acquisitions, which include antiquities. Many of these institutions view repatriation claims based on cultural importance and gestures of goodwill, framed as necessary to restoring a country's national pride (Eakin, 2005), as nationalistic and narrow-minded (Cuno, 2014; Forbes, 2014; "Of Marbles and Men," 2012).

In response, some antiquities-rich countries proclaim that all pieces viewed as cultural patrimony must return home (Cuno, 2014; Cuno, 2001; Jacobs, 2019) because it would strengthen their connection to the past and promote cultural prowess (Bilefsky, 2012; Edgers, 2011; "Of Marbles and Men," 2012). These claims of ownership on antiquities often rely on the argument that members of the community are direct descendants of past civilizations (Posner, 2007). Repatriation critics rebut this by saying this "bond with the past" is actually a fluid concept rather than a direct ancestral line. These critics posit that contemporary societies and borders have little connection to past civilizations (Posner, 2007), and as such can have no claim over past civilizations with no direct cultural descendants (Kilmister, 2003**)**. This direct claim to

past societies is instead viewed as exploitative and used for the purpose of pushing nationalistic worldviews (Cuno, 2014; Cuno, 2001). Those in favor of universal museums proclaim that housing art and artifacts from various cultures is important to representing the scope of humanity. Rather than viewing the objects in their collections as an ethical need to repatriate looted objects, they view these claims as targeting pieces that have been legally acquired, even if they were legally acquired based on outdated acquisition practices ("Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums," 2004; Eakin, 2005).

## Public Response to Repatriation

As museums continue to discuss repatriation, and as more institutions enact regulations that return objects to their source countries and communities, the matter of how the public responds to these measures arises. While museum administrative bodies and government entities are already discussing repatriation within the context of how museums, source countries, and communities will respond, public response to this major museum issue is an underdeveloped research topic. Visitors are intrinsic to the success of any institution, and because many public museums are in part federally or state funded, the public are stakeholders in these institutions, with their opinions and reactions incredibly important to the success of an institution. The public, defined as individual visitors, are not accurately represented in the response to repatriation, however. Instead, either museum officials or the media express their own response to this issue, often citing public opinion without seeking it or supporting their claims, as will be explored in this section.

### Media Response

Within the context of repatriation discussions, there is little research that has been done on how the public responds to museum repatriation, especially considering that local or national

museums may be the only access some visitors have to particular objects. However, as repatriation discussions multiply, with outcomes of these discussions having the potential to greatly change how museums collect and display objects, media sources have started to cover these stories, often claiming to represent the public's opinions without collecting important data. In a Boston Globe article written on the Museum of Fine Art's decision to return its half of the Weary Herakles to Turkey, Edgers (2011) quotes an American tourist who agrees that the object should be returned, using one person's opinion to represent public perception of a major museum issue. While public opinion was quite important to the MFA in this repatriation decision, with one article in The Economist (2012) characterizing the decision as "bow[ing] to public pressure" (p. 2), it is also important to collect and analyze numerous responses in order to characterize the public's response.

While this repatriation conversation appears to have been solved by public input, there is a difference between the outcome of one specific instance and knowing how the public responds to the repatriation discussion as a whole. While the case of the Weary Herakles was a unique issue, in that the decision to repatriate the object was characterized as a result of public pressure in articles (Edgers, 2011; "Of Marbles and Men," 2012), visitor opinion on repatriation is often ignored by the media, who choose to focus on the argument museum officials make that repatriation will harm the museum experience rather than interviewing visitors on their thoughts.

*Media Representation.* The difficulties repatriation poses for institutions, the unwillingness that some institutions have expressed for complying with requests, and the legality behind repatriation claims have all been covered by the media. While articles on repatriation practices appear to provide the most insight into how members of the public are responding to these issues, these views are represented by a small subsection of society: journalists. Because

news articles are designed to capture the interest of readers, journalists often cover large-scale repatriation requests, which garner more attention. However, repatriation claims within museums extend to all facets of a collection. As the NAGPRA framework shows, any object that falls within its categories can be reclaimed by a community, no matter how minor that object seems. The same can be said for antiquities collections. In addition to sensational objects such as the Euphronios Krater, previously of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, or the Getty Bronze, owned by the Getty Museum, large research-based museums such as the Getty also focus acquisition attention on valuable research objects (Felch & Frammolino, 2011; "Collections Management Policy"; "Acquisition Policies"). Many of these objects, e.g. broken pot sherds and fresco fragments, can be less appropriate for exhibition, but are invaluable for archaeological and art history research, providing insight into the past (Felch & Frammolino, 2011). While these objects are also considered for repatriation, much of the media's concentration on repatriation focuses on more large-scale objects in a museum's collection, which garner more attention from visitors and governmental repatriation efforts alike. In 2007, the Getty Museum agreed to repatriate 40 antiquities to Italy. The repatriation included some of the Getty's most famous objects, including the cult statue of a goddess, or the Morgantina goddess. However, amongst the 40 objects were also a fresco fragment and various Graeco-Roman vessels, artifacts which are rarely covered by the media in favor of more attention-grabbing objects like the goddess ("Italian Ministry of Culture," 2007; Sydell, 2007).

There are also moments when media coverage pertaining to repatriation appears concerned more with sensationalizing proceedings than informing the public in an unbiased manner, which may have the power to sway public opinion. As mentioned previously, in 2007 the Getty Museum agreed to repatriate over 40 objects to Italy, antiquities which had been looted

from their source country in opposition to the 1970 UNESCO Convention and Italian cultural heritage laws. The last piece to go home was the Morgantina goddess, a towering statue believed to be Aphrodite that the museum purchased in 1988. The Getty's repatriation discussions were not without their difficulties, including Getty ex-curator Marion True standing trial in Italy for acquiring looted antiquities (Felch & Frammolino, 2011). In the Smithsonian article "The Goddess Goes Home," Frammolino (2011) depicts museum officials pitted against looted communities, hungry for antiquities and willing to bend the rules for a prize piece, without taking into account that museums often rely on evidence to initiate repatriation claims, and that many institutions are actively dealing with these issues. While public opinion regarding the goddess' repatriation is not referenced or considered in this article, the portrayal of the Getty as unwilling to abide by laws for the sake of a few expensive antiquities has the power to sway public opinion against museums that may already be working to repatriate antiquities.

## Public Represented by Museums

While the media appears focused on covering the more sensational aspects of the repatriation discussion, occasionally appearing to represent public opinion on the matter, museums have also begun to focus on evaluating public opinion. This includes surveying visitors' responses to programs and using evaluation methods to improve museum programming and outreach in an effort to remain relevant in a quickly changing society (Falk & Dierking, 2013). Museums often utilize evaluation questionnaires to measure audience response to everything from exhibits to public programs in order to improve on visitor experience.

Repatriation continues to directly impact museum collections, exhibit, and collaboration between countries, which suggests that public response to this matter would be an important consideration for museum officials. Rather than museum officials evaluating public response to

repatriation as they do for other things, they instead discuss the issue in terms of the best interests of the public without consulting them, similar to media tactics. In 2004, directors from major museums throughout the world renounced repatriation claims, stating that they would set a precedent that would leave museums and their visitors bereft. While these directors chose not to substantiate their claims with visitor data, they stated that "to narrow the focus of museums whose collections are diverse and multifaceted would therefore be a disservice to all visitors" ("Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums," 2004, p. 1). While many of the museums that signed this declaration have since repatriated a number of objects suspected of being looted (Opoku, 2013), there are still museum officials who reject sweeping repatriation reform in the name of public interest, often without offering the evidence to back those assertions (Cuno, 2014). While retaining certain objects that have been legally acquired is important for an institution's collection, this response has led to the belief that overlooking public perception on repatriation is in the museum's best interest, since releasing relevant information and evaluating visitors' opinions may encourage the public to stand up for repatriation (Opoku, 2013). Although the media may portray museums as serving in their best interests, it is clear that these museum directors are attuned to the needs of museum visitors, although the lack of visitor evaluation also suggests that public response to repatriation may differ from what museums suggest.

Public Response Summary

Museums have been discussing the merits and appropriate frameworks for repatriating antiquities for years, with the media focusing on both the successes and failures of these efforts. Because news articles tend towards sensationalizing this already complex conversation, passing judgement on museums and their practices increases the potential for visitors to develop biased perspectives towards repatriation practices. While James Cuno has expressed displeasure over

certain aspects of repatriation discussions, he emphasizes that museums must explain the position and reasoning behind these discussions so that the public can understand how museums make these decisions (Cuno, 2014). Until museums are transparent with their repatriation conversations and take into account the importance of visitors' responses, public response will continue to be characterized through sensationalized articles.

## Visitors' Attitudes Towards Museum Collections

As public institutions, museums are constantly evolving and developing new ways to better serve their visitors. The evolution from private collections of wealthy westerners (Weschler, 1996) to funded institutions led to the traditional research-based museum model, which focused on collecting and preserving objects. Collections were categorized and researched, and while a few pieces in the collection were exhibited to visitors at any given time, most pieces remained in storage. As museums continue to evaluate their role in society, their focus has shifted to building on visitor experience. This shift can be seen in the ways that both museums and their visitors approach collections, with new techniques utilized to enhance collection accessibility for visitors and to better center collections around visitors and communities. As museums continue to reevaluate how best to utilize their collections, it is important to take visitors' attitudes and responses into account, as many of these techniques focus on improving the museum audience's experience. This section of the literature review will look at various methods that museums implement to develop visitors' experiences with museum collections, including the ways in which visitors have responded to these methods.

### Accessibility

As museums continue to reevaluate their purpose within society, it is important to note that many objects in a museum's collection remain in storage, while a small fraction of a

museum's permanent collection is exhibited at any one time (Caesar, 2007). In order to achieve increased accessibility and equity to the traditionally inaccessible parts of museums, such as collections storage, museums have incorporated a number of methods. This includes the utilization of open access and open storage methods, the success of which is in part reliant on visitor response to this development. While audience opinions can be used to pinpoint successes and failures within these new systems, they are often overlooked in favor of the opinions of museum and research professionals.

*Digitization.* In order to address issues of accessibility and equity within museums, many institutions have begun to utilize digitization techniques to increase visitor access through technology ("Open Access"). This assists museums in creating a platform that makes information public and available to everyone online, and often includes digital reconstructions of museum objects in addition to free access to object images and information. As more museums embrace open access to collections, organizations like Open Knowledge Foundation continue to call on museums to make their content – including collections, images, and research – accessible to the public ("Mission"; Wiedemann, 2019). In addition to nonprofit organizations, the European Union adopted the "Public Sector Information directive" in 2003, which called on public sector information to be made publicly available, and which grew to include access to cultural content in 2012 ("Data Policy and Innovation," 2020). This directive requests that museums increase their collections and content accessibility to the general public, which may signal how governments around the world will continue to handle calls for open access to museum content.

Museums around the world have begun to implement open access policies and programs in response to these requests. In 2017, the Metropolitan Museum of Art made the images of all

public-domain works available ("Open Access at the Met"), while the British Museum continues to release public-domain content ("Copyright and Permissions"). Both institutions, in addition to such museums as the Brooklyn Museum and the Rijksmuseum, have made their images available through Creative Commons, a nonprofit organization committed to "building a globally-accessible public commons of knowledge and culture" ("What We Do"). The purpose of initiating open access policies within the museum sphere is often twofold: increase accessibility to information to all visitors, and increase the availability of research information to scholars, teachers, and students. By increasing access to information and collections, researchers hope to subsequently increase researcher diversity and equitable access for all (Drew, 2017).

While the utilization of open access methods throughout museums has increased, there remains a disconnect in how these methods are used and their efficacy from a visitor experience standpoint. Rather than there existing a one-size-fits-all open access formula, there is instead a growing need to understand how visitors interact with a variety of open access techniques. While it is important to understand visitors' experiences with an institution's online platform and with open access technology in general, there is little research on the topic. The research conducted focuses mainly on web analytics rather than using surveys to look in-depth at visitor response. However, a study published by Villaespesa (2019) looks specifically at how the Metropolitan Museum of Art is handling the varied expectations for open access information. Using survey data that focused on the reasons visitors were visiting the Met's website and what sort of information they were looking for, Villaespesa was able to categorize visitors into six main groups: professional researcher, personal information-seeker, student researcher, inspiration-seeker, casual browser, and visit planner. By understanding the demographics of those visiting the Met's online collections, museums can better tailor their online experience to each type of

visitor. Until open access is designed to enhance all visitors' experiences, this will appear second in importance to the simple creation of open access platforms.

*Open Storage.* Many public museums are currently faced with a growing concern: how to continue safely storing collection objects while giving visitors greater access to them (Orcutt, 2011). One such response to this dilemma has been to establish open or visible storage solutions, where collections storage spaces can be viewed by the public. Open storage methods vary based on the museum, and often result in either static spaces, which remain virtually untouched while displaying hundreds of objects with few explanations (Bohlen, 2001), or active storage spaces that are still utilized by museum professionals while on display to visitors. One institution which has implemented visible storage techniques is the Broad Museum in Los Angeles. During the reconstruction of the museum, a window was incorporated into the architecture that allows visitors to observe the museum's behind-the-scenes machinations. This window allows visitors to glimpse museum employees at work, while also allowing them to view stored art that is not currently on display (Vankin, 2015).

While open storage techniques have made objects more accessible to visitors, the results have been both positive and negative. In a study conducted on visitors' responses to open storage at the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver, BC it was found that, while many visitors appreciated this method and felt it opened their eyes to the museum's collection, many others were overwhelmed by the sheer number of objects (Dawes, 2016). Instead of increasing access to the collections, these responses show that there was not a significant increase in knowledge and appreciation to be gained from open storage methods.

However, if open storage is utilized and implemented well, these responses can change. In 2004 and 2005, the Science Museum in London approached the concept of open storage from

a different angle, offering storage tours as a means to make accessible the remaining 90% of the museum's collection that remain in permanent storage (Caesar, 2007). While storage tours are sometimes utilized if a museum is unable to incorporate another type of open storage (like that at the Broad), their effectiveness had not previously been studied to such an extent. In order to determine whether these tours were effective at increasing access to the museum's storage, each tour member was given a questionnaire designed by the Science Museum. Over 540 questionnaires – which included open-ended and audience demographic questions – were analyzed. By focusing on visitors' responses to these tours, the museum found that they were an effective way to increase the audience's understanding of museum collections, with many visitors stating that, prior to the tour, they had not known collections existed. These responses also highlighted many visitors' newfound interest and appreciation in open storage, and an increased appreciation in the museum's educational resources. However, while storage tours may increase access to a museum's closed spaces, the amount of employee time spent on the creation of these tours, which can include curators creating content and leading the tours, may not be a realistic method for many institutions.

Cultural Identity

While museums often collect objects based on their research value (Eakin, 2005), visitor response to museum collections is often based in part on the bond that they have with objects in museum collections. These connections that many visitors have with displayed or stored objects often influence such things as repatriation claims. As many indigenous communities seek to revive cultural practices that are intrinsic to cultural identity, both communities and governments work to repatriate objects that hold significant cultural value (Simpson, 2009). These efforts in part stem from a desire to reclaim cultural heritage in an effort to renew and strengthen cultural

identity, which is often tied to “sacred and ceremonial artefacts.” Cultural objects were often acquired by colonizers for a variety of reasons, including efforts to undermine the society they were colonizing, as was seen in England’s punitive expedition on Benin (Weale, 2016), and for the simple reason that these objects looked interesting (Weschler, 1996). The restoration of key items, often of religious significance, is often viewed as healing “post-colonial trauma,” which places significance on individual objects and their connections with individuals (Simpson, 2009).

While NAGPRA has been a key legal framework for repatriating objects back to Native American communities, there are those in the museum field who believe this type of framework should not apply to antiquities. While antiquities are excavated from archaeological sites that are within modern borders, they are often viewed as objects without identity, not existing within a modern community since they are too old for any contemporary connection (Cuno, 2014; Posner, 2007). However, governments and communities alike often emphasize the importance that antiquities have to their cultural identity and that the repatriation of such items is needed to regain their cultural heritage (Frammolino, 2011; Pianigiani, 2018). As mentioned earlier, the Getty Museum in Los Angeles acquired a large marble statue, supposedly of Aphrodite, in 1988 (Donadio, 2014; Povoledo, 2007). The statue was created around the fifth century B.C., during the classical age of ancient Greece, and is Greek in both style and material (“Italian Ministry of Culture”). In 2007, the Getty agreed to repatriate the statue after the Italian government was able to prove that the statue had been illegally looted and exported from Morgantina. While modern-day citizens of Aidone, which is located near the Morgantina site, may not be cultural descendants of the Greeks and Romans who were the city’s previous inhabitants, many of Aidone’s citizens feel that the Morgantina statue is an intrinsic part of their cultural heritage and identity (Donadio, 2014; Povoledo, 2007). While they may not have visited the Getty before the

statue's repatriation, the cultural bond that they have with the statue has impacted the way in which both the Italian government and the Getty Museum have handled the repatriation. Instead of being viewed simply as a looted antiquity, the statue has taken on a deeper meaning in Aidone's and Italy's cultural heritage image, with one Italian citizen stating "the return of the statue is very important. It is like a piece of our culture, a piece of our country" (Frammolino, 2011). It is clear that people, both governments and individuals alike, can have strong ties to museum objects that extend beyond their research value.

Humans on Display

As museums continue to shift their focus away from an exclusively collection- and preservation-based model, objects that are both on display and kept in museum storage have come under scrutiny. These discussions often include objects that are or will be repatriated, including looted and colonial acquired objects, in addition to human remains. Human remains were often collected by museums for scientific research and were viewed as tools for understanding societies and civilizations, both past and present (Parkinson, 2016; Preston, 2014). Many western museums acquired remains from colonized territories, such as Australia and New Zealand, which were then used by physical anthropologists and scientists as research tools (Preston, 2014). However, over the past few decades both the necessity and appropriateness of acquiring and exhibiting human remains has come under scrutiny (Bernick, 2014; Gilyeat, 2019; Parkinson, 2016).

While surveys that measure individual visitor perceptions and attitudes towards the ownership and display of human remains are seldom used, there are many source communities that have called for museums to repatriate human remains. In this context, "source communities" are defined as "the communities from which museum collections originate" (Peers and Brown,

2003, 1), i.e. the communities that are connected to the human remains that museums possess. Often finding a voice through representatives or the media, source communities such as aboriginal Australians and the Maori are utilizing this change in museum collecting practices to shine light on current collections and exhibits (Gilyeat, 2019). The Pitt Rivers Museum in England is home to around 2,000 human specimens, many of which were collected during England's colonial rule. As museums like the Pitt Rivers continue to reevaluate their exhibit content, open conversations with different communities lead to greater equity and acceptance. As museums continue to listen to community concerns, the repatriation of important and sacred remains, e.g. the return of seven Toi moko, or tattooed and mummified heads (Gilyeat, 2019), will become more common.

France, which has a law that prohibits the repatriation of objects (Carpentier, 2014), has often found itself at the receiving end of communities calling for the repatriation of human remains. In 2002, the remains of Sarah Baartman, which had been on display in France's Musée de l'Homme until 1974, were repatriated to South Africa (Howard, 2018; Parkinson, 2016). Baartman, who was born in Africa, was coerced in 1810 to sign a contract with an Englishman and travel to England with him to perform in shows. Contemptuously named the "Hottentot Venus," and fetishized by western audiences for her large buttocks, Baartman was displayed in a cage for many of these shows ("Sara 'Saartjie' Baartman"). In 1815, Baartman died in France, destitute. An interested scientist purchased her remains, making a plaster cast of her body before preserving her genitals and brain, which remained on display until 1974. Only after feminist protests was her plaster cast removed from public viewing in 1981 (Webster, 2000), and it took the powerful voice of newly elected Nelson Mandela – who made the request for repatriation in 1994 – before her body was repatriated in 2002 (Parkinson, 2016), exemplifying the power of the

collective voice.

As communities call for the repatriation of human remains, some museums are beginning to look specifically at how individual visitors respond to exhibited remains. As mentioned earlier, while visitors' attitudes towards human remains have not been as rigorously studied in comparison to how often the issue is discussed in the museum field, there appears to be a dichotomy between how source communities view museums and human remains and how individual visitors view this content. The display of human remains continues to fascinate visitors and remains a popular exhibit choice for museums (Balistreri, 2014), especially remains that have been mummified (Balistreri, 2014; Kilmister, 2003; Vogel, 2008). The Museo de las Momias de Guanajuato in Mexico is comprised completely of mummified remains ("Collection"; Balistreri, 2014). The remains, which were exhumed from a local cemetery between 1865 and 1958, had been naturally mummified in their graves. The natural mummification process proved to be a source of fascination that people paid to view, resulting in a museum established in 1969. In keeping with the museum's purpose, the human remains stay within the community and cannot be removed. The community view the museum as an intrinsic part of their identity and appreciate the attention and interest that it has brought them; this suggests that the exhibited remains are displayed appropriately because the community is involved (Balistreri, 2014). Subsequently, visitors expressed interest in the bodies, and had little trouble in viewing them as archaeological artifacts rather than humans (Balistreri, 2014).

As a popular display choice in museums, visitors' responses to mummified remains are quite important. Mummified remains often go unnoticed in repatriation claims, as they are generally unrelated to any living societies (unlike repatriated Maori and Native American remains, for example). In addition, these remains are often exhibited less like human remains and

more like archaeological artifacts. However, a lack of information on how visitors react to displayed remains means that museums are unable to understand how human remains – especially those that are not related to contemporary societies – are perceived by visitors. Recognizing this lack of data, interviews with visitors were conducted at three British museums that exhibited ancient Egyptian human remains (Kilmister, 2003). It must be noted that ancient human remains are unique in that many people view them as being without cultural descendants, and thus reactions cannot be applied to the discussion of human remains in museums as a whole. Taking this into account, the study was important in finding that many visitors were appreciative of seeing human remains on display. While many visitors both viewed the remains more like scientific objects and trusted that museums properly care for the remains, there were those who believed the remains should be exhibited in a more respectful manner.

This study only touches the surface of all types of human remains within museums, and it is important to note that, while the study did ask four questions that were demographic in nature, the study failed to take into account that responses may be informed in part by racial and cultural backgrounds (Kilmister, 2003). Many of the visitors in this survey appear actively engaged with the remains on display, and these responses have the potential to shed light on museum discussions taking place. However, responses to the display of human remains continues to be a complex and nuanced discussion. While many indigenous communities called for ancestral remains to be repatriated, e.g. from the Pitt Rivers Museum, there were also indigenous communities who appreciate seeing their ancestors respectfully displayed and contributing to a museum's educational history (Gilyeat, 2019). Unable to create a "one size fits all" response to human remains, museums must continue this discussion with visitors and communities alike.

## Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore visitors' attitudes to high-profile antiquities repatriations in museums. The study was guided by the following three research questions:

1. What is the nature of museum visitors' awareness and understanding of repatriation?
2. What positive or negative feelings do visitors have about the topic of museums repatriating antiquities?
3. What factors seem to influence visitors' positive and negative feelings about repatriating antiquities?

This study used a descriptive survey design (Creswell, 2014) in which data were collected from a sample of people with the goal of generalizing findings to a wider population of art museum visitors. The data were collected over Zoom using semi-structured interviews with adults who had visited an art museum in the past year. This chapter describes the methods utilized for this study, including the sampling strategies, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, and the major limitations faced during this study.

### Sampling

The original recruitment plan was to interview adults onsite at an art museum. However, after the researcher confirmed three research sites, the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States caused museums to close, making this in-person data collection plan impossible. Instead, the researcher sent emails and social media posts to students and staff in her master's program, asking them to put her in contact with one person in their life who was not associated with museums, over the age of 18 years, had visited an art museum in the past year, and was willing to participate in a 10-minute Zoom interview.

All participants were informed of the researcher's study through the first email, and

interested individuals contacted the researcher to schedule interview times. At the beginning of each interview, participants were informed of their right to end the interview at any time and were asked for verbal confirmation to record the conversation for transcription purposes. Once verbal consent was obtained, the researcher proceeded with the interview questions. In total, data were collected from 40 participants.

**Data Collection**

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A). Each interview consisted of three parts. Part one assessed visitors' awareness and understanding of repatriation. Visitors were offered a definition of repatriation within museums and were asked if they had any knowledge of this issue. Part two measured visitors' feelings about repatriation. Each visitor was given the same example of repatriation within museums. Each visitor was then asked to describe their reaction to the example given. Part three examined the factors that may have influenced visitors' feelings towards repatriation. Each visitor was asked to describe their feelings about repatriation in-depth, and then asked about their reaction to the idea of ownership within museums. The survey ended with one demographic question pertaining to age. On average, interviews lasted approximately eight minutes.

**Data Analysis**

Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Responses to open-ended questions were analyzed using an emergent coding analysis procedure in order to identify themes between responses. Closed-ended questions were quantified and analyzed. All interviews were coded and analyzed using a coding rubric (Appendix C).

**Limitations**

While the researcher was able to find three sites that were amenable towards scheduling

data collection for the study, a major limitation that changed the scope of the study was a disruption of travel plans due to COVID-19. Rather than interviewing visitors at museums, the researcher instead recruited potential participants through members of her master's program, who in turn reached out to eligible participants in their life who could take part in the study. As a result, the researcher likely did not interview a diverse group of individuals, as many of the participants were recruited through mutual acquaintances. As such, the study's sample may have been comprised of individuals who knew more about museums or who visited museums more often than the general public. This may also mean that participants had more knowledge of repatriation than the general public. If this study were conducted again utilizing on-site museum participants, the results may differ.

In addition, the researcher was not able to find a comparable study conducted on how visitors respond to the topic of repatriation within museums. As a result, the researcher was unable to use an existing instrument with questions that had been previously tested. While there are studies that look at visitors' responses to collections in general, having a study that specifically measured responses to antiquities repatriations may have assisted the researcher in producing a more targeted interview guide. Instead, the researcher's interview guide approached the topic from a more general outlook, in order to create a basis for studying attitudes towards antiquities repatriations.

## Chapter 4: Results

This study explored visitors' awareness of and attitudes towards high-profile antiquities repatriations. The results provide answers to the following three research questions: (1) What is the nature of museum visitors' awareness and understanding of repatriation?; (2) What positive of negative feelings do visitors have about the topic of museums repatriating antiquities?; (3) What factors seem to influence visitors' positive and negative feelings about repatriating antiquities? Data were analyzed according to the coding rubric found in Appendix C.

### 1. What is the nature of museum visitors' awareness and understanding of repatriation?

Participants were given a definition of repatriation and information related to the issue, and they were asked if they had been aware of this issue before the researcher gave them this information. Of the 40 visitors in this study, ninety-five percent (n=38) responded in the affirmative, stating that they had heard of repatriation before, while five percent (n=2) said that they had not.

#### Knowledge and Awareness of Repatriation

*Knowledge.* Study participants were asked to describe what they knew about repatriation in their own words. Responses were coded into five emergent categories. Forty-five percent (n=17) of participants responded with general references to repatriation. One participant stated,

> "I don't know a whole lot. I just kind of know the basics of what you've already described, of how people have been able to legally, they think, get these artifacts from different places, when it might have been illegally obtained in the first place. And then some countries feel like they should get their artifacts back because that's where they belong, versus being in another country's museum."

Another participant said, "I know that it's kind of becoming a growing thing over the years, as people are becoming much more aware of how bad colonialism and repatriation, or just taking things from other countries that don't belong there, is."

Thirty-seven percent (n=14) of participants made general references to repatriation within museums specifically. For example, one participant explained,

> "I feel like the main way that I've heard it is through the British Museum taking objects from places that they've colonized and housing it there, and I have a vague idea that perhaps they returned some stuff, but I know a lot of countries are asking for things back. And I feel like the argument is, it's housed here because it's safer and we'll take better care of it."

Another participant said, "In general, I knew there were always critiques about European museums, for example, and American museums to actually even identify where this was originally from. If you're not going to return it, to at least go, 'Ok this is where it's from.'"

Thirteen percent (n=5) of participants described their knowledge of repatriation within a cultural context, making general references to cultural repatriation. One participant described,

> "What I knew about it is, for example, there are some cases where indigenous people will walk through a museum and things will be tagged as having no idea what family created them or something like that, but people who have those objects as part of their history can walk through and recognize them for what they are, because they were taken from their people, from their lands, without permission. The repatriation, the idea is there are these cultural touchstones that belong to these groups of people and they're being put on display in these other areas, and people want to bring their culture back and be able to reclaim that part of their heritage."

Another participant stated that repatriation, "also does expand to things that may or may not have actually been that nation's cultural patrimony."

Eleven percent (n=4) of participants related their knowledge of repatriation specifically to World War II, making general references to that time period and the cultural issues it created. One participant said,

> "I think with regard to more the Nazi era is people have been finding art that had been stuck away somewhere. It's starting to reveal itself. So it's a little bit more prevalent now, you're seeing more as more people can see more pieces and I don't know what sort of brings that about other than communication and the internet that sort of allows that data to be out there and better research as to what's going on."

Another participant explained in general terms, “A Dutch master is looted from the Louvre during World War Two so these are things that were removed under not ideal circumstances,” while another participant said, “A lot of my studies have led me to Hitler having taken a bunch of art and cultural objects. So that's how I kind of became familiar with that aspect, as well as countries wanting those objects back.”

*Awareness.* Study participants were also asked to explain how they became aware of repatriation. Responses were coded into six emergent categories. Thirty-four percent (n=13) of participants responded saying that they had become aware of repatriation through online platforms like social media, in addition to various news sources. One participant explained, “I'm not really sure how I figured it out. Probably one of my friends posted about it on Facebook, because I have a lot of pretty liberal friends, and they tend to be up on this stuff.” Another participant said, “I've become aware of it from seeing articles on different social media platforms. Nothing that I have researched on my own really,” while another participant said, “I became aware of it from reading news articles, because I do read two major papers a day.”

Thirty-two percent (n=12) of participants mentioned that they became aware of repatriation through elements of visual culture, including museums and their exhibits and popular culture, specifically films. One participant explained, “I think part of it was the Black Panther movie.” Another participant explained their awareness in more depth, stating,

> “I went to the University of Chicago, and we have a museum there called the Oriental Institute. It's an artifact museum mostly. I remember going and visiting there for a class one time and thinking about that for the first time, honestly, ever, how did they get these things, did they have permission to go on these archaeological digs even, and did they consult with the people who own the land.”

Another participant described their awareness of repatriation through visual culture around World War II, saying they became aware “primarily of the issue of World War Two, mainly

from watching certain movies that have highlighted it."

Twenty-six percent (n=10) of participants said that they became aware of repatriation through educational venues, mentioning such things as school courses or personal study. One participant who described structured educational courses said,

> "I'm aware of this issue because during my own master's program in education we had talked a lot about the subject. The vocabulary is a little bit different surrounding it. And I have seen it myself or become way more aware of it since getting my master's degree."

Another participant explained, "I have a minor in historic preservation, and I took an international conservation class about a third of which was focused on repatriation in the arts and museum world." The participant who became aware through personal study said, "I do a lot of studying on World War Two. It's actually something that I enjoy reading about and learning about that period of time in history."

Twenty-four percent (n=9) of participants explained that they had become aware of repatriation through conversations with other people, either in informal settings or conversations within museums. One participant explained, "in visiting different museums I think with other people I've had more conversations around ownership and colonialism." Another participant stated, "I was probably made aware of it through conversations with friends."

Eight percent (n=3) of participants described a general awareness of repatriation. One participant explained, "I think I've probably known about it since high school. I've known about it for a while. It becomes a hot button issue every so often in the news and then kind of fades away." Another participant said, "I'm not quite sure how I became aware of it. I'm semi-active in arts and art museums. I'm not sure how I first became aware of it." Lastly, one participant explained "I've not really done much reading about it or knew that much about it until you told me about it."

Five percent (n=2) of participants became aware of repatriation through other means. One participant said, “I became aware of that about two years ago when I started working with the BLM, what that specific federal policy was. So. . .from my current job and being from the Native community.” The other participant explained, “I'm Mexican American and part Native American, but so far back where we don't have family records past a certain point, so I think I've always just identified with that specifically.”

Awareness of Repatriation in Museums

After participants were asked to explain their awareness and knowledge of repatriation, all participants were then asked if they had heard the specific term repatriation in the context of museums before the interview. Fifty-three percent (n=21) of participants responded “yes,” thirty-five percent (n=14) responded “no,” and thirteen percent (n=5) responded that they were “not sure.”

Those participants who responded yes were then asked to explain where they had heard the term “repatriation” in the context of museums. Responses were coded into five emergent categories. Fifty-seven percent (n=12) of participants became aware of the term repatriation through online platforms like social media, in addition to various news sources. One participant explained their source, saying “I guess in the news, like in that article that I read a while ago and other similar conversations, mostly online probably,” while another said simply, “In the news, on blogs.” Another participant said,

> “I'm in several Facebook groups that are on political or social topics, and I repeatedly get tagged in those topics because I'm considered one of the people who has strong opinions about it and can talk about it at length.”

Twenty-nine percent (n=6) of participants said they heard of the term through museums themselves. One participant explained,

> "I heard of the term from museums. There are a lot of really cool objects from all over that are in museums. Specifically, I think of the Field Museum in Chicago, which is a big museums that is trying to do some work with repatriation with these important things that have been in collections for years, but have significance to the groups that actually should have them."

Another participant explained they had heard the term "within the same context [as before], mostly within really globally notable museums like the Louvre or the British Museum taking objects from other countries."

Twenty-nine percent (n=6) of participants described their awareness in terms of educational outlets, including structured classes or personal study. One participant who became aware of the term through personal study said, "I study World War Two history, that's mostly where I've heard it from." Another participant described,

> "In my undergrad I took a class called the "Politics of Provence" through our art history department and the first half of the class was about forgery, and the second half of the class was basically on repatriating things that the Nazis stole."

A third participant explained, "I heard it in my international conservation class."

Nineteen percent (n=4) of participants explained that they became aware of the term "repatriation" through personal conversations with others. One participant said, "I've heard it a lot in discussions." Another participant explained they had heard the term through a specific group of people, calling them "leftist social circles," while another participant said they had heard the term "just generally in conversation. I know a lot of like history majors and art history majors."

Five percent (n=1) of participants responded outside of the previous categories. This participant said,

> "I've just heard about it for a long time, maybe during the Iraq war, it came up a little bit more, where people were looting and precious art was being lost and that might have been where I heard about it more, where people were trying to move it to a safe location to preserve it, and was that really what they were doing, or were

they just stealing it?"

This participant's response was specific enough that it spoke to more than a general awareness of the term. However, this participant did not elaborate on where they had specifically heard the term and how they had become aware of it in the past.

In their responses, many participants stated that they had become aware of the term repatriation through the same informational avenues that they had become aware of the issue of repatriation. This aspect of their response was important enough that they made a point of referencing that in their answers.

**2. What positive or negative feelings do visitors have about the topic of museums repatriating antiquities?**

The second part of the interview revolved around a specific example of high-profile antiquities repatriation, and participants were posed a series of questions based on the example. The same example was given to each participant and was chosen because of the amount of publicity around the story, in the hopes that the participants may have heard of it before. After listening to the example, study participants were asked to describe their initial reactions, including how it made them feel. Responses were coded into five emergent categories.

Forty-eight percent (n=19) of participants described positive reactions to the example in part because of the collaboration exhibited between the museum and the Italian government. One participant said, "The fact that the Italian Government is lending them other objects for their collection I think is also a good thing. I think it's good for pieces to be able to travel places where otherwise people might not ever see them." Another participant explained,

> "My feeling is positive that they were able to work it out so that people could continue to view this. I think it's great that people are still able to participate in viewing these artifacts, but then it ultimately is going to belong to the group of people that it should belong to, the original owners."

Another participant qualified their response to the collaboration, saying,

> "I'm glad to hear that they received something in return for their willingness to do this also because it could create great hardship for a museum, had they paid a great deal of money for such a thing, so I like to hear that there might be some kind of arrangement made for those who rightfully are willing to do this."

Thirty-three percent (n=13) of participants explained that the proof of looting was incredibly important to them when describing their initial reactions. One participant explained, "The Getty bought it not knowing that it was a problem. And when it sounds like it was brought to their attention that it was a problem with evidence, that they worked with the Italian Government to find a mutual resolution." Another participant said,

> "I think I'm pleased with the outcome, eventually, of being able to repatriate that item because of having the documented evidence that this piece was originally in Italy and had been moved, and then they were able to use that information to leverage the return of that particular piece and other antiquities."

Another participant explained the need for proof based on the initial purchase, saying,

> "It's awesome. I can see where they would want, since they had thought they had legally purchased it, I can see where they would want some evidence that it was in fact stolen. And I applaud them for taking efforts once that was verified to return it to the rightful owner. . ."

Twenty-eight percent (n=11) of participants described their reaction as both negative and positive, in what can best be described as bittersweet, viewing the acquisition of the antiquity negatively but the object's repatriation positively. One participant explained, "My initial reaction is that sounds great. I wish that the Getty had taken Italy at its word sooner, but it sounds like it got to a resolution that works for everyone. It makes me feel good because it went home." Another participant described their reaction, saying,

> "I am stunned that that would happen, because I think it is so wrong to steal a country's culture like that, and I am also stunned that the Getty would be just as surprised that that was how they received it. How did someone not know? How is that not recorded anywhere? But at the same time, it makes me feel a little proud

> of the staff at the Getty for, in my mind, doing the right thing, and I see that approach as an effective one that respects all parties because it does include returning some of the objects."

Twenty-five percent (n=10) of participants expressed their reaction in terms of general positivity at the outcome. One participant simply said, "I like that the Getty decided to return the looted items," while another explained,

> "My initial reaction is that obviously pieces that have been discovered or were found to be, if they're displayed in a country that was not where they were originally made, I want to say that they should be displayed in the country they were made in."

Another participant related their reaction to other examples of repatriation they had heard of, describing,

> "I have to say that most instances where I've heard of other countries asking for things back, I [finally] get to hear a positive instance. Normally, people will just say it's in our collection, and we've always had it. And so, I'm glad to see the Getty is returning what I would say is rightfully the Italian Government's."

Fifteen percent (n=6) of participants described their reaction in more negative terms. One participant described,

> "One of the most visceral reactions was the thought of something as beautiful as this being broken up into pieces purposefully in order for it to be looted. That means the sculpture's original integrity is no longer there, even though it looks like they were able to piece it back together nicely. The thought of this thing, laying in the dirt all broken into pieces so somebody could loot it or take it out of the country, that was a strong reaction."

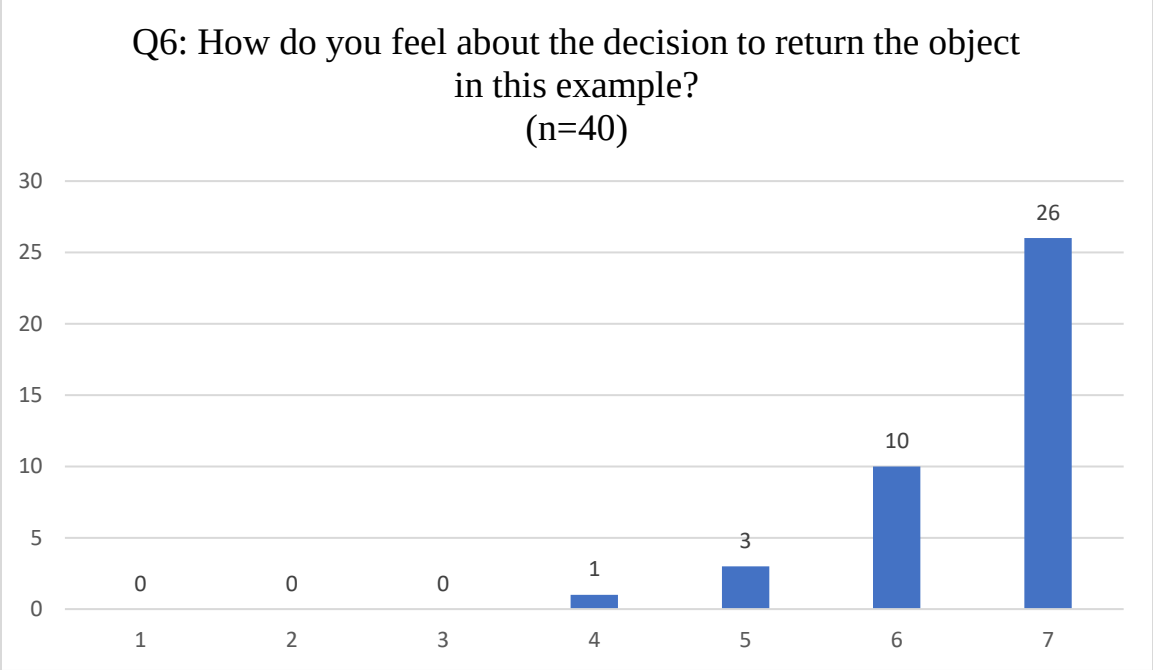
Another participant commented on the collaborative aspect of the repatriation, saying "I feel like the Italians shouldn't have had to offer something in exchange for getting what was theirs."

Another participant mentioned the potentially detrimental side effects of repatriation, explaining,

> "At the same time, there's also that other balance of, sometimes art is meant to be shared, and you want as many people to view notable works of art, but to think that the Getty had leverage over Italy to try and use that to get something in return. It's definitely problematic."

After describing their initial reactions to the example of repatriation, participants were then asked to decide, on a scale from 1-7, how they felt about the decision to return the object in this example, where 1 was strongly disagree and 7 was strongly agree. The median rating was a 7.

**Figure 1: Participants' feeling towards repatriation example**




Participants were then asked to explain their rating and describe in more detail why they agreed or disagreed with repatriating this object. Responses were coded into five emergent categories. Fifty-three percent (n=21) of participants placed importance on how the object was taken from Italy, and righting a past wrong. One participant described their rating in terms of colonization, saying,

> "I think that it's part of a larger conversation around Western colonialism and exploitation. If we're going to really reckon with the history of colonialism, then we need to make hard choices and admit that we don't get to keep everything that we got. And even if it wasn't directly through colonialism, such as by looting or stealing or I know that some artifacts were sold by people from the countries that they originated, I think that it's still part of a larger dynamic between countries."

Another participant said, “I am generally positively biased towards owning up to your mistakes and fixing them,” while another participant explained, “It was theirs [the Italians] and somebody stole it. And so, I strongly agree that it should be returned to the rightful owner.”

Forty-three percent (n=17) of participants placed importance on the original ownership and cultural connection to the piece. One participant explained,

> “Well, things that are important to one culture are just an interesting thing to another culture. For something taken from colonization or that was looted or stolen, it doesn't belong to the museum that has it, it belongs to the culture that it was from.”

Another participant explained their response in both cultural and legal ownership terms, saying, “It makes sense that the people who actually have an affinity with it and a right to it both legally and morally should have it,” while another said, “I think that the original owners deserve the control over what happens to such an important piece.”

Twenty-five percent (n=10) of participants stressed the necessity and importance of hard evidence in the decision to repatriate the object. One participant said, “If it was determined to have been appropriated in a criminal way, or in a way that wasn't a mutual agreement between two parties, it should be returned to where it came from.” Another participant explained,

> “Well, I think that if they were able to identify the fact that it was likely obtained, that it was the actual antiquity that was originally in Italy, and that the Getty was able to identify that having been obtained unlawfully then yeah, they definitely should return it and I'm happy that they did.”

However, one participant emphasized the apparent lack of evidence, saying, “It's a case that’s kind of vague as to whether it was appropriate to return or not, in my opinion.”

Twenty-five percent (n=10) of participants appreciated the collaboration between countries and institutions, including future loan agreements and formal requests for repatriation. One participant described the benefits for both parties, saying,

> "I guess, in this case, it's sort of a win-win because we're still going to be able to see these kinds of antiquities at the Getty so it's not a complete loss. I realize it might not be the exact same one, but I think the sharing of these kinds of things is a good thing."

Another participant stated, "I gave it a 7 because they're [the Getty] getting something in return for giving it back to them [Italy]," while another participant placed importance on the formal request, saying that "the government that is the proper owner requested that it be returned." Lastly, one participant explained the need for reciprocity, saying,

> "I mean, since they thought that they had legally purchased it, you know, to have some kind of agreement based on how that's going to impact the person that's giving back the merchandise. I mean they can't be totally altruistic, but you know maybe get something in return for doing the right thing."

Fifteen percent (n=6) of participants described their opinion in terms of display and access, including concern if the object would remain safe after repatriation. One participant agreed with repatriating the object in part because "there was no danger for it to return." Another participant described their rating, saying,

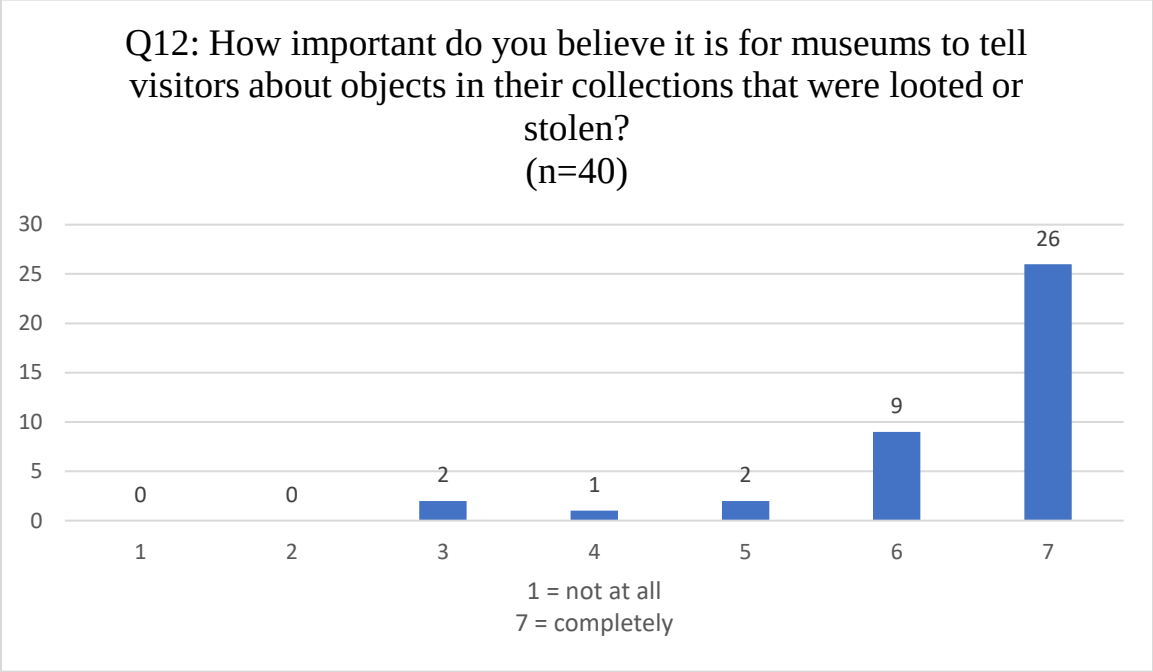
> "It's probably going to be better kept there or treated with more respect. I just think that things should most likely, if there are the means for it to be displayed in a safe and capable way in the country that it came from, I think that's probably where it should be."

Another participant explained their rating, describing,

> "I'm sure there's arguments out there that having the Getty Aphrodite at the Getty Museum allowed people who might not be able to go to Italy to interact with this art piece and to be able to engage with a piece of Italian art history. So, I'm sure that there were detractors from the decision to repatriate that item. . ."

After discussing their reactions to an example of repatriation, participants were asked to decide, on a scale from 1-7, how important they thought it was for museums to tell visitors about objects in their collections that were looted or stolen, where 1 was not at all and 7 was completely. The median rating was 7.

**Figure 2: Participants' feelings towards repatriation information:**




Participants were then asked to explain their rating and why they thought providing visitors with information on repatriation was important or unimportant. Fifty-three percent (n=21) of participants placed importance on transparency in museums, including having honest and ethical conversations around objects. One participant described the importance behind accessible information, saying, "That's just revisionist history if they don't, and that's not responsible, ethical museum behavior." Another participant explained both the importance and the potential issues,

> "I mean, partially because I would like to think that museums are being impartial when they're displaying artifacts and part of that is being truthful in where they've come from and how they've gotten to the place they are now. Do I think that would ever happen? Probably not, because it would damage their own reputation in some ways, but going along with the whole responsibility theme of everything, I feel like it would be the ethical thing to do to give people the entire information and allow them to make that decision for themselves."

Another participant mentioned the role of a museum in the community, saying, "I believe they have a responsibility to say the origin is unknown or it's under investigation or whatever they

have to say about it. I feel it's a relationship they have with me as part of my community to be straightforward."

Forty-five percent (n=18) of participants emphasized that museums should supply more information because it is important to the history of an object. One participant said, "I think that's important. I think it's important to the history of the piece. I think that adds to the story of the piece and without speaking on its origin, that's removing an important part of the story." Another participant described historical accuracy in terms of colonialism, saying,

> "There's a lot of institutions that we have, especially in academia, where the evidence of colonialism, evidence of looting evidence and of thievery for the sake of enriching someone's own collections or for the sake of erasing someone else's history, have been allowed to persist, and if we ignore that history of things being pillaged then we're ignoring the history of that object. And we're ignoring some really valuable history about the conflict between nations and about different questions of who gets to tell the story of a place or of an object."

Another participant described it in terms of preexisting museum practice, saying, "I think it's an important, historically significant fact, just like they have plates next to the artwork that tell you what they are and gives you the historical significance. I think that's part of the history of the object."

Forty-five percent (n=18) of participants framed their rating in terms of the educational opportunity behind informing visitors of objects' histories, including their own personal interest in learning about these histories. One participant explained,

> "I think it's just good and interesting and informative for people to know where things come from. I feel like a lot of times when people come into museums there isn't a lot of dialogue around where those objects actually come from, and I think that's a really important thing for people to be thinking about and aware of. It's important for people to know for example that this was looted and the history behind that, because it's a part of the history."

Another participant said, "They should tell their visitors about that because I would want to know if an object was stolen," while another said, "The public should be given the opportunity to

have opinions or to think about an object also based on where it came from, and how it came to be in that place."

Thirteen percent (n=5) of participants did not believe that it was particularly important for museums to include information on looted or stolen objects in their exhibits. One participant explained that their rating was not as strong because of the potential issues behind that information, explaining,

> "I oscillated to a six because I know right now things are so polarized and are so black and white, that I can see a large faction of people who might go to a museum, see the description that this was originally looted, and immediately say 'give it back' without pausing to ask if the museum had talking to that country, and if that country even wants it back."

Another participant explained their rating in terms of museum visitors' prior knowledge, saying,

> "I think it's important for the people who are the art historians, the people who are totally dedicated to the craft of museums and art. I think it's important for them to help to navigate some of that, but I don't think the general populace really honestly is all that aware of it even, or that that would make a decision of whether they were going to see the piece or not see the piece or that that would make a decision whether they felt bad about the museum or not."

Another participant recognized the complex nature of the question, saying, "I know at some point in time you may find this information because stuff comes out, but do I as a museum patron I need to know? I don't know."

Lastly, three percent (n=1) of participants responded with an answer outside of the previous four categories. In their response, the participant explained that information on looted or stolen antiquities was important because of potential repatriation requests, saying, "That just opens the door for the group of people that it actually belongs to, to be able to be aware of that object and to take claim back over it, if they want to."

**3. What factors seem to influence visitors' positive and negative feelings about repatriating antiquities?**

The third part of the interview focused on cultural and legal ownership of antiquities. The first two questions in this third section still pertained to the repatriation example given to participants. Participants were asked to explain what it was specifically about this repatriation example that made them feel like the museum should or should not have repatriated that object. Responses were coded into six emergent categories. Sixty percent (n=24) of participants explained that the museum being provided with undeniable proof was important to facilitate the repatriation process. One participant explained that without proof the process might be more difficult, saying,

> "There's the evidence. It was very clear that it had been stolen and looted from the Italian art community, I guess. So that proof. I can see it being more complex in other situations when we don't know for sure. In this example, I think it worked out for the best."

Another participant said, "I think that if somebody can provide proof or evidence that it does belong to a different group of people, then that's where it should belong." Another participant explained that the apparent lack of proof was a negative aspect of this example, saying, "It goes back to, there seemed to be some uncertainty as to whether or not it was looted. It didn't seem like it was in the first place, and then it did seem like it was, so it might have been worthwhile to keep it in its original place (i.e. the Getty)."

Twenty-eight percent (n=11) of participants said that the idea of ownership and cultural heritage was important, and that repatriation would either right the wrong of past looting or instead take that object away from its new community. One participant placed importance on recognizing change, saying, "It's worth the recognition that they [the Getty] remedied their wrongdoings." Another participant described their response in terms of ownership and

recognizing that art was also being taken away, saying, “I feel like that's a cultural aspect that's worth keeping in mind as well, the importance of art being taken away just as much as returning it to its place of origin.”

Twenty-five percent (n=10) of participants mentioned that the method by which the object was looted, exported, and acquired by the museum was important. One participant said, “I think that fact that it was taken without the knowledge or consent of the local authorities. If they had agreed, that would be a totally different matter. But because they didn't know, and they didn't agree, that seems wrong to me.” Another participant described their response in great detail, saying,

> “The first thing that came to mind was just the way that it was looted. The fact that it was broken into pieces and covered with dirt and shipped out. You only hide things when you know you're doing something wrong. So, the fact that it was so furtive and secretive, obviously it was theft, and in my mind, it's theft, it's wrong. To put it back is to do the right thing. So I think that's why I do feel so strongly about it, both intellectually and emotionally, because that method of extracting was so disrespectful, both to the people and to the artwork, because it's still, the hand is partially broken, and we lost part of history because of that stealing.”

Another participant said, “The statue was broken into pieces and buried in the dirt so that it could be removed from Italy, and that's not the circumstances under which something should come into a museum’s collection. That is not good. That's not right.”

Fifteen percent (n=6) of participants said that it was important that the country of origin requested the return of this specific example. One participant explained that the request was intrinsic to the decision, saying,

> “I think that if there wasn’t a group that felt strongly from the place that it should be returned then I don’t know if it’s necessarily so important, like I think it’s up to that community, but I think in this case they did want it back, and provided a clear argument as to why it’s rightfully theirs.”

Another participant said, “The Italian Government requesting its return makes me agree with that

decision to repatriate," while another participant tempered their response by focusing on the safety of the object, saying, "If the repatriating country is requesting it back and has a way to protect it and preserve it, then there shouldn't be any obstacle to repatriating it."

Eight percent (n=3) of participants said that it was important to them that the museum and the Italian government collaborated throughout the process, which included loaning objects as a part of the repatriation process. One participant said, "I like the idea that again that other group is going to be kind to them and give them some things to make up for the difference." Another participant explained that collaboration was intrinsic to supporting the repatriation, saying, "Mostly the compromise that Italy would, in return, offer them more pieces of work without it. Honestly, I really like that compromise, and that's why I think it was a good idea for them to return it." Another participant explained that collaboration assisted with the repatriation, explaining, "For that reason, I think the whole collaboration was a good way to handle the situation."

Eight percent (n=3) of participants gave responses outside of the scope of the other five emergent categories. One participant did mention potential safety issues as a reason not to repatriate, saying, "I guess the argument can be made if some governments are saying they don't have the infrastructure in place to care and protect for this item." Another participant described their response based more on extra evidence, saying,

> "I think that they should have repatriated it and I feel strongly about this because they knew what they were doing. They knew that the art dealer that they were obtaining artifacts from was not exactly the most honest about what he was doing. And there was evidence that documents were being forged for artifacts that they were requiring for the museum and it wasn't just a matter of the art dealer being shady. It was that the art museum itself was helping to forge documents and that made it 10 times worse."

Another participant explained their response in terms of power, saying,

> "Probably partially because it's the Getty, and they're just so powerful and them losing this one piece is not going to damage their repertoire. They have so much stuff it's not really going to hurt them. But on the other side of things, it's probably really going to benefit wherever it's going, so partially the names involved is what would help me make that decision."

Participants were then asked if they felt that museums had the responsibility to return an object if the country or community of origin did not ask for an object to be returned. Responses were coded into five emergent categories. Seventy percent (n=28) of participants felt that before the decision to repatriate an object is made, there must be discussions between both parties, with either the museum initiating contact or the source community. One participant said, "I think the conversation should be had regardless. I think countries or places that have been looted or ravaged or put at a disadvantage shouldn't have the burden of having to ask for their things back. I think they should be offered first." Another participant explained, "I think there should at least be an offer. The institution that it was stolen from shouldn't have to ask. The place that stole it should ask if they want it back." One participant explained that the request should be made by the original country rather than the museum, saying,

> "It could be that the future Italians or the future members of that community say that they want this statue back, I guess my answer would be that until that happens the statue can be in the hands of the looters but whenever the real community that exists makes a request, that's when they need to return it."

Forty-three percent (n=17) of participants felt that the final decision to repatriate remained with the source country or community. One participant explained, "I think as long as they're okay with it being in the museum, I think that could actually be a really beneficial thing because then other people can learn about it and learn about other things." Another participant explained that repatriation was not necessarily required, saying,

> "I think if the original community doesn't care, I don't know if it would necessarily need to be returned, because what the museum is doing in the first place is displaying it for people to learn from. So maybe if, instead, the museum

> updated the information of how it came to be, I don't think it necessarily needs to go back to its home country, or a place of origin."

Twenty percent (n=8) of participants did not agree that the responsibility lay with the museum to repatriate an object, citing a variety of reasons. One participant explained the museum did not have responsibility if a request was never made, saying, "If it had never been investigated and it had never been asked for, I think that would indicate they don't have to give it back and they're not morally compelled to give it back." Another participant said that museums do not have the responsibility because of the traditional museum infrastructure, explaining,

> "I think that's a challenging question to answer because there's all those externalities. You know, museums often don't have a ton of funding and maybe they don't really want to spend the time or the resources to look into their collection and say that they received these remains or these art pieces under dubious circumstances and perhaps they should rethink their place in our collection. So, from a practical standpoint, I can see some issues with requiring repatriation or insisting that museums partake in that sort of activity. . ."

Another participant said,

> "The question of maintaining it and insuring it and also allowing others to see it. That's a huge responsibility. So if, for example, the Getty was keeping it and the Italian government never realized it, I would say just keep it. I think the Getty does a good job of keeping the pieces it has, and I think most museums do as well."

Thirteen percent (n=5) of participants agreed that in general museums have the responsibility to repatriate an object. One participant said, "I think that. . .just basic humanity and doing the right thing is important." Another participant explained that repatriation should generally happen even without consultation, saying,

> "I guess if the museum finds that it, within their own historical research on the object, if they find out it was stolen, I think they should return it. Even if the other country may not be aware of it or maybe they don't even know that it's gone, or that the other country has it. I think they should do the right thing and return it."

Five percent (n=2) of participants responded outside the scope of the previous four

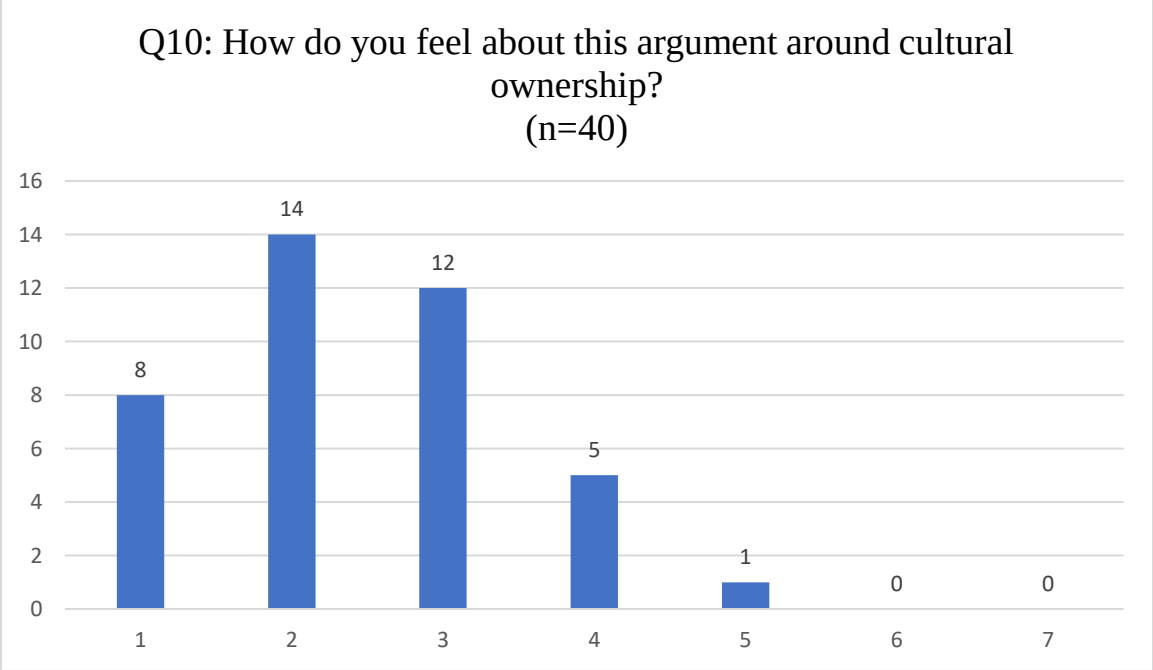
categories. One participant explained that repatriation depends on circumstances, saying,

> "I think it would depend upon where it would be going, whether it would still be on view for the public or whether it would be returned and not as available to those who would like to see it. So, I would say yes, it should be return. But I think there should be decisions made regarding how widely available it is."

Another participant said that if the museum does nothing else, they should "at least acknowledge the fact that it maybe wasn't obtained in an honorable fashion."

Participants were then provided with an example of an argument some make around museum artifacts, namely that pieces which have been separated from their countries or communities of origin can become culturally assimilated with the new location. After listening to the argument, participants were asked to decide, on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 was strongly disagree and 7 was strongly agree, how they felt about this argument pertaining to cultural ownership. The median rating was 2.

**Figure 3: Participants' Feelings about Culture Ownership:**



Participants were then asked to explain why they agreed or disagreed with this argument. Responses were coded into six emergent categories. Forty-five percent (n=18) of participants explained that the original ownership of the object was important to their decision, which included objects taken from original communities by colonizers. One participant said, “I think ultimately it is not necessarily the property of the museum or that sort of secondary culture.” Another participant explained their rating through colonization, saying, “I can understand that argument, even though I don't agree with it because I do think that if a country that was colonized wants their stuff back, they should get it back because it is righting a wrong that historically happened.” Lastly, one participant explained, “I don't agree that having technical legal ownership of an object supersedes the cultural and historical and sometimes religious significance that an object can have.”

Thirty percent (n=12) of participants said that the importance of cultural heritage to the original owners was a deciding factor in their ratings. One participant explained, “I don't think finders keepers necessarily applies when it comes to sacred objects or when it comes to human remains or things that are of a more sensitive nature, or things that really have great historical importance to wherever they originated from.” Another participant explained that the claim from the original owners “outweighs the shorter-term identity and cultural connection of whoever might be holding it at the time.” Lastly, one participant described,

> “Trying to say that it's now part of the cultural context when realistically, most people probably don't have that same kind of pride that the original culture would have. I think that it could be very important, I'm not going to argue that, but I don't think that it is as strong of a cultural touchstone in the new home.”

Twenty-three percent (n=9) determined that the overall cultural assimilation or appreciation of the museum piece was important to their rating. One participant explained their rating in terms of a legally acquired object, describing,

> "I'm circling back to the Mona Lisa. I know there was a person who was of Italian heritage who tried to steal back the Mona Lisa from France, saying that Napoleon had stolen the Mona Lisa and that it rightfully belonged to Italy. But it turns out that it was actually gifted to Napoleon and therefore has a rightful place in France and has become somewhat of a French cultural thing within the Louvre. People go to the Louvre to see the Mona Lisa. So, instances like that which become so ingrained within that culture. I couldn't imagine them moving the Mona Lisa somewhere else."

Another participant who spoke in terms of timing said,

> "I think that ownership really has to do with was it legitimate from the start. It doesn't become more legitimate as an act if time goes by and even though people's emotions do change as time goes by and people would become more and more invested in having that object but I think that those emotions are relevant to consider."

Another participant said, "If an object has been in one place for a long time, even if it's not where it originally came from, I can see how there would be some cultural significance or importance that might be attached to that object."

Twenty-three percent (n=9) of participants based their rating in part on the educational opportunities that the museum could provide when discussing cultural heritage, in addition to the accessibility of the object. One participant said, "I think the reason it's not a 1 is that same kind of argument of accessibility and having access to the things that have traditionally been accessible in a certain place." However, another participant approached the concept of accessibility differently, saying, "Hire artisans to make a replica and have that on display, and then talk about the history of when it was at the museum and what happened to it." One participant described their rating in more historically educational terms, saying,

> "Because history has multiple sides to every story, and one of them is, unfortunately, that the conqueror side that is the one that is talked about more. In the case of the British Museum, if we took out all the artifacts from all of their times of colonization, we would in effect be erasing part of history, because that's what started globalization. That was one aspect of a new era of the spice trade and exploration of different lands and things like that. So, it would be in effect trying to erase history that did happen. I understand that other mindset too, where we

can't rewrite history, we can just enter into new chapters."

Twenty percent (n=8) of participants said that an important factor in their rating was how the museum actually acquired the object in question, and whether or not that object had been looted. One participant said, "If it was illegally looted, even though it does build on their culture, I would agree to give it back to the original owner." Another participant explained,

> "If it's discovered that the means by which the museum obtained it were not on the up and up, then I don't think that cultural significance of its new home is enough to overcome my feeling that it needs to go back to where it originated. It would depend on how long the item had been in its new home maybe."

Another participant explained their rating in terms of legality, questioning, "Can I say if someone stole my laptop and sold it to my neighbor, is that my neighbor's laptop? I am leaning towards 2, just thinking about the specific example of legality."

Lastly, ten percent (n=4) of participants responded outside the scope of the previous five categories. One participant responded, "If it was purchased legally by the museum and nobody has asked for it back, then I don't feel like it needs to be repatriated." Another participant tempered their response based on the nature of the object, saying,

> "I think there is something to be said about if it is something that's really valuable, or really well-known like that. I think that kind of gives that community or that culture some sort of capital in a way that I can't say yes or no, if it would be ethical to take that away from them. But then also, on the other hand, if it was primarily from a specific culture, I'm inclined to say that maybe they could share it. But I don't know how to work."

# Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this study was to explore visitors' attitudes to high-profile antiquities repatriations. The research was guided by three key questions:

1. What is the nature of museum visitors' awareness and understanding of repatriation?
2. What positive or negative feelings do visitors have about the topic of museums repatriating antiquities?
3. What factors seem to influence visitors' positive and negative feelings about repatriating antiquities?

This study utilized a descriptive survey design. Data were collected via Zoom interviews through semi-structured interviews with 40 adults. Open-ended questions were analyzed through emergent coding to identify the ways in which participants perceived various aspects of the repatriation process within museums. This chapter situates the findings within the existing research and highlights the implications for future research.

## Conclusions

Overall, a large majority of study participants were aware of repatriation, with half of participants having heard the specific term repatriation in the context of museums. When asked how they had become aware of the issue, several participants mentioned some form of media, including news articles, as the basis for their awareness. There is less research conducted on the ways in which visitors become aware of certain museum topics, including repatriation. This study contributes data that shows more specifically the extent to which visitors know of the issue and the ways in which they learned of the topic, which can assist museums and researchers alike in understanding visitors' habits and interests.

The majority of study participants agreed with the repatriation of certain objects in

museum collections for a variety of reasons, including method of acquisition and collaboration between parties, and recognized repatriation works on a case-by-case basis. Likewise, a majority of participants disagreed with the idea of cultural ownership. These participants disagreed with the concept based on the idea of original ownership and cultural heritage. This is in keeping with news articles on the subject, in which quoted individuals and authors alike discuss the necessity for certain objects to be returned home to source communities (Bilefski, 2012; Edgers, 20122; Frammolino, 2011). This response also goes against the belief held by universal museums that widespread repatriation would act as a "disservice" to all visitors, as participants characterized repatriation, not as a disservice, but as an important development in museum partnerships with source communities ("Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums").

A majority of study participants, when asked if they felt museums should provide more information on objects in their collections that had been looted or stolen, expressed interest in museums providing accessible information to their visitors. In part, participants explained that an increase in information could lead to engaging conversations with visitors and a variety of educational opportunities based on repatriation and museums. This is similar to Caesar's (2007) study conducted on the educational benefits of storage tours at the Science Museum, London. While different from this study's scope in that it focused specifically on storage tours, this study showed the importance of interpretive material for visitors, which is similar to what participants agreed would be beneficial for museums to include on repatriation.

Participants also explained that museums had the responsibility to be fully transparent with visitors. This is in keeping with what Cuno (2014) suggested on the subject, namely that museums should keep their visitors informed on the topic of repatriation within museums in order for the public to better understand how and why museums make their decisions. Some

participants also pointed out that a lack of information provided by the museum does not allow visitors to form their own opinions on repatriation, which is a detriment to the public, and that a lack of information ignores or erases the history of both the object and the museum that acquired it. While different in scope and content from Kilmister's (2003) study on mummified remains in English museums, there are connections that can be drawn. While a high percentage (eighty-three percent) of participants in Kilmister's study trusted museums to design exhibits and include information in whatever way they saw fit, participants in this researcher's study instead believed museums should do more than what they were currently doing.

Collaboration between museums and source communities was mentioned by a majority of participants as important when repatriating objects, in part because it can lead to increased educational value for museum materials and the increased potential for loans between institutions. This is in keeping with Falkoff's (2007) article on mutually beneficial repatriation agreements, which many museums turn to in order to facilitate antiquities repatriations. The importance that study participants placed on this form of collaboration implies that this is viewed as an effective response to repatriation requests and is something that can benefit both parties.

## Implications

### Practice

Given the extent to which participants expressed interest in having museums adopt transparent tactics and provide more information on repatriation, museums are uniquely posed to provide more dialogue around the topic of repatriation. In studies conducted at the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver, BC and the Science Museum, London, findings suggested that visitors can benefit from various educational tactics that are outside the scope of traditional museum visits, including newly developed tours and exhibit spaces designed to respond to

specific questions and respond to community desires (Caesar, 2007; Dawes, 2016). While these studies focus on open storage techniques in museums, the success around aspects of open storage methods can be translated into museum exhibits. When contemplating different museum responses to repatriation, many participants mentioned such things as replicas of repatriated items paired with important information, or new exhibits designed to pose questions on the topic to visitors while discussing specific pieces in their collections. In considering these responses, museums can more directly engage their visitors through such things as tours or exhibits centered specifically around either objects being requested for repatriation or objects that have already been included in these discussions that have remained at the museum. These educational opportunities have the potential to grow from gallery information into tours and exhibits specifically designed to engage visitors in a complex museum topic, while keeping in mind that information should be provided to visitors in such a way so as not to potentially overwhelm individuals (Dawes, 2016).

Exhibits designed around repatriation, or existing exhibits that can incorporate new information on the topic, would allow museums to conduct further evaluative research on the topic. This would allow for visitors to be interviewed about their perception of repatriation while confronted with objects that better represent the scope of the topic. By providing visitors with increased information on a sensitive topic, and by further involving members of their community with an issue that can directly affect them, museums can involve visitors in these discussions and see how visitors react to objects being returned to source countries.

## Research

This study focused in part on how participants responded specifically to antiquities repatriations. Further research into how museum visitors respond to other forms of repatriation,

including Native American pieces under NAGPRA, religious and spiritual objects, or human remains (to name a few) could provide a valuable understanding on repatriation responses. Future studies on repatriation would be particularly effective if visitors were interviewed at museums with objects related to the repatriation discussion, as on-site conversations may directly affect how visitors respond to the topic. This relates to Kilmister's (2003) study on visitors' responses to mummified human remains, which suggests that visitors accept museum ownership of remains, while taking the scope of the study one step further and specifically discussing responses based on repatriation. Site-specific studies may also contribute to a greater understanding of how such materials as labels and contextual information may affect how visitors respond to repatriation.

In addition to further research conducted on visitors' responses to other forms of repatriation in museums, further research into how visitors and source communities alike respond to objects that have already been repatriated would offer valuable insight into the process. Further research could be conducted onsite at exhibits that have welcomed newly repatriated objects into their space, as Morgantina welcomed the Getty Aphrodite (Frammolino, 2011). This is similar in scope to news articles focusing on source community response to repatriated objects (Donadio, 2014; Frammolino, 2011; Gilyeat, 2019; "Of Marbles and Men," 2012). Studying how visitors to museums in source communities or countries that exhibit repatriated objects respond to the concept of repatriation has the potential to aid museums that are considering repatriation, in part by providing valuable insight into how visitors view such decisions after the fact.

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## Appendix A: Interview Guide

Introduction:

*Hi! Thank you so much for setting aside some time to speak with me today! I really appreciate it. Before we get started, is it alright if I record our conversation through zoom? I will be the only one with access to this recording, and it will only be used for transcription purposes and will be deleted once I am done with it.*

*Let me know if at any point my audio starts to cut out. I have had some issues in the past with my laptop.*

*Now, I understand that you've been to an art museum in the last year. What I want to talk about in this interview has nothing to do with your specific visit. We will be talking in broad terms about a museum-wide topic.*

*Do you have any questions before we get started?*

*Let's get started!*

**Part 1: Awareness and Understanding of Repatriation**:

Right now, some museums are dealing with an ethical issue around certain objects in their collections. Throughout history, many museums have collected a variety of objects, including those that have been legally purchased, some that may have been taken from countries during colonial occupation, and others that were looted or stolen during war or national crisis, like during the Nazi occupation. In response, some countries and communities are asking for certain objects within museums to be returned. This issue is often called repatriation, which is the process of giving an object back to its place or peoples of origin.

1. Were you aware of this issue, before I described it to you just now?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Not sure

2. [If **YES**] In your own words, what do you know about this issue? How did you become aware of it?

    [If **NO]** Is this the first time that you are hearing of this issue, or have you heard about some aspects of it before?

[If **NOT SURE**] Could you tell me more?

3. Had you heard the term "repatriation" in the context of museums before today?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Not sure

4. [If **YES**] Where have you heard this term before?

*So now we are going to talk about feelings behind repatriation. At this time, I am going to share my computer screen with you to show you an image. If that alright with you?*

**Part 2: Visitors' Feelings About Repatriation**:

One high-profile example of repatriation is the Getty Aphrodite, which the Getty Museum acquired in 1988. This marble statue depicts an unknown goddess, although she is popularly viewed as Aphrodite. While the Italian government believed that the statue had been illegally looted and exported from Italy, it was not until 2006, when photographic evidence showed the statue broken into pieces and covered in dirt, that the Getty recognized that the statue had been looted. In 2007, the Getty agreed to return 40 looted antiquities, including the Getty Aphrodite, to Italy. The Italian government agreed to loan other items to the Getty in return for their cooperation.

5. What is your initial reaction to this example I have given to you? How does it make you feel?

*Now I am showing you a scale on the screen:*

6. On a scale from 1-7, where 1 is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree, how do you feel about the decision to return the object in this example?

7. Can you tell me more about your rating? Why do you [agree or disagree] with repatriating this object?

**Part 3: Factors that Might Influence Visitors' Feelings about Repatriation:**

8. What is it specifically about this example that makes you feel like the museum [should or should not] have repatriated this object?

9. What if the country or community does not ask for an object to be returned? Do you feel that the museum has a responsibility to return an object in that case, or not?

Some people have argued that objects, even if they have been looted or stolen, should be kept by the museum, because they are now a part of that culture or community's history and identity. Even though these objects might not have originally belonged to these people, they now own these objects, and consider them an important part of who they are.

[*Keep on same scale*]

10. On a scale from 1-7, where 1 is strongly disagree and 7 is strongly agree, how do you feel about this argument around cultural ownership?

11. Can you explain your rating? Why do you [agree or disagree] with this argument?

[*Now I am going to show you a new scale*]

12. On a scale from 1-7, where 1 is not at all and 7 is completely, how important do you believe it is for museums to tell visitors about objects in their collections that were looted or stolen?

13. Can you explain your rating? Why do you think this is [important or unimportant]?

Demographics: One last question for demographic purposes.

14. What year were you born?

*I am going to stop recording now.*
*Are you interested in receiving the $10 gift card for participating?*
***[If Yes]** I will be contacting you regarding the gift card in the next couple weeks.*

## Appendix B: Coding Rubric

| Question | Key Words | Category | Example |
|---|---|---|---|
| #2a [If yes] What do you know about this issue? | | General understanding of repatriation. | "I know it's one of the most complicated issues I can imagine legally."<br>"I've heard of repatriation."<br>"We've gathered things from groups of people that probably want them back from this very area (Detroit)."<br>"I just kind of know the basics of what you've already described." |
| | | General references to repatriation in museums. | "I saw this was when I went to London and I went to the British Museum, which the majority of their stuff is probably not from England."<br>"I know India has asked for a few artifacts back from the British Museum, part of the thing with Brexit has to do with Greece wanting a couple of artifacts back."<br>"There were a number of plaques and pieces within the exhibit that explained that there are pieces of our country's history that have been lost."<br>"In general, I knew there were always critiques about European museums." |
| | | General references to cultural repatriation. | "The repatriation, the idea is there are these cultural touchstones that belong to these groups of people and they're being put on display in these other areas, and people want to bring their culture back and be able to reclaim that part of their heritage."<br>"Seeing petitions about Native American arts and arts from Africa and the Pacific Islands specifically."<br>"I think that it also does expand to things that may or may not have actually been that nation's cultural patrimony." |
| | WWII | General references to WWII and repatriation. | "A Dutch master is looted from the louvre during World |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | War Two so these are things that were removed under not ideal circumstances."<br>"A lot of my studies have led me to Hitler having taken a bunch of art and cultural objects. So that's how I kind of became familiar with that aspect, as well as countries wanting those objects back."<br>"A lot of Jewish families had their things stolen and dispersed out to various places or kept for what Hitler wanted." |
| #2b [If yes] How did you become aware of this issue? | General | General awareness of repatriation. | "I've not really done much reading about it or knew that much about it until you told me about it."<br>"I think I've probably known about it since high school. I've known about it for a while."<br>"I'm not quite sure how I became aware of it." |
| | Online | Participants became aware of repatriation through online platforms, including social media, and the news. | "I've read a few articles on it."<br>"I've become aware of it from seeing articles on different social media platforms."<br>"I probably saw different people on social media, friends share articles or information about different." |
| | Conversations | Participants became aware of repatriation through conversations with others. | "I was probably made aware of it through conversations with friends."<br>"I have a couple of friends who are interested in museum studies and I've heard them touch on it."<br>"In visiting different museums, I think with other people I've had more conversations around ownership and colonialism." |
| | Visual Culture | Participants became aware of repatriation through visual culture, including museums and films. | "I've encountered this issue at a couple of different museums."<br>"I think part of it was the Black Panther movie."<br>"They had a movie on the Monuments Men, which actually talked about how they went and found some of those stolen pieces of art. . ." |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Education | Participants became aware of repatriation through educational avenues, either through school or personal study. | “I do a lot of studying on World War Two.”<br>“I'm aware of this issue, because during my own master's program in education we had talked a lot about the subject.”<br>“I took an art history class a couple years ago, and I think we talked about it a little there.” |
| | Other | Other | “I became aware of that about two years ago when I started working with the BLM, what that specific federal policy was. So aside from my current job and being from the Native community”<br>“I'm Mexican American and part Native American, but so far back where we don't have family records past a certain point, so I think I've always just identified with that specifically” |
| #4 [If yes that they had heard repatriation in context of museums] Where have you heard this term before? | Online | Participants heard the term through online sources, either through the news or social media. | “Probably from some of the articles specifically dealing with it in the context of sending artifacts back”<br>“Through reading various articles”<br>“On blogs”<br>“I'm in several Facebook groups that are on political or social topics” |
| | Personal | Participants heard the term through personal conversations and study. | “Generally, in conversation. I know a lot of like history majors and art history majors.”<br>“I've heard it a lot in discussions” |
| | Museum | Participants heard the term through museum sources. | “Typically, in museums”<br>“News releases from the museums that are repatriating works” |
| | Educational | Participants heard the term through educational sources such as classes. | “in my college anthropology class”<br>“I took a class called the “Politics of Provence” |
| | Other | Participants did not elaborate on where they heard the term. | “I've just heard about it for a long time” |
| #5 What is your initial reaction to this example I have given to you? How does | Bittersweet | Participants had a negative feeling over what had happened but were positive of the outcome. | “I mean it's upsetting that that happened in the first place, but I guess it's good that it is being returned, and so quickly.” |

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| it make you feel? | | | “I feel frustrated, because the museum didn’t want to record that it had been looted. . .I like the idea of returning the statue.”<br>“It makes me a little upset that they wouldn't acknowledge it until there was photographic evidence of the looting. . .I'm glad they have it back. . .” |
| | Collaboration | Collaboration between the museum and the Italian government was appreciated by participants. | “My feeling is positive that they were able to work it out so that people could continue to view this.”<br>“My initial emotional response is that I am pleased that the Getty Museum was able to work with Italy. It sounds like they came to a conclusion that was beneficial for all parties.” |
| | General positivity | Participants were generally positive about the outcome. | “Honestly, I think what they did was right, returning [the statue] to Italy.”<br>“It feels good, it’s a positive feeling, because I think that where the art originated should have a claim on it.”<br>“I'm glad to See the Getty is returning what I would say is rightfully the Italian Government’s.” |
| | Negative | Reactions and feelings towards the example were negatively described. | “One of the most visceral reactions was the thought of something as beautiful as this being broken up into pieces purposefully in order for it to be looted. That means the sculpture’s original integrity is no longer there.”<br>“I think that it should have been immediately returned the moment that they had any suspicions that it had been illegally obtained. . . It should not have taken almost 30 years to repatriate it.” |
| | Proof | Proof was an intrinsic part of their reactions and feelings towards the outcome. | “I think it's good that the Getty recognized that it had basically been stolen art and they should return it because it was stolen.”<br>“It's awesome. . .I can see where they would want some evidence that it was in fact stolen. And I applaud them for taking efforts once that was verified to return it to |

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| | | | the rightful owner." |
| #7 Can you tell me more about your rating? Why do you [agree or disagree] with repatriating this object? | Cultural identity, Original Ownership | Importance was placed on the original owner of the piece, and their cultural connection to it. | "If someone who has some sort of claim through nationhood or through ethnicity wants something back, I tend to agree with that."<br>"It belonged originally to the Italian Government. . ."<br>"I think that the original owners deserve the control over what happens to such an important piece." |
| | Evidence | Access to hard proof was necessary or important to the decision to repatriate the object. | "There is strong evidence to show that it was taken unethically from its country of origin."<br>"They were able to find photographic evidence that it was looted."<br>"It's a case that's kind of vague as to whether it was appropriate to return or not." |
| | Access | Participants were concerned with access to the object and its safe display. | "I think there are benefits of having different pieces of art all around the world for educational purposes."<br>"Hopefully that statue is still visible for people and on display in a way where other people can appreciate its artistry."<br>"It's probably going to be better kept there or treated with more respect." |
| | Acquisition, circumstances | Concern was expressed over how the object was taken and righting the wrong that the original country experienced. | "Well, I feel that any object that was obtained under such circumstances, any such object would belong in its place of origination."<br>"I think an important part of that is recognizing that things were appropriated in a bad way."<br>"I just feel like this is one of the small things that we could do to repair the relationship with people that has been damaged over time." |
| | Collaboration | Participants appreciated collaboration between countries, including the loaning of similar antiquities, and the formal request for an object to be repatriated. | "If [that culture] would like it to be back or in a different place or anything, I think that it should be up to them."<br>"They were very willing to cooperate, and so I think it ended up being a very good mutual resolution to the |

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| | | | issue."<br>"The government that is the proper owner requested that it be returned."<br>"They're (the Getty) getting something in return for giving it back to them (Italy)." |
| #8 What is it specifically about this example that makes you feel like the museum [should or should not] have repatriated this object? | Proof | The fact that there was undeniable proof that the object had been looted was important to participants. | "There's the evidence; it was very clear that it had been stolen and looted from the Italian art community."<br>"I think that if somebody can provide proof or evidence. . ."<br>"I guess the evidence that was provided that it had been looted." |
| | Return requested | The country of origin requested the object's return, which was important to repatriation. | "The country is saying that it's theirs, they are actively wanting the piece back."<br>"They did want it back and provided a clear argument as to why it's rightfully theirs."<br>"If the repatriating country is requesting it back and has a way to protect it and preserve it, then there shouldn't be any obstacle to repatriating it." |
| | Method of looting | The method by which the object was looted, exported, and acquired by the Getty was important to participants. | "The fact that it was taken without consent of the owners."<br>"It just has to do with how the museum acquired the object."<br>"The fact that it was broken into pieces and covered with dirt and shipped out." |
| | Cultural heritage | The idea of ownership and cultural heritage was important, and that repatriating them would either right the wrong of looting them, or take them away from the new community. | "These objects are rare. They are not part of our cultural heritage or the Getty's cultural heritage."<br>"There's some recognition, it's worth the recognition that they remedied their wrongdoings."<br>"It doesn't belong to them no matter how much money they paid or who it was paid from."<br>"It's allowing a cultural wound to heal for those instances where art and history has been taken from a |

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| | | | place."<br>"I feel like that's a cultural aspect that's worth keeping in mind as well, the importance of art being taken away just as much as returning it to its place of origin." |
| | Organizational collaboration | It was important to participants that the Getty and Italian government were collaborating throughout the process, and loaning objects. | "I think the whole collaboration was a good way to handle the situation."<br>"The compromise that Italy would, in return, offer them more pieces of work without it."<br>"I like the idea that again that other group's going to be kind to them and give them some things to make up for the difference." |
| | Other | Wasn't sure where these fit in | "They knew that the art dealer that they were obtaining artifacts from was not exactly the most honest about what he was doing. And there was evidence that documents were being forged for artifacts. . ."<br>"Probably partially because it's the Getty, and they're just so powerful and them losing this one piece is not going to damage their repertoire. They have so much stuff it's not really going to hurt them. But on the other side of things, it's probably really going to benefit wherever it's going, so partially the names involved is what would help me make that decision."<br>"There seemed to be some uncertainty as to whether or not it was looted, it didn't seem like it was in the first place, and then it did seem like it was, so it might have been worthwhile to keep it in its original place (i.e. the Getty), because I feel like that's a cultural aspect that's worth keeping in mind as well, the importance of art being taken away just as much as returning it to its place of origin." |
| #9 What if the country of community does not ask for an object to be returned? Do | Communication | Before a decision is made to repatriate, there must be conversation between the two groups, with either the museum initiating contact, or | "I feel like as long as they're aware that the object or artifact exists, and they know where it is."<br>"If somebody wants something, they're going to ask for |

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| you feel that the museum has a responsibility to return an object in that case, or not? | | the source community. | it back."<br>"I think the museum has the responsibility to attempt to contact the country from which it came and then make an offer."<br>"There is a responsibility, long term, should the community ask for it to be returned that it'd be returned." |
| | Original Country Decides | Even if participants agreed or disagreed with museums taking responsibility, the final decision to repatriate was made by the source country. | "There are situations where a community or institution might not want it returned if they can't care for it. . . if they don't want it back, I guess there's no responsibility to return it."<br>"I think if the original community doesn't care, I don't know if it would necessarily need to be returned."<br>"If it's not bothering the culture that has an affinity to it, then it might do the most good to have these objects." |
| | General | Yes, in general participants agreed the museum had responsibility. | "I'm more on the side of giving it back, I think."<br>"I do. I think that. . .just basic humanity and doing the right thing is important."<br>"I guess if the museum finds that, within their own historical research on the object, it was stolen, I think they should return it." |
| | No | No, the museum does not have the responsibility to repatriate an item, either in general or if because no one is asking for its return, or because of funding restrictions. | "No, not necessarily. . .There are some cases where I think it doesn't necessarily need to be in its rightful place."<br>"I don't feel that they necessarily have the responsibility to return it."<br>"If no one's asking for the piece back explicitly, then I guess it's fine for museums to keep it."<br>"I don't think so. . .if, for example, the Getty was keeping it and the Italian government never realized it, I would say just keep it."<br>"Museums often don't have a ton of funding and maybe they don't really want to spend the time or the resources |

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| | | | to look into their collection."<br>"I think that would be very challenging, because many museums don't have funding to appropriately staff that." |
| | Other | Other | "At least acknowledge the fact that it maybe wasn't obtained in an honorable fashion."<br>"I think it would depend upon where it would be going, whether it would still be on view for the public or whether it would be returned and not as available to those who would like to see it. So, I would say yes, it should be return. But I think there should be decisions made regarding how widely available it is." |
| #11 Can you explain your rating? | Appreciation | The overall cultural assimilation or appreciate of a piece that is now located in a museum is important to their rating. | "People go to the Louvre to see the Mona Lisa. So, instances like that which become so ingrained within that culture."<br>"When an object that's been taken has been in the culture that took it for so long that it's become a part of that culture, it's kind of important to both of them."<br>"Especially if it's something that that culture has had for hundreds of years. Maybe they now have traditions around it. That's a really hard thing, and the people who are alive now aren't necessarily responsible for what their ancestors did." |
| | Education, history | Educational opportunities that museum can use when discussing cultural heritage are important, in addition to object accessibility. | "We have photographs, you can either work something out where you can borrow that artifact or trade that artifact back and forth, maybe put up a photograph and explain the whole process of repatriation."<br>"Because a lot of museums don't even display their whole collection. . .there's no reason why some of that stuff couldn't travel somewhere else."<br>"The argument of accessibility and having access to the things that have traditionally been accessible in a certain place." |

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| | Cultural heritage | The importance of cultural heritage to the original owners was a deciding factor. | "I don't think most people in the cultures I've grown up with have any strong attachment to items in our museums."<br>"I can't think of any object in anybody's possession right now where I would say their "ownership" of this item for the past so many years has made it a cultural object of their nation."<br>"I don't think just because it's been in a place for a long time that it's part of that place's culture."<br>"It wasn't something that the culture used, built, worshipped, etc., so it's not a part of their culture. It's something that they've started to really appreciate and really learn from and that's beautiful and wonderful and at the same time, it's still not yours." |
| | Original ownership | The original ownership of the object was important to their decision.<br>• This includes things taken by colonizers from the original community | "It comes down to personal property or property with a museum as opposed to actual historical and cultural value to the group."<br>"I can see where they're like we've based a lot of our museum around these objects, but just because you have them in your possession doesn't mean that they should belong to you."<br>"I think ultimately it is not necessarily the property of the museum or that sort of secondary culture." |
| | Acquisition | An important factor in their decision was how the museum actually acquired the object in question, and whether or not it was looted. | "Colonialism theft is so much a part of who we are that we can't interrogate that at all. And I think that's a problem."<br>"If it's discovered that the means by which the museum obtained it were not on the up and up, then I don't think that cultural significance of its new home is enough. . ."<br>"But if it was illegally looted, even though it does build on their culture, I would agree to give it back to the original owner." |

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| | Other | | "It depends, I suppose, on the timeline and the given object. I mean, there has to be some reason, but as a whole, I wouldn't take that as an answer to the situation."<br>"If it is something that's really valuable, or really well-known like that. I think that kind of gives that community or that culture some sort of capital in a way that I can't say yes or no, if it would be ethical to take that away from them."<br>"If it was purchased legally by the museum and nobody has asked for it back, then I don't feel like it needs to be repatriated."<br>"And I was thinking, I don't think we should give all the land back to the Native American." |
| #13 Can you explain your rating? | Transparency | The importance of transparency in museums, including honest and ethical conversations around their objects, was important to participants. | "I think it's really important to be transparent about the sources of your items and of your information at all times."<br>"They shouldn't act like they got them entirely legally if they didn't."<br>"It would be kind of lying to imply that they had gotten [an object] in another way, if it has been stolen." |
| | Historical importance | Participants emphasized that museums should give information about objects because it is important to the history of an object. | "I think that's important. I think it's important to the history of the piece. I think that adds to the story of the piece and without speaking on its origin, that's removing an important part of the story."<br>"I feel that part of an object's history is explaining how it was acquired."<br>"Letting museum goers know the provenance of an item is not admitting that there was a wrong done. I think it's just letting people know how this was obtained." |

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| | | | “If they're being honest about the narrative of that object and the history of that object, then they should include how they came by it.” |
| | Education | The educational opportunity behind informing visitors was an important aspect and included personal interest in educational opportunities. | “The public should be given the opportunity to have opinions or to think about an object also based on where it came from, and how it came to be in that place.”<br>“I'm not a massive history buff. . .to me, it's even more fascinating to learn ‘how did that get here.’”<br>“In general, a lot of people aren’t probably aware of this issue and I think that would bring an awareness.” |
| | Unimportant | Some participants believed that it was not important for museums to inform visitors of looted or stolen antiquities. | “I don't think that you would need to label all objects and say that this one definitely wasn't stolen, and to have that as a requirement for all display is that we need to have that label.”<br>“Most people who go to art museums are not that invested in all of it.”<br>“I know right now things are so polarized and are so black and white, that I can see a large faction of people who might go to a museum, see the description that this was originally looted, and immediately say ‘give it back.’” |
| | Other | | “That just opens the door for the group of people that it actually belongs to, to be able to be aware of that object and to take claim back over it, if they want to.” |