

Narratives of Transformation:

Reframing and naming the impact of activist
museum practice on visitors

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Leicester

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University of Leicester
November 2018

Abstract

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This thesis considers the long-term impacts of activist museum practice on visitors. Activist museum practice refers to an approach to museum work which advocates for positive socio-political change including the advancement of civil and human rights. Drawing from the fields of emancipatory learning, transformative learning, and clinical psychology, I advocate for a reframing of impact which contextualises and situates the museum experience within a wider framework of transformative experiences. The *narrative of transformation* allows us to better understand the process of transformation, the role of the museum visit within this process, and the relationship between museum visits and other transformative experiences.

Here I consider the experiences of visitors to two case study sites – the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool, UK and the Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, Georgia, US. Through a series of interviews, visitors shared their museum experiences and their interpretations of the impact of those visits on their attitudes, understandings, and ways of being in the world. They also reflected on other experiences both related and unrelated which informed their beliefs, attitudes, and actions in the world.

The findings suggest that museum visits play a role in the narratives of transformation for many visitors. Visitors who reported a high level of emotional and empathetic engagement – affective connectedness – were more likely to assign the museum a transformative role. Visitors were also able to situate the museum visit amongst other transformative experiences including formal education, experiences with media sources such as books, films, and news programmes, visits to similar heritage institutions, and direct personal experiences. For some visitors, the museum visit played a highly significant transformative role while for others it acted as one ‘nudge’ amongst many along their unique transformative journey.

Acknowledgements

Many people contributed to and enriched my PhD journey over the past four years and I am hugely grateful to each of them.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Professor Richard Sandell, for his unfailing support and guidance. I would also like to thank Dr Giasemi Vavoula, my second supervisor, for her keen insights. I could not have written this thesis without the support of my colleagues and fellow PhD researchers at the School of Museum Studies – especially to Dr Sarah Plumb for her words of encouragement; Dr Jen Walklate for keeping me sane; and Katy Bunning for her exceptional mentoring. Special thanks must also go to Christine Cheesman and Gurpreet (Bob) Ahluwalia for knowing the answers to all of my questions. I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to my examiners Dr Stacy Boldrick and Janneke Geene for the depth of their insights and their generous encouragement.

This research would not have been possible without the generosity from staff at both the International Slavery Museum and the Center for Civil and Human Rights. Thanks go to Adam Duckworth and Yossarian Vanducci from the Slavery Museum for sharing their experiences and expertise with me. I would especially like to thank Dina Bailey, Keisha Lewis, David Hopings, and Tynisha Wooley from the Center for being supportive and enthusiastic about this research as well as for their hospitality.

Without the contributions and commitment from my participants, this project really would not have been possible. I would like to extend my utmost gratitude to everyone who took time to share their experiences with me.

Finally, to my dearest friends and family: I doubt that words could properly encapsulate my deepest appreciation for your care, love, and support over the past four years. To my parents and research co-funders Carole and Jim Bergevin, I dedicate this thesis to you. Thank you for all of your support and love over the years. To my friends Dan and Kirsten DiFlavis, Greg and Amy Curley, Erika Hennings, Laurie and Lloyd Dain, Jen Wicoff, Sara Steele, and Mizah Kholil and Ling, thank you for pushing me onward even when I wanted to stop. Finally, to my fiancé Jeremy Thackray, thank you for your unwavering love, continuing kindness, and limitless patience. Thank you, too, for your editor's eye and for keeping me on this journey through it all.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

On a warm summer's day in 2014, I found myself joining the queue waiting to enter the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam in the Netherlands (fig. 1-1). I had been in the city for a few days and had not initially intended to visit the museum as I had failed to book an advanced ticket and the thought of queuing for most of the day was daunting. Despite this reticence, I woke early one morning and made my way along Prinsengracht towards the house. I had read Anne Frank's diary as an adult and had seen the 1959 film adaptation as well as a theatrical adaptation which had included previously edited material. These experiences were in my head as I entered the museum and began my journey through the galleries, through the historic rooms where Otto Frank had run his business, and up the narrow staircase, through the bookcase to the secret annex.



*Figure 1-1: A view of Prinsengracht and the Anne Frank House from Westerkerk
Photograph by the author*

I recall the visceral experience of standing in the room Anne Frank shared with Fritz Pfeffer and seeing the photographs, many taken from magazines, that she had pasted to the wall. It was in that moment that she leapt from the pages of her diary and I connected to her and her story in a way I hadn't previously. As I made my way through the remainder of the museum, I continued to experience waves of strong emotions which seemed to carry me through the rest of the rooms and galleries.

As I entered the final gallery, *Reflections on Anne Frank* (fig. 1-2), a film projected against one of the walls began to play. A number of actors, writers, and visitors were featured expressing their thoughts on Anne Frank and her legacy. What stood out to me and what I took with me after my experience at the Anne Frank House were the words which actress Emma Thompson used to describe Anne Frank and who she might have been had she lived:

I don't think she would have been an actress. I think if she'd lived, she would have written books, she would have helped others, she would have used her extraordinary intelligence to organise our thoughts about the world. I think she would have loved generously and without prejudice. I think she would have had great courage. I think she would have spoken up for the dispossessed and I think that she would have tried to storm the invisible barriers that separate human beings and keep us in such conflict. So what I say now is the only thing we have to remember is all her would-haves are our real possibilities; all her would-haves are our opportunities. (Anne Frank House, 2009)

Those words echoed in my head as I sat in the museum café looking out over Prinsengracht. I thought about my own possibilities and opportunities of making change in the world. Then I looked at the multitudes of other visitors sitting in the café and those beyond the windows who were yet to enter. How many of them would turn Anne Frank's would-haves into their own opportunities? What possibilities defined the ways that they could transform the world?



Figure 1-2: Text panel for the exhibition 'Reflections on Anne Frank' (Anne Frank House, 2018a)

1.1 Research focus

My experience at the Anne Frank House catapulted me on a journey to try to answer those questions. I wanted to better understand the ways in which museums empower their visitors to transform themselves and the world. I wanted to know how visits to places like the Anne Frank House contributed to the advancement of social justice and human rights causes – or indeed if they did so at all. In essence I wanted to better understand the impact visits to museums like the Anne Frank House had in the lives of visitors.

Discussions of impact reveal the complexity with which it can be perceived. The ways in which impact is defined, framed, and reported varies according to preconceived criteria (such as projected visitor numbers, memberships, and learning outcomes). In many cases, these criteria are fixed by the museum or in the case of museological studies, the researcher. Impact is rarely defined from the point of view of the visitor – perhaps the person best placed to set the criteria. We must therefore think about impact in a different way, one in which audience members are not passive, but active in the process.

We might then think about impact in terms of how visitors and the wider community engage with and interact with the museum and its offerings rather than defining it in terms of the institution's effect on visitors and the wider community.

In addition to these considerations, it is also important to reflect on the ways in which the museum and heritage sector has slowly begun to acknowledge and in certain cases embrace its ability to weigh in on contemporary issues relating to justice, democracy, and human rights. The rise of what we might consider campaigning museums (Fleming, 2010; 2016), human rights museology (Carter and Orange, 2012; Orange and Carter, 2012), and activist museum practice¹ (Sandell, 2017; Sandell and Dodd, 2010) form part of a longer trend in the museological field which began to focus more squarely on the social value of museums and their situated place within society to foster positive socio-political change. The Anne Frank House (2018b) with its mission to '[encourage] people to reflect on the dangers of antisemitism, racism, and discrimination, and the importance of freedom, equal rights, and democracy' certainly stands within an activist museum practice ethos. Impact is an important element for activist museums whose missions tend to focus on promoting positive socio-political change, democratic values, and active citizenship.

The question for those engaged in activist practice becomes what difference are we making in our communities and to the world at large through our work? This remains frustratingly difficult to answer. Some groundwork has been laid, most notably by Richard Sandell (Sandell, Dodd, and Garland-Thomson, 2010; Sandell, Dodd, and Jones; 2010; Sandell, Lennon, and Smith, 2018; Sandell and Nightingale, 2012) and the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) (2000; 2007; 2017). These studies have tended to examine audience responses immediately following the visit, making it

¹ Each of these labels has subtle implications and differences. In essence, though, they are describing an institution or museological practice dedicated to outwardly endorsing a set of social and political values. Throughout this thesis, I will tend to refer to these institutions and practices as *activist museums* which I take to encompass all variations of this type of institution.

difficult to extrapolate the longer-term impact of the museum experience within the individual's life. The handful of longitudinal studies which have taken place have tended to focus on learning outcomes, memory, visitor agendas and identities.

A summary of the longitudinal research which had taken place prior to 2007 discusses the complexities of trying to conduct this kind of research, including the multiplicities of outcomes in free-choice learning environments and the need to consider impact from the point of view of the visitor (Anderson, Storksdieck, Spock, 2007). While acknowledging the paucity of studies examining longitudinal impact, the authors collate and enumerate the findings which may be taken from the studies which had been done. Memory and recall are heavily represented in these findings as well as the cognitive nature of these processes in relation to museum visits. Another area which is well represented, particularly by Falk and his associates, is around visitor agendas, identity, and previous knowledge, and how these and other factors shape the museum experience and subsequent impact (Falk, 2009; Falk and Dierking, 1997; Falk, Dierking, and Semmel, 2012; Falk, Moussouri, and Coulson, 1998; Falk, et al., 2007). We might also consider the findings which speak to processes of retention of attitudes and understandings and the evidence which suggests that over the course of time, visitors tend to return to prior ways of thinking and feeling (Adelman, Falk, and James, 2000; Anderson, Storksdieck, and Spock, 2007; Falk, Dierking, and Semmel, 2012). Despite the desire to privilege the visitor perspective, this has rarely been fully realised in relation to longitudinal impact studies. Moreover, the ways in which impact has been considered tend to narrow the possibility for foregrounding the visitor's own understandings of impact within the context of their lives.

It became clear that a framework for understanding impact was needed which could situate the museum visit within the wider context of an individual's life, which would retain as much complexity and nuance as possible, and which would foreground the visitor perspective. Drawing on literature from emancipatory and transformative learning as well as from clinical psychology, this thesis is an attempt to construct a new way of understanding impact in relation to activist museum practice by considering

impact as a narrative of transformation which includes the richness of interconnected and interrelated experiences and situates the museum visit within that whole.

In addition to positing this framework, this thesis sets out to define the role of activist museum practice within individuals' narratives of transformation. By privileging their unique perspectives and contexts, it brings to light the ways in which individuals define that role for themselves and what significance they attach to the museum visit within the context of their wider transformative journey. More specifically, this thesis proposes to answer the following questions:

- In what ways do individuals understand the role of museum visits, specifically visits to institutions engaged in the promotion of social justice, in their development of attitudes, understandings, and personal commitments to action with regard to social justice topics?
- How do individuals make sense of the relationship of the museum visit and other contextualising experiences to the development of their attitudes, understandings, and personal commitments to action?
- Which situations and experiences prompt individuals to draw upon their museum visit in the six-month period of time following the visit?
- Are there museum practices which facilitate the transformative process and does the data suggest new approaches which might facilitate this process?

With the inclusion of a longitudinal approach, this research aims to provide insights into the longevity of transformative museum experiences and to increase understanding of how activist museums contribute more broadly to social justice work, advocacy, and the promotion of democratic values, and active citizenship.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

This introductory chapter has laid the foundations for the remainder of this thesis by situating the research as one which itself was borne out of a transformative museum

experience. It has briefly outlined the focus of the study and provided some context for the research.

Chapter 2 begins by tracing the emergence of activist museum practice from the development of the new museology of the late 1980s through to the advent of human rights museology and campaigning museums over the past ten years. In historicising the emergence of activist practice, it is possible to trace its antecedents and identify the trends in the sector which have fostered its growth. The chapter then delves more deeply into the range and diversity of activist approaches and details the wider global networks which advocate for and share best practices for human rights advocacy, memorialisation, and social justice work taking place in the heritage sector. The chapter concludes by exploring in more depth previous research undertaken to understand the impact of museums and activist practice more specifically.

Chapter 3 seeks to reframe how we characterise impact by drawing on theoretical frameworks from the fields of adult education and clinical psychology. Bringing together the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1972; 1975; 1998; 2013) who advocated for a critical pedagogy of liberation, the transformative learning theory of Jack Mezirow (1978; 1981; 1990; 2009), and the transtheoretical model of change developed by James Prochaska and his associates (Prochaska and DiClemente, 1994; Prochaska, Prochaska, and Levesque, 2001; Prochaska, Norcross, DiClemente, 1994) from clinical psychology, it will facilitate understanding impact as a narrative of transformation which is non-linear, contextual, and highly individualised. This reframing opens possibilities for situating the museum visit within the visitors' wider fields of experiences and for drawing on visitors' own understandings of the role of the museum within their transformative journey.

Chapter 4 sets out the research design process and methodologies employed in greater detail. It lays out the case for a rich, qualitative approach characterised by the privileging of participants' voices. It describes the development of the multiple case study design and further elucidates the data collection and analytical methods employed to respond

to the research puzzle. It further situates the researcher as being part of and within the research itself owing to the nature of qualitative design. The chapter concludes with a description of the two case study sites in which the first phase of the research was conducted: The International Slavery Museum in Liverpool in the United Kingdom and the Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, Georgia in the United States.

Chapter 5 begins to explore the role of the museum visit within visitors' narratives of transformation. Drawing inspiration from ethnographic reporting, participants' voices and experiences are woven throughout the chapter and reveal the complex and nuanced meanings drawn from their museum experience and the ways in which these meanings informed, fostered, and in some instances activated transformation. The chapter is structured thematically according to the ways in which visits were described by participants. Through their own words, we begin to understand the roles of the museum experience: to remind; to raise awareness; to foster deeper understanding; to inspire action; and to reaffirm transformative pathways.

Whereas Chapter 5 focuses squarely on the museum experience, Chapter 6 attempts to situate the museum visit within the wider framework of the narrative of transformation. It begins by examining the importance of what I term *affective connectedness* – connecting emotionally and empathetically – in fostering transformative museum experiences. It then considers the complex interplay of diverse experiences and how these experiences relate to, enhance, and interact with museum experiences.

This thesis aims to better understand the transformative role of activist museum practice from the perspective of the visitor and further to understand the relationship of museum visits to other transformative experiences. The concluding chapter synthesises the threads of the research and advocates for the place of activist museum practice within the heritage sector. Further, this chapter elucidates the importance of critical reflection as a component of transformational change and advocates for further research into the role of reflection and affective connectedness in fostering transformative museum experiences.

Chapter 2 Defining activist museum practice

The museological landscape has experienced a dramatic shift over the past thirty years from an almost exclusive focus on preservation, collections management, and research to one which emphasises the social value of museums and places audiences at the centre of practice. It is this trend which has fostered the growth of socially engaged museum practice and activist practice specifically.

This chapter begins by charting this aforementioned trend and will contextualise activist museums within the wider museological field. It will then delve more deeply into the diverse realm of activist museum practice itself with a focus on defining and illustrating its characteristics through a series of examples. The chapter will also consider the global networks which have arisen to disseminate examples of best practice and support the work of activist heritage organisations. The chapter will then present an examination of the reception of activist practice through media and visitor studies before concluding with a discussion of its impact.

2.1 The new museology

For much of the nineteenth and part of the twentieth centuries, literature in the field of museum studies focused on methods of practice relating to the conservation and classification of collections. Exhibitions tended to employ didactic communication techniques with curators acting as the arbiters of good taste and knowledge. These practices and ideologies had been shaped throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when museums had been places of indoctrination, moral reformation, and celebrations of the superiority of Western culture (Weil, 2007). Decisions about what to collect, display, or preserve were often exclusively in the purview of curatorial ‘experts’ which was partially responsible for the perpetuation of cultural hegemonies within the museum sector (Bennett, 2007, p. 13).

An exception can be found in the writings of John Cotton Dana. Writing in the early part of the twentieth century, Dana noted the fundamental disconnect between the museum and its community:

By no right in reason whatever is a museum a mere collection of things, save by right of precedent. Yet precedent has so ruled in this field that our carefully organized museums have little more power to influence their communities than has a painting which hangs on the wall of some sanctuary, a sanctuary which few visit and they only to wonder as they gaze and to depart with the proud consciousness that they have seen. (Dana, 1917, p. 25)

He envisioned a 'new museum' with multiple branches spreading throughout the community and which foregrounded the public, learning, and allowed for the generous lending and display of collections to individuals and community groups (Halpin, 1997, p. 54). Exhibitions, he believed, should prompt reflection and discovery. He proposed a purposeful museum which operated within and for the good of society.

Dana's vision for a new museum was partly a product of nineteenth century patrician values in which exposure to fine works of art improved the moral character of the public; however, his ideas went further than other contemporary commentators in its assertion that the community should be the central consideration of the museum. In this way, his writings seem almost prescient. For him, it was not merely contact with beautiful objects and fine art curated by experts that improved society, it was also about integrating the collections into the community and the community into the collections – he advocated for the collection of modern examples of arts and crafts produced locally. It was also about being accessible physically for those living within the community and those visiting from afar. It would take nearly seventy years for Dana's vision of the museum to begin to take hold.

In the late 1980s, Peter Vergo published a book called *The New Museology* which called for an ideological shift in the fundamental approaches to museum practice. He critically

questioned the underlying biases which permeated museum practices and asserted the need for a more reflexive approach:

Beyond the captions, the information panels, the accompanying catalogue, the press handout, there is a subtext comprising innumerable diverse, often contradictory strands, woven from the wishes and ambitions, the intellectual or political or social or educational aspirations and preconceptions of the museum director, the curator, the scholar, the designer, the sponsor - to say nothing of the society, the political or social or educational system which nurtured all these people and in so doing left its stamp upon them. Such considerations, rather than, say, the administration of museums, their methods and techniques of conservation, their financial well-being, their success or neglect in the eyes of the public, are the subject matter of the new museology. (Vergo, 1989, p. 3)

Vergo was not alone in calling for a new approach to museum work (Karp, 1991; Karp, Kreamer, and Lavine, 1992; Weil, 1990); the new museologists suggested shifting the focus of practice from collections to people. The societal role of the museum – its purpose – would become the focus for debate in the field over the next thirty years.

The debate partly centred on cultural authority and ownership and partly on accessibility, representation, and inclusion. Visitor studies became an essential window into audiences' experience in museums and perceptions of them. We might point to a focus group study presented in Eilean Hooper-Greenhill's *The Educational Role of the Museum* (1999) as being indicative of the types of research taking place. The study was conducted with participants from minority ethnic backgrounds in the UK. They were asked about their perceptions of museums. The study found that participants viewed museums as 'white spaces' with the narratives presented tending toward a white construction of history and culture.

The need to better understand the role that museums might have to address societal issues around inclusion and diversity led the Group for Large Local Authority Museums (GLLAM) to commission a study of its members. The Research Centre for Museums and Galleries at the University of Leicester found that 'museums and galleries, perhaps

uniquely, have the potential to represent the diversity of communities and, in doing so, to challenge stereotypes and promote tolerance and social cohesion' (RCMG, 2000, p. 30). These findings enumerated the opportunities for museum to engage with topics such as discrimination, inequality, and disadvantage.

Museum professionals began to consider new approaches to their work which reflected the need to engage more meaningfully with their communities. The advent of artist interventions and community collaborative programmes, events, and exhibitions reflects the better understandings of the social value of the museum gained through visitor studies. These new approaches and their accompanying ideologies around inclusion, social value, and democratising museum practice fostered the emergence of activist museum practice.

Before turning to activist museum practice, it is important to note that the turn in museological practice to audience-centred approaches occurred incrementally over the past three decades. As can be expected with fundamental shifts in ideology, there were and continue to be opponents to these approaches. Criticisms tended to centre on the loss of scholarship, the de-emphasis of collections, and a perceived focus on entertainment over learning (Appleton, 2007). These fears were not necessarily borne out by the growing field of visitor studies. By connecting museum practice – collections care, interpretation, scholarship – to a diverse public, museums began to forge new and meaningful connections with their communities.

2.2 Defining an activist practice

By turning the focus of museum work to connecting with people and communities, museum professionals acknowledged their own social responsibility. The ideological foundations for new approaches to practice had been laid and despite criticisms to the contrary, many of these endeavours drew upon the strengths of museums as collectors and displayers of material culture. Reinterpretation of collections through collaborations with the public and artists provided new insights into collections

revealing diverse readings of history and culture. Collections audits focused on discovering objects with hidden histories and connections to underrepresented groups.

One such project, *Buried in the Footnotes: the representation of disabled people in museum and gallery collections* (Dodd, et al., 2004), involved collections audits of several UK museums in an attempt to assess the extent to which museum collections contained material relating to the lives of disabled people. The collections review found a variety of objects and artworks which connected to disabled lives, much of which was not on display. 'Where objects and artworks were displayed, their connection with disability was rarely made explicit or interpreted to visitors. Representations of disabled people in displays and exhibitions ... most often conformed to prevalent stereotypes found in other media' (Dodd, et al., 2008, p. 10). The report found that collections supported telling better, more nuanced stories about the lives of disabled people and further that museums had the ability to connect contemporary discrimination to historical narratives. Through these connections, museums could work to undermine harmful stereotypes and reveal the diverse contributions which disabled people have made and continue to make to society. By grounding this work in the collections, museums draw upon their unique practice of collecting and displaying objects.

The revelations of hidden histories allowed museum professionals to view their collections differently. Artist interventions such as Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* in 1992 and the more recent 2009 Manchester Hermit Project (Marstine, 2017) have critically examined and commented on museum practices which subtly and not so subtly reinforce hegemonic narratives. In *Mining the Museum*, artist Fred Wilson curated an exhibit at The Contemporary Museum of Baltimore using collections from the Maryland Historical Society. He juxtaposed documents and objects in unexpected, ironic ways to bring to light the absence of Black Americans in the collections. Using museum conventions of exhibition and interpretation, Wilson confronted visitors with the impact and legacy of racism in the United States by juxtaposing objects and highlighting absence (Wilson and Halle, 1993). When asked about institutional critique as a tool in advancing social justice, Wilson replied:

Institutional critique has helped move the dialogue forward ... I had a fire in my belly around issues of social justice because they directly affected me and because, as an outsider, I was able to see the rhetoric of the museum and the profession's complete denial of the codes in place, codes that exclude, stereotype, and reinforce hegemonic power structures. I wanted to explore how museums were talking about culture and what wasn't being talked about. (Marstine, 2012, p. 42)

It was against this backdrop in which representation and the redress of historic and contemporary hegemonies were being openly debated and acknowledged, that some researchers and practitioners began to call for stronger advocacy for social justice, equality, and human rights through museum work.

There have been a number of authors who have sought to define this emerging trend in practice and theory. Writing specifically about disability rights in the museum sector in 2010, Sandell and Dodd (p. 3) coined the phrase 'activist museum practice' to define an emerging trend within museums and galleries 'intended to construct and elicit support amongst audiences (and other constituencies) for alternative, progressive ways of thinking about disability.' This definition has since been expanded to include a number of social justice topics (Sandell, 2017). At its core, activist practice is inherently impact-oriented with a focus on promoting and garnering support for positive socio-political outcomes through museum practices. As related in Chapter 1, there are other nomenclatures which describe the essence of activist practice. Jennifer Orange and Jennifer Carter (2012, p. 261) define a 'human rights museology' as 'an evolving body of theory and professional practices underlying the rise of museums dedicated to issues of social justice — a global development that is changing the form and nature of museum work.' David Fleming (2010, p. 3), former Director of National Museums Liverpool characterised the International Slavery Museum as a 'campaigning museum' where 'we want visitors ... to leave in a determined and campaigning mood, in a mood to take action, in a mood to do something about such iniquities.' These approaches differ from previous practice which only sought to raise awareness, give voice to underrepresented groups, or increase physical and intellectual access. The intent of activist museum

practice goes further to engendering support and growing confidence within the visitor to make the work of creating a more just society part of their individual responsibility.

We might ask ourselves whether advocacy is a natural extension of the trends in representative, audience-centric, and socially purposeful museology which began with the new museologists. Fleming (2010) cites the rise of new museological principles as a grounding force behind the emergence of activist museology including the redefined focus on people over collections, new forms of communication and learning which recognises the importance of emotive experiences, and the work with underrepresented communities growing from representation to advocacy. At the same time, geopolitical events of the latter twentieth century, the rise of global terrorism, and increased emphasis on the protection of human rights were also at play (Carter and Orange, 2012). Beginning with the revelations of the Holocaust during the Nuremburg trials, human rights increasingly became a focal point for global discussions. This culminated in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations which codified fundamental human rights and acknowledged that these rights should be collectively recognised and protected. Activist museum practice was borne out of trends in the heritage sector and reinforced by a specific set of global circumstances.

2.2.1 The myth of the neutral museum

The extent to which museums and museum professionals have engaged with activist practice varies widely across the sector. There is an admitted averseness amongst some in the sector of adopting specific stances on contemporary issues, calling for the museum to remain neutral. Sandell (2017, p. 147) notes this hesitancy to 'embrace bias' observing that 'many remain reluctant to explicitly articulate an institutional position on contentious contemporary issues preferring, instead, to present themselves as spaces for dialogue in which divergent viewpoints are presented, and in which visitors are invited to make up their own minds.'

Many authors have rejected the idea of the neutral museum. Robert Janes (2009, p. 31) refers to the 'fallacy of authoritative neutrality' to describe the fear of being perceived as biased or political and which prevents museums from taking clear moral stances. Neutrality is strongly contested by David Fleming, who wrote, 'no museum is actually "neutral," ever and it is a huge deceit to claim that it is' and continues:

All museum messages are the creation of the people who work at the museums, and while many of these people genuinely strive to present 'balanced' views about the world, every comment they make is an opinion that could be opposed; every object they choose to display is loaded with meaning; every decision to omit something from display could be disputed. (2016, p. 74)

His sentiments harken back to those of Peter Vergo in *The New Museology* about the need for a reflexivity in museum practice to avoid the perpetuation of cultural hegemonies.

In 2002, the Australian Research Council funded a project, *Exhibitions as Contested Sites*, to determine the role of the museum in presenting difficult or contested narratives. Using surveys, focus groups, and interviews the researchers interviewed visitors, staff, and other stakeholders in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The findings illustrate a perception and longing on the part of the public and practitioners for museums to present contested narratives in an apolitical manner and, echoing Sandell's observation, allowing the public to reach its own conclusions (Cameron, 2007). Despite this, the research also showed that when history and science museums do engage with these topics, they are 'inextricably political, acting as moralising technologies for stakeholder values' (ibid., p. 333).

More recently, the idea of the museum as a forum for debate and dialogue has gained strength. Both debate and dialogue serve as effective tools for engaging with contested narratives and can be a valuable asset for fostering transformation. However, Sandell

(2017, p. 148) sounds a note of caution against museums acting in the role of a neutral host:

[Museums] taking sides on human rights issues requires a refinement of the idea of the museum as forum, in which the responsibility for weighing up the legitimacy of divergent moral standpoints is sometimes left to the visitor, towards the idea of the museum as arbiter.

Museums risk moral equivalency between human rights advocates and those opposed to human rights if they adopt a neutral stance.

More recently, LaTanya Autry and Mike Murawski initiated a campaign which advocates for the recognition of political nature of museum practice stating:

Museums have the potential to be relevant, socially-engaged spaces in our communities, acting as agents of positive change. Yet, too often, they strive to remain 'above' the political and social issues that affect our lives — embracing a myth of neutrality. Well, MUSEUMS ARE NOT NEUTRAL, plain and simple. [emphasis in original] (Murawski, 2017)

Their campaign has sparked continued debate and reflection amongst museum practitioners and scholars. Their success underscores the continued growth in interest around socially purposeful museology and activist practice.

2.2.2 Exploring a range of activist practice

The extent to which museums engage with activist practice can vary from a single event or temporary exhibition to forming part of its core mission. The examples I have provided in this section are by no means comprehensive but are illustrative of the ways activist practice is approached within different contexts.

Between 2001 and 2010, the Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow (GoMA) instituted a social justice programme which focused on human rights themes through the display and engagement with contemporary art. The programme included exhibitions featuring topics related to refugees, violence against women, religious sectarianism, and LGBTI² rights. Mark O'Neill, the creative force behind the social justice programme stated:

We want to challenge people to think and feel differently, but we are not about trying to outrage people ... it is not serious politics if you alienate most of your audience ... We want to raise issues — but responsibly. (Sandell, Dodd, Jones, 2010, p. 14)

The social justice programme was initiated to shift perceptions of the gallery, to improve accessibility, and to improve its relevancy to the City Council and Glasgow at large. It employed a collaborative approach relying on input from advisory groups representing the voices of those represented in the exhibitions and programmes. Sandell (2012, p. 200) notes that as the programme continued to develop 'a philosophy of practice emerged which centred on the use of art as a platform for engaging audiences in debate and dialogue around a series of human rights related topics.'

In collaboration with Amnesty International and members of community based organisations, the fourth programme, *sh[OUT]* focused on LGBTI rights and featured work by eighteen artists. Amnesty International produced a video which explored campaigns for LGBTI rights and rights violations from around the world. Discussions with exhibition partners revealed the diversity of viewpoints within the LGBTI community and much debate was had over the inclusion of works by Robert Mapplethorpe. The

² There are many variations in the nomenclature used to describe same-sex love and desire. As Sandell (2017) noted the acronym LGBT is the most common variant however it is not universally accepted within the community as a way of describing the spectrum of same-sex love. Throughout this thesis I have employed the use of the acronyms used by specific museums and heritage sites to describe their work with these groups. In this instance, GoMA worked with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people for their exhibition entitled *sh[OUT]*.

exhibition opened in 2009 and attempted to highlight the diverseness of the LGBTI community while emphasising a shared humanity:

The final selection of works that eventually opened to the public portrayed diverse aspects of LGBTI lives. Both proposed Mapplethorpe images were selected, alongside other works which, to varying degrees and in different ways, were felt to be more challenging for audiences (and which can be understood to reflect support for a more radical LGBTI identity politics). However, these works – which prompted one visitor to comment, ‘Sex, sex, sex, morning noon and night. Why can they only put their message over by being sexually explicit?’ – were accompanied by many others which emphasised a common humanity, irrespective of sexual orientation and gender identity. (Sandell, 2012, p. 206)

The Research Centre for Museums and Galleries at the University of Leicester performed an evaluation of audience and media responses to *sh[OUT]*. The report found that there was overwhelming support among visitors for the social justice programme and this exhibition in particular despite controversial and negative press coverage. In their summary, the authors pointed out that ‘there is a difficult balance to achieve concerning how far boundaries can be pushed when the ultimate goal is to engender increasing support amongst a range of constituencies for an issue like LGBTI human rights’ (Sandell, Dodd, and Jones, 2010, p. 3). This emphasises one of the challenges of activist museum practice – to balance a firm and uncompromising support for equality and rights while carefully presenting this for audiences who are sceptical of this view and may require mindful interpretive strategies in order to reach them.

Another important aspect of the evaluation impressed the need to work with members of the represented community and to ensure that these relationships are authentic and well-supported. For a sector which has only relatively recently begun to engage with and include the perspectives of previously underrepresented groups, this aspect of activist practice becomes especially important.

What we might take from this example of activist practice is the way in which organisations can work in partnership with other groups in order to develop programmes which address rights issues. In the case of GoMA, their social justice programme represents a model for adopting activist approaches within an institution whose core mission does not necessarily include activism. GoMA was able to employ principles of activist practice while still retaining its character and mission as a modern art museum devoted to the display of contemporary artists and artworks.

Similar to the social justice programme at GoMA, there are examples of institutions not explicitly dedicated to human or civil rights, engaging in activist practice within their permanent galleries. For example, The Children's Museum in Indianapolis in the United States opened a permanent exhibition entitled *The Power of Children* in 2007. The exhibition focuses on the lives of Anne Frank, Ruby Bridges, and Ryan White and explores themes of racism, intolerance, and bigotry. The exhibition employs live theatre as an interpretive strategy – engaging young audiences in the stories of the three children through emotionally engaging and age appropriate monologues (Simon, 2009). As well as detailing the lives and impact each of these children has had on their wider communities, the exhibition features a *Take Action* area which 'encourages families to work together to identify local issues and problems and consider how to bring about change. In addition to this orientation toward action, visitors have opportunities to create action plans, identify volunteer opportunities, and make promises' (Wood, 2013, p. 218). This selection of activities empowers visitors to create opportunities to promote positive change in their lives and communities after they have left the museum.

The Power of Children is a remarkable example owing to its context – a children's museum. The exhibition speaks directly to young people about difficult topics. The family guide developed by the museum prompts young visitors to reflect on questions such as 'why is caring deeply about something not enough?' and providing concrete steps to maintaining the action plan developed within the gallery (Children's Museum, n.d.). The museum has also developed an award scheme, *The Power of Children Awards*, which celebrates middle to high school aged students who have made a positive impact

in the lives of others. The scheme began in 2005 and has since recognised sixty-six winners across fifteen states for projects which focused on issues such as domestic violence, bullying, cancer, and homelessness.

The examples of the social justice programmes at GoMA and the *Power of Children* exhibition at the Children's Museum Indianapolis are illustrative of institutions which have adopted activist practice as a portion of their overall offer. This is not to suggest that these projects have not seeded themselves more deeply on an organisational level merely that the core ethos of the organisations were not formally steeped in activist practice. Other institutions have embedded this ethos in this way – placing advocacy, human rights, and equality at the core of their work.

Institutions such as the Anne Frank House, Constitution Hill in Johannesburg in South Africa, and the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, in the United States for example, have each adopted language within their mission and vision statements which illustrate their commitment to activist practice as a core part of their work. Another example comes from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, D.C. which has outlined this approach in their mission statement:

The Museum's primary mission is to advance and disseminate knowledge about this unprecedented tragedy; to preserve the memory of those who suffered; and to encourage its visitors to reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust as well as their own responsibilities as citizens of a democracy. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2017)

Many comparable institutions employ similarly potent language which conveys an earnest desire to effect change within their visitors and communities. Often the museums which have adopted this language tend to be dedicated to topics relating to social or environmental justice; they are human rights museums, civil rights museums, sites of memory, and institutions dedicated to environmental conservation.

In reviewing the mission statements of human rights museums, Carter and Orange (2012) enumerated three distinct aims most often found to define the work of what we might call activist museums. The first is educational with a focus on highlighting historic human rights issues and reframing them within a contemporary context. Often this coincides with the aim of empowering visitors toward social activism as well as galvanising support for social justice causes. Memorialisation often forms part of the overarching approach taken by activist institutions. Carter and Orange (2012) also found that a proportion of activist museums serve as repositories for documentary evidence of human rights abuses. It is important to note that activist museums embed these approaches not only in their forward-facing work – exhibitions, events, and programming – but quite often they are evidenced in their internal policies and visible through diverse and equitable hiring practices, the creation of accessible physical spaces, and the partnerships formed with external organisations.

2.2.3 Global networks for activist museology

In addition to hundreds of individual heritage sites and museums which promote activist ideals, international organisations such as the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience and the Federation of International Human Rights Museums (FIHRM) have been networking across the globe to formalise and facilitate the sharing of best practice within the heritage sector. Offering a variety of resources, case studies, and educational packages which can be easily adapted and applied within a variety of contexts, these networks have connected practitioners from across the world working to improve their practice and share new ideas with one another.

The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience was founded in 1999 at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City by Ruth Abram. Beginning with just nine members when founded, the Coalition now encompasses two hundred members across fifty-five countries. With the motto 'from memory to action', the Coalition strives to memorialise and remember past human rights violations and trace their contemporary legacy (International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, 2017). Through dialogic programming, visitors engage with historic injustices and learn how they can become

advocates in their own communities. The Coalition offers their members a number of resources including grants, training and networking opportunities, advocacy, and resources for facilitating transitional justice approaches.

The Federation of International Human Rights Museums (FIHRM) sprung out of the 2008 International Committee on Management (INTERCOM) conference. The need for international dialogue to facilitate museum involvement in human rights issues led to the formation of FIHRM. National Museums Liverpool (NML) established FIHRM as an off-shoot of the International Slavery Museum housed in the Merseyside Maritime Museum. Much like the Coalition, FIHRM networks with museum and heritage sites as well as other organisations dedicated to the advancement of human rights in order to bring to light best practices, share experiences, and to continually develop new and better offerings (Fleming, 2012). Through conferences held around the world and by providing travel bursaries to colleagues from developing countries, FIHRM endeavours to include a wide range of experiences and organisations in their work.

Organisations such as the Coalition and FIHRM are dedicated to providing resources to institutions specifically focused on human rights and memory work. What is especially illuminating is reviewing recent policies and projects put forth by other professional museums and heritage networks which suggests that advocacy for diversity, tolerance, and human rights is gaining a foothold throughout the heritage sector. While this trend is far from gaining full acceptance, and indeed advocacy is often still only seen in niche museums which focus on specialised topics and audiences (Wood, 2013), more and more professional organisations are voicing the need for museums and heritage sites to become places for dialogue, debate, and advocacy.

Examples from INTERCOM, the International Council of Museums (ICOM), and the Museums Association (MA) in the United Kingdom reveal this trend. In 2009 at the INTERCOM conference in Torreon, Mexico, the INTERCOM Declaration of Museum Responsibility to Promote Human Rights was adopted, stating:

INTERCOM believes that it is a fundamental responsibility of museums, wherever possible, to be active in promoting diversity and human rights, respect and equality for people of all origins, beliefs and background. (INTERCOM, 2009)

While less explicit in their wording, the ICOM Code of Ethics includes the following clause which suggests the importance of advocacy when working with collections from contemporary communities:

Museum usage of collections from contemporary communities requires respect for human dignity and the traditions and cultures that use such material. Such collections should be used to promote human well-being, social development, tolerance, and respect by advocating multisocial, multicultural and multilingual expression. (ICOM, 2017)

The growing acknowledgement that the promotion of equality, diversity, and human rights is an integral part of museum work, signals a move away from maintaining a neutral stance with regards to these topics. It indicates that the sector is beginning to accept and acknowledge their ability and responsibility to contribute to often difficult dialogues on these issues and more importantly, to stand on the side of creating more just communities.

In 2013, the Museums Association launched *Museums Change Lives*, a ‘vision for the increased social impact of museums’ (Museums Association, 2013, p. 3). Drawing on research and dialogue conducted since the 1990s, the MA turned its focus to discussing the impact that museums have on their visitors and communities. Central to this statement were a set of principles which included such tenets as ‘social justice is at the heart of the impact of museums’ and ‘museums are not neutral spaces’ (ibid., p. 4). These bold statements place activist practice not on the fringe of museum work but at the centre of it. With a renewed and strengthened focus on social purpose and advocacy, it becomes even more important to understand how this work is changing lives and communities and what reception activist practice is having in the public sphere.

2.2.4 Activist practice as a balancing act

The move within the sector towards a more active stance on contemporary issues has opened possibilities for museums to work with and for communities to create spaces for debate, dialogue, and advocacy. While recent studies have shown that visitors are generally receptive to this, there is a small but vocal minority which has expressed discomfort over museums as places of advocacy (Dodd, et al., 2018; Dodd and Plumb, 2018). Fred Wilson spoke about the balancing act museums must engage in in order to be effective politically but not alienate potential allies:

Museums need to be politically engaged but the danger of activism is that it can be seen as a brand. That's not how I, personally, approach things because when you present yourself as an activist, people who are interested in that agenda go towards you but a whole lot of other people walk away. Also, activist agendas can become too fixed. It's important to have clear goals but as people gather around the idea of something and it picks up steam, it can veer off and become something no longer creative but instead static and didactic. (Marstine, 2012, p. 41)

How then can activist museums ensure that their missions to engage with and promote ideals of social justice are intentional without falling into prescriptive, or as Fred Wilson asserts, didactic modes of communication? In what ways can activist museums ensure that their missions engage with members of the public who are not interested in a human rights agenda? What does happen when an organisation's desire to commit to this work alienates portions of the public?

These questions are important for any activist museum to consider. How exhibitions and programmes are crafted to ensure an unapologetic stance with regards to equality, democracy, and tolerance, without alienating those members of the public which are perhaps most in need of engaging with these ideas is a delicate balancing act. As noted previously, activist practice tends to rely on partnerships, the inclusion of diverse viewpoints, community approaches, and the revelation of hidden histories in order to ensure that their presentations are rich, thoughtful, as well as uncompromising in their principles. What happens though when museums are perceived as having stepped

beyond their remit, are considered to have a too overt a political agenda, or their social justice work begins to alienate their traditional audiences?

The *sh[OUT]* exhibition at GoMA introduced earlier in this chapter, received a great deal of media attention at the time. At the centre of the media controversy were works which were viewed by the conservative press as sexually explicit as well as an artwork which engaged with the idea of religious exclusion of LGBTQI people through the display of a bible which visitors were encouraged to amend to be more inclusive (Sandell, 2012). In writing about the media coverage in which newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* compared artworks to ‘hardcore gay porn’, Sandell (2012, p. 207) wrote ‘even taking into account the sensationalist tone of much of the coverage, the scale and tenor of media reporting seemed to suggest that the moral standpoint embodied in *sh[OUT]* constituted a significant affront to prevailing moral codes and conventions.’ What the evaluations of visitor responses revealed, however, is that the public’s reaction was far more nuanced than the media publicity indicated. The exhibition had attracted a highly diverse audience who were interested in engaging with and debating the topics raised through the exhibition. An analysis of visitor response cards revealed that nearly two-thirds of visitors responded positively to *sh[OUT]*. While there were negative responses from individuals visiting the gallery, the evaluation indicates that the majority of the public, far from being outraged as some of the media would have suggested, was interested in the content and the ways in which the messages of *sh[OUT]* were presented. Interestingly, one media commentator, Moira Jeffery, seemed to reflect Fred Wilson’s comments on overt activism in museums when she wrote, ‘what could have so easily been an explicitly political show about gay rights is instead a celebration of tender portraiture’ (Sandell, 2012, p. 206). In her view, there was not an overt political agenda on display as some of the more conservative media commentators suggested but a carefully balanced programme which engaged audiences to consider multiple readings of same sex love.

More recently, the National Trust in the United Kingdom was at the centre of a similar media controversy with regards to their programme *Prejudice and Pride*. The year-long

project marked the fiftieth anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality in Britain and explored LGBTQ heritage at a number of National Trust locations. Participating properties developed a bespoke offer including programmes, films, and exhibitions which reflected the unique stories of same sex love and desire and gender diversity which formed an integral part of the history of those locations.

In the summer of 2017, Felbrigg Hall in Norfolk was singled out by certain members of the conservative press over a short film, *The Unfinished Portrait*. The film was based on research conducted by the University of Leicester that discussed the life of the last ancestral owner of the property, Robert Wyndham Ketton-Cremer. The Trust was accused of 'outing' Ketton-Cremer by both *The Daily Mail* (Levy, 2017) and *The Telegraph* (Bird, 2017). Around the same time that the press was reporting on the film, Felbrigg Hall became the centre of further media controversy when it was reported that volunteers at the property had been asked to wear rainbow badges and lanyards to make visible their welcome to all and to promote the events and exhibitions part of *Prejudice and Pride*. Volunteers who did not wish to wear the badges and lanyards were initially removed from forward-facing roles for the duration of the project. The Trust later reversed this decision following the media coverage.

The Trust was accused of pushing a radical political agenda through their work. Interestingly, much of the social media backlash featured comments which called for the Trust to return to their core business of preserving country homes and landscapes rather than engaging in political topics. The perception that engaging with stories of LGBTQ history was not within the remit of the National Trust is interesting from the standpoint of activist practice. The National Trust has been in existence for 122 years and for much of that time, has been engaged almost exclusively in preservation and conservation work, although it could be argued that the Trust was borne of activist roots as it emerged from the work of social reformers. While the museum sector has undergone transformations brought about by the new museology, the National Trust and similar heritage organisations have been slower to respond to the growing emphasis on social value and the need to engage with diverse histories. More recently, and perhaps owing

to changes in leadership, the Trust has expressed a greater desire to engage with these stories.

A final glimpse of the place that activist practice potentially holds in the view of media and the wider public can perhaps be gleaned through another contemporary controversy. In August 2017, demonstrations by neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups erupted in violence in the city of Charlottesville, Virginia in the United States. At the centre of their demonstration was the proposed removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee general in the Confederate Army during the American Civil War. The demonstration and ensuing violence which left one counter-protestor dead, certainly goes beyond the removal of the statue and revolves around the deeply engrained racial tensions within the United States; statues and monuments to the Confederacy have become a symbol of these tensions and the call for their removal has been gaining more and more support in recent years. What has been of interest to the museum sector is the call to place these memorials within museum contexts (Cotter, 2017; Grinberg, 2017; Knight, 2017). This was seen with earlier calls to remove the Confederate flag from government buildings and has carried into the conversations about what to do with removed Confederate memorials. It is perhaps interesting that much of the criticism of the National Trust was that their work to highlight LGBTQ lives was beyond their remit, the suggestions by American journalists and members of the public that museums are the appropriate places for these controversial objects seems to offer a tacit acknowledgement that museums are places best suited to contextualise and interpret challenging histories.

These examples illustrate the complexity of media responses to activist museum practice especially when juxtaposed with public responses. Examples such as *sh[OUT]* and *Prejudice and Pride* reveal the ways in which media coverage can affect the perceptions of some visitors though many members of the public remain willing and open to engaging with contemporary issues. It is also telling that within the American context of Confederate memorials that many are calling for museums to be the places which work to contextualise these difficult histories and advocate for fuller, more nuanced approaches to interpreting difficult and highly controversial objects.

2.3 Gauging the impact of activist practice

While public and media perceptions of activist museum practice differ widely depending on the contexts and issues addressed, understanding the impact of this work on visitors is essential for practitioners hoping to make positive contributions to visitors' lives and their wider communities. For institutions engaging in activist practice it remains unclear what impact these activities are having on audiences (Sandell and Dodd, 2010). Much has been written in support of the approaches often utilised in activist museum practice including community engagement, the inclusion of diverse voices, artist inventions, the power of dialogic encounters, and the benefits of participation in community programming (see Besley and Low, 2010; Boylan, 1992; Chatterjee and Noble, 2013; Golding and Modest, 2013; Macdonald, 1998; Marstine, 2012; 2017; Silverman, 2009). These practices have continued to be developed, refined, and shared within the museum sector and while there is much anecdotal evidence for their effectiveness and impact, capturing this within formalised studies has proven more difficult.

The idea of impact has been at the forefront of the museum sector in recent years as more and more organisations are being tasked with providing evidence of their value to society; often with this evidence being tied to funding. Arguably, publically funded institutions perhaps have a greater responsibility in proving their positive impact to their stakeholders, the public. Before entering a discussion about how to gauge impact, it is first important to interrogate impact as a concept and further discuss what is known about how audiences engage with museums and how they are or are not potentially impacted through that engagement.

The word *impact* itself is not one without controversy. As Matarasso (2015) points out, its inherent connotations involve an implication of violence as well as a passivity of those perceived as being impacted. The notion of impact as being something done to someone provides no room for an exchange or negotiation of experiences and ideas which is not borne out in the research of how visitors make meaning from their museum encounters.

Educational theorists and researchers in the heritage sector have for decades pointed to a constructivist understanding of audience experiences within museums and galleries. Constructivism follows the epistemic understanding that meaning and knowledge are created within the individual; that knowledge is not an external phenomenon which can be acquired but rather it is made through individual encounters and negotiations with new concepts and experiences (Hein, 1995; Hein and Alexander, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999). Constructivism rejects the notion of the learner as the proverbial *empty vessel* to be filled with knowledge, rather the learner brings her own understandings and experiences into the learning encounter. As she builds onto her existing knowledge frameworks, she constructs new meanings and makes new connections. She is also free to reject understandings which do not fit within her extant frameworks. In this way, the learner becomes central to the educational encounter. A notion of impact as something that is done to a passive receiver does not make sense within the free-choice learning environment of the museum or gallery space. We must therefore think about impact in a different way, in which audience members are not passive, but active in the process. We might then think about impact in terms of how visitors and the wider community engage with and interact with the museum and its offerings rather than defining it in terms of the institution's effect on visitors and the wider community.

The idea of impact is important to activist museums whose missions are focused on generating positive social and political change. With this idea at the heart of activist practice, it becomes vital to understand how visitors are interacting with these institutions and what processes are taking place. There have been a number of studies which have begun to shape our understandings of the impact of activist practice. In *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference*, Sandell (2007) examined audience responses to exhibitions designed specifically to challenge prejudice at the Anne Frank House and at the St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art in Glasgow. His intention was to provide museums with an informed framework for understanding the potential social impact their practice may have and what specific elements can best be utilised in order to facilitate this impact. He argued that 'museums can counter prejudice by

reframing, informing and enabling society's conversations about difference' through more effective interpretations as well as concrete exhibition strategies (ibid., p. 171). He emphasised audience agency in constructing meaning often through dialogic encounters with the material presented:

The presence of dynamic and dialogic interpretations of difference suggests that the agency of museums cannot be understood simply in terms of the extent to which visitors concur with or resist the museums' messages. Rather, they suggest that the interpretive processes actuated by the visitor-exhibition encounter contain transformative possibilities. (ibid., p. 100)

His study included in-depth, open-ended interviews with museum visitors immediately after their encounters with the exhibitions. Using audience studies as a framework for analysis, he discovered that responses tended to be confirmatory, oppositional, or negotiated; those visitors agreeing with the concepts presented falling into the confirmatory category and those opposed in the oppositional category. Responses which acknowledged the messages and material about prejudice but questioned its broad application fell into the final category. Interestingly, and encouragingly, a fourth category emerged which Sandell (ibid., p. 98) referred to as 'dynamic and dialogic interpretations of difference'. In their responses, these audience members evinced a dialogue occurring between the exhibition material and their own experiences and illustrated the complexities of engagement that occur when visitors interact with exhibitions. This fourth category suggests that visitors were reflecting critically on the topics of prejudice and social justice.

If we return to the *sh[OUT]* exhibition at GoMA, we discover that these findings were echoed in the report by RCMG (Sandell, Dodd, and Jones, 2010). Visitor comments were analysed to determine what responses audiences were having to the material and themes presented. The results were similar to those found at the Anne Frank House and St. Mungo with some visitors showing signs of a synthesis between their own experiences and promisingly, some shifts in opinion. In the case of *sh[OUT]*, these shifts took the form of a greater understanding and appreciation for LGBTI rights.

More recently the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, partnering with eight medical museums in the UK conducted an evaluation of audience responses to four artist interventions. The project, *Exceptional & Extraordinary* was focused on highlighting stories of disability within medical museums and through artistic performances including film, theatre, dance, and comedy, in order to 'examine our attitudes towards difference with the aim of stimulating debate around the implications of a society that values some lives more than others' (RCMG, 2017). While responses varied greatly, the findings reflect the power of museums to encourage debate and stimulate visitors to think differently about topics such as disability. The responses highlight the importance of engaging with authentic 'lived experience' of those adversely affected by societal attitudes towards difference (ibid.).

Thus far the studies discussed evaluated audience responses directly following their engagement with the museum. While the findings suggest that visitors do engage with and construct new meanings which align with the goals of activist museum practice in the immediate aftermath of a visit, it is less clear whether this is sustained beyond the visit. After they exit through the gift shop, do visitors continue to reflect upon the themes of their museum encounters? Do these reflections ever elicit changes in perspectives, attitudes, or behaviours? Thus far, there have been few studies which have examined this phenomenon specifically.

2.3.1 Looking longitudinally

Designing a longitudinal impact study in the museum environment presents several methodological challenges. Challenges in definition, such as what precisely is meant by *longitudinal*; challenges in recruiting participants from a transient population of visitors at a specific site on a specific day; challenges in contacting participants months or even years following the initial museum visit. It is therefore, not surprising that few longitudinal studies have been attempted of museum visitors (Anderson, Storksdieck, and Spock, 2007). Those which have been conducted (see Adelman, Falk, and James, 2000; Ellenbogen, 2002; Falk, Moussouri, Coulson, 1998; Falk and Dierking, 1997; Storksdieck, Ellenbogen, Heimlich, 2005) tend to be centred on learning outcomes,

recall, the free-choice environment and the effect of visitors' agendas and identities on how and what has been learned.

Looking broadly at the longitudinal literature, Anderson, Storksdieck, and Spock (2007) completed a cross-study summarisation of some of the most important findings. In relation to memories, studies showed that visits tend to be remembered contextually rather than for the content of the exhibitions and that memories change over time as individuals have new experiences. The ability of visitors to learn and the long-term effect of that learning are often dictated by prior knowledge, visitor agendas, and the depth of interest in the material as well as the type of learner. Finally, many of the most striking aspects of the visit may be buried unless awakened subsequently or rehearsed through social discourse. Many of these findings speak to cognitive functioning tied to learning, recall, and memory which are essential parts of understanding the longitudinal impact of museum visits on users. Few of the findings reported by the authors speak to what sorts of experiences cause visitors to access those memories or to act on what they have experienced at the museum.

It is challenging to assign causation to a relatively brief museum encounter as all experiences are constructed within the identity of the individual and so a change in behaviour or attitude may be the result of a complex network of previous encounters of which, the museum visit may only be one piece. Despite this, understanding how the museum visit fits into these personal constructions is an important aspect of museum practice and activist museum practice in particular.

Two studies are of particular interest when considering the long-term impact of activist museum practice. Both were conducted in the United States and investigated the impact of environmental education at free-choice learning sites. These studies sought to assess whether museum-like encounters produced changes in attitude and behaviours consistent with conservation education.

The first study examined visitors at the National Aquarium in Baltimore and focused on changes surrounding the idea of conservation (Adelman, Falk, and James, 2000). Four key points of the visit were studied including prior knowledge, behaviour, and attitudes; the interaction of visitors within the aquarium; the knowledge, behaviour, and attitudes of the visitors following their engagement; and finally reassessing these three aspects six to eight weeks following. The findings suggest that while internal changes, such as changes in attitude and understanding continued through the six- to eight-week period following the visit, 'these personal experiences rarely resulted in new conservation actions. In fact, their enthusiasm and emotional commitment to conservation (inspired during the NAIB visit) generally fell back to original levels' (ibid., p. 33). It was concluded that without subsequent reinforcing experiences, visitors tend to revert back to pre-visit levels of commitment to action. The authors further suggest that there may be specific phases during the period of time following the visit in which visitors may be more likely to commit to changes in behaviour provided there are reinforcing experiences:

Theoretically, there is some time period immediately following a museum experience when additional experiences are likely to significantly enhance learning that was initiated by the museum, another period beyond the first in which additional experiences make some difference, and, finally, a time period beyond the second period then most visitors would be unaffected by additional educational experiences. (ibid., p. 58).

These sorts of subsequent learning opportunities are generally out of the reach of many typical museum visits, activist museum visits included.

The second longitudinal study (Storksdieck, Ellenbogen, Heimlich, 2005) looked at the impacts of three case studies specifically of free-choice environmental education projects. The authors emphasised that use of traditional learning outcomes to assess impact in free-choice environments is insufficient and likely to produce erroneous results. Rather than focusing on knowledge gains, the authors chose to focus on visitor types and assessed the kinds of gains made by each type of visitor. The first case study is the most relevant to activist museum practice and examined a traveling exhibition entitled *Biodiversity 911 Saving Life on Earth* when it appeared in the National

Geographic Explorer's Hall in Washington, DC. Much like the previous study, data was captured prior to the visit, directly following the visit, and six to eight weeks following. The findings echoed those in the first where knowledge and perceptions of biodiversity were increased following engagement with the exhibit. This study, however, also assessed how visitors ranked activities to protect diversity across three categories, personal direct action, personal passive action, and impersonal action. Following the visit, participants ranked personal direct actions as the most effective form of activity to protect biodiversity. 'Visitors' increased emphasis on personal direct actions over impersonal actions is arguably the most significant finding of the study. It is also a sign that a majority of visitors were ready to consider embracing personal behavioural changes' (ibid., p. 257). While these results were encouraging, the longitudinal data revealed that participants had reverted to their original opinions, citing indirect actions as the most effective means of protecting biodiversity. Much like the study at the National Aquarium in Baltimore, the authors believed that reinforcing experiences would have aided participants in retaining their post-visit enthusiasm for personal action.

In addition to these studies, the work of John Falk and his associates has contributed to our understanding of the impact of museums more broadly. This work has typically centred on contextualising visitor learning through investigations of visitor motivations and agendas (Falk, Moussouri, and Coulson, 1998) and on determining the impact of visits to free-choice learning environments including zoos, aquariums, and museums (Adelman, Falk, and James, 2000; Falk, Dierking, and Semmel, 2012; Falk et al., 2007) through the use of methodologies such as personal meaning mapping coupled with qualitative interviews conducted before, immediately following, and periods of months or years after the visit. These studies tend to equate impact with evidence of learning and with memory. Falk, Lynn Dierking, and Marsha Semmel (2012, p. 221) in discussing the cumulative findings of much of the work done to better understand free-choice learning environments stated:

Among the key insights gained in the last two decades has been the importance of expanding the focus of investigation beyond the narrow confines of the visit itself and an appreciation that free-choice learners enter any learning experience with well-formed interests, knowledge, opinions, and motivations, all of which directly affect learning.

Contextualising impact in such a way as to incorporate visitors' unique perspectives, motivations, and interests opens up possibilities for more nuanced understandings of museum experiences.

The California Science Center LASAR project (Los Angeles Science Education Research) has sought to understand the impact of the Science Center on the public's understanding of science (ibid.). The project began in 1993 and has carried on through a series of studies over the course of fifteen years. One aspect of the project investigated 217 visitors to the *World of Life* exhibition using the Contextual Model of Learning as a framework. The visitors were interviewed, before entering the exhibit and immediately afterwards and further were tracked and observed while in the galleries. According to the findings of this initial study all 217 visitors evinced some aspects of short-term learning of the content presented in the exhibition. Two years following this initial study, participants were contacted once more and asked to participate in another interview. Of the 217 original participants, 52 completed a follow-up interview. The researchers found that:

In all cases, individuals felt they benefited and learned, but the learning benefits were not consistently perceived to be increased science understanding. In fact, the depth of science learning varied considerably across the fifty-two individuals we interviewed; for some it was considerable, for other less so. In some cases it represented the addition of new science concepts, but in most cases it was an expansion and elaboration of existing understandings. (ibid., p. 228)

The findings also aligned with those of other longitudinal inquiries in that memories faded over time but that identity-related motivations for visiting correlated with visitors' most vivid memories. These identity-related motivations fit into a visitor segmentation

model developed by Falk (2009) which categorises visitors through self-identifying characteristics and behaviour. These identity-related motivations developed by Falk rejected traditional segmentation methods which have tended to rely on demographic information and included five categories: the Explorer, the Facilitator, the Experience Seeker, the Professional/Hobbyist, and the Recharger (Falk, 2009).

Dawson and Jensen (2011) while lauding Falk's urging to better contextualise museum experiences and shift our ways of thinking about visitors, discuss the inherent problems with Falk's conceptualisations of visitor identities. Part of their criticism stems from the primacy of the museum visit within the studies conducted:

Although Falk considered some contextual variables, for Falk the visits remain unquestionably the site of primary interest, still positioned broadly as an inherently significant learning intervention, and not as simply one event amongst many in a visitor's life. (ibid., p. 131)

We might begin to wonder whether decentring the museum visit within these studies would provide more insights in to the ways in which visitors negotiate their experiences and construct meanings from them.

Dawson and Jensen further question the reliance of Falk's segmentation model on visitor motivations at the expense of other identity-related phenomenon including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc.:

It is highly problematic that Falk's (2009) model ignores the importance demographic factors hold for visitors and that it assumes visits to cultural institutions are perceived in similar ways regardless of ethnicity, age, class background, or personal history. Demographic factors influence people's attitudes, experiences, and behaviors, as demonstrated by a wealth of research in sociology, cultural studies, and educational research, as well as in visitor research. (Dawson and Jensen, 2011, p. 132).

While identity characteristics determined by demographics should not represent the entire method of conceptualising the visitor, neither, too, should their motivations. What Dawson and Jensen highlight is the need for more nuanced and contextualised understandings of the visitor and the place of the museum visit within the wider context of the visitor's life.

A drawback of many of the studies highlighted into the longitudinal impact of museum practice in general and activist museum practice in particular is the rigid ways in which the visit and the visitor have been conceived. While acknowledging constructivist and learner-centric theoretical models, often the methodologies employed sought to reveal what and how much of the museums' content the visitors had retained in the weeks following the visit. While retention of content is part of the learning process, these methodologies failed to capture how visitors interacted with and incorporated or perhaps rejected the messages found in the exhibitions. The *Biodiversity 911* study perhaps comes the closest to reaching a more nuanced understanding of how visitors negotiated the material in the weeks following their visit (Storksdieck, Ellenbogen, Heimlich, 2005).

What is missing from our understanding of the longitudinal impact of museum visits and specifically activist museum visits is a highly contextual, nuanced picture of the ways visitors conceptualise themselves and their museum visit as one part of their lives. Rather than measuring acquisition and retention of content, we should be asking how visitors reflect on their visit, what experiences they have which foster further connections and reflections, and what changes do visitors identify as having been borne out of their museum encounters.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the contextual development within the field of museum studies and the heritage sector which allowed for the growth of an activist museum practice to emerge. Through the rise of the new museology with its outward focus on

audience-centric models of engagement and on becoming more inclusive institutions, museums were given the opportunity to define their social value and their role within their communities. Slowly, museum professionals began to realise their potential to advocate for more just and equal societies through both conventional and new audience-centric museum practices. Museum professionals have engaged with activist practice in a variety of ways and to varying extents. Through professional networks, the desire and ability of museums to further realise their potential to engender support for social justice, civil and human rights, and equality has gained further acceptance within the sector. This acceptance has, on occasion, not yet filtered into media attitudes, however, research has shown that visitors want to engage with social justice topics and believe that it is the role of museums and heritage sites to participate in these social dialogues and debates.

The impact of activist museum practice is still unclear with regards to its long-term abilities to stimulate changes in attitudes, beliefs, and actions. The few studies which have attempted to better understand this impact, have shown that there is a need for reinforcing experiences following the museum visit and that overall desire to assume new individual behaviours are generally not sustained over the weeks following the visit. What is lacking in these previous studies is a nuanced engagement with the understandings of the processes of change, constructivist principles of learning, and evaluating the impact of the museum experience within the context of the visitor's own experiences and understandings of what impact means for them as an individual.

The next chapter will set out a theoretical framework through which we might better understand in a more nuanced and complex way the qualities of the impact of activist museum practice on visitors.

Chapter 3 Framing Transformation

The previous chapter illustrated that what we know about the impact of activist museums is incomplete. We know that in the immediate aftermath of a museum experience, visitors begin to make connections with other similar experiences and build on previous knowledge. We have seen in past studies that visitors are also more likely to make strong personal commitments to action during this time. We also know that in the weeks following the experience, those commitments begin to fade. While visitors retain a sense of their experience and the connections made within the museum, those commitments to action diminish over time. This leaves researchers and museum practitioners with a dilemma – how can we better understand the processes taking place so that we can create lasting change in our visitors and, by extension, our communities?

Leaving academic literature for the moment, I was reminded of this tendency for strong affective experiences to fade over time while reading Khaled Hosseini's novel, *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013). The novel is a tapestry of interwoven stories of those touched by the Afghanistan War. The story of Idris, an Afghani-American doctor who travels to Kabul in 2003 and experiences the aftermath of the war took on a special prominence as I read. While visiting the hospital he meets and befriends Roshi, a young girl who was badly disfigured in an attack by a relative. Idris becomes attached to Roshi and vows that upon his return to the United States, he will find a way to bring her to his hospital to try to provide the operations and medical care she needs. He begins to fantasise about adopting Roshi and giving her a loving home away from the pain she has experienced. After returning home and after a half-hearted attempt to keep his promises to her, he gradually begins to return to his daily life. The immediacy and need to act gradually fades and becomes something surreal in his memory:

In the last month, Roshi has become something abstract to him, like a character in a play. Their connection has frayed. The unexpected intimacy he had stumbled upon in that hospital, so urgent and acute, has eroded into something dull. The experience has lost its power. He recognizes the fierce determination that had seized him for what it really was, an illusion, a

mirage. He had fallen under the influence of something like a drug. The distance between him and the girl feels vast now. It feels infinite, insurmountable, and his promise to her misguided, a reckless mistake, a terrible misreading of the measures of his own powers and will and character. Something best forgotten. He isn't capable of it. It is that simple. (ibid., p. 193)

Hosseini is able to capture within this story the very real experience of fading commitment. The story of Idris is an artistic rendering of the phenomenon that museum researchers and professionals have documented in the academic literature. How might those of us in the field construct a more holistic and nuanced understanding of this experience such as that reflected within Hosseini's prose but is also grounded in research and academic rigor?

In essence, what is needed is an understanding of the processes of change – what happens when a person is confronted with new ways of thinking and being in the world and makes a commitment to new courses of thinking, feeling, and acting. In this chapter, I will explore three theories of change which formed my basis of understanding the impact of activist museum practice. Critical pedagogy and transformative learning theory approach the processes of change from a learning standpoint which fits comfortably with many aspects of museum work and theory. In addition, I explore the transtheoretical model of change from the field of psychology which provides a clinical grounding to the discussion of transformation. Each of these frameworks will be discussed in relation to their own contexts and then expanded to illustrate how they might relate to activist museum practice.

Finally, I will propose a framework which synthesises these three theories of change, bringing together the elements which can best help museum researchers and practitioners understand the impact of activist museum practice on visitors. I will advocate for considering the museum visit contextually, that is, within the life narrative of the individual. What we think of as impact might better be described in terms of a *narrative of transformation*. This alternative language promotes an understanding of impact and transformation as contextual to the individual – emphasising the unique

circumstances which facilitate or hinder change and recognising that the museum experience can be one out of a thousand possible experiences contributing towards transformation.

Before delving too deeply into the individual frameworks, I believe it is prudent to sound a note of caution when relying upon specific models and theories in artificially limiting ways. While models are useful tools for shaping our understanding of the human experience, when applied in rigid or unmindful ways they can be counterproductive and begin to impede more nuanced understandings of the processes taking place. While I have used critical pedagogy, transformative learning theory, and the transtheoretical model of change as touchstones for my own approach to understanding the transformative impacts of activist museum practice, I have been careful in my approach to applying it to the data I have collected. Rather than overlaying the models on top of the visitor experiences shared with me, I have used the idea of narratives of transformation to guide my reading of these experiences. This has allowed me to retain the richness of these experiences while simultaneously providing me with multiple lenses through which to view the impact of activist museum practice.

3.1 Critical pedagogy

The educational role of museums is one that has been championed since the advent of the new museology. Museum educators such as Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (1999; 2002; 2004), George E. Hein (1995; 1998; 2005; Hein and Alexander, 1998), and Viv Golding (2007; 2009; 2010; 2016) have made a strong case for museums as sites where transformational learning takes place. Just as the museum sector experienced drastic changes in social purpose as detailed in the last chapter, the role of the museum educator has expanded beyond bespoke sessions for schoolchildren and adult learners and has grown to encompass an integrated approach to exhibitions and displays as well as the more traditional purview of events and educational sessions (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999). The expanding educational role of museums:

has led to a need to broaden the theoretical analysis of educational practices. It is no longer sufficient to focus only on learning processes; broader social questions need to be asked. Educational theory needs to be supplemented by sociological and philosophical theory if we want to develop and articulate these broader themes. (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999, p. 4)

The need to interrogate the educational role of museums and its placement within the wider context of social value, provides ample opportunity for better understanding the impacts of museum work on audiences and activist museum work in particular. Hooper-Greenhill called for a 'critical museum pedagogy' which 'reviews and develops its methods, strategies and provision with regard both to educational excellence and to working towards the democratization of the museum' (ibid., p. 4). In evoking critical pedagogy within the museum context, Hooper-Greenhill was uniting the social role and the educational role of the museum under the banner of emancipatory learning – learning which seeks to question critically the social, political, and economic systems at play and promote freedom from their systemic confines (Nouri and Sajjadi, 2014). Critical pedagogy encompasses a number of philosophical schools of thought and educational theories including critical theory, feminist theory, Latin American liberation philosophies, neo-Marxism, radical pedagogy, multiculturalism, public pedagogy, social justice pedagogy, constructivism, and popular education to name but a few (McLaren, 1995). Giroux (2006, p. 4) defined critical pedagogy as:

a discourse for asserting the primacy of the political and the ethical as a central feature of educational theory and practice. Critical pedagogy makes clear that schools and other educational spheres cannot be viewed merely as instructional sites, but must be seen as places where culture, power, and knowledge come together to produce particular identities, narratives, and social practices. In this case, critical pedagogy illuminates that schooling is not merely about the production of skills, but about the construction of knowledge and identities that always presuppose a vision of the future.

Replacing schools with museums in this paragraph might lead one to believe he or she is reading a text by a new museologists or indeed an activist museum practitioner. The similarities between critical pedagogy and activist museum practice coupled with the conceptualisation of transformation and change suggested throughout critical

pedagogical literature suggests that it is a logical framework to begin understanding the processes of change elicited by activist museum practice.

In order to understand activist museum practice within the framework of critical pedagogy, it is first necessary to understand the core tenets of critical pedagogy as a philosophy of emancipatory learning. To do this, it is best to begin with the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1972; 1975; 1998; 2013; Freire and Shor, 1987). Freire is considered to be the most influential philosopher in the field of critical learning theories and his work continues to inspire contemporary commentators on critical pedagogy (Nouri and Sajjadi, 2014). Freire worked as an adult educator with a focus on literacy in his native Brazil until the 1964 junta. His educational methods and philosophy were considered subversive to the military government and he was imprisoned for a short time before being exiled. He spent time in Chile and Switzerland, further developing his educational philosophies and methods which he envisioned as essential to the liberation of oppressed peoples. His seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1972), outlined much of the philosophical underpinnings of critical pedagogy.

Freire (ibid., p. 15) discusses at length the idea of *conscientização*, or the anglicised conscientization, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, describing it as ‘learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements’. In essence, conscientization represents a critical awakening within the individual where he or she begins to recognise the dominant power structures woven throughout society and creating systemic inequalities leading to a dichotomy of dominance and oppression (ibid., 1972). Becoming aware of these systems results in a proverbial awakening in which individuals come to understand their place within the hegemonic structures of society. This understanding creates in them a desire to change these systems and by extension, the world.

The idea of conscientization as a critical awakening is reflected in contemporary North American slang. The phrase *stay woke* has appeared in references to the Black experience particularly in the United States and has been woven into the language of

the Black Lives Matter movement. It has since broadened in use to refer to other social justice movements as well. To *be woke* refers to acknowledging an awareness of systemic oppression and also possessing the self-awareness of one's privilege or lack thereof within the dominant societal structures (Merriam-Webster, 2017). The usage of this phrase grew to encompass not only this acknowledgement but also a call to action to combat systemic inequality, specifically racism. This reflects the idea of conscientization as being 'necessary, but not a sufficient condition by itself for liberation; it must become the motivating force for liberating action' (Freire, 1972, p. 24).

One can conclude that having experienced this awakening is essential to the process of growth and change towards accepting the need for action to create more just societies. For activist museum practitioners, creating opportunities for conscientization would be paramount to facilitating the kind of impact hoped for through the museum encounter. Borg and Mayo (2000; 2010; Mayo, 2013) are two strong proponents for the adoption of a critical museum pedagogy. Often drawing comparisons between state education systems and the heritage sector with regards to the creation and perpetuation of 'official knowledge' which replicates hegemonic viewpoints, they argue that the use of critical pedagogical approaches can be effective in mitigating this effect (Borg and Mayo, 2000, p. 2016). Further, Mayo (2013, p. 150) illustrates how problematizing collections of gold and silver often found in decorative arts museums, heritage sites, and art galleries can create space for conscientization within gallery spaces:

One can question the provenance of the gold and silver in question, the role of slavery in this context, and the subjugation and extermination of thousands of indigenous people and imported slaves which occurred in the process of extracting mineral resources from the mines of Protosí in present day Bolivia, other parts of Latin America, and elsewhere.

The problematizing of collections can begin the process of conscientization wherein visitors begin to consider and reflect upon, not only museum objects, but objects which they encounter in their daily lives. Suddenly, it brings to light the conditions of those

working to produce the iPhones in their pockets or the buttons on their shirts. Critical pedagogy within the museum context has the potential to 'disturb the romantic and harmonious political and cultural state of affairs, and render problematic that which at face value appeared to be "beautiful" and "interesting"' (Borg and Mayo, 2000, p. 107).

Central to critical pedagogy is entering into equitable dialogic encounters in which people come together to 'name the world' (Freire, 1972, p. 61). Freire was quite specific about what constituted an authentic dialogic relationship. He defined dialogue as 'a horizontal relationship between persons'" in a 'relation of "empathy" between two "poles" who are engaged in a joint search' which 'is nourished by love, humility, hope, faith, and mutual trust' (Freire, 2013, p. 42). Freirian dialogue is best understood as an activity undertaken by equal partners coming together in mutual respect and desire to better understand the world. Dialogues centre on what Freire termed generative themes. These are current social, political, or cultural topics which have relevance for the participants. Themes can be thought of as universal, societal, or regional allowing for the focus of the dialogue to be attenuated to a given situation.

This sort of thematic grounding applies to the museum setting as most exhibitions, displays, events, or educational programmes are grounded thematically. The International Coalition for Sites of Conscience provides the best examples of dialogic frameworks on the order of what Freire proposed within the heritage sector. As stated in the previous chapter the Coalition relies upon dialogic encounters to create learning opportunities at many of their sites. An example of this programming can be seen in the tours which take place at The Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City. Each tour is structured around dialogues centred on immigration. The intent is to provide visitors with an opportunity to engage with the past and apply their thoughts, feelings, and experiences to current immigration debates.

Freire (1972) discussed the necessity of love in the dialogic encounter at length and defined it as both a love of people and the world involving care and commitment to the process. It is not often that one encounters such an emphatic endorsement of the

essentialness of emotion within a learning context. From love comes equality between participants. Freire railed against didactic teaching, what he referred to as the *banking concept* whereby teachers transmitted knowledge to students who were expected to absorb, remember, and integrate what they received (ibid., 1972). This method of teaching has largely been discredited in favour of more learner-centric models, however, when Freire was writing it was still heavily favoured. In this method, the voice of the teacher, often representative of the dominant culture was given authority over the voices of students. This inequitable arrangement serves to perpetuate further systemic inequalities and removes agency from learners. Again, it is possible to draw parallels with historic curatorial methods within cultural institutions where the visitors to museums and galleries were expected to absorb information provided throughout exhibitions which often featured only the dominant cultural voice (Hooper-Greenhill, 2004).

While dialogue is the vehicle through which transformation takes place, understanding the process of that transformation requires deconstructing the principle of praxis:

As we attempt to analyse dialogue as a human phenomenon, we discover something which is the essence of dialogue itself: the word. But the word is more than just an instrument which makes dialogue possible; accordingly, we must seek its constitutive elements. Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed – even in part – the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world. (Freire, 1972, p. 60)

Praxis refers to this continuous cycle of critical reflection and action to produce change in the world. The interplay between critical reflection and action creates a dichotomy in which action is moderated with an understanding of historical, political, social, and cultural contexts while simultaneously requiring those who reflect on these issues not to remain stagnant but to act on their considerations (Glass, 2001). It is only through this kind of action which has been tempered with critical reflection that genuine transformation of the world can take place. Freire warned against the possibility of

action devoid of reflection which he termed *activism*. This is less in the sense of what is colloquially considered activism and more in the sense of action unrooted in critical reflection and thinking. Likewise, Freire also contended that reflection which is not eventually turned toward action is mere *verbalism* – slogans which cannot produce change in the world.

Critical pedagogy offers an understanding of change framed by conscientization and praxis. Through an understanding of praxis, practitioners and researchers can begin to deconstruct the impact of the museum experience along the lines of reflection and action. We can also assess the quality of these phenomena with regards to verbalism and activism as defined by Freire. Coupled with the notion of conscientization, we can also begin to recognise the qualities of awareness raising within our galleries. Awareness raising represents a large portion of the work of activist practice but we might begin to ask about the type of awareness raised. Does it extend beyond knowing about a given social injustice to deconstructing the systemic nature of social systems at play? Does it extend to understanding the role that the visitor, as an individual, plays within those systems?

Criticisms levelled at critical pedagogy often come from educational practitioners who view its tenets as idealistic rather than realistic (Katz, 2014). Contemporary proponents of critical pedagogy (Giroux, 2006; McLaren, 1995) frequently bemoan the more diffuse form of critical pedagogy often modelled in classrooms. Problems arising from the reliance of critical pedagogical approaches without a mindful embedding of these practices, became apparent in an ethnographic study of a mobile museum programme in Israel. The prevailing narrative in Israel's large ethnographic museums is one which reinforces hegemony in favour of the official national story (Markovich, 2013). In an effort to supplement this narrative, artist Alemu Eshetie developed the *Museum in a Suitcase* to engage students with the stories of Ethiopian Jewish immigrants. He facilitated four workshops centred around the generative themes of home, people, language, and ceremony using personal objects contained within the wooden suitcase. The workshops were underpinned by a critical pedagogical approach with the desired

outcome of fostering an appreciation of the Ethiopian Jewish experience in Israel and to uncover and supplant the systemic othering of Ethiopian Jews in Israel (ibid., 2013).

Through her study, Markovich uncovered a problematic disconnect between the critical pedagogic approach and the outcomes she observed in the pupils. Despite the presence of Ethiopian students in the classroom, and widespread engagement with the concepts and material presented, the class never overcame the otherness of the Ethiopian Jewish experience:

Although the educational process the pupils underwent brought a change in the ways the Jewish Ethiopian culture was presented by the members of the group itself, and in the ways it was accepted by pupils from other ethnic groups, its perception as a culture that is peripheral and secondary to the hegemonic culture remained unchanged. (ibid., p. 432)

Markovich (ibid., p. 432) warns against regarding critical pedagogy as an “‘automatic” process that moves between disenfranchisement and empowerment.’ This sort of thinking removes the learner from the equation and treats him or her merely as an outcome without any constructive agency. This study reinforces the need for a mindful approach to engagement with theoretical frameworks and educational philosophies.

For the purposes of gaining insights into the processes of change, especially within a context of emancipatory philosophy, critical pedagogy offers much to the discussion of the impact of activist museum practice. Critical pedagogy provides a poetic language for understanding the processes through which individuals can grow to change the world. What it does not offer necessarily is an in-depth modelling of the processes of transformative learning. For this, it is necessary to turn to Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) a model of adult learning developed by Jack Mezirow.

3.2 Transformative learning theory (TLT)

In 1978, Mezirow concluded a study which examined women's experiences of community college programmes designed to aide them in returning to higher education or the workforce following an extended absence (Mezirow, 1978). Transformative Learning Theory was borne out of the results of this initial study and has grown into one of the most heavily discussed and implemented theories in the field of adult learning. According to Mezirow (2009, p. 22), 'transformative learning may be defined as learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change.' The philosophical underpinnings of TLT were dramatically shaped by the work of Paulo Freire especially in reference to conscientization and the need for critical reflection (Baumgartner, 2012). Other philosophical underpinnings derive from the work of Jürgen Habermas, Thomas Kuhn, and Roger Gould (Mezirow, 2000).

At the heart of TLT is the idea of perspective transformation – a process which closely mirrors the concept of conscientization. Mezirow (1981, p. 6) defined perspective transformation as 'the emancipatory process of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships, reconstituting the experience and acting upon these understandings.' The pathway to transformation involves ten phases through which the learner traverses. It should be noted that these phases do not necessarily occur in a linear fashion as every learning journey is unique and contextualised to that individual's experience. The phases identified with TLT are as follows:

1. A disorienting dilemma; 2. Self-examination; 3. A critical assessment of assumptions; 4. Recognition of a connection between one's discontent and the process of transformation; 5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and action; 6. Planning a course of action; 7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan; 8. Provisional trying of new roles; 9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; 10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perceptive. (Mezirow, 2009, p. 19)

The journey of transformation elaborated by TLT theorists and practitioners involves an initial experience which causes the learner to confront their assumptions about themselves and the world. Following this initial dilemma, the learner goes through a process of critical reflection of themselves, their assumptions, and systemic social structures. This leads to a desire to find new meanings and ways of being and acting within the world. The later phases prepare the learner for this new approach to themselves and the world and involve inhabiting new behaviours and roles which are eventually integrated fully into the learner's realm of understanding and being.

This is not necessarily a smooth process nor is it one that every learner is likely to complete. Mezirow (*ibid.*, p. 22) warned that 'a transformative learning experience requires that the learner make an informed and reflective decision to act or not. This decision may result in immediate action or delayed action, caused by situational constraints, or lack of information on how to act, or a reasoned reaffirmation of an existing pattern of action.' This warning reflects the importance of viewing each learner's transformative journey as unique as well as contextual. Studies have reinforced the notion that transformative learning and in particular shifts in perspective follow non-linear patterns and in fact are often recursive, presenting a continual assessment and re-assessment of the initial disorienting dilemma (Taylor, 2000). It should also be noted that the processes of transformative learning can take place over decades due to the 'cumulative nature of transformative learning, whereby many meaning schemes change over time culminating in a perspective transformation' (*ibid.*, p. 291).

Criticisms of TLT as expounded by Mezirow tend to refer to its overreliance on rationality and critical reflection to the exclusion of the importance of emotive dimensions of learning (Grabove, 1997). However, as TLT has grown since the late 1970s, theorists and practitioners have begun to address these gaps and promote the importance of the affective nature of adult learning. Writing in the late 1990s, Grabove noted a split in the literature relating to TLT with proponents of a more rational interpretation of the process on one side and those who were beginning to integrate emotive processes such as depth psychology on the other. She noted that authors such as Scott (1997):

[describe] the reintegration of body and mind as soulwork, a holistic experience that is difficult to explain. Because of the personal nature of depth transformation, such an experience is different for everyone and must be experienced and understood. The goal of depth psychology is an expansion of consciousness rather than a cognitive change of a distorted or uncritical frame of reference. As such, it requires a loss of ego control and, in this regard, cannot be planned. (Grabove, 1997, p. 91)

The addition of the affective dimension of learning to TLT through the introduction of depth psychology strengthened the understanding of the processes of transformative learning.

It is perhaps prudent to pause in the discussion of TLT briefly to more fully explore the importance of the affective force in learning in the museum context. Roger Simon (2014) highlighted the importance of the affective force in transformative learning experiences in his book *A Pedagogy of Witnessing*. He compared the interpretation of the same collection of lynching photographs, which spanned the period of United States history from the conclusion of the American Civil War through the Civil Rights Movement, across two museum sites – the Andy Warhol Museum and the Chicago Historical Society. While his study was necessarily examining the implications of curatorial practices on visitors, much of his analysis refers to the affective force of these photographs on visitors. Indeed, his description of the initial interaction with difficult material might very well describe what Mezirow places as the first step in the transformative learning process – the disorienting dilemma:

Affect here is not to be taken as simply an equivalent term for emotion. Rather the denotation 'affect' is a reference to a nonspecific, immediate sensation not pre-coded by a representational system that settles its substance within specific linguistic markers that offer an understanding of just what one is feeling ... This notion of affect is not dichotomously opposed to or forestalling thought, but felt as a force that incites and compels thought as to the range of emotions one is feeling, as well as to what in the encounter had provoked these feelings and consequently, in what ways this encounter might become significant to one's framework for acting in the world. (ibid., p. 11)

The experience described by Simon is disorienting indeed, with the visitor uncertain how to process the difficult images with which he or she is being confronted. This suggests that the transformative journey must inherently begin with an emotive state. This is further reflected in studies of transformative learning which reinforce the notion that 'without the expression and recognition of feelings participants will not engage their new reality, leave behind past resentment, and begin critical reflection' (Taylor, 2000, p. 291). Simon himself referred to difficulties experienced by visitors to exhibitions designed to elicit weighty emotions which did not then provide an outlet to direct those feelings in ways which might promote growth. Often these visitors leave frustrated and feeling impotent to effect any sort of changes within their own lives let alone the wider community.

Simon reflects the understanding posited within TLT as to the contextual nature of understanding one's place within the world. In discussing visitor responses to both exhibitions, he found that comments could be separated into those which connected the historical images to present injustices and those which suggested that violence and bigotry were firmly fixed in the past and that times had changed. The foundations of these responses tended to be linked to how closely individuals felt connected to oppressed groups. The individualised nature of transformative learning can at times manifest itself as the learner assessing the potentially new meanings inherent in an experience and concluding that that no new actions or meaning schemes need to be developed. This assessment is based upon previous experiences and contextualising examples the learner has enfolded into his or her world view.

On the other side of spectrum, the prevalence of calls to action and promises of action in the future also hold an important place in Simon's study. Simon views the pledges of visitors as a necessary part of processing difficult imagery:

What cannot be stressed enough about these statements is the propitious, reassuring function of such injunctions and how necessary they are in the moment of responding to one's (just prior) viewing of the exhibitions. In many of the comments, such statements were offered as a way beyond the

crushing reality of racist brutality that visitors had seen in the photographs.
(Simon, 2014, p. 158)

Calls to action and pledges for moving forward are a commonplace interpretational strategy especially in activist museum practice. The thought behind such activities is to give visitors a method of channelling difficult emotions into a healthy way to move forward. What Simon suggests is that this process within the exhibition space is perhaps more performative rather than bolstered by the critical reflection both critical pedagogy and TLT require as part of true transformational action. Indeed, Simon's findings suggest that if the museum encounter constitutes a disorienting dilemma, then visitors are not generally in a state to begin the phases of critical reflection and action until long after leaving the museum:

There is perhaps no comment ... that expresses both the affective disruption that accompanies the destabilization of habitual ways of seeing the world and the desire for thought or action promising a more secure framework for living in the present that the following text ... :

I'm not really sure what I'm supposed to do when I leave here today. Things just can't go back to normal. I feel very sad when I look at the black faces hanging from those trees they look like my family, friends, people I see on the street everyday, What makes [me] more upset is to see those white faces, looking at the bodies with pride and accomplishment. Those white faces also look like people I see on the street. (I'm very confused as what I should feel right now). Peace. (ibid., p. 156)

It is important to note that while Simon's work illustrates the importance of emotive elements in the transformational process, that not every visitor will experience their initial disorienting experience in the museum. Visitors will enter the museum along different points of their transformational journey and will interact with the museum space accordingly. Each museum will have an affective force to a greater or lesser extent, but how these emotions impact on the visitors' transformative learning experience will depend on where they are in that experience as well as on the specific context of that visitor's life.

So what can this mean for the longitudinal researcher hoping to employ TLT as a theoretical framework for understanding the process of change? To begin with, placing undue emphasis on phases is potentially unhelpful. Rather, it is more important to understand change as a process through which learners may experience stages of progression with certain shared characteristics but their own learning journey will be unique and contextual. Secondly, a learner may progress through their journey up to a certain point, desiring and planning to take on specific actions, but may be unable to follow through. To put it more colloquially, life gets in the way – financial constraints, time constraints, familial obligations, or uncertainty about how to make changes prevents the learner from engaging in new actions or taking on new roles. The use of TLT as a theoretical framework necessitates a broad, contextual approach to understanding change as a unique process for each individual. It can be a lengthy process, not easily captured in short-term studies requiring the researcher to again consider the broader cycles inherent in transformative learning.

3.3 Transtheoretical model of change (TTM)

The theoretical frameworks discussed thus far have both emerged from the fields of education and specifically, adult learning. Drawing connections between critical pedagogy and TLT to the work of activist museum practice is relatively straightforward as museum work tends to have a core of learning woven throughout. The transtheoretical model, often referred to as the stages of change, comes from the field of clinical psychology and the work of James O. Prochaska and his associates (Norcross, Krebs, and Prochaska, 2011; Norcross and Prochaska, 2002; Prochaska and DiClemente, 1984; Prochaska, Norcross, and Diclemente, 1994). TTM is a unified approach to understanding the processes of change undergone by individuals attempting to modify unhealthy behaviours either on their own or through therapy with the help of a specialist. Prochaska and his colleagues arrived at this model of change through a cross-theoretical analysis of a range of psychotherapy practice – searching for common themes and progressions reflected in multiple approaches (Prochaska, Norcross, and Diclemente, 1994). TTM has primarily been applied in clinical settings in which therapists work with patients to end unhealthy behaviours and promote healthy, sustainable

changes. Cessation of smoking and weight loss are common areas to find the stages of change applied. While it might appear at first glance, that such a model of change would not easily transfer to the field of impact studies with museums contexts, TTM offers yet another way of understanding change which is grounded in understanding psychological factors such as readiness to change, the sustainability of change, as well as an understanding of which strategies are most effective given the stage of change an individual is currently experiencing.

More recently, TTM has begun to be applied in other settings to address more socially engrained problems. For example, Boegel (2009) has argued for using TTM as a method for developing culturally literate and sensitive school settings in the United States. He argued for applying a model of change which takes into account the readiness of the individual to adopt a multicultural worldview and strategies which are most effective for that individual at that specific stage. TTM has also been applied in collective settings in addition to its primary use as a model of change within an individual. Janice and James Prochaska and Deborah Levesque (2001), proposed adapting TTM in ways which would help to describe and promote change on an organisational level by matching the stage readiness of employees to accept institutional change with effective strategies to implement change. Synthesising the various literature about TTM and its application not only to clinical settings but also in educational and institutional settings reveals that the essence of TTM is in matching strategy to the stage of change in order to elicit long-term, effective behavioural change.

The model outlined in TTM is a complex overlay of these stages of change and processes of change. The stages represent broader categories describing where and when the individual is on their journey of change and the processes of change describe strategies for how individuals change (Norcross, Krebs, and Prochaska, 2011). The stages of change most often represented in the literature are as follows: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance (ibid.). Occasionally, a sixth stage, termination, is referred to though it is often accompanied by a great deal of scepticism as to whether individuals ever reach this point in the progression.

Precontemplation refers to a stage in which a person is unaware of a problem or behaviour and they have no active desire to take steps to modify it. Contemplation represents the stage at which a person becomes aware of a problem and begins to seriously consider changing, though they do not yet make a firm commitment to action at this point. Comparing TTM to critical pedagogy and TLT, the contemplation phase represents the point at which conscientization or the disorienting dilemma occurs. The next stage outlined in TTM is preparation. Preparation describes the point at which individuals begin to make very small behavioural modifications and when they plan for more extensive changes to occur in the very near future. Action describes the stage in which the most activity occurs as the individual enters into a period of extensive modifications to their behaviour and ways of thinking. The fifth stage, maintenance, is often viewed as a period of relapse prevention, in which the individual consciously makes effort to maintain their new behaviours and modified thought processes. When mentioned at all, termination refers to individuals who have reached a point where maintenance no longer requires conscious effort – the individual has integrated the new behaviours fully into their life and there is no chance of reverting back to previous stages. It is worth reiterating that much of the more recent literature omits termination as a stage in favour of reinforcing the continuation of the maintenance stage.

Before describing the processes of change which accompany the stages, it is important to point out that TTM is not envisioned as a linear progression but rather individuals do and are expected to revert to early stages several times throughout the process. In the clinical setting, Norcoss and Prochaska (2002, p. 1) explained that:

most people acting on their own do not successfully negotiate all the stages on their first attempt. Smokers, for example, make an average of three or four attempts before they quit permanently. People often try dozens of times before they succeed in maintaining weight loss. Most patients in treatment have come to the sobering realisation that slipping back into depression or anxiety is the rule rather than the exception.

The implication is that similarly to TLT, TTM suggests that change is a non-linear process in which the individual may cycle through earlier stages before progressing through to later stages of change.

Each stage of change is accompanied by a set of what is referred to as processes of change. 'Processes of change are overt and covert activities that individuals engage in when they attempt to modify problem behaviours. Each process is a broad category that encompasses multiple techniques, methods, and relationship stances' (Norcross, Krebs, and Prochaska, 2011, p. 144). Depending on the stage of change an individual is currently expressing, certain processes of change will be more or less effective. 'Stage-matched interventions can have a greater impact than one-size-fits-all programmes by increasing the likelihood that individuals will take action' (Prochaska, Prochaska, and Levesque, 2001, p. 251). The ten processes of change outlined in TTM are as follows:

Consciousness Raising involves increased awareness about the causes, consequences, and cures for a particular problem behaviour ...

Dramatic Relief initially produces increased emotional experiences followed by reduced affect if appropriate action can be taken ...

Self-reevaluation combines both cognitive and affective assessments of one's self-image with and without a particular unhealthy habit ...

Environmental Reevaluation combines both affective and cognitive assessments of how the presence or absence of a personal habit affects one's social environment ...

Self-liberation is both the belief that one can change and the commitment and recommitment to act on that belief ...

Social Liberation requires an increase in social opportunities or alternatives especially for people who are relatively deprived or oppressed ...

Counterconditioning requires the learning of healthier behaviours that can substitute for problem behaviours ...

Stimulus Control removes cues for unhealthy habits and adds prompts for healthier alternatives ...

Contingency Management provides consequences for taking steps in a particular direction. (Prochaska and Velicer, 1997, p. 39)

While the processes of change as presented here refer mostly to the clinical application of TTM in combating unhealthy behaviours, it is possible to begin to understand how these strategies might relate to the museum setting and specifically in relation to activist museum practice.

At the core of TTM is the necessity to match the intervention with the stage of change an individual is currently experiencing. For example, consciousness raising and dramatic relief are particularly effective for those in the precontemplation and contemplation stages whereas helping relationships and contingency management are more useful to those in the maintenance stages. If we begin to translate the ten processes of change into museum interpretational strategies, we can begin to see that differentiating our exhibitions, programmes, and events to include visitors who may be in different stages along their own personal change journeys might produce more effective impact and change. For example, activist museum practice includes a variety of what could be considered consciousness raising elements which help to build awareness of particular social justice issues within audiences. For visitors who are unaware of specific social justice struggles, those we might consider in the precontemplative stage, these sort of strategies will be more effective at perhaps moving them into the next stage of change. For visitors who are already well aware of these issues, if the exhibition does not include other strategies such as stimulus control which might include prompts and ideas for how they might get involved in promoting social justice, the exhibition will not be as effective. For the moment, what we should consider about TTM is the lessons in understanding how the diverse strategies employed in our museums and galleries has the potential to

reach certain visitors, to arouse them, and perhaps to discourage them depending upon which stage of change they are currently experiencing.

Despite its widespread use in clinical settings, TTM is not without its detractors. Much of the criticisms levelled at this approach emerge from scepticism of its clinical effectiveness, its rigidity in delineating between the six stages, and the lack of nuance in its approach to behaviours and behaviour change (Brug, et al., 2005; West, 2005). Many of these criticisms are well-founded especially with relation to the rigidity of the modelling of the stages. As West (2005, p. 1037) put it, TTM 'has to draw arbitrary dividing lines in order to differentiate between the stages ... For example, an individual who is planning to stop smoking is in the preparation stage if this is within the next 30 days (provided the smoker has made a quit attempt that lasted 24 hours in the past 12 months) but only the contemplation stage if it is in 31 days' time'. Depending on the publication, TTM does in fact recommend such rigid understanding of its stages, though this is not consistent across the literature with some authors, including Prochaska and his associates (2011, p. 143), stating that the 'time an individual spends in each stage may vary'. There is a danger in using any kind of model in non-reflexive ways which restrict the understanding of individual circumstances and nuance and TTM is no exception.

Another criticism of TTM is that it inhabits a reductionist view of behaviour and the systems and processes which contribute to the development of behaviour and cognitive schemes (Brug, et al., 2005). Writing specifically about applying TTM to increasing physical activity, Brug and his associates (*ibid.*, p. 245) state that 'physical activity as such is not a single behaviour, but a complex category of different specific actions'. The same applies not only to this example of physical activity and its accompanying behaviours but also to cognitive, emotional schemes which are interwoven with behaviours. Simply changing one aspect of one type of behaviour will not necessarily yield long-term change if other underlying processes are not also addressed. This also leads on to the problem with relying on behaviourist models and strategies. While TTM employs a great deal more than the simplistic reward-scheme that antiquated behaviourist approached

employed, it does nevertheless focus specifically on behaviour as not only the focus for change but also as the indicator of stage progression. Certain behaviours are the indicators that a person has progressed to a new stage and this can necessarily diminish the importance of changes taking place, emotionally, cognitively, and socially.

Interestingly, a study conducted in 2000 designed to understand the long-term impacts of visits to Disney's Animal Kingdom's Conservation Station included the following research question: 'Can a behaviour change model be used to document the potential short- and long-term impact of visits to a place like Conservation Station on intended behaviour?' (Dierking, et al., 2004, p. 323). Researchers used TTM as the chosen test-model of behaviour change, specifically conservation-related actions subsequent to visits to the Conservation Station. In order to account for constructivist modes of learning, the researchers grouped visitors based on 'similar entering knowledge, behaviour and attitudes, and then [looked] for changes within these groups' (ibid., p. 324). Varying numbers of visitors were interviewed before visiting the exhibits, following their visit, and two to three months following their visit. The interview questions remained the same throughout the process and were designed to assess intended conservation actions. In order to determine prior engagement with conservation topics, visitors were asked to report on eleven pre-determined conservation behaviours taken from a national survey, the responses were then scored using a quantitative scale. These were then overlaid onto the five stages of change from TTM. As with the studies mentioned in the previous chapter with regards to long-term conservation behaviours following engagement with free-choice learning environments, visitors' intentions to commit to new conservation actions increased directly following their visit but then fell away over the two to three months following.

The researchers concluded that the complexities surrounding commitment to new conservation actions was necessarily multifaceted and varied across the represented samples and even within the demarcated groups based on what stage of change visitors were currently experiencing. 'After conducting this study, it is our thinking that the motivation required to engage in environment-friendly activities is a complex function

of interest, knowledge, experience, concern, and commitment developed over a lifetime' (ibid., 2004, p. 339). Owing to the highly quantitative approach taken, it was impossible to develop a more nuanced understanding of contributing factors to visitors' abilities to take new actions. Researchers also pointed out the limitations of the way in which TTM was adapted in this particular study:

Although the model provided an excellent way of describing people within a continuum of intended behaviour change, there were limitations in terms of the coarseness of the measurement and its inability to discern fine-grained incremental changes in intended conservation action. (ibid, p. 339)

This study illustrates not only the limitations of TTM but also the problems inherent in relying too heavily on rigid models and frameworks without allowing for more flexibility and indeed, qualitative understandings to support and bolster what we know about the long-term impacts of museum practices.

3.4 Towards a narrative of transformation

Up to this point, this chapter has explored separately three theoretical frameworks for understanding how long-term change occurs in individuals – critical pedagogy, transformative learning theory, and the transtheoretical model of change. I have attempted to highlight not only the important elements to each theory, but also their application to understanding activist museum practice, as well as criticisms levelled against them. As we have seen in the study of Disney's Animal Kingdom, difficulties arise when researchers apply any one model too rigidly in attempting to understand the highly nuanced and individualised nature of change whether than change occurs within an individual, for example in their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and attitudes, or whether that change is represented through new actions and behaviours.

It was this difficulty in understanding these changes which initially drew me to these three frameworks. When approaching the analysis of the data I collected through my study, I found that I was lacking a language for describing these often incremental

changes visitors were reporting. Rather than attempting to overlay a specific model of change which could disrupt and obscure the nuance of my participants' experience, I began to think about change as a narrative arc – a life story which was highly individualised and unique to each person. This outlook emerged not only through my reading of the data but also through gaining an understanding of change as presented in these three aforementioned models. A new way of thinking about impact began to take shape – one based on the process of transformation over time which takes into account the highly personal experiences which shape a person's life, outlook, and actions. I began to think about impact as a *narrative of transformation* – a life story of experiences, thoughts, emotions, and actions which interweave into a complex way of understanding change.

The idea of a narrative of transformation takes into account elements inherent in the three frameworks highlighted in this chapter. Firstly, transformation is a process which takes place over varying lengths of time. It involves a progression from a state of unawareness to becoming aware. This takes the form of conscientization in critical pedagogy, the disorienting dilemma in TLT, and the progression from precontemplation to contemplation in TTM. After becoming aware, the individual then proceeds through cycles of critical reflection, trying to understand how their thoughts, feelings, and actions fit within this newly aware state of the world. Individuals begin to develop a desire to change and to act in new ways. Despite the inclusion of the word *transformation* within this descriptor, it is important to note that change is not a certainty. Individuals might never experience a moment of awakening. Additionally, the narrative is non-linear and can involve periods of regression to previous ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. It can also involve periods in which individuals become stuck, unsure of how to progress without further complementary experiences.

The narrative of transformation is ongoing – for some it may be a continuous journey of developing better understandings of the world and as a result better ways of being in the world. For others, it may take multiple experiences and cycles of reflection before their journey begins. This way of thinking about impact takes into account not only

cognitive and behavioural aspects but also the affective nature of transformation as an emotive process. It is also important to note that varying strategies, experiences, and stimuli will be more or less effective depending on where an individual is along their narrative of transformation. Finally, narratives of transformation are unique to the individual and take into account a range of contributing experiences, life events, and relationships.

Thus we can no longer think of impact in terms of the museum visit alone, but the museum visit as contextualised to the individual's experience and ways of being in the world. When we try to understand the impact of activist museum practice, we must look at that experience as a contributing factor in the overall narrative of transformation for that individual. Depending on where along the journey that visitor may be, the museum visit may not contribute greatly to their personal progression or it may be the spark that awakens that individual and propels them from a state of unawareness to awareness. It might be the nudge that helps the individual develop new ideas for acting within the world or it may further entrench the visitor in a state of precontemplation, not yet to the point where they can accept other ways of thinking and acting in the world.

When we begin to think of impact in this way, rather than as a quantitative equation in which adding the museum visit to the individual produces change, we can begin to consider how museum practices can contribute to the individual narratives of transformation taking place throughout our galleries.

Adopting this understanding of impact and of change has helped me to better understand the experiences reported by visitors and enhanced the way in which I approached the analysis of my data. It has provided a framework without sacrificing the importance of nuance and individuality required to understanding such an intimate process, which transformation necessarily is. This understanding will become more apparent in subsequent chapters dealing with the methodology and analysis of the data collected for this project.

Chapter 4 Methodology

Thus far my focus has been on positioning activist museum practice within the wider heritage sector and developing a thematic framework for understanding impact as a deeply personal phenomenon, contextualised within the life experiences of the individual. Within these unique experiences, we can still trace the outlines of a transformative arc which I have referred to as a narrative of transformation. These frameworks serve to underpin the research I have conducted in order to better understand the impact of activist museum practice.

This chapter will report on the research design I developed and the methodologies I employed in order to better understand the role of activist museum practice within the narrative of transformation framework. I will begin by outlining my research aims and questions. I will then frame the research design I developed, outlining the case for a highly qualitative multiple case study design girded by a grounded theory analysis of the data which was collected. I will then define the parameters I set for the study in terms of sites, timescale, and participants before discussing my data collection methods and detailing the analysis process I employed. I conclude this chapter with a statement regarding research ethics and by addressing my own positioning within this research.

4.1 Research aims and questions

In Chapter 2, I highlighted previous studies which have examined the longitudinal impact of museum visits on audiences. Anderson, Storksdieck, and Spock (2007) helpfully summarised the findings from across a number of longitudinal impact studies. The authors outlined a number of difficulties both in methodological approaches to this type of inquiry and the challenges which are associated with determining the influence of a single experience amid a wide network of personal experiences:

The challenges in assessing the impact of visitors' experiences from museums are numerous. That challenges are also a function of the complex nature of

human experiences, the tremendous variability in museum visitor experience, and also inherent to the chosen research methodologies employed to gain an understanding of the impact. The question remains: How can we assess the rich, complex, and highly personal nature of museum experiences, and specifically learning from and in museums, in valid and reliable ways? (ibid, p. 203)

This is indeed the question with which I was faced when designing this study. The importance of retaining the nuance and contextual nature of the experience was of central importance, but so was the desire to understand the museum visit in relation to other influences and experiences. Bearing in mind these previous studies and their findings, my aim was to better understand the role of activist museum practice in the transformative journeys of individual visitors. Further, I wanted to bring to light the ways in which individuals define that role for themselves and what significance they personally assign to the museum visit within their wider narrative of transformation. It was necessary to craft specific questions based on these aims which could guide my thinking in the research design process. Namely I wanted to answer the following questions:

- In what ways do individuals define the role of museum visits, specifically visits to institutions engaged in the promotion of social justice, in their development of attitudes, understandings, and personal commitments to action with regard to these topics?
- How do individuals perceive the interplay of the museum visit and other contextualising experiences in the development of their attitudes, understandings, and personal commitments to action?
- Which situations and experiences prompt individuals to draw upon their museum visit in the six-month period of time following the visit?
- Which museum practices facilitate the transformative process and does the data suggest new approaches which might facilitate this process?

Before moving on to an outline of the research design, I would like to pause to mention the importance of the longitudinal approach within this study. From its inception, this study was about bettering our understanding of the impact of museum visits over time. As such my overarching aim to better understand the role of activist museum practice in the transformative journeys of individual visitors was always seen as situated across time rather than focused on its role immediately following the visit. It is only in looking at the visit within the wider context of experiences both previous and subsequent that we can begin to fully understand how museums and similar institutions are placed within the transformative arcs of individuals. While the longitudinal element of the research remains one of the central foci of this thesis, there was a great deal of rich data which emerged from interviews conducted on site and which greatly informed the analysis and findings chapters.

4.2 A qualitative approach to research design

It is readily apparent from my research aims and questions that a qualitative approach would be essential. A highly qualitative inquiry using data collections methods which foreground participants' perspectives of their experiences, followed by the use of analysis techniques grounded in inductive processes, would be the most effective means of answering the research questions previously laid out. Authors on qualitative inquiry tend to refrain from offering specific definitions of qualitative research, opting for discussions of theoretical underpinnings, descriptions of data collection methods, sampling strategies, and analysis and leaving it to their readers to intuit the flavours and nuances which constitute qualitative research approaches (Creswell, 2012). Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 3), however, offer the following:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things

in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Qualitative inquiry not only transforms the world in this process but the researcher as well. The researcher becomes the instrument through which data is collected and interpreted (Creswell, 2012). In essence, qualitative inquiry is bound up in the relationships developed through the process – the relationship of the researcher and the participant, the participant and the world they inhabit, and the researcher and the data. The qualitative inquirer is embedded in the research process, sharing with the participants in the creation of understanding and transforming the world together.

Following the decision to focus on qualitative inquiry, it became necessary to focus on a specific qualitative approach which would frame the research design. Previous similar longitudinal studies (see Adelman, Falk, and James, 2000; Falk, Dierking, and Coulson, 1997; Falk, Moussouri, and Coulson, 1998; Storksdieck, Ellenbogen, and Heimlich, 2005), as well as studies which examined activist practice and the impact of museum practice on participants (see Lee, 2011; Markovich, 2012; RCMG, 2017; Sandell, 2012; Sandell, Dodd, and Jones, 2010; Sandell, 2007), have tended to approach their inquiry through case studies at specific museum sites or a series of sites. The notable exception is Ellenbogen's (2002) ethnographic study in which she embedded herself with a family who frequently made visits to museums. While there was a certain appeal in adopting an ethnographic approach – the potential for a full, rich description of the participants' experiences as well as the context of those experience which would come from such an embedded approach, the logistics of arranging such a study for the scale of this project was not feasible. It was determined that aligning with previous studies in their approaches to similar inquiries was the best option in this case. It would allow for better comparison of the findings across these previous studies and it was scalable in such a way as to be manageable for a lone researcher to execute with full rigor. Thus a research design with a multiple case study approach was adopted.

4.3 A multiple case study design

Let us first examine the anatomy of a case study – what it is and the benefits of such an approach. Drawing on the work of Stake (1995) and Yin (2003), Cresswell (2012, p. 97) defines case study research in the following way:

[A] qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes. The unit of analysis in the case study might be multiple cases (a multisite study) or a single case (a within-site study).

Case studies are best suited to the examination of current, lived experiences through the lens of one or more cases in order to answer questions such as how and why specific events, experiences, or phenomena happen in the manner that they do (Yin, 2003). Because the investigation is carried out within a bounded system, the parameters of the case and the study can be defined more readily. The case might constitute one individual, one organisation, a specific time and place, or an event (Creswell, 2012). Essentially, case studies rely upon multiple sources of data in order to build a complex, nuanced, and comprehensive description of what is being studied.

There are several characteristics of case study research which must be considered when designing for such an approach. Firstly, a case study may be intrinsic or it may be instrumental. An intrinsic case study describes a circumstance in which the case itself is the subject of the investigation and the researcher chooses this subject for its unique qualities (Stake, 1995). Instrumental case studies, on the other hand, begins with an issue or phenomenon and specific cases are chosen which illustrate that particular topic. The case becomes a tool which aids the researcher in investigating and understanding their research problem (ibid.).

In addition to the question of intrinsic and instrumental case studies, this approach can focus on one specific case (single-case designs) or may include a number of separate cases (collective or multiple-case design). Comparing case study research to laboratory experiments, Yin (2003) suggests several rationales for using a single-case study design including highlighting a critical case as it relates to an established theory, examining an extreme or unusual case, using a representative case to explore a typical situation, exploring a new phenomenon in a revelatory case, or studying a case over time in a longitudinal case. The strength of a single-case study lies in the depth of understanding which such a narrow focus provides. Indeed, Cresswell (2012, p. 101) states that 'the study of more than one case dilutes the overall analysis' suggesting that depth is sacrificed when a multiple-case study approach is taken.

A multiple-case study approach uses more than one case to illuminate a specific research problem across different examples and viewpoints. This may be done internally at a single site through selecting multiple programmes, classes, or individuals or it may be carried out across several sites. Again, relying upon an analogy to experimentation, Yin (2003) focuses on the strength of replication when describing the benefits of this design approach. He states that the value in this kind of design is that the results can be repeated and that theories may be tested along predictable lines. Having data manifest across multiple cases is 'considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust' (ibid., p. 46).

Comparing qualitative case studies to experimental research, however, is problematic. Flyvbjerg (2006) contends that while case studies can be used to test and confirm theories, the practical knowledge which arises from studying social phenomenon through this approach is just as valuable. Often the inability to generalise to the rest of the world based upon the findings of a single-case study or even a multiple-case study approach is cited as a weakness by quantitative or natural science researchers who prefer to see results reflected within large populations. Flyvbjerg contends that generalisations can be made through careful and purposeful selection of cases and full reporting of both confirmatory and negative examples. He questions the emphasis

placed on generalisation stating that it 'is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas "the force of example" is underestimated' (ibid., p. 228). The strength of qualitative case study research lies within the rich, full description of the experiences of participants and in the qualitative nature of the co-production of knowledge between the participants and the researcher. This idea aligns with my overall approach to this research both methodologically and theoretically and reflects my findings.

In relation to the research design for this project and in light of the questions I wanted to answer, the need for this kind of deeply contextualised and nuanced approach was evident. An instrumental case study approach would allow me to use the lens of activist practice as a tool with which to examine visitors' experiences of these types of museum practices and approaches. I defined the case at the site level, meaning the museums at which the initial research would be conducted. These cases were chosen for their ability to highlight activist museum practices and for the opportunities they presented to explore the research questions through an embedded investigation with visitors, staff, and of the institutions themselves. Two distinct sites were chosen which would capture diverse approaches to activist museum practice – one within the more traditional museum model with the use of historical objects and collections and one which approached activist practice through the use of interactives, audiovisual technology, and recreated spaces. I elaborate in the following sections.

4.4 Sampling

Determining sampling strategies was an important and complex process owing to the various levels of sampling embedded in the research design. Sampling criteria had to be established at the institutional level, the staff level, visitor level, and along the dimension of time. Qualitative inquiry frequently relies on purposeful sampling 'in which particular settings, persons, or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that can't be gotten as well from other choices' (Maxwell, 1996, p. 70). Mason (2002) places purposeful sampling partially under the umbrella of theoretical sampling. In this strategy, samples are selected on the basis of how well they align with

the ontological and epistemological theories underpinning the research allowing the researcher to focus on data sources most likely to illuminate the topic of the inquiry and provide answers to the research questions posed.

Maxwell (1996) breaks down purposeful sampling in qualitative research in terms of four possible strategies: representative sampling in which typical examples are employed to illustrate what is characteristic; maximum variation sampling in which a variety of examples from across the population are chosen to illustrate a range of possibilities; critical or extreme cases which are used to test theories; and finally comparative sampling used to compare and contrast examples. Deciding upon a sampling strategy requires the researcher to ask what it is the sample should do and how the sample relates to the larger population (Mason, 2002).

4.4.1 Sites of Activist Practice

Choosing two case study sites in which the research would be embedded was one of the most important decisions. A criterion-based strategy was employed to narrow the field of possibilities. It was decided to focus on institutions which had embedded the ideals of activist practice throughout the organisation, meaning the museum has incorporated activist museum principles into their core mission statements and strategic planning. This embedded approach to activist practice manifests in multiple ways. For example, a focus on fair and diverse hiring practices; audience outreach programmes with the aim of inspiring action; and prioritising accessibility, representation, and activist interpretation. While accreditation with a professional heritage or museum association was also part of the criteria, there was more of a focus on narrowing the field through membership with organisations such as FIHRM or the Coalition for Sites of Conscience as these sites illustrated further commitment to the ideals of activist museum practice.

Once the field was narrowed, a representative sampling strategy was employed to choose two potential sites. As stated previously, the goal was to study the impact of multiple approaches to activist practices. It was decided to focus on sites in the United

Kingdom and the United States. This decision was based on the facility with which access could be gained within both countries as well as the presence of a number of excellent potential candidates. Several sites were contacted and access was negotiated primarily with members of the education and outreach teams. The two institutions which were both interested in participating in the study and could practically support the fieldwork were the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool and the Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, Georgia.

4.4.1.1 The International Slavery Museum, Liverpool (UK)

In the early 1990s, a project was instituted at the Merseyside Maritime Museum (fig. 4-1) with a focus on addressing Liverpool's role in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. While the trade was acknowledged in the museum's galleries it formed only a small portion of a wider thematic approach to Liverpool's role in international trade. This underplayed the extent of the city's participation in and benefit from the slave trade. The Moores Foundation approached National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside (NMGM), now National Museums Liverpool (NML) with a proposal to fund the creation and installation of a separate gallery devoted entirely to the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its legacies.

The initial aim of the gallery was to 'increase public understanding of the experience of Black people in Britain and the modern world through an examination of the Atlantic slave trade and the African diaspora' (Tibbles, 1996). To achieve this aim, an advisory committee was established with input from parties representing local, national, and international interests and an international roster of experts on the topics of the slave trade and its legacies were brought in as guest curators. *Transatlantic Slavery: Against Human Dignity* opened in 1994 in the basement of the Merseyside Maritime Museum.



*Figure 4-1: A view of the Albert Dock with the Dr Martin Luther King Jr building and Merseyside Maritime Museum in the background
Photograph by the author*

In the early 2000s David Fleming, then Director of NML proposed that the Transatlantic Slavery Gallery be moved and expanded into a national museum in its own right. The vision for the new museum was ‘to create a major new International Slavery Museum to promote the understanding of transatlantic slavery and its enduring impact’ (International Slavery Museum, 2018). The museum would be similar in focus to the original gallery with an expanded mission to increase awareness of the legacies of the slave trade as well as contemporary slavery throughout the world. Funding for the new museum came from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Heritage Lottery Fund, and the North West Development Agency. The first phase of development would be the opening of the museum which would occupy the third floor of the Merseyside Maritime Museum. The second phase would see the creation of a research institute on slavery together with the opening of an educational and exhibition centre in the adjacent Dr Martin Luther King Jr Building.

The International Slavery Museum opened its doors on 23 August 2007. The date coincided with UNESCO's Slavery Remembrance Day and the year marked the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in Britain. Occupying the third floor of the Merseyside Maritime Museum, it consists of four gallery spaces interpreted thematically. The visit begins with the *Life in West Africa* gallery (fig. 4-2) which explores the rich and varied culture of West African communities prior to European colonisation and interference. This is done through the interpretation of African artefacts as well as the partial recreation of an Igbo family compound.



Figure 4-2: Recreation of the Igbo family compound in the 'Life in West Africa' gallery
Photograph by the author.

The next gallery, *Enslavement and the Middle Passage* examines the experience of Africans who were enslaved and transported to the Americas. An audio-visual display is designed to illustrate the experience of being in the hold of a slave ship and immerses the visitor in a montage of disorienting sights and sounds. More traditional

interpretation techniques highlight themes around the daily life of enslaved people, the economics of slavery, and plantations in the Americas. Further video installations personalise the stories of enslaved people through the use of actors who speak directly to the visitor.

The legacy of slavery is explored in the *Legacy* gallery in which visitors explore the impact of systemic racism throughout Europe and the Americas as well as the colonisation of Africa. There is also a focus on and celebration of the Black diaspora and its influence on culture through art, music, dance, and sport. Narratives about the Black community in Liverpool centre part of this story on the local community.

The final gallery space, *The Campaign Zone* (fig. 4-3) often features temporary exhibitions held in conjunction with partnership organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). At the time my fieldwork was carried out, the gallery was hosting an exhibition on contemporary slavery in India called *Broken Lives – Slavery in Modern India*. This exhibition was produced with the Dalit Freedom Network and focused on the experience of Dalits in India. The term Dalit is translated from Sanskrit to mean ‘broken, crushed, or oppressed’ (International Slavery Museum, 2016).

The Slavery Museum presented an ideal case study site for this research. In his remarks at the opening gala for the museum, David Fleming (2007) noted:

The museum should provoke in us the kind of zeal and commitment that fired Martin Luther King, that made his speeches so electrifying in the cause of civil and human rights ... Make no mistake, this is a museum with a mission. We wish to help counter the disease of racism, and at the heart of the museum is a rage which will not be quieted while racists walk the streets of our cities, and while many people in Africa, the Caribbean, and elsewhere, continue to subsist in a state of chronic poverty. This is not a museum that could be described as a ‘neutral space’ – it is a space of commitment, controversy, honesty, and campaigning.

The role of the museum as an activist institution, or indeed as Fleming refers to it, a campaigning institution, was clear from its inception. This embedded approach to activism is also found in NML itself, the umbrella organisation of which the museum is part. In the National Museum Liverpool Strategic Plan for the years 2015-2018, the mission of NML was outlined thusly:



Figure 4-3: The temporary exhibition 'Broken Lives' occupied the Campaign Zone during the fieldwork

Photograph by the author

To be the world's leading example of an inclusive museum service. ('inclusive' means available to all, regardless of age, ability, background or other factor or characteristic which might limit a person's access to what we do. (National Museums Liverpool, 2015, p. 4)

The plan then goes on to list organisational values:

we are an inclusive and democratic museum service; we aim to maximise social impact and educational benefit for all – museums change lives...we believe in the power of museums to help promote good and active citizenship, and to act as agents of social change: we believe in the concept of, and campaign for, social justice.” (ibid., p. 4)

The Slavery Museum and NML were also the founding force behind the Federation of International Human Rights Museums (FIHRM) in 2010.

When viewed holistically, the Slavery Museum presented a unique opportunity as a case study site. Not only are the tenets of activist museum practice embedded at an organisational level, but also within the overarching organisational structure of NML itself. The museum also stands uniquely within the sector as the only museum devoted to the memorialisation of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its legacies. Its physical location within the Merseyside Maritime Museum provided a further research opportunity in that visitors were more likely to come to the Slavery Museum as part of a visit to the Maritime Museum thus increasing the possibility that participants would not necessarily already be predisposed to its advocacy. In many ways the Slavery Museum was a poignant contrast to the second case study site selected.

4.4.1.2 Center for Civil and Human Rights, Atlanta, Georgia (US)

The Center for Civil and Human Rights (figs. 4-4 and 4-5) was the brainchild of Evelyn and Joseph Lowry, Juanita Abernathy, former United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young, and US Representative John Lewis. In 2005, they approached then Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin with a proposition to establish a centre which would highlight and celebrate the city’s pivotal role in the American Civil Rights Movement. As a result, a working group consisting of Central Atlanta Progress, the Boston Consulting Group, and local community leaders was established. The group connected with and drew inspiration from other civil rights museums throughout the United States and in December 2006 the group sent its recommendations to Mayor Franklin that:

a Center should be established to commemorate the groundbreaking contributions of Atlantans and Georgians to the historic struggle for African American freedom and equality, and also serve as a space for ongoing dialogue, study, and contributions to the resolution of current and future freedom struggles of all people at the local, national, and international level. (McNair, 2009)

Around the same time Mayor Franklin was able to fundraise and secure the exhibition rights to the Morehouse College Martin Luther King, Jr Collection, a collection of the civil rights leader's papers.



*Figure 4-4: A view of the Center for Civil and Human Rights
Photograph by the author*

The Center was established in 2007 through funds raised both privately and publicly. The Coca-Cola Company headquartered in Atlanta is one of the Center's primary corporate donors and donated the land upon which the Center was built at Pemberton Place. The financial recession impacted the development of the site and the resulting

building was down-sized in order to ensure that the project would go forward. The Center opened to the public on 23 June 2014.



Figure 4-5: Mural in the foyer of the Center featuring iconic posters from global human rights movements

Photograph by the author

The Center as a tourist attraction often competes with institutions such as its neighbours the Georgia Aquarium and the World of Coca-Cola. As such the Center charges admission fees to visitors. These were increased to \$19.99 for adults, \$15.99 for young people, and \$17.99 for students and seniors in 2017. An examination of the CityPass scheme provides a glimpse into the way in which the Center is positioned within Atlanta's wider tourist industry. The scheme provides discounted admission to the Georgia Aquarium, World of Coca-Cola, and Inside CNN Studio Tour. Visitors then choose between the Fernbank Museum of Natural History and the College Football Hall of Fame and between Zoo Atlanta and the Center for their final two discounted attractions (CityPASS Atlanta, 2018). Within this scheme the Center competes directly

with Zoo Atlanta for visitors. In addition to framing the Center within Atlanta's wider tourist industry it should be noted that Atlanta is home the Martin Luther King Jr National Historic Park. The park encompasses a number of historic sites linked with Dr King including his birth home, the Ebenezer Baptist Church where he served as co-pastor and which later held his funeral, and the King Center which is the burial site of Dr King and his wife Coretta Scott King. As the historical area is part of the National Park Service, entrance to the park and sites is free of charge.

It should be noted that the Center itself is not in the strictest definition a museum. Interpretation is primarily executed through interactives, film, text panels, and recreations rather than objects and collections. The main gallery features the exhibition *Rolls Down Like Water* and focuses on the American Civil Rights Movement from the early 1950s through the assassination of Dr King. The exhibition was curated by Tony Award-winning playwright and film director George C. Wolfe. Wolfe is also the Chief Creative Officer at the Center. The exhibition is characterised by a number of immersive and interactive experiences.

The exhibition entrance features enlarged black and white photographs of the American South in the 1950s separated into those representing life for white Americans and life for black Americans. This first gallery introduces visitors to life in segregated Atlanta with a focus on Jim Crow Laws as well as films featuring noted segregationists as they were seen in television interviews. This is juxtaposed against the vibrant Black community through an exploration of Auburn Avenue what was in the 1950s the hub of the African American community in Atlanta.

Visitors move from this gallery into the second exhibition space which traces the development of the American Civil Rights Movement and highlights notable acts of resistance such as the Montgomery bus boycott, the Freedom Riders, and the lunch counter protests. This is done through textual interpretation as well as the recreation of a Greyhound Bus plastered with the mug shots of hundreds of Freedom Riders. Visitors can listen to actual participants describe their experiences as Freedom Riders. Perhaps

the most notable interpretive device in this gallery and indeed in the whole of the Center is the recreation of the lunch counter (fig. 4-6).



Figure 4-6: The simulated lunch counter experience
Photograph by the author

It is worth pausing to further detail the lunch counter interactive experience as it became a main focus for many participants during their visit to the Center. After reading text panels explaining the long training process non-violent protestors underwent during the American Civil Rights Movement, visitors are invited to sit as a recreated lunch counter. Wearing headphones, visitors close their eyes and place their hands on the counter which triggers the interactive. Through their headphones, visitors hear a recreation of the abuse and threats which original protestors faced. Their stool shakes as though being violently pummelled from behind. The experience lasts under a minute and visitors are able to end the simulation at any point by removing their headphones.

The counter is always staffed by a gallery attendant who is present to aid any visitors who become distressed by the experience.

The iconic March on Washington is depicted in a large, open gallery with white columns emulating the architecture of the Lincoln Memorial. Film clips from the March are played on a large screen which helps to illustrate the scale of the event. Text panels discuss the historic context as well as the planning of the event, the logistics and schedules, as well as the outcomes of the day. The mood of the gallery is light, uplifting, and hopeful – achieved through the use of lighter colours as well as the subject matter. This contrasts starkly with the next two galleries which depicts the deaths of four school girls killed in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama through four stained glass portraits of the girls. The story of the Civil Rights Movement ends with the assassination of Dr King, depicted through contemporary news broadcasts of the event, enlarged photographs taken on the day of the assassination, and footage of the funeral procession.

Visitors emerge from this dark space into the bright, white space of the memorial gallery (fig. 4-7). Here the photographs of Civil Rights activists who were murdered are placed on rotating pipes. Visitors can turn the images to read about the individuals. Text of the Civil Rights Act fills one of the walls and an interactive table provides further information about the Civil Rights Movement. The final gallery in this space is one which prompts the visitor to take action. Standing in the centre of the gallery, long, narrow screens display an audio-visual presentation celebrating the strides made in civil and human rights but also cautioning that violations continue and will continue if continued action is not taken.



*Figure 4-7: Memorial gallery featuring the wall of martyrs in the background
Photograph by the author*

The second permanent exhibition called *Spark of Conviction* was curated by human rights advocate and advisor to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Jill Savitt. This exhibition focuses on the global human rights movement. Visitors enter through a digital interactive space which includes life-sized recordings of individuals discussing their personal experiences with human rights issues. Through these initial encounters, visitors come to understand human rights as a personal issue which impacts real people in varied ways and visitors begin to form connections between the personal and the global.

This trend is continued as visitors enter the main exhibition space. Through text and video visitors learn about civil rights advocates devoted to more specific areas of action including disability rights and women's rights (fig. 4-8). These stories are framed by artists' portraits of human rights leaders including Ghandi, Dr Martin Luther King, Jr, and Eleanor Roosevelt. On the opposing wall are life-sized representations of human rights abusers. These individuals, including Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Idi Amin, are

presented as though in a police line-up. These three distinct portrayals actually serve to highlight the individuals currently advocating for human rights and who often remain anonymous in this work while placing them within the wider, perhaps more well-known players throughout history. This area also includes interpretation on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Further in the gallery are audio-visual presentations on specific human rights stories, textual examples of the erosion of human rights protections, and a specific display illustrating common products which are often manufactured by means which are unethical in their treatments of workers. By placing common, everyday objects which visitors take for granted within the context of the wider human rights debate, visitors are implicated as participating in the systemic suppression of some people's rights. This makes way for visitors to begin to question their own role in these systems and hopefully prompts reflection and action with regards to those reflections.



*Figure 4-8: Main exhibition space for 'Spark of Conviction' featuring the personal stories of contemporary human rights activists
Photograph by the author*

The final space (fig. 4-9) features a world map with scrolling up-to-date headlines about human rights news stories. There are also three interactive tables which provide visitors with further information about specific human rights topics. This information also includes suggestions on ways that visitors can take action breaking these ideas into three areas – what can be done in sixty seconds, sixty minutes, and sixty days. These concrete options empower visitors to seek solutions to the problems posed throughout the exhibition and indeed the larger context of the museum.



*Figure 4-9: Human rights watch world map and interactive tables in the 'Spark of Conviction' exhibition
Photograph by the author*

The final exhibition, *Voice to the Voiceless*, features the Morehouse College Martin Luther King, Jr Collection which is rotated through the basement gallery. This collection of Dr King's papers is thematically displayed with past exhibitions focused on youth involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and papers written and collected in the last year of Dr King's life.

The Center provided an excellent contrasting case study to the Slavery Museum. Both sites embrace their roles as advocates for civil and human rights but do so through different interpretive techniques and within two distinct and contrasting contexts. The Center interprets the American Civil Rights Movement and the global human rights movement through recreations and interactive technologies while the Slavery Museum presents the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its legacies primarily though not exclusively through collections. The Center charges admission fees in line with nearby tourist attractions while the Slavery Museum retains free entry to all visitors. As stated previously, the Slavery Museum is located within the Merseyside Maritime Museum which presented a unique opportunity from a research standpoint while the Center is a separate site which markets itself as a place to explore human and civil rights and to become 'empowered to join the conversation in your own community' (Center for Civil and Human Rights, 2018). These contrasts ensured that a range of visitor experiences, motivations, and agendas would be represented through the study.

4.4.2 Defining impact across time

As stated previously, the longitudinal aspect of this research was central to the design process from its inception. Multiple ways to sample across time are available to researchers through a variety of data collection methods such as ethnographic observation, diary methods, qualitative interviews, or surveys to name but a few. The challenge of when to deploy these data collection methods remains. Longitudinal researchers need to ask: at what point or points along the timeline do we sample?

Previous longitudinal studies of museum visitors have tended to sample at three distinct points in the process: directly before the visit, directly after the visit, and six to eight weeks after the visit (see Adelman, Falk, and James, 2000; Anderson, Storksdieck, and Spock, 2007; Falk and Dierking, 1997; Falk, Moussouri, and Coulson, 1998; Storksdieck, Ellenbogen, and Heimlich, 2005). One of the suggestions to come from Anderson, Storksdieck, and Spock's (2007) cross-study summary was to employ longer timeframes in new longitudinal studies. While it would be useful to sample at a year or two years or

even beyond that timeframe, the parameters of this study were such that it was not feasible. Instead the overall timeframe was set at six-months from the initial visit.

Two sampling points were chosen along the longitudinal spectrum of this study. As the research was aimed at understanding visitor's perspectives of the visit and its relation to their wider contextual experiences, sampling prior to the visit was not necessary. Rather, visitors would be sampled directly after their museum experience and then six-months later. The first point, directly after the visit was necessary in order to develop a relationship with the participants. As this research would expose potentially highly personal aspects of their lives, it was important that the people participating were familiar with me as both a researcher and individual. It was also important to capture initial impressions, thoughts, and understandings while still within the museum space. These would act as points of discussion during the second sampling point as well as serve as points of comparison both within the study and between other similar studies. A sampling point six months following the visit was fixed upon to allow for a longer timeframe, as suggested by previous studies, which would allow participants to contextualise their visits within a wider pool of experiences, thoughts, and feelings. As the aim was to understand this relationship of the visit to other experiences, it was deemed better to leave space for the participants to have some distance from the visit.

4.4.2.1 Contextualising the time and place of the research

The initial round of interviews occurred over a two-week period at each site. Those conducted at the Slavery Museum took place between 7 and 20 February 2016 while those at the Center took place between 6 and 19 March 2016. As stated previously, participants were then contacted via email for a follow-up activity six months after their visit. For visitors to the Slavery Museum, this occurred in August 2016 and for participants from the Center this occurred in September 2016. It is important to contextualise the timeframe in which the fieldwork took place as significant national events in both the US and the UK affected participants' views and interpretations of their museum visits.

The UK government in May 2015 passed the European Union Referendum Act establishing the legal basis for a referendum vote on the continued membership of the UK in the European Union (EU). The United Kingdom European Union membership referendum colloquially referred to as the Brexit vote took place on 23 June 2016. Of all eligible voters across the UK, 72.2% voted in the referendum with 17.5 million voting to leave the EU (51.9%) and 16.1 million voting to remain in the EU (48.1%) (Uberoi, 2016).

The referendum was a contentious issue which dominated UK politics in the months preceding. It has been argued that tactics employed specifically by those campaigning to leave the EU appealed to nativist commentaries and relied upon xenophobic and racist arguments (Burnett, 2017). Virdee and McGeever (2018, pg. 1804) in their analysis of the Vote Leave campaign found that it had capitalised on the politicisation of Englishness underpinned by 'racializing, insular nationalism'. During both rounds of interviews participants, primarily those from the Slavery Museum, made references to the referendum including discussions of the nature of the Vote Leave campaign and the rise in violence against immigrants which immediately followed the vote.

Concurrently, the US Presidential primaries were taking place between February and June 2016. This process which would lead to the eventual nominations of Secretary Hillary Clinton for the Democratic Party and businessman Donald Trump for the Republican Party, began with the Iowa caucuses on 1 February.³ At the time the onsite fieldwork was taking place the Democratic nominees remaining in the race were Secretary Clinton and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders. Senator Sanders withdrew from the race at the Democratic National Convention in July. The Republican field of

³ During the period in which onsite fieldwork was taking place there were sixty-one primaries/caucuses which took place across both parties. Six Republican candidates withdrew from the race during this time (Virginia Governor Jim Gilmore on 12 February, businesswoman Carly Fiorina and New Jersey Governor Chris Christie on 10 February, Florida Governor Jeb Bush on 20 February, Dr Ben Carson on 4 March, and Florida Senator Marco Rubio on 15 March). Third party candidates New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson for the Libertarian Party and Dr Jill Stein for the Green Party received the nominations for their respective parties.

nominees had initially included seventeen candidates, the largest field in US history. By the middle of May Donald Trump had secured the Republican nomination and he would go on to take the Presidency in November 2016. The majority of the general election process took place after the second round of interviews had already taken place.

Similar to the rhetoric experienced during the EU referendum, much of the US Presidential election was characterised by the Trump campaign's appeals to white nationalism, nativism, and xenophobia which were underpinned by economic concerns and partisan divides (Bobo, 2017). Participants at both the Slavery Museum and the Center referenced the political climate in the US when discussing their museum experiences often whilst framing contemporary implications of African slavery and the struggle for civil and human rights. In a sense, Donald Trump was invoked by participants as an embodiment of contemporary populist attitudes towards people of colour, immigrants, and Muslims.

It is important to make brief mention of increasing attention within mainstream media outlets of extrajudicial killings of Black Americans as well as police violence against unarmed Black Americans. The death of Trayvon Martin in 2012 and the acquittal of his killer George Zimmerman, galvanised activists Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi to form the #BlackLivesMatter movement defined by Garza (2016, p. 23) as 'an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise.' The deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner in 2014 at the hands of white police officers led to an increase in attention regarding police violence against Black Americans and to the #BlackLivesMatter movement itself. Series of events, protests, and social media campaigns took place during this time further raising the profile of cases of violence against unarmed Black people. The movement faced backlash from conservative commentators who responded with slogans such as #BlueLivesMatter and #AllLivesMatter.

Throughout both onsite fieldwork and during the follow-up interviews in August and September 2016, participants referenced police violence and the #BlackLivesMatter

movement. Contemporary protests against the killings of unarmed Black people in the United States were influential in shaping participants understandings and views on race in the US – a theme explored in both the Slavery Museum and the Center.

4.4.3 Staff and visitor participants

Part of the appeal of the case study design model is the multifaceted nature of the process and the ability to look at the research topic from a variety of viewpoints. From the beginning of the process, it was essential to involve staff members in the research. Staff members are embedded within the organisation and are positioned in such a way as to observe and participate in the transformative journeys of visitors. Furthermore, their perspective from within the institution provides them with a unique analytical framework when they discuss the impact that they have witnessed or been part of creating. Understanding staff perspectives on impact and their role in the narratives of transformation they have been part of led me to seek out members of staff who most often work directly with visitors. As such staff within the education and learning departments, gallery assistants, and visitor services professionals were asked to participate.

Sampling at the visitor level posed many different challenges both in design and in execution. It was essential to develop a strategy for this population as they would constitute the main group from which data would be generated. Museum visitors are by their nature a transient population; they are present at the site for a relatively brief period of time and their personal agendas and circumstances add to the difficulty in determining who may be willing and able to participate in a study. This is further compounded in longitudinal studies when the same participants will be contacted in the future – the desire on the part of participants to be contacted for follow-up activities as well as the facility to do so adds another potential barrier to participation from the outset.

In determining the best ways to sample from the population of museum visitors, I opted again for a purposeful sampling strategy but with the knowledge that there would be a high probability that the sample would tend toward a self-selecting dynamic. To clarify, participants would be approached at the end of their museum visit and based loosely on visitor profiles provided by both fieldwork sites. These profiles were based on surveys completed by the sites to better understand who was visiting their spaces. The decision to try to sample along these profiles was to ensure a measure of validity in the research, specifically that my sample roughly corresponded with typical visitor profiles to each museum. The self-selecting dynamic entered the equation in practice. Visitors would at times approach me to inquire as to my activity and to request to participate. Other elements of self-selecting in the sampling process came from high refusal rates owing to time constraints and ability or willingness to participate in follow-up activities.

4.4.3.1 Who were the participants?

Fieldwork began on 7 February 2016 at the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool. Over the course of two weeks, I interviewed 24 participants in a series of 18 interviews. Interviews took place within the galleries of the Slavery Museum at various points within the day. This same approach was duplicated at the Center where I interviewed 33 participants in a series of 21 interviews. While participants from the Slavery Museum tended to be recruited through an initial approach made by me, participants from the Center were recruited both through this process as well as a self-selecting one in which visitors approached me and after learning about the project expressed interest in participating. This is reflected in the higher number of participants from the Center.

The number of staff participating in interviews also varied across the fieldwork sites. This was partly to do with the approach each site took to facilitating the study. After I had begun my fieldwork at the Slavery Museum, an email was sent to staff members by the research officer in the museum's research and marketing team introducing me and inviting any staff who wanted to participate to make contact with me to set up an

interview. The Center arranged interviews with key members of staff ahead of my arrival and included a range of roles which reflected visitor services, learning, and gallery staff.

Visitors from the Slavery Museum were invited to complete a follow-up activity taking place in August 2016, while participants from the Center were invited to complete the activity in September 2016. Of the initial 24 participants at the Slavery Museum, 6 took part in the follow-up activity. Out of the 33 who participated from the Center, 7 completed the activity. Visitors chose between participating in an interview through a service such as Skype (or in the case of those residing in the United Kingdom, over the phone) or by completing a questionnaire through email. The questions were the same regardless of which method participants chose. Out of the 13 participating in the follow-up activity, 12 opted for filling out the questionnaire over email and 1 participated in a Skype interview. Table 4-1 illustrates the breakdown of both visitor and staff participants by site while table 4-2 further examines the roles staff participants held within their respective organisations.

Table: 4-1: Participants by case study site

	# of participants completing initial interview	# of participants completing follow-up interview	# of staff members interviewed
International Slavery Museum	24	6	3
The Center	33	7	8
Total	57	13	11

Table 4-1: Overview of all participants by case study site

Table 4-2: Staff participants by role

	Learning team	Visitor services	Gallery staff
International Slavery Museum	2	—	1
The Center	3	2	3
Total	5	2	4

Table 4-2: Overview of staff participants by role within the organisation

Attrition rates are one of the most challenging aspects to conducting longitudinal research. While only thirteen visitor participants completed a follow-up interview, the depth of their responses, as well as the data from the initial interviews and staff interviews, helped to form a rich, qualitative pool from which the findings were generated.

Participants were given the option to provide demographic information after their interview. This information was collected to ensure the pool of participants was reflective of the visitor profiles which each site had produced independent of the study. These breakdowns form appendix 4. More relevant to the study were the ways in which participants discussed elements of their identity which they believed were important in relation to their museum experience. Nationality, race, sexuality, and gender identity allowed certain visitors to build connections between themselves and themes woven through the galleries. I elaborate on this further in Chapter 5.

4.5 Data collections methods

It is helpful to reiterate that a case study approach relies upon the use of a variety of data sources and collection methods in order to generate as complete an understanding as possible. Document analysis, interviews, and observations can all contribute to developing a nuanced understanding of each case (Yin, 2003). During the course of my fieldwork I employed each of these methods to varying degrees in order to develop my

understanding of each site. That being said, the aims of this study defined the data collection methods which would be of most use to me in answering my research questions. As such, most of my data was generated through semi-structured interviews conducted with members of staff and more importantly, visitors. Documentary analysis and observations provided supplemental and contextualising data from which to better understand the themes and ideas which were brought out during the interviews.

Interviews are one of the most popular forms of data collection method used by researchers and qualitative researchers especially. As qualitative inquiry seeks to understand the world through the experience of human beings, one of the best methods for uncovering those experiences is through conversational means with people. Much has been written on qualitative interviewing from strategies to techniques to philosophical underpinnings to ethical considerations. In attempting to define what the qualitative interview is, many authors quote from Burgess (1982, p. 164) who described the interview in terms of a 'conversation with a purpose'. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 27) more recently described qualitative interviewing in the following way:

A semi-structured life world interview attempts to understand themes of the lived everyday world from the subjects' own perspectives. This kind of interview seeks to obtain descriptions of the interviewees' lived world with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena. It comes close to an everyday conversation, but as a professional interview it has a purpose and involves a specific approach and technique.

This idea of a conversation being driven by specific purposeful outcomes coupled with the employment of elicitation techniques and underpinned by the researcher's objectives must inevitably lead into a brief albeit important discussion about asymmetrical power dynamics within research relationships and research ethics.

Qualitative inquiry forefronts the human component in both the researcher as instrument analogy as well as the centrality of participants and their experiences. Essentially the work of the qualitative researcher is the work of establishing healthy

research relationships which are both reciprocal and professional. However, the power dynamics in a research relationship are inherently uneven with the weight of power leaning toward the researcher.

Feminist theories related to research ethics have sought to explore and expose these sorts of power dynamics within academic research (Thomas and Ehrkamp, 2013). There have been tensions between theorists who advocate for developing caring, friendship-like relationships with research participants and those who view these types of research relationships as potentially manipulative (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). To mitigate the inherent power dynamics in research settings, feminist researchers advocate for an approach which seeks 'to establish collaborative and nonexploitative relationships, to place the researcher within the study so as to avoid objectification, and to conduct research that is transformative' (Creswell, 2012, p. 29). In this context, transformative research refers to a positive transformation of both the participant and the researcher.

Returning briefly to critical pedagogy as outlined in Chapter 2 of these thesis, the importance of dialogical encounters within the framework of critical pedagogy offers some potentially interesting insight into the question of power dynamics posed by semi-structured interviews. Freire (1972; 1975; 1998; 2013) recognised dialogue as an important pedagogical and transformative activity in which people come together to understand the world. He placed an emphasis on the equality of voices in these interactions and viewed this as an essential part of the process. Without it, authentic and meaningful dialogue would not be able to take place. Remarkably, this sentiment is at times echoed in the literature about qualitative interviewing (Kvale, 2006). Congruently, there is a recognition that no matter how much as researcher may desire a perfectly equitable situation, the 'qualitative research interview entails a hierarchical relationship with an asymmetrical power distribution of interviewer and interviewee. It is a one-way dialogue, an instrumental and indirect conversation, where the interviewer upholds a monopoly of interpretation' (Kvale, 2006, p. 484).

These concerns over power dynamics and the ethical implications of the research relationships developed between participants were very important to me as I considered the use of semi-structured interviews and developed both my ethical and interview protocols. In practice, I approached my relationships with staff members participating in the study as those of colleagues. In my relationships with visitors, I tried to maintain a friendly though formal relationship. More central to these relationships was the importance in communicating clearly what my intentions were, who I was as both a researcher and postgraduate student, and that the time and insights the participant shared with me was important and special. Further I added a line of questioning in the follow-up interviews which asked participants to explore their feelings regarding their participation in the research. This was added not only to understand the role the study might have had in how participants viewed their museum experience but was also designed to ensure that participants had an opportunity to speak about their research experience separately and to reflect on it more fully.

The initial round of interviews was carried out at each fieldwork site (the International Slavery Museum and the Center for Civil and Human Rights). This round included interviews with staff members as well as interviews with museum visitors. Interviews with staff tended to be longer and more in-depth as time was specially allotted for these interviews. Interviews with museum visitors were conducted within designated spaces in the galleries and tended to last between ten and thirty minutes. Both staff and visitor interviews were audio recorded for later transcription.

The second round of data collection occurred six months following the initial visit. Participants who had consented to being contacted for follow-up interviews were emailed using the contact information provided on the informed consent forms. After gaining further consent to participate in the follow-up activity, participants were given a choice as to whether they preferred to have another interview either over the phone or through an Internet messaging platform such as Skype, or whether they preferred to have an open-ended survey emailed to them which they could respond to and return via email. The questions were the same regardless of which method the participants

chose. This choice was given to participants in order to facilitate responses and to provide alternatives to people who were not comfortable with an audio interview or who could not participate in this way. Those who did choose to respond to the open-ended survey were asked follow-up questions to the survey in several instances to clarify or expand upon certain points they had made in their answers.

4.6 Analysis of the data

It is best practice within qualitative researching that analysis forms part of a reflective practice of inductive as well as deductive ways of thinking about the data. Further, this process should be integrated within the data collection process. Indeed, authors on the subject of qualitative data analysis contend that the process should begin as soon as there is data to process (Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Mason, 2002; Maxwell, 1996). As qualitative analysis is necessarily an organic process, the question becomes what are the best approaches to the analysis process? Creswell (2012) advises an immersive approach to data analysis as does Maxwell (1996, p. 78) who further explains that 'the initial step in qualitative analysis is reading the interview transcripts, observation notes, or documents that are to be analysed ... Listening to interview tapes prior to transcription is also an opportunity for analysis, as is the actual process of transcribing interviews'. Living with the data in this manner and actively engaging through listening, reading, and attaching brief notes referencing specific pieces of data, broad themes begin to emerge from the data. This is an inductive process, meaning these nascent themes have come out of the data rather than from a deductive process initiated by the researcher.

In her chapter on grounded theory approaches to social justice inquiry, Charmaz (2005, p. 507) defined this approach as 'a set of flexible analytical guidelines that enable researchers to focus their data collection and to build inductive middle-range theories through successive levels of data analysis and conceptual development.' Grounded theory is an inductive process. Often the data is analysed through a process of coding in which the researcher attempts to link emergent broad themes through the use of keywords. 'The goal of coding is not to produce counts of things, but to 'fracture' the

data and rearrange it into categories that facilitate the comparison of data within and between these categories and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts' (Maxwell, 1996, p. 78). Often the codes, or chosen keywords, are derived directly from the data, or *in vivo*. They might also derive from disciplinary standards for example from the field of museum studies or they may be developed independently by the researcher (Creswell, 2012). The coding process allows for a detailed, deep reading of the data. This process eventually leads to the generation of larger thematic trends which can be generalised to the everyday.

Charmaz, however, expands upon this, exploring ways in which a grounded theory approach to data analysis aligns with social justice studies. She focuses on the ways in which the pragmatist underpinnings of grounded theory and their 'novel aspects of experience [can] give rise to new interpretations and actions' and further how 'this view ... can sensitize social justice researchers to study change in new ways, and grounded theory methods can give them the tools for studying it' (Charmaz, 2005, p. 508). Grounded theory approaches to qualitative data have tended to rely upon positivist epistemologies and ontologies (Glaser, 1992). This has been challenged more recently as moves toward a constructivist grounded theory approach have been made. This approach removes the positivist underpinnings of grounded theory and replaces them with constructivist approaches which permit reflexive and nuanced epistemologies to emerge.

Adopting this approach to my data analysis provided a much needed avenue for being able to consider each participant's story separately as the telling of their personal narrative of transformation and to consider how each narrative related to the wider pool of data collected. The tension between maintaining the integrity of the individual experience and the importance of understanding which experiences were common to all or nearly all drove the analysis phase of this project. Constructivist grounded theory allowed me to approach the data more reflexively throughout the analysis process.

In practical terms, the analysis began during the data collection phase. I took reflexive field notes during and after all interviews and designated time during my fieldwork to listen to the audio recordings and to begin transcribing them. I opted to transcribe all of the interviews myself so as to continue immersing myself in the data. I took further notes as I transcribed each interview and kept a research journal in which I detailed emergent themes and thoughts regarding participants' individual stories. This process was repeated for follow-up interviews and through the open-ended surveys. Communications with participants at this stage provided an opportunity to clarify and validate themes which had begun to emerge from the initial round of interviews.

The advent of specialised software such as NVIVO has facilitated the data analysis process greatly. Following the completion of the transcribing process, each interview transcript was placed within NVIVO in order to be coded. I made one final pass through each transcript to make more generalised notes about specific points in the data before beginning my coding.

Each transcription as well as the follow-up open ended surveys were coded through NVIVO. Coding was done inductively, with many of the keywords being taken directly from the participants' own remarks and stories. Again it was important to be mindful of the individual narratives of transformation within the data as well as to look at the data as a whole. The coding process generated a number of broader themes which were then compared with the themes that came through the first readings of the data. These were also compared to other individual narratives as well as across both sites of study. After completing the first pass of coding, I returned to the data and completed a second pass in which I looked for any potential missed codes or themes. It was during this pass that the majority of the themes which would eventually form the bulk of my analysis and discussion began to form.

4.7 Statement regarding research ethics

I have tried where possible in this chapter to embed discussions of ethical approaches to research, for example in my approaches to interviewing and the research relationships which were developed throughout the project. It was important to embed ethical practices within the research design. As with many aspects of research design, ethics can be discussed from a variety of perspectives; from codes of ethics developed by professional associations and academic institutions to philosophical approaches such as utilitarianism or feminist theories. Ethics, like many complex and nuanced aspects of research, is difficult to reduce to a single definition or outlook. As such I adopted a pragmatic approach to ethical concerns when designing this study and throughout the duration of the project.

I adopted my research design approach to ethics by focusing on Cresswell's (2012) discussion of ethics which he divided by stage of research. This allows the researcher to focus on specific types of ethical dilemmas which might arise during each phase. During the initial phase of designing the study, it was paramount to familiarise myself with the University of Leicester's guidelines on ethical research as well as specific departmental guidelines set out by the School of Museum Studies. Full compliance with these guidelines was necessary to obtaining approval from the university's ethics committee. This practice also allowed for reflexivity on my part to identify areas within the study which might have caused potential concern in moving forward. The development of ethical protocols was embedded alongside the development of my data collection protocols. This practice again led to a more thoughtful, reflexive approach to the research itself.

The protocols which were developed included guidelines on how to approach potential participants with specific emphasis on clarifying that participation was entirely voluntary and that the individual could opt out of the study at any point during the project with no consequences to themselves. Informed consent also played a vital role in the protocols. Participants were given printed information sheets with details of the project, its aims, and their rights as participants. This was retained by the participants for their

own records. Participants were encouraged to ask clarifying questions and were asked to sign an informed consent form to indicate that they understood the research as well as their role within it. This practice was repeated for follow-up interviews. My initial email request included information regarding the study and the purpose of the follow-up interviews. It also reiterated that there was no obligation to participate and that individuals could withdraw from the study at any time. I viewed responses from participants asking for the open ended surveys or for a phone interview as consent to further participation.

More broadly, the selection of sites and negotiations with staff members at each site was conducted along similar lines. Each institution signed an informed consent outlining their responsibilities and position as a fieldwork site. I in turn signed an agreement which outlined to the institution my responsibilities as an external researcher at that site. These agreements did not act as informed consent for individual staff members who participated in interviews. Each staff member was given a staff-specific information sheet and was asked to sign an informed consent before their interview.

While designing the data collection phase, it was essential to ground my approaches ethically. As previously discussed in this chapter the issue of power dynamics between the researcher and the participant underpinned my approaches to my research relationships and the interviews. In practice, the data collection phase brought out further ethical concerns once I had begun my fieldwork. In some circumstances, participants related very strong emotional reactions to their visit. There were participants who had deeply personal connections to the narratives within the galleries. This was especially the case at the Center in which many of the topics covered were within the living memory of some participants. In cases where participants were experiencing strong emotions, I managed these emotions by asking if they would prefer to pause or discontinue the interview. It was also my practice to inquire whether they wanted or needed any additional support during or following the interview. All interviews concluded with a debriefing period which allowed participants to ask further

questions or to reflect on the interview after the recorder had been turned off. This provided a sense of closure for the participants regarding the research encounter.

When designing the data analysis phase, the most important ethical dilemmas were related to researcher bias and participant identity. While researcher bias may influence all stages of the project, it is especially of concern during the data analysis phase. This is compounded in the case of a project with a lone researcher such as this one. At the conclusion of this chapter I will discuss my role within this research, highlighting potential biases I have brought into the project. For now, it is important to note that maintaining an awareness of my viewpoint throughout the research process and especially when approaching the analysis of my data was essential. As the researcher is the only interpretive lens through which the data is analysed, participant intentions are potentially open to misinterpretation and misrepresentation. A full and rich reporting of the case or cases investigated, including negative examples will help to ensure that the research meets appropriate levels of validation. Where possible, I also inquired of participants to clarify certain points which they had made to ensure that they were represented accurately and that the interpretations and conclusions drawn from the study were as valid as possible.

It was also during this phase that I focused on practices which would protect the identities of my participants. While perfect anonymity is difficult to guarantee, safeguarding participants' identities was of the utmost importance. Where possible, identifying information has been masked including names and places of work or worship. Each participant has been given a unique pseudonym as well.

4.8 Situating the researcher

I wish to return for a moment to a discussion of qualitative inquiry. Perhaps one of the most unique qualities of this approach is the human quality which is embedded throughout. While quantitative inquiry can speak to the human condition, qualitative inquiry becomes much more a space in which human beings come together to explore

questions about what it is and what it is like to be human. As stated previously in this chapter, participants join the researcher in trying to understand the world. The researcher herself becomes the interpretive lens through which experiences are collected, analysed, and interpreted. As such the role of the researcher; who she is and her personal biography become inextricably linked to the inquiry. The role of the qualitative researcher is also a key component in the discussion of validity and integrity. Personal biographies are an important part of qualitative research reporting as well as research design as they position the researcher within the world he or she is studying and allow readers to understand the lens through which the study was conducted (Creswell, 2012; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Mason, 2002). I will briefly layout my own personal biography here with emphasis on the ways in which who I am as a researcher interacted with the themes I have studied through this project.

It is important to begin by stating that I am a white, middle class woman from the east coast of the United States. This becomes important when viewed in light of the social justice themes explored in both of my fieldwork sites. Both the Slavery Museum and the Center explore themes related to the experience of Africans, Black Americans, Black Britons, and members of the African Diaspora. Of course these themes are not divorced from the histories or experiences of white Europeans and Americans and indeed they are inextricably bound together through perpetuating systems of oppression which persist to the present day. This is not to say that there is not scope for reading the thematic narratives in both of these museums through the ways in which white people also fought to dismantle these systems but by my very nature I am the product of an American society which has privileged these interpretations over those of others.

This fact goes beyond just interpretation of the themes in these museums and carries into the ways in which I potentially interpret the experiences of these museums by people of colour. Many of my participants especially at the Center were Black Americans who felt deep connections to the messages and narratives woven throughout the galleries. This is certainly something which I can recognise and understand but which my own race and cultural context prevent me from engaging with more fully. In her book

So You Want to Talk About Race, Ijeoma Oluo (2018) lays out the fundamental disconnect that white people living in societies such as the United States have when it comes to understanding the impact of racism on people of colour. She explains that 'this is not just a gap in experience and viewpoint. The Grand Canyon is a gap. This is a chasm you could drop entire solar systems into' (ibid., p. 5). The ways in which I approached this research was from my implicitly white viewpoint. I worked to mitigate this as much as possible through centralising participants' unique narratives of transformation throughout the project. It was essential to create and maintain an open space in which these stories were collected and interpreted as holistically as possible.

My professional career as a primary school music educator in the United States further influenced the ways in which I approached this research. Critical pedagogy was the foundational educational philosophy in my teacher training programme. This early influence has formed the foundation of my personal educational philosophy and informed my work as both an educator and museum professional. They have also clearly influenced the theoretical framework of this research. This is seen in the emphasis I have placed on critical pedagogy as one of the main philosophies underpinning my approach to narratives of transformation. My experiences with transformative learning both within the primary school classroom and beyond in higher learning settings has further impacted on the ways in which I approach research. Fundamentally, I believe that research should be an open endeavour and done in partnerships with participants as much as possible. Research should also primarily reflect a certain humanity. What we study are the processes and experiences of being human. This should be reflected in both the interpretation and dissemination of the findings.

I would like to close this chapter by reflecting upon the story I told in the opening pages of this thesis. This research is the direct product of my own personal experience as a visitor at the Anne Frank House. The idea for this project was born in the café that afternoon and the strong motivation to understand the impact that experience had on me continued to inspire me throughout this process. In essence, this study is itself the

direct result of engagement with activist museum principles and forms part of my own narrative of transformation which began in the gallery of a museum.

I have worked to mitigate as much as is possible the potential for researcher bias throughout this study. By focusing on the experiences and voices of participants, applying an inductive approach, and continuing to reflexively read and re-read the data and my interpretations of it, it is my hope that the findings I report in the next two chapters reflect the lived experiences of visitors to the Center and the Slavery Museum.

Chapter 5 The role of the museum in the narrative of transformation

As has been made clear in the preceding chapters of this thesis, the notion of the story – the narrative – has provided the framework for understanding the role of activist museums in relation to transformative experiences. It is therefore fitting to share a personal story of change at the beginning of the first of two chapters which will detail the findings of the longitudinal study I have thus far presented. In the spring of 2015, I flew into Atlanta, Georgia for the first time in order to attend the American Alliance of Museums conference. I had only just begun my PhD journey – I was reading on various theoretical frameworks and on activist museum practice while my research design was still highly conceptual. After collecting my luggage, I arranged for a taxi to take me to my accommodation.

The lights of the city floated past my window as my driver took me through downtown Atlanta. He welcomed me to the city and asked what had brought me all the way from the UK. I mentioned my conference and briefly explained my own research interests. A change came over him and he lit up excitedly as he told me about his own experience visiting the Center for Civil and Human Rights. He encouraged me to go while I was in Atlanta, telling me that the simulation of the lunch counter protests was an experience that had stayed with him since his visit. News reports of recent police violence against Black Americans brought the memory back of sitting with his eyes closed at the counter. As we drove through the city, he reflected upon what the original protestors had gone through and confessed that while he was sitting at the lunch counter and whenever he saw those news reports that he still wasn't sure he would have been able to maintain his composure the way they had.

Throughout the development of this study, as I designed my fieldwork, wrote my research and interview questions, and analysed my data I continued to think about the cabdriver. Sitting in the backseat of my taxi that evening, it was clear to me that a visit

to a museum had changed this young man in terms of his views of the past, the present, and how he reflected on himself. In many ways, he offered me a preview of the transformative potential of visits to activist museums and his experience is not dissimilar to those shared by my participants. Moreover, this story continues to remind me that anyone might carry with them a similar experience of how a museum changed them in some way – that these stories are perhaps more frequently embedded in the narratives of those around us and a friendly chat as between a driver and his fare has the potential to unexpectedly reveal the transformative potential of museums.

This chapter and the next will detail the findings which emerged from the analysis of both rounds of interviews completed with participants from the Slavery Museum and the Center. I have organised the findings into three specific sections: the role of the museum within the narrative of transformation, the importance of affective connectedness in fostering transformative experiences, and finally the significance of museum visits within the wider field of transformative experience. This chapter focuses on the first of these three through an exploration of specific visitor narratives presented in such a way as to foreground participant experience. Essentially, there exists a complex relationship between ways of thinking, feeling, understanding, and being in the world which are dependent upon where an individual is located within their own narrative of transformation. What these findings will illustrate is that museum visits can be part of these narratives and that they play complex and highly nuanced roles within individual stories of change.

Both this chapter and the next were written in a style which borrows from the ethnographic tradition in order to privilege the words and experience of the participants as well as to include a more complete account of the stories related through the interviews. It was not possible to include every participant's story and so representative examples have been chosen which highlight the broader themes which emerged throughout the analysis. Where I have included information related to participants' identities, for example their gender identity, sexuality, race, or nationality, it has been done partly because those individuals indicated that those aspects of their identity were

an integral part of their experiences and the ways in which they understood their museum visit. It was also important to contextualise participants' experiences more fully especially in cases where individuals may have been unaware or reluctant to discuss how their identities have influenced the ways in which they perceive and negotiate the world. For example, those individuals who enjoy more privilege owing to their identity as white or as male did not as frequently recognise the influence of these identities on their experiences. More specific identifying information, including names, have been changed to protect the privacy of those who participated in the study.

I hasten to add that while I make every effort to share participants' experiences as faithfully as possible, the very nature of qualitative analysis necessitates that these experiences are interpreted through my own lens which is shaped by my own experiences and readings of the data. As part of the analytical process and throughout writing these chapters, I have been careful to examine these stories from a place of reflexive critical curiosity, allowing themes and trends to emerge from participants' stories and re-reading these stories with different intentions, awareness, and reflexivity. This practice has facilitated an approach to the data which does not place value on certain experiences over others. For example, visitors for whom the museum played no significant role in their lives provided insights which were just as illuminating and valuable as visitors for whom the museum was an essential part of their transformative journey. What I wish to present in these chapters is not a hierarchical approach to experience in which value judgements place more emphasis on certain stories, but rather an illustrative spectrum which details the broad range of transformative experience within activist museums.

5.1 What is the role of the museum in the narrative of transformation?

How might we begin to untangle the myriad and complex webs of transformative experience in order to understand the role that museum visits play within visitors' stories of change? When the visit is viewed within this wider field of transformative experience, it is difficult and in some cases impossible to isolate the role it has played for that individual. Furthermore, a single museum visit might perform multiple functions

within a person's transformative narrative or conversely, it might play no role whatsoever. For the purposes of this study I began with visitors' own perceptions of their museum visit, allowing roles to emerge organically from the data. This approach which allowed visitors to define these roles for themselves – to privilege their perceptions and to acknowledge their expertise within their own experience – was an important part of developing an understanding of the roles which museums play within the transformative process.

The trends which emerged from the data point broadly to five overlapping and intersecting roles which we can understand in the following ways: museums remind us of the past and to be mindful of the present and future; museums raise our awareness; museums foster deeper understandings of the past and present; museums inspire action; and finally museums reaffirm transformative pathways for those who are already involved in social justice activities. As stated previously, these roles may intersect and overlap within the transformational narrative of one individual, as illustrated in figure 5-1. As an example, it may be the case for one visitor to have not only been reminded of past injustices, but for a deeper understanding of present forms of oppression to have been fostered through the visit, leading that individual to take action to end it. What is essential to understand is that the role of the museum within the narrative of transformation is contextual, nuanced, and personal.

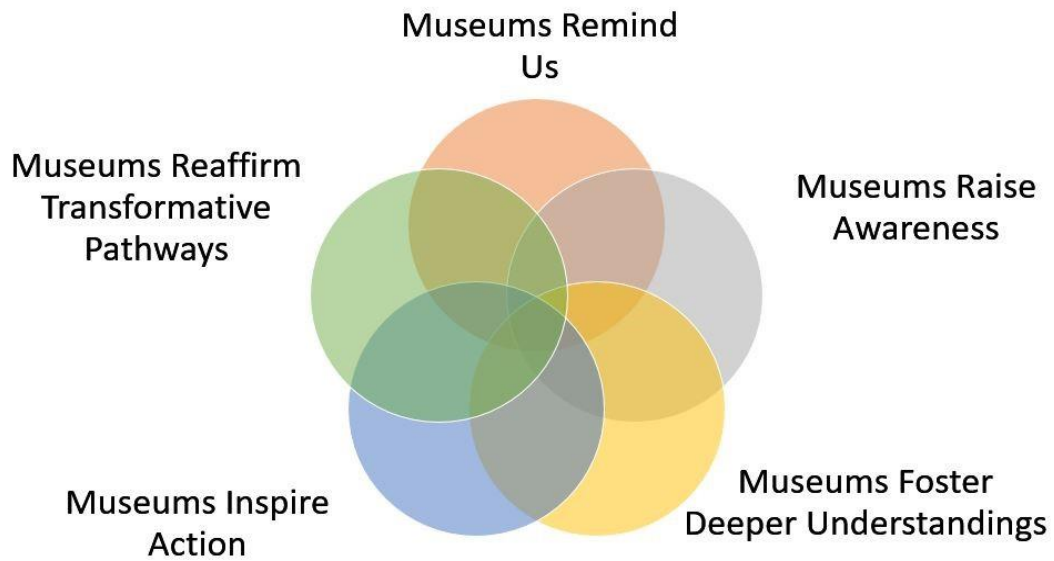


Figure 5-1: The role of the museum within the narrative of transformation

5.2 Museums remind us

Broadly, museums acting as memory institutions which preserve and shape collective memory through practices of collecting and display is fairly well-established (Black, 2011; Crane, 2000; Simon; 2006; 2014). Museums, especially memorial museums or those with a focus on histories of oppression further act in the capacity as memorials and sites of remembrance. This is certainly the case for both the Slavery Museum and the Center with both devoting space in the galleries for memorial and reflection. More than institutions which holds memories of the past, activist museums also act to remind visitors of present legacies of past oppression and to be mindful the impacts of systemic pressures on human and civil rights.

The broad range of memory and remembrance activities with which museum engage form part of the basis for understanding the role of the museum as a reminder. Including both rounds of interviews, twelve participants made seventeen references to the museum acting in the role of a reminder. This elicits a more interesting question: how did these individuals perceive the role of the museum as part of their transformative journey? In order to answer this question, I will provide three narratives from

participants who spoke about the museum acting in this role. These narratives provide a spectrum of experience with regards to museum visits as reminders and illustrate the potential complexities when thinking about museums not simply as reminders of the past but in connecting the past and present.

5.2.1 'It's just an interesting part of history' – James, visitor to the Slavery Museum

James, a white British man in his early seventies was visiting the Slavery Museum with his wife. He remembered Liverpool and the Albert Docks where the museum is located when it was a working port:

I used to come to Liverpool but when I was working in the docks and places like that years and years and years ago. It's changed quite considerably since when I first came down here when it was a proper docks. It's all sort of, I don't know, people doing nothing now I suppose – not like it used to be anyway.

Most of the visitors I interviewed at the Slavery Museum had indeed come specifically to visit that museum. When asked, James was very quick to assert that they had come to the Maritime Museum and to position the Slavery Museum as part of that institution:

We actually came to the Maritime Museum which the Slavery Museum is obviously part of. So we've transgressed into this place really because we'd decided we were going to come to the museum anyway so we just ended up in here.

Throughout our interview, James adopted a perspective on slavery which allowed him to maintain an emotional and empathetic distance from the more humanising narratives woven throughout the museum. For example, in describing his interest in some of the metal artefacts, specifically a set of shackles, he was primarily interested in the manufacturing of these items and did not consider their use or who might have worn them:

I was looking at some of the metal artefacts. I mean I'm an engineer so I'm always interested in that and I know that a lot of the sort of arm and ankle bits were all made in the UK by a company which supplied ironware to vessels for years and years and years. You know and they still carried on until about the late sixties the company did.

James reflected that his former profession as an engineer perhaps influenced the way in which he perceived the museum and more specifically some of the objects.

James also reflected on his own personal memories related to the migration of Afro-Caribbean people to the United Kingdom and his experiences living in the southern United States and in South Africa during the end of apartheid. Despite having lived through and witnessing racial segregation, James tended to view these memories through a dispassionate, historical lens – not dissimilar to the ways in which he viewed the themes within the museum exhibitions. For him, the museum visit sat squarely in an historical framework:

[Slavery is] just something that's a long time away isn't it? There were so many people who had their fingers in the pie, it wasn't considered to be anything that was untoward in those times. Nowadays people are probably appalled by it. There were lots of other things weren't there? People had to go and work in mines and you know stuff like that. They were really appalling. You know wherever it was. So it's just interesting a part of history.

James engaged with the narratives around historic slavery through a lens which failed to acknowledge its contemporary legacies nor the instances of contemporary slavery highlighted in the museum. What is interesting here is the pairing of the struggles of miners to that of enslaved Africans, perhaps reflecting his deeper connection to that oppressed group.

I asked James to reflect on whether he might think, feel, or act differently as a result of his visit to the Slavery Museum:

I don't know really. I was looking at a couple of the books downstairs. I might buy one of the books. I haven't decided which one yet. I read a very interesting book a couple of years ago called Blood River ... about a trip down the Congo and it has a lot of a lot of information in it about slavery and it's a modern book but it has a lot of things in it about slavery from years ago ... But I might just have a look at what's downstairs and go and buy one.

I encountered James later in the afternoon in part of the Maritime Museum. He informed me that he had purchased Solomon Northup's novel *Twelve Years a Slave* from the museum bookshop. It is difficult to ascertain whether this purchase was entirely spurred by his museum visit or whether, as is possible, our conversation contributed to his decision to seek out further engagement on the topic of slavery. The fact that James did not participate in a follow-up interview makes determining what, if any, lasting impressions his visit had on him or indeed, whether he read the book he purchased impossible.

The story of James provides an insight into the experience of visitors who disengage from the contemporary legacies of historical oppression. His museum experience did not necessarily disrupt his previous understandings of history nor did it lead to a confrontation of his understandings of the ongoing legacies of that history. His identity as a white British man should not be overlooked as a contributing factor to his difficulty in engaging in a more active and contemporary reading of slavery as was his ability to maintain an emotional and historic distance from the topic.

Whether his decision to purchase a book and to potentially engage further with the topic was solely the result of his visit or, as I suspect was partially due to our conversation, there is an argument to be made that despite his emotional and historical distancing and his ability to overlook contemporary legacies of slavery, he was nonetheless willing to open himself to further learning (and potentially) transformative opportunities. We might think about James's narrative of transformation in terms of continual light engagement with historical injustice. For him, the museum visit did not in itself prompt deeper or further reflection on his views of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and its contemporary global legacies. The visit did, in part, encourage further engagement with

the topic which manifested in the purchase of a book. In the case of James, we can only speculate as to what potential transformative impacts might arise from this sort of light engagement with the topic in future.

5.2.2 'You know I was not in that time frame, but my people were and therefore the connection is still there' – Kamal, visitor to the Center

Kamal's story provides a different example of the museum visit acting in the role of a reminder; in this instance as a form of memorialisation in relation to sacrifices made by previous generations. Kamal was visiting the Center with his wife Chantell in order to see a temporary exhibition on Malcolm X which had unfortunately already finished. Both Kamal and Chantell found that their visit to the Center provided opportunities to draw connections between past injustices and the current political situation in the United States during the Presidential primaries. This formed one of the most important lenses through which they perceived the narratives and themes presented in the Center. Kamal said, 'I made a joke to my wife when we were going into the hall downstairs: it's interesting we see all these things now; at the end of the year we may see a lot again.' This idea of potential future attacks on civil rights arising from the election of Donald Trump (which had not yet occurred at the time I conducted my fieldwork), formed a strong part of Kamal and Chantell's visit to the Center and connected historic injustices to their contemporary realities as Black American Muslims.

These connections forged through their identities was most strongly evident in the way in which Kamal spoke about the role the Center played in his own transformative journey. The ideas of remembrance and memorialisation were the most important aspect of his experience at the Center which had provided a space for him to connect to people of the past in profoundly empathetic ways:

[The Center is] more a means of remembrance, acknowledgement, respect. You know just as in the Hall of Martyrs [exhibit], [The Center] is a means of respect that's long overdue. So what I'll take away from my visit is that remembrance ... We continuously try to learn about history in our family and it's a reminder saying lest we forget. It is for us not to forget. It's very

emotional. You know I was not in that time frame, but my people were and therefore the connection is still there.

For Kamal, his identity as a Black American contributed to his ability to connect affectively in those spaces of remembrance. Having a place and means of remembering and being reminded of the sacrifices which were made during the Civil Rights Movement were very important to him. Whereas James felt distanced from the past during his museum visit, Kamal was very much connected to the past through his identity and through the very visceral and emotive experiences elicited by the Center. Part of this remembrance is entwined with the ideas of acknowledgement and respect; making people visible who might have gone unremembered otherwise.

It is important to examine another aspect of Kamal's experience which shaped the role of the museum for both he and Chantell. Both were disappointed by the absences within the narrative on the American Civil Rights Movement. Many of the stories and individuals represented in the galleries were 'the safe people' they said. Leaders whose views deviated from non-violent means of protest such as Kwame Ture and Malcolm X were not given as much space within the narrative. Kamal reflected on this in relation to the role of the museum as a reminder or memory institution saying, 'I think we have to not only not forget but we also have to make sure that we tell the whole story.' He and Chantell were quite disappointed in having missed the temporary exhibition on Malcolm X which members of their mosque had encouraged them to see. Kamal's criticism of the Center illustrates the ways in which visitors negotiate their experience through personal understandings, ways of knowing, and remembering.

In relation to the ways in which Kamal's story informs our understanding of the role of the museum as a reminder, it provides insights into the ways in which remembering is actively grounded within contemporary reflection. That is, when the museum acts as a reminder it is not necessarily rooted solely in acting as a reminder of the past – there are connections which are made and forged to contemporary society and contemporary identities which can provide highly emotive and empathetic experiences for visitors.

5.2.3 'I'm just really glad to have that fire relit in me and museums like this do that.' – Caroline, visitor to the Center

The final story in this section is that of Caroline, a gerontologist in her late 60s. She was visiting the Center with her granddaughter, Nicole a student at an HBCU⁴ in Atlanta. Caroline and Nicole had come to the Center following a visit to the Martin Luther King, Jr Art Gallery. For Caroline, the themes presented in the Center were part of her lived experience – a lived experience she wanted to share with her granddaughter:

I have actually lived most of the items that are contained in this museum and I have always tried to teach my children that if you understand where you came from, you can better define where you're going. So this is an opportunity to help her understand even more where she's come from.

In this way the museum was not a reminder of an abstract past – it was a visceral reminder of Caroline's personal past. Throughout their visit, Caroline and Nicole's interactions could best be described as a kind of intergenerational exchange with Caroline actively used the Center as a means to connect her personal past to Nicole's contemporary realities. This was especially evident in their discussion around the student involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. Nicole found herself drawn to these stories as a student herself:

One of the streets I walk across every day is called the Atlanta Student Movement Boulevard where students from Moorehouse College and Atlanta University came together to fight for civil rights and so I was really excited to see that. And I actually live on SNCC Way and I just realised that SNCC stands for Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and they helped with the Selma March and everything and things that I didn't even know! I'm actually living black history so I found that very interesting.

⁴ HBCU refers to an historically black college or university. It is defined in US law by the Higher Education Act of 1965 as "any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principle mission was, and is, the education of black Americans and that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary [of Education]. (*Higher Education Act 1965*, P.L. 89—329)

Caroline went on to add:

And people don't know the role [students] played in the Civil Rights Movement. There really would not have been a Civil Rights Movement without students. That students really were the major force behind the Civil Rights Movement and so I wanted her to know that, just like I already knew it, but I wanted her to know it and more than know it, I wanted her to feel it.

This exchange characterises much of Caroline and Nicole's experience at the Center. Their visit was part of an intimate and emotive sharing experience across generations often with Nicole being struck with the realisation of the closeness of these historic events both in time and to herself through her connection to her grandmother. For Caroline, having the lived personal experience with the Civil Rights Movement, provided a means for more profound acts of remembrance:

You know what? You can become very complacent in your life where you feel very comfortable and things are just fine in your little corner of the world but you have to realise that you have a corner of the world for a reason. Museums and places that document African-American history remind all of us that are doing well that not everybody did well, not everybody is doing well, and for those of us that are doing well, a very high price was paid for that. And so does it rekindle something in me? Absolutely. To do something? Absolutely. And one of those things is to pass this on to my children. Another thing is to let my friends know that when you get to Atlanta, you should come to [The Center]; when you get to Birmingham you should go to the [Birmingham Civil Rights Institute] so that they will take time out of their busy schedules to relive what we all lived through and to have that fire in them rekindled so that they can appreciate and protect the life that they have.

For Caroline, museums like the Center provide opportunities, not only to remember the past and the ways in which the present has been shaped by the past, but to share that memory with others. When Caroline speaks about being reminded it is not a passive engagement with memory but rather an active one which 'rekindles' appreciation of the past and leads to action through the protection of the rights which were hard won by her generation. It is here that we can see the ways in which museums play multiple roles

within the narrative of one individual. For Caroline the Center is a reminder but it also inspires acts of sharing and reaffirms her transformative journey.

Caroline's example is especially poignant with regards to the instrumentality of activist museums – that is the conscious use of visits to activist institutions in order to prompt certain ways of thinking, feeling, and being:

Whenever I travel I try to go to those museums or things that have been set up to document the Black experience ... It just makes me appreciate all the things that we do have in life. Places like this remind you of the struggle – they bring it back to you in a very real way and it lets you know that this was not easy. None of this came easy and so we need to be appreciative but we also need to be very protective because it didn't come easy and it could slip away at any point in time. So I'm just really glad to have that fire relit in me and museums like this do that which is why I gravitate to them no matter where I am.

Caroline consciously initiates a cycle of remembrance, appreciation, sharing, and reaffirmation through visiting institutions similar to the Center. We might think of these visits in the sense of a proverbial notification tone which prods her out of that state of complacency. Having periodic reminders in the form of museum visits prompts her desire to share her understandings and experiences with others such as her granddaughter. Here the museum visit is a reminder in two separate ways – a reminder of the past, but also a reminder to remain active and to continue to engage with ideas around social justice.

The stories of James, Kamal, and Caroline were chosen not only for their representative qualities but also because they illustrate the spectrum of experience with regards to museums inhabiting the role of a reminder within narratives of transformation. Through James we see that the visit might only serve as a reminder of an abstract past which seemingly does not engender deeper connections between the past and present. Kamal has shown us that museum visits can provide a means to connect more profoundly with people of the past through memorialisation and remembrance. Caroline provides an

example of how museum visits can be used consciously as reminders of the past and as reminders to be active in the present. These examples also provide a glimpse into the ways in which identity can facilitate deeper engagement through remembrance.

5.3 Museums raise awareness

In terms of emancipatory learning and models of change, awareness-raising forms a large part of the transformative process. However, awareness-raising is not solely about the construction of new ways of thinking; it must also include an intent to influence new ways of thinking and being in the world:

To raise awareness of something - good, bad or indifferent - is to promote its visibility and credibility within a community or society. To raise awareness is also to inform and educate people about a topic or issue with the intention of influencing their attitudes, behaviours and beliefs towards the achievement of a defined purpose or goal. (Sayers, 2006, p. 10)

This definition of awareness-raising aligns with the intentions underpinning activist museum practice in which it is hoped that engagements with the museum will not only highlight historic and contemporary examples of injustice but will prompt visitors to change and work towards a more equitable society.

The stories in this section illustrate that awareness-raising in the museum arises from multiple embedded approaches to activist museum practice including interpretive strategies, accessible facilities, and a willingness among staff to engage visitors in challenging dialogues.

5.3.1 'It's this sort of thing that actually makes you realise that there's more going on in the world than in your own little bubble.' – Scott, visitor to the Slavery Museum

Scott and his partner Samantha (Sam) were visiting the Slavery Museum during a weekend holiday in Liverpool. They had chosen to come specifically to the Slavery Museum owing to Sam's interest in the Transatlantic Slave Trade; an interest she had

developed through her studies at university. Whereas Sam had a wealth of previous knowledge on the subject, Scott had virtually none. During our first interview, he shared with me that his visit had not only piqued his interest in the topic but that he was surprised at how engaged he had been while reading the text throughout the galleries:

I mean normally if I'm going to go to a museum I don't read I just look at the bits and pieces [collections]. Actually this time I was more interested in reading and understanding a bit more and knowing a bit more than actually looking at the bits and pieces. I think it's because it's something I don't really know anything about and it's probably something I should know something about. I mean it affects people and I guess people have been through hard times and you don't know about it. So I guess I feel I should know something about it. The stuff [collections] I've not been so bothered about I haven't really looked at any of it.

Scott raises a few interesting points in his discussion around his engagement with the museum. Firstly, his interest in the subject stems from a need to bear witness to the suffering of others – that there is what we might think of as an obligation to know and understand the experiences of oppressed people. Secondly, he engages with the topic almost exclusively through the exhibition text rather than through the museum collections. There were other participants who engaged with the topics in similar ways – engaging more with text, interactives, or audio-visual media as illustrated in table 5-1. While this is partly explained by the Center's emphasis on interactive media, visitors to the Slavery Museum also tended to be drawn to media, interactives, and text which highlighted personal stories.

This is not to say that objects were not an important part of visitors' engagement as collections in both the Slavery Museum and the Center proved to be powerful parts of the visitor experience for some participants.

Table 5-1: Participant engagement based on interpretation strategies

	Collections	Audio-visual media	Interactives	Exhibition text
International Slavery Museum	8	8	1	4
The Center	2	8	16	0
Total	10	16	17	4

Table 5-1: Breakdown of participant engagement based on interpretation strategies.

This table highlights the ways in which participants engaged with the topics at the Slavery Museum and the Center. Not all participants discussed their engagement specifically. These numbers reflect the participants who made direct references to their primary means of engaging with the topics.

The temporary exhibition *Broken Lives* was foremost on Scott and Sam's minds when they were discussing their visit. This exhibition had a profound impact on the ways in which both Sam and Scott thought not only about slavery but about themselves within an interconnected global society. Scott began by describing his experience in the *Broken Lives* exhibition:

I spent some time walking around the bit about what still happens in places like India. I really just wasn't aware that kind of stuff goes on and [the exhibition] draws your attention to things like that. I stood there thinking actually my jumper could well have been made by somebody that's going through this kind of thing – that's been forced to work in a cotton mill and it's just going around in a cycle we can't get out of. So I guess it makes you a little bit more aware about some of the difficulties that other people are going through that you just don't realise, because it's very easy to be separated from it. It's this sort of thing that actually makes you realise that there's more going on in the world than in your own little bubble.

Scott describes an experience not only of awareness-raising with respect to contemporary slavery but of his own role within systems which perpetuate it. Sam had a similar experience with regards to this same part of the exhibit:

I was exactly the same. I saw the thing about fashion and I took a screenshot on my phone – there's a website that you can look out for [more information] because I didn't think about [contemporary slavery in fashion] really.

For Sam, having her awareness raised prompted her to photograph part of the exhibition so that she could engage further with these ideas after leaving the museum. In describing the ways in which she thought this experience might change her, she noted:

It's something in normal everyday life I'll actually think of – it'll pop into my head now whereas before it wasn't something I thought of.

When similarly asked to reflect on how this new awareness might change his experience going forward, Scott admitted that he was unsure whether it would make a lasting impression on him but thought it might in relation to future purchasing habits:

It just makes you more aware of stuff that's going on. Whether in a week's time you give it any thought, I don't know. It's something I'll probably be a little bit more aware of. There are certain shops that you hear about that have bad reputations and which maybe you'll think about that.

Sam did not complete a follow-up interview so it is not possible to state with assurance whether the awareness-raising which took place at the time of her visit played a further role in her life. I was, however, able to get in touch with Scott and over the course of several emails, we discussed his museum experience and the role it had played in the intervening months. The awareness-raising which had taken place in the museum had led to new ways of thinking and understanding the subject of slavery:

I think it has made me think differently about the subject as a whole, I wasn't really aware of slavery as a modern problem or the different forms that are common in the modern world. I have certainly learnt that slavery is still very much a world problem and is not just a subject that affected people hundreds of years ago. I think the benefit to me is a better understanding of a problem I wasn't really aware of, and a better understanding of the issue and its impact on people, not only in years gone by but in the world today. It is very easy for people to remain oblivious to the problems of others in the world so

an exhibition that brings tough human stories to the front and helps educate people on them can only be a good thing.

When asked whether his visit to the museum had manifested in any changes in his life he said the following:

I wouldn't say I have changed anything in my day to day life, but having visited the museum, I have gained a better understanding of the subject, I would consider it something that I would be interested in learning more about. I certainly would be more inclined to watch documentaries, films, read newspaper stories, etc. on the subject rather than skipping over them. I do donate to charities from time to time and it would also be a worthwhile cause I would happily donate to having learned more about it.

Though Scott felt that he had not made any conscious, discernible changes within his life as a result of his visit to the Slavery Museum, I would argue that having the ability to critically reflect on his own role in perpetuating systems of oppression and having more of an inclination to notice and engage with the topic of slavery represents significant progress in his transformative journey. Any future learning or actions might be traced back to this initial experience at the Slavery Museum mitigated through his continuing engagement with the topic. While it is not possible to say what shape Scott's transformative journey will take in future, it is possible to point to his museum visit as an experience which raised his awareness of contemporary examples of slavery and the interconnected systems which foster it and of which he is part.

5.3.2 'You came in here and you changed your mind about something.' – David, staff member at the Center

I would now like to turn to a story related to me by David Hopings, a member of staff at the Center. As Manager of Visitor Experience, David's role is to ensure a good visitor experience from a logistics and operations standpoint. While much of his work tends to be behind-the-scenes, David has made a special point of walking through the galleries several times throughout the day to engage with visitors. During our interview, David related the following story to me:

One day on my way down the stairs this lady asked me a question I hear a thousand times a day, where's the bathroom? I pointed and then I went and did something and came back in a thoroughly tight envelope of time and then I saw her again with her friend and they were discussing a discomfort with the restrooms up here because they're unisex bathrooms which can be a little uncomfortable for people who are used to the idea of going to separate gendered bathrooms.

Part of the work of being here is that you are constantly in the middle of conversations that are sometimes difficult for people – sometimes unwanted for people or sometimes outside someone's knowledge base. So I try to be careful about how much I download people with information at any one time because I don't want them to feel like I'm talking down to them. It's on the walls in here so if they're interested they can find it so I don't always tell them exactly what I think.

David decided to approach the women again and directed them to toilet facilities on the other floors of the Center which were gendered:

They said thanks and the woman kind of caught my eye and then she was like can I ask you a question? What's with these unisex bathrooms? I find them in restaurants more and she goes off on this whole diatribe and she was like so what is this all about?

I took a pause because initially I wasn't really sure this was the right conversation but you have to take a risk sometimes. So I said the reason why these bathrooms don't have a gender is because one of the things that we are concerned about as the Center for Civil and Human Rights is gender equality for transgender people, for men, for women, for parents who need to breastfeed – all ranges of people should be accepted here. She was like oh! So if I didn't have a gender that I feel comfortable with, I can go to either one of these bathrooms? I said exactly. And she was like, well shoot I wasn't going to use that bathroom but now I'll go back and use that bathroom and she marched right over there and used the bathroom.

*Then I saw her half an hour later because a lot of my day I spend looping the building so you run into people multiple times and she told me, you should tell everyone and I was like **you** should tell everyone. You came in here and you changed your mind about something. She was like, yeah I will! I'm proud of this!*

David's anecdote illustrates the strength of applying an embedded approach to activist museum practice. Throughout their visit, the women were engaging with interpretations of the historic Civil Rights Movement and contemporary global human rights movements. The Center further models tenets of human and civil rights movements through the provision of gender neutral toilet facilities, accessible spaces, and diverse hiring practices. This story also provides evidence of the importance of support and advocacy from front-of-house staff to engage with visitors around topics which some might perceive as challenging. Merely having gender neutral toilet facilities was not enough to trigger understanding and indeed empathy for what non-binary, transgendered, or breastfeeding parents might feel, rather it was a combination of the facilities and David's willingness to honestly engage with the visitors which created space for this awareness-raising moment. More importantly, this moment elicited in this woman a desire to 'tell everyone' – to share her new found attitudes and understandings with others.

What is notable about both of these stories are the surprising ways in which the museum visit acted as a catalyst for awareness-raising. For Scott, the in-gallery text engaged him, more so than the collections to consider contemporary legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and contemporary slavery in India. His experience fostered a critical examination of systems of oppression – systems in which he plays a part. For the woman in David's story, being confronted with gender neutral toilet facilities and having the opportunity to engage with someone on the importance of their provision sparked an empathetic awareness of diverse experiences including the experiences of transgender people. Both of these stories highlight the need to include varied embedded approaches to activist practice both in terms of more traditional interpretation (in-gallery text) and through modelling the ideals of equality inherent in the themes encapsulated within the institution (providing accessible spaces for all).

5.4 Museums foster deeper understandings

Creating opportunities and space for visitors to engage deeply with exhibitions topics, personal narratives, and wider thematic interpretations is an essential part of museum

practice. This sort of engagement fosters deeper understandings of the world and the experience of others and oneself in the world – understandings which can lead to new ways of thinking, attitudes and values, and feelings of appreciation and pride. Already in the stories included in this chapter we find examples in which the museum visit has fostered these deeper understandings. Nicole discussed the deeply moving nature of discovering her own personal connections to the Civil Rights Movement through sharing her visit with her grandmother, Caroline. Scott discovered his own role within societal systems which contribute to contemporary slavery during his visit to the Slavery Museum and the empathetic connections revealed through David's anecdote further illustrate the power of activist museums to bridge understandings between peoples through an embedded approach. We see in these examples the importance of fostering deeper understandings and also the ways in which the roles of the museum within narratives of transformations can intersect. The following stories further unpack the role of the museum to foster these rich and nuanced understandings in relation to different stories of change.

5.4.1 'The raw power of some of the exhibits helps to foster a deepening understanding of some incredibly important (and upsetting) issues.' – Matt, visitor to the Slavery Museum

Matt, a white British man working in marketing was visiting Liverpool with his wife Victoria, a white British academic. Both had a deep interest in the topic of the Transatlantic Slave Trade borne out of formal study of the subject at university. The couple had found their visit to be an affectively charged experience and indeed, there were instances which they had found it difficult to navigate the emotions elicited. This was especially the case with the audio-visual presentation in the Middle Passage gallery depicting the experience of enslaved Africans in the hold of a slave ship during the crossing. Victoria explained:

I found it troubling more than anything else ... I didn't quite know how to situate that in there. I sort of just wandered in without really knowing what it was meant to be and with it being wordless ... I don't know. I found it quite troubling ... I think the physicality of it; how much it focused in on wounds and suffering and obviously that's really important but it was just a very

suddenly visceral experience in the middle of an exhibit which to that point had been very textual and kind of information-heavy ... I think it's really important that there's that side of things but I struggled a bit with how I mediated it.

Matt echoed these sentiments and also pointed to the videos of personal stories relating to contemporary slavery and the legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade which appear in the passage next to the Africa gallery: They both agreed that the personal narratives captured them more than the objects on display across from them. The engagement with personal narratives continued in the Middle Passage gallery:

It's that whole Middle Passage and the experience of slavery in the Americas; the video of the woman telling all the slavery stories as well, because that's a very effective way of exploring the experience or range of experiences. [It's] really well realised. You can really imagine [it] somehow.

Victoria also spoke about the wider narrative in this section of the museum:

The kind of fractional experience as well and just how on the one side you have the merchants and the traders and the long, really heavily documented preparations that go into the voyages and on the other side you've got these traces – the fractional oral histories that have to compete for space with it. I think that idea is really important and done really well. That you had so many people's lives and voices and histories lost and just completely subsumed in this very bureaucratic kind of Western European industry.

The engagement with the overall narrative as well as with the personal stories woven throughout the museum featured prominently in their discussions around their experience. These engagements provided a means of connecting historic slavery to contemporary legacies:

The fact that a third of [the museum] is devoted to legacies and then within that the kind of continued – I don't know the right terms for it – it's not a museum piece. It's not something that's neatly boxed up in history that we've solved now. It's still very much shaping presents in the world today. I think it's something that's going to be there for a very long time.

While Victoria made the above statement, Matt agreed stating his thoughts were ‘running down a similar vein.’

Victoria and Matt were uncertain about the role the museum might play in shaping their viewpoints and ways of being in the world. Both agreed that there was a need to give some space in order to process the experience more fully – a sentiment that was repeated by many participants at both the Slavery Museum and the Center and harkens back to Simon’s (2014) assertion that deeply affective experiences require reflective distance in order to fully appreciate the experience.

Victoria was unavailable for a follow-up interview; however, I was able to follow-up with Matt through email. I asked him about how he viewed his museum experience after having some of that distance:

I think it’s a wonderful museum and the raw power of some of the exhibits helps to foster a deeper understanding of some incredibly important (and upsetting) issues. I think that having more of a sense of the cruel realities of slavery, as well as of its unimaginable extent, has helped to deepen my understanding of a range of contemporary issues. For example, recently the nation had been awash with the cheery jingoism of the Brexit campaign. My experience at the Slavery Museum gives me more of an idea of what Britain is, the foundation of its wealth, and served as an interesting counterpoint to the facile flag waving and nationalistic nonsense that dominated the referendum debate.

Matt explicitly captures the role the museum visit has played within his wider transformative journey – the museum created space in which he was able to engage with personal, emotive narratives and build new, deeper understandings of the continued legacies of historic slavery in contemporary Britain. He further acknowledged that his narrative of transformation was far from complete: ‘my objective in visiting the museum was to try to get to grips with a difficult truth of world history. I am still trying.’

This admission that there is room for further growth and understandings is quite interesting especially given Matt's previous visit to the Slavery Museum as well as his formal study of the subject. It can be the case, as will be illustrated in the next chapter, that prior knowledge can act as a barrier to the deeper engagements evidenced in Matt's story. It is likely that the affective engagement with personal narratives during his visit created the opportunity to foster deeper understandings.

5.4.2 'I think what I was hoping to take away ... is just more appreciation, a deeper understanding of the history of this story and the experience.' – Silvia, visitor to the Center (with her husband, Ian)

Silvia and Ian, a white American couple in their early forties had added a few extra days onto a business trip to Atlanta in order to explore the city. The day before their visit to the Center, they had visited the Sweet Auburn neighbourhood and the Martin Luther King, Jr National Historic Park. Ian had a deep interest in the Civil Rights Movement, having read a number of books on the subject while Silvia had only a passing familiarity with it gained through formal schooling. It is interesting to note that both Silvia and Ian felt that their visit to the Center fostered deeper understandings of civil and human rights – that the differences in prior knowledge and interest did not present any barriers, but rather that their museum visit was mitigated individually through their prior experiences.

This is first seen in their engagement with the interactive lunch counter. Silvia was surprised at the depth of her emotional engagement stating:

What I'm probably going to remember is the lunch counter just because it had the most emotional impact ... I started crying. Sometimes it surprises me how I have emotional reactions but it's just tough. I mean it forced you to really think what would it feel like being there.

While Silvia had been deeply affected by this experience, Ian found that his prior familiarity with the subject actually worked to undermine the depth of his emotional engagement:

I kept waiting for it to get worse. It's terrible to say but I had read The March comic by John Lewis and read about those kind of experiences in a reprint of the Martin Luther King comic from back in the era. Reading those, seeing [the film] Selma, I was wondering what are they going to have rigged up here that's going to make this like reality? So I didn't have that reaction because I kept waiting for it to get worse because I'd seen that it could get worse. I kept wondering how far within the confines of this place will they go with this to show how bad it would be.

It is interesting that for Ian, his prior understandings of the Civil Rights Movement gained through engagement in popular depictions of the movement posed as a barrier to the kind of emotional and empathetic engagement experienced by Silvia.

Despite this differing level of engagement with this specific part of the exhibitions, both Silvia and Ian found themselves drawn to the gallery on contemporary global human rights and more specifically to the display on the ethical footprint of common products imported to the United States. They had been so interested in this aspect of the exhibition that Silvia had discussed it with one of the gallery attendants:

I think we started talking to her about the flowers ... I was just kind of shocked about how much impact the products have. It's so complex because you have the poverty issues and you have the fair treatment of workers issues and I was just shocked that the US imports flowers from abroad to begin with!

When I asked Silvia what she would take away from her visit, she focused on more internal transformations which were related to her motivations in wanting to visit the Center in the first instance:

I think what I was hoping to take away and what I will is just more appreciation, a deeper understanding of the history of this story and the experience. I think I'm on a journey to understand where we are today in race relations and this part of the story you got to know the history to get where we are today. But personally, for me, maybe I didn't pay attention in school very well, it didn't stick, but I think [the museum] filled in a lot of details I didn't know or a lot of bits of the story ... I'm kind of filling in more details to understand what happened.

In some ways, her sentiments reflect those of Matt who was on a similar journey to better understand the world, how the past has shaped the present, and himself within it.

Picking up on her comment about formal schooling, Ian posited that the ways in which US schools address history often omits more recent events and movements owing to a greater focus on other aspects of American history like the American Civil War; ‘by the time you hit the 1960s, we’ve fallen behind and we don’t have time to discuss these things anymore.’ Silvia agreed that she hadn’t had much exposure to the Civil Rights Movement through her schooling and that the Center had addressed many of these gaps in her knowledge.

Both Silvia and Ian agreed to follow-up interviews through email. In those communications, Silvia reflected upon the ways her visit had helped her develop a deeper understanding and awareness of issues around civil and human rights and further how other experiences she had had subsequently were further shaping these understandings:

I’ve had several experiences that are layering deeper understanding of this part of our human history/story ... I’m starting to see the same story of the struggle for equal rights repeated over and over with different populations. (I knew this was the case, but the exposure to more personal stories is helping me understand it on a deeper level.)

These experiences included watching the film *Selma* and reading a friend’s autobiography which detailed the barriers to education disabled people face. She had also read about the opening of the Smithsonian Museum of African American History and Culture in a magazine which included personal stories of Black Americans. Her museum experience not only prompted deeper reflection and understanding but also had raised her awareness. She wrote about being ‘more inclined to pay more attention to this topic and to keep learning’ once again illustrating the intersection of various roles within one transformation narrative.

Ian also felt that his visit to the Center had provided him 'with a fuller understanding of the history behind certain issues of race in America.' This understanding stretched to having more insights into contemporary racial struggles, 'I have more knowledge now than I did before, and so a tiny bit of my vast ignorance has been addressed.' Despite his prior knowledge having posed a barrier at one point during his visit to the Center, Ian was open to developing more understandings of historic and contemporary issues around race in the United States through his visit to the Center. Both Silvia and Ian's experiences at the Center illustrate once again the intersectional nature of the role of the museum within the narrative of transformation. Their experience highlights the ways in which museum experiences can foster deeper understandings not only by addressing gaps in knowledge but by providing context for that knowledge.

The role of the museum in deepening understandings is perhaps the most common to have arisen through this study. While I have highlighted the stories of Matt and Silvia and Ian, evidence of activist museums to foster understanding can be seen in David's anecdote and Scott's story as well as through Nicole's interactions with her grandmother. In some respects, museums are best placed to work toward this role and many organisations incorporate it into their mission and vision statements along with raising awareness and inspiring action – the role I will explore in the next section.

5.5 Museums inspire action

Up to this point, we might consider that the role of the museum within the narrative of transformation to be related to internal changes with regards to attitudes, values, and understandings. Being reminded of the past and its influence on the present, raising awareness, and fostering deeper, more critical understandings of the world and one's place within it describe new ways of thinking, feeling, and being within oneself in the world. The understandings which have emerged with regards to the role of the museum in inspiring action provides fresh insights into the contextual processes at work with regards to the outward expression of these more internal transformations. In the stories already shared throughout this chapter, we can begin to see how visits to activist museums have inspired the actions of individuals. For example, Caroline expressed her

intentions to share her experience with others and to encourage them to seek out similar opportunities to visit museums. Both Scott and Silvia were drawn to learning more about the topics of slavery and the Civil Rights Movement and Silvia had already begun to read more on the subject.

While these actions when viewed on a global scale are seemingly insignificant, it is essential to view them within the context of the individual's narrative of transformation – for someone who had little or no awareness of contemporary slavery, making an effort to continue to engage with the subject and learn more is quite a significant forward step within the framework of their life. For others, the actions inspired by their museum visit might have further reaching consequences within the wider world. It is important that we think about action in a nuanced sense by situating it contextually within the lives of the individual.

5.5.1 'Any changes I've made haven't been ground breaking and maybe it's time that I got more involved.' – Ashley, visitor to the Center

Ashley, a white university student from the United States was visiting the Center with her friend, Christina. Both characterised their visit as being a highly emotive experience with the interactive lunch counter having elicited strong empathetic connections. Ashley remarked that this interactive experience had formed one of the most important parts of her visit:

It's the closest you can get to actually understanding the Civil Rights Movement I think. It was like a simulated experience of it. It was scary. Like listening to those yells in my ear I thought someone was yelling off to the side. I thought it was real. It was so scary.

For Ashley, this experience was especially unsettling as it brought back memories of harassment she had faced in her own life:

In my past, I have dealt with a very aggressive individual and the [lunch counter] reminded me of that. I completely understand that what I faced is

very different from what Black Americans had to go through, and there's no way that I will ever truly understand how that racism feels but I did have a personal connection to the audio recording which made it that much harder to listen to.

Throughout her visit, Ashley found herself engaging emotionally with the content of the exhibitions especially the video presentations in the gallery related to the March on Washington. This tied into that feeling of history being brought to life in ways which were more fully realised than what she had learned through books or formalised education. She began to draw connections to the historic Civil Rights Movement and the current political climate in the United States with reference to the Presidential Primaries:

I kept thinking it's making me afraid of the upcoming Presidential elections and who's going to win and what if we reverted to something like this and then had to go through that process of years trying to win back rights for people? Creating peace is always so much harder than creating hatred.

Both women found it difficult to articulate whether their visit had inspired them towards committing actions in the future. Ashley felt that the overriding message of the Center was 'that we've come so far – our society has come so far but I feel like we still have stuff to do.' Christina discussed feeling a desire to do something but both she and Ashley were uncertain how to proceed and what their role could be:

I'm not sure what we could do as two young college kids – what role we have to play in any sort of race issue but I mean if there's a place, I'm sure we would love to get involved.

Ashley agreed that she felt unsure about how to parlay the highly emotive experience she had at the Center into action in her own life.

I was able to get in touch with Ashley six-months following her visit and through a series of emails, I asked her to reflect on her time at the Center. For her, the emotional and

empathetic connections she had developed during her visit were still at the forefront of her mind:

I remember feeling very emotional during the video related to the March on Washington. It was shown in a very large room in the middle of the museum. The museum did a very good job in creating a timeline, first we were shown what Black Americans were facing which was very shocking, then we got to see some sort of progress or at least this giant culmination of people coming together which is incredibly powerful. I think it stayed with me because I was so moved by the act itself.

The Center had fostered deeper understandings of the Civil Rights Movement which Ashley had connected to contemporary rights movements, specifically the #BlackLivesMatter movement:

I think that with today's current issues, and the #BlackLivesMatter movement, it is so important for this history to be learned and appreciated. Once people try to understand what black people had and still have to face, they'll understand the purpose of BLM ... I think the exhibit has improved my understanding of BLM and the issues related to that. It provides background knowledge that leads to sympathy when such tragedies occur. I already supported the movement but I think the museum gave a more hands-on understanding. It provided opportunities to engage and simulate the racism that was very much alive in the '40s and '50s.

It is interesting to note that while Ashley supported contemporary movements advancing racial equality, her visit to the Center provided more opportunities to engage with these topics using 'a more hands-on' approach. We might understand this as engaging in an authentic, embodied way. This was especially the case for her experience with the interactive lunch counter.

For Ashley, these better understandings borne out of highly emotive, empathetic, and embodied experiences at the Center, bolstered her confidence and allowed her to engage others on the topic of racial equality in the United States:

I would say on a personal level it has benefited me. It has expanded my knowledge on the subject. It allows me to participate in conversations on these issues and provides relevant details to support my case ... Any changes I've made haven't been ground breaking and maybe it's time that I got more involved. It's been more of a mental change, keeping up with the news and doing what I can to educate others on the subject. I've had a few discussions with my mom to try to explain BLM and I think she's begun to understand it more. It's difficult to figure out how to help sometimes and what the best path is.

Strikingly, Ashley believes her transformation to be one that has been mainly internal, a 'mental change' which manifests in being more aware of the issues of race, having better understandings and knowledge of the subject area. Certainly, her visit to the Center has been an essential part of her developing better, more nuanced understandings of the Civil Rights Movement and race in the United States. Again, she references the uncertainty in how to proceed – how to transfer those understandings into action and chides herself by saying 'it's time that I got more involved.'

I would argue that Ashley's conversations with her mother and with others constitute a form of action which has been inspired in part due to her visit to the Center. Similar to Caroline, Ashley is sharing her experience and understandings in ways which garner support for racial equality. While she may not attach much value in these small opportunities she has made for herself, these can be powerful ways of creating transformation in the lives of those in her immediate circle.

5.5.2 'I want to help my people as much as I can.' – Ximena, visitor to the Center

Ximena had come to the Center on her day off from work as she was interested in learning more about the American Civil Rights Movement. Having grown up and lived most of her life in Venezuela, she had known little about the American Civil Rights Movement or about racism in the United States. She was drawn to the narrative around Dr Martin Luther King and told me she found inspiration in his example as a leader of the Civil Rights Movement:

I wanted to see more about Martin Luther King because as I told you I'm from Venezuela and we didn't have those racial discrimination [sic] at all in Venezuela because it's a multiracial country. So for me that is new about what happened in the time of Martin Luther King. It's very inspiring what he did.

Ximena spoke at length about the representation of South America in the human rights gallery. She believed that the Center was missing an opportunity to highlight the political unrest occurring in her country at that moment. She had taken photographs of the map wall and sent them to her family in Venezuela through social media:

There is a big political change that is happening in Venezuela in these seventeen past years and there were many protests and violence in these past years so basically would like to see some of that in the museum.

It was important for her to have a story with which she was intimately connected represented in the space about global human rights movements. Despite her disappointment, Ximena was clearly inspired by her visit to the Center and again specifically by the work of Dr King:

[I am inspired] to keep talking about what Martin Luther King said about equal rights especially for [sic] racial discrimination because as I told you I was born and raised in Venezuela and we didn't have that discrimination and segregation ... When I came to live in the United States I saw there's still racial discrimination.

Interestingly, Ximena took steps beyond sharing her experiences at the Center in the months following her visit. Over a series of emails, we discussed her reflections on her visit and she revealed the ways in which she had taken inspiration from the narratives around the Civil Rights Movement and had created opportunities for herself to participate in the struggles taking place in Venezuela:

I have been sending food and medicines to Venezuela. There is a shortage of food and medicines due to the economical [sic] and political crisis that Venezuela is facing right now. I want to help my people as much as I can. I

was inspired by Martin Luther King, but he worked for black civil rights. I am doing it for the poor people in Venezuela.

Ximena told me that she couldn't 'ignore people who are suffering' and had organised this effort through her church. She had recruited friends and members of her congregation to donate supplies and send them to Venezuela. Importantly, the relief effort she organised was directly tied to her experience at the Center and learning more about the organisational efforts of Dr King.

For Ximena, her museum visit brought to life the realities of the American Civil Rights Movement and racism in the United States. She said, 'I knew about racism in the United States but the visit to the museum made me feel, listen, and almost witness how divided United States was because of racism.' It was through these acts of witnessing – of feeling part of that movement through her museum visit – that she was then inspired to take action for people in her country.

5.5.3 I left out of here and wanted to know what can I do for the people in [my] community? – Evonne, visitor to the Center

The story of Evonne, like that of Ximena, is a clear illustration of the power of activist museums to inspire action. I met Evonne during her second visit to the Center when she had brought her niece, Sheri. Evonne, a Black American woman and owner of a nursing school, discussed at length the powerful emotions elicited during both her first visit and this latest one. She found that having the opportunity to forge empathetic connections to past protesters through the interactive lunch counter experience was something that gave her strength:

When you sit down at the counter and you hear all of those things that's going on and everything but to me it made me stronger. You can hear what was said to them [the protestors] and you can picture yourself in your life now and say wow. It just makes you go away from that counter stronger.

Both Evonne and Sheri spent a great deal of time reflecting on past and present racial violence but always returned to the idea of unity and of shared humanity which transcends difference. For Evonne these ideas formed the most important part of her visit to the Center:

On this visit, I'm going to take away the unity because I really didn't know there was that many white people on that bus with the Freedom Riders and when I listened to some of their stories I was just amazed because our struggle was our struggle but they still were saying, no we're a part of this too, because we don't want [racial inequality] either. So it was a lot of people that was unified ... I'm just glad that we as a people stand together more so than we are divided and if we could just see that – it would be a better world.

These sorts of ideas of universal humanity and shared experience characterised much of what Evonne spoke of in relation not only to her experience with the Center but her experiences in the wider world. It is not necessarily the case that the Center inspired these ways of thinking and feeling, but rather that Evonne had seen the values she already held reflected within the narratives presented in the Center.

I was not able to follow-up with Evonne after this, her second visit, however she was quite open with me about how her first visit to the Center had ignited a powerful desire in her to seek ways to aid her own community:

I have my own [nursing school] and when I was here the first time with my husband, I cried and I've been crying ever since; but I left out of here and wanted to know what can I do for the people in [my] community? So when I got back to my school I decreased my prices and the [students] in the class cried and they were like, we've been struggling trying to pay for this.

There are several points which stand out from her very brief description of this act. The intensity of her emotional engagement with the Center was at the forefront of her mind when thinking about the ways in which her initial visit had inspired her. This emotive engagement was also something that was long-lasting – 'I've been crying ever since.' In

other words, the emotional connections forged during that first visit were deep enough to still be part of her experience even a year following.

In addition to this deep emotional engagement, there is the fact that she had considered how she was best able to make positive change in her community and chose to act by making her nursing school more accessible financially to her students. She informed me that many of her students were from lower and lower-middle income families and that by lowering her fees, more students were able to afford to enter the nursing profession in her community. When I inquired whether this decision to decrease her fees was a direct result of her visit to the Center, she was adamant that her visit to the Center had been the motivating factor in this decision.

It is quite rare to come across a story like Evonne's, or indeed Ximena, in which the museum visit was so clearly the inspiration driving positive social action. Much more common are stories like Ashley's, Scott's, and Silvia's in which the museum visit inspires incremental change and action is formed through a number of contributing experiences. These stories illustrate the importance of viewing these transformations holistically within the context of individuals' lives. Evonne was clearly in a place within her transformation narrative that allowed her to be open to taking dramatic action inspired by quite an emotive visit to the Center. Her story also provides a very clear example of what we might think of as a platform for action – something which is already present in a person's life which facilitates action.

In the case of Evonne, being the owner of a nursing school provided her with a platform from which she could readily act and effect change in her life and the lives of her students. Ashley found her platform for action in her relationships with others, specifically her mother. Ximena was able to act through her church and the relationships she had developed with other congregants. These platforms facilitate action because they are already embedded within the life of the individual. This diminishes the need to build wholly new support systems or forge new relationships which will support new ways of being in the world.

These platforms are something which educators at the Center are keen to facilitate in their programmes and tours with visitors. During my interview with Dina Bailey, then Director of Educational Strategies, she discussed the approaches taken with regards to inspiring action following engagement with educational programmes:

When we're talking about intergenerational visitors or just your general visitation group, we often don't have that pre- and post-contact with them and so we're bringing it all together at the same time whether it's through a programme or through a tour. So we very consciously figure out where they are as soon as we get them as a target audience so that we can bring them more information about a particular aspect and then from there we consciously try to encourage some type of action after. That has been really interesting for us because we don't often give them a specific action – we don't say you should do this but we give options and so we say if you are a fifth grader you might consider writing your next paper about this experience; if you are a religious person, you might consider speaking at your next Sunday service or church group; so really asking people to think about themselves within a context and then taking an action from there.

These strategies were further elaborated upon by Tynisha Wooley, the Center's educational strategies coordinator. In working with teen groups, she discussed the ways in which the Center's educational team tries to localise human and civil rights for students:

We focus a lot on having dialogue series where they come and we're talking about different issues and how it's not only a global issue but it's a domestic issue; not only is it a domestic issue it's a community issue; and not only is it a community issue, it's a what-can-I-do-at-my-high-school issue. So really breaking down those barriers for them in that way.

These approaches are applied not only to learning programmes at the Center, but gallery attendants are encouraged to engage visitors in this way. These strategies – localising human and civil rights issues and suggesting possible action which is based on the unique circumstances of the individual – facilitate the role of the museum as an inspiration for action. By acknowledging and helping visitors locate their own platforms for action it is more likely that individuals will be able to initiate meaningful changes within their lives.

5.6 Museums reaffirm transformation

Up until this point, many of the narratives featured have been those which highlight the experiences of individuals who have not necessarily embedded an active approach to civil and human rights within their own lives. This is not to say that these individuals do not have lived experience with social justice issues as many participants I interviewed including people of colour, women, and LGBTQ+ participants discussed the ways in which living in a cultural context that privileges white, male, cis-gendered, and heteronormative viewpoints has had a profound impact on their daily experience. Rather, the narratives have pointed to individuals who have been reminded of historic and contemporary social justice campaigns, gained awareness of the experiences of those who are different, and gained a deeper understanding of historical and contemporary human rights issues. The previous section has also explored narratives which highlight individuals for whom the museum visit inspired actions in their lives, potentially, but not necessarily for the first time. This section features narratives of individuals who have embedded social justice action and thought into their lives already – it is core to who they are and what they do. These are individuals who work either professionally or in volunteer capacities to bring about positive social change. For those individuals what role can a visit to an activist museum play within their already mature narrative of transformation?

5.6.1 ‘I just want to give back to the community. It reaffirms what I want to do.’ – Lara, visitor to the Center

Lara, a Latinx student studying international relations, was visiting the Center as part of an alternative spring break programme through her university. She and nine other students had come to Atlanta to do community service work specifically around women’s issues. They had made time to visit the Center as its themes and message aligned with the core mission of their programme.

For Lara, there wasn’t one part of the Center that she found herself drawn to; rather the overall experience and a coupling of the architectural rendering of the space with multiracial images had a profound effect on her:

I love this last part where it all turns white and I love the use of art. It really surrounds you in this environment. The use of the natural light and it just being all white gives you a lot of hope and the images used – it's really impactful. It's cross-cultural. I can just see a lot of elements that the photographer used that's putting everyone overlapping. It kind of makes it seem like there are no boundaries within us or between us.

Lara was one of very few participants who spoke about the space in such a way. It was interesting that she focused not specifically on the narrative themes or permanent exhibitions as most visitors had, but rather spoke about the feelings the space had engendered. Part of this was also related to the mural by the photographer Platon featured in the balcony space on the third-floor (fig. 5-2). The work features life-sized portraits of human rights workers from around the globe.



Figure 5-2: Third floor of the Center with mural by Platon (thepeoplesportfolio.org)

For someone like Lara who was studying human rights and was already involved in community work through her university the Center provided a means to reaffirm her current pathway:

I'm really into human rights and I'd like to continue studying it but [the Center] just enhances it – it adds to my passion and why I'm here and why I'm doing the service trip and what I want to do with my life ... I want to give back to the community. It reaffirms what I want to do. So I want to go back to school and I really want to push people to do these alternative spring breaks that I have been doing and really tell people to go to museums. I mean it really inspires you that's why it's here!

Lara found a great deal of inspiration in her visit to the Center and found that it bolstered her desire to continue her studies in this field and her own community work through her university. There was undoubtedly this passion already within her prior to her visit but the Center enhanced and reaffirmed her belief that she was pursuing goals which were meaningful and fulfilling to her.

5.6.2 '[The museum] gives me the motivation to keep going.' – Aniyah, visitor to the Center

Aniyah was visiting the Center with her husband, Edward and their teenaged son and daughter while on a family holiday. Part of their reasoning for bringing their children to the Center was to help them develop an understanding of themselves as Black Americans through connecting to the past as well as to provide positive examples of Black role models. Edward remarked:

We wanted them to see history [and] to understand the past and correlate that with what the present actually is. What I wanted them to be able to see is always remembering your history and not to take things for granted. For [our son] being an African-American male – you see particularly in the news a lot of bad press, a lot of negative things. So I wanted them to see some of the positive insights of the struggle that people went through to afford them the opportunity to be able to come and visit places like this.

Their motivations were not dissimilar to Caroline who brought her granddaughter to the Center in order to share connections to the past and foster confidence and understanding. Aniyah and Edward were similar in the ways that they used museum visits as a family to prompt these sorts of intergenerational exchanges. They remarked on the uniqueness of their visit to the Center in that the interactive lunch counter

provided a very visceral connection to the past one which they had not experienced during other museum visits.

Aniyah: We've gone to several museums but I've never experienced that before and it gave you a very real sense of what happened and how frightening that had to have been.

Edward: I couldn't imagine being a young adult – people get into movements and they feel like I'm going to fight for this but you don't really think about the physical aspects of what's coming and so to believe in something so deeply and to feel like, okay I'm going to go and I'm going to demonstrate but when you actually get there and people are physically harming you and the feel of the hatred is just unbelievable. And so that was – because you read about it and you hear the stories and you watch the movies but it was just such a realistic account of what happened.

Aniyah and Edward were both drawn to the wider narratives around the Civil Rights Movement and specifically to the multiracial and multiregional efforts which were central to the success of the movement. For Aniyah this, as well as the examples set by those who participated in the movement were central in the lessons she wanted to pass on to her children:

Edward: Even the pictures – it actually showed that it wasn't really a struggle just for blacks. It was a combination of all races –

Aniyah: -- coming together. And people not just in the south. That was amazing. You had more people coming from up north and other places to come down here to fight for the struggle ... and that's what we want [our children] to always have an understanding of in their own everyday lives. You've got to believe in something, You've got to stand up for something and if it's something you feel in your heart ... you stand up for that and you've got to give it a hundred percent because there's so many people that have lost their lives for them, for us, to be able to have the luxuries in life that we have. You know, just to go and use the bathroom, we take those things for granted ... So I want them to have an appreciation of the things that they have in life now ... and I think museums like this are very important.

These lessons were also important for Aniyah due to her own community service work. She explained that she was heavily involved in multiple charitable organisations locally and regionally. She also volunteered at her children's school. Further, her daughter had founded a charitable organisation to help homeless children and Aniyah helped arrange donations and distribution of water and healthy food. She viewed the visit to the Center not only as an opportunity for further learning experiences for her children but she felt that her visit had been beneficial in her own transformation:

I do a lot of community service work so sometimes because things can be so political you're like I'm not dealing with that anymore, I'm going home. But [the museum] gives me the motivation to keep going, to stay there and to keep going and not to let those people that are there for the wrong reasons deter me from being there for the right reasons.

For someone like Aniyah who was already involved in community service projects as a full-time endeavour, her visit to the Center provided a means to reaffirm her efforts; to use an analogy, the Center had 're-charged her batteries' so that when she returned home she could continue to devote her efforts to that work.

5.7 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to illustrate the varied spectrum of visitor experience with activist museums. The roles that museums play in visitors' narratives of transformation is contingent upon their prior experiences, levels of engagement, and their place within that transformative journey.

I would briefly like to return to one of the first narratives shared in this chapter. Caroline's story proved an interesting quandary in that much of her experience at the Center fit into each of the roles highlighted here. She spoke at length of her visit acting as a reminder to be appreciative of the past and to recognise the sacrifices which were made to afford future generations more opportunities. There was, too, an element of awareness-raising within her story in her interactions with her granddaughter Nicole becoming aware that she was surrounded by Black history not only at her university but

within her own family through her grandmother. This formed a powerful part of Nicole's museum visit. While this was not strictly Caroline's experience, she had used the Center as a means of fostering these connections with Nicole and generating those deeper understandings of herself and the world. Caroline found that this experience with her granddaughter at the Center inspired her to want to share and encourage others to seek out similar experiences. I would argue that her experience was one which reaffirmed her own transformation by seeking out museum visits in order to reignite her passion for this subject – to remind her not to be complacent.

Caroline's story illustrates the interconnectedness of each of the five roles I have highlighted in this chapter. While I have discussed each separately and provided representative narrative examples, it is impossible to perfectly partition these experiences within the boundaries of a framework. Every individual will view their museum visit through the lens of their experiences and the ways in which that visit will inform their beliefs, attitudes, values, and actions will depend greatly on their motivations for visiting, the experiences they have had leading up to the visit and those that follow. Visits to activist museums certainly have a role to play within the transformative journeys of their visitors – a role which is contextual, nuanced, and interdependent on the depth of the connections made at the time of the visit and the network of connecting experiences in which the visit is situated. The next chapter will discuss in more depth the importance of affective connections in the facilitation of transformation and the ways in which the wider network of experience contributes to the transformative journey.

Chapter 6 Affective connectedness and situating the museum visit in the wider narrative of transformation

Throughout the development and execution of this study, I have been concerned with the role activist museums play within the transformative journeys of their visitors. The previous chapter has provided a framework for understanding how activist museums act as reminders, raise awareness, foster better understandings, inspire action, and reaffirm transformative pathways. Examining these roles through the lens of individuals' transformation narratives has foregrounded their inherent complexities and nuance. We have seen in a number of the shared stories within Chapter 5 that museums can play multiple roles within a single narrative of transformation as in the case of Caroline. But why do visits to activist museums facilitate change in some individuals and not others? What ingredients are necessary to open an individual to transformative experience within the museum and how are museum visits situated within a person's wider network of experience?

These are the questions I plan to explore in this chapter. I will begin with a discussion of the importance of affective connectedness – emotional and empathetic connections – in facilitating transformative experience. There is a burgeoning recognition of the importance of affective engagement in the museological field (Gokcigdem, 2016; Gregory and Witcomb, 2007; Simon, 2014; Watson, 2016; Witcomb, 2013). What I intend to argue is that the development of emotional and empathetic connections to the wider world – what Gokcigdem (2016, p. xix) referred to as 'the Whole' – is essential in the facilitation of a transformative museum experience. Following this discussion, I will pivot focus on the ways in which the museum visit is situated within the wider field of an individual's experience. Specifically, I will explore the degree to which museums nudge visitors along transformative pathways. As with the previous chapter, I intend to explore these findings through representative narratives.

6.1 The importance of affect in fostering transformative experiences

In her introduction to the edited volume, *Fostering Empathy in Museums*, Gokcigdem (ibid., p. xviii) addressed the importance of museums as spaces for empathetic connections stating ‘museums and empathy are a powerful combination that can provide transformative experiences of dialogue, discovery, understanding, and contemplation to all regardless of age or background.’ She acknowledges the idea that museums have the capacity to elicit empathy and, more broadly, emotional connections and that this capacity is linked with transformative opportunities.

There is a growing interest amongst museologists to form better understandings of the ways in which museums engage visitors’ emotions and empathy. Both Witcomb (2013) and Watson (2016) have pointed out that while we understand that emotions and empathy are part of engagement and learning within museums, it is still unclear how emotional and empathetic connections work within the museum in transformative ways. The work of Simon (2014) has provided insight into how visitors process their museum experience through affective lenses which can in turn foster transformation. Bringing together studies from psychology and museum practice, Nilsen and Bader (2016) have produced guidance for museums wishing to develop empathy using the dialogic tours conducted at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City as a case study example.

I would like to pause briefly in order to outline the ways in which I am thinking about emotions and how I am defining empathy. Watson (2016) has adopted an understanding of emotions taken from anthropology which situates emotions as learned through embedded socialisation contextualised through cultural practices. That is our emotions are contingent upon our social and cultural contexts. This understanding is particularly important for any research undertaken across cultures as the performance and interpretation of emotion will necessarily be different for each context. We can, however, parlay this understanding of emotion into how we think about empathy. Nilsen and Bader (2016, p. 116) have defined it ‘as a feeling of *shared emotion* with another person: you feel happy, and I imagine what you must feel like, leading me to

feel happy too.’ It is important to acknowledge that complexities arise from how different cultural understandings of emotion shape empathetic responses both within and across different cultures. While emotions and empathy will be perceived differently across cultural and indeed historic contexts, this does not negate the power of participants’ affective experiences to foster transformation. Referencing Gibson (2004), Andrea Witcomb (2013, p. 267) described this transformative quality of empathy as ‘affect alteration ... a process through which the museum visitor undergoes a change from unknowing to knowing, from partial to holistic comprehension.’ Through affective experiences, visitors come to know themselves and the world more fully.

Drawing together Watson’s interpretation of emotions with what we can understand of empathy from Nilsen and Bader and Witcomb, can provide a useful lens for examining the role of affective connectedness – connecting emotionally and empathetically – within the transformative process. These connections provide a means through which visitors find personal meaning within the museum, through which they associate with personal narratives, themes, and content more deeply. They provide ways for visitors to understand themselves and the ways they perceive the world and the ways others perceive the world. While visiting the Center, Harry, a white American man in his fifties, described this phenomenon beautifully towards the end of our interview in the gallery:

Everybody has their lenses that they use to see the world and when you throw an idea at somebody that then gets focused in a certain way and they only see a piece of the idea and they only see it in a certain way ... How we can learn lessons from the civil rights movement about communicating with each other and finding ways forward when we've got those lenses in the way is an important issue particularly today.

Visitors who were able to connect emotionally and empathetically during their visit – who were able to adjust their lenses and perceive the world through the lens of another were far more likely to have assigned the museum a role within their transformative journey and were more likely to speak about changes within themselves.

To support this, we might draw upon narratives presented in the previous chapter. Kamal, Caroline and Nicole, the visitor from David's anecdote, Matt, Silvia, Ashley, Evonne, Lara, and Aniyah each referenced affective connections made during their visit. We might also consider Scott and Ximena who forged connections between themselves – their own personal contexts – and the stories represented in the exhibitions. For visitors who struggled to form deep, affective, personal connections, the relationship of the museum visit within their narrative of transformation was unclear or non-existent. This suggests that the development of affective, personal connections is an essential ingredient for fostering transformative experiences within the museum.

I would like to illustrate this point through the presentation of four contrasting narratives. Juxtaposing these stories provides insights into the perceived barriers to the development of emotional and empathetic engagement and ultimately of transformative experience.

6.2 Affective barriers or affective opportunities?

These first two stories explore two opposing experiences with regards to affective connectedness. These narratives illustrate the complexities around affective engagement by juxtaposing two individuals who experienced vastly different levels of affective connectedness during their visits despite similarities in certain aspects of their identities and backgrounds. This highlights some of the challenges in attempting to generalise or codify visitor experience in broader terms.

6.2.1 'I think I'm in the same place as I was when I came in. Obviously [slavery] is not right.' – Lisa, visitor to the Slavery Museum

Lisa's story exemplifies the ways in which prior knowledge and identity at times work as a barrier to affective connectedness and transformative experience. While visiting the Slavery Museum with her daughter, Emma, Lisa embodied a pointed detachment from the experience. She was quite open about this noting that her career likely defined the ways in which she engaged with difficult subject matter:

I'm a child abuse investigator which is maybe why I have a really high tolerance for terrible things happening because I see it every day ... I see parts of life that most people never see on a daily basis so I think my threshold is probably different [to others].

Lisa also found that her identity as a white British woman was a barrier to developing deeper, more empathetic connections with both historic accounts of slavery as well as contemporary legacies relating to racial inequalities:

I hadn't really given it much thought to be honest because I'm a white British person so it's not something that really impacts much on my life at all.

Throughout the interview, the difficulty Lisa experienced in engaging affectively with the museum manifested in her feeling that the museum had not offered her new ways of understanding historic slavery nor the experiences of enslaved peoples:

I did a degree in literature and we did quite a lot of slave history then. So there's not a lot of it that's completely new to me. I'm kind of familiar with the Middle Passage and the problems so for me I don't think I've probably learned a lot from it if I'm honest.

It is interesting to note that Lisa did not feel that the museum visit had enhanced her prior knowledge of historic slavery. Further, she felt that the museum's attempts to discuss contemporary slavery in India were unrelated to the historic slave trade:

Then you think there's slavery in India and you're thinking, okay that's interesting that you're making a connection there with African slavery. [Interviewer: Do you think that was well done?] [Lisa: It was] tenuous.

Lisa also struggled to understand the connections to African communities prior to European contact and was especially vocal in her dislike of the recreation of the Igbo family compound, saying 'I wasn't sort of that keen on the plastic huts if I'm honest. It confused me about why even have that?' This is an interesting response which illustrates

the way that Lisa negotiated a challenge to her preconceptions of the focus of the Slavery Museum. Indeed, her dislike of this particular section was what remained with her most strongly in the months following the visit and indeed had seemingly intensified. When I followed up with Lisa six-months afterwards she remarked, 'I mostly remember the ghastly fibreglass reconstruction of a tribal hut because it was so nasty.'

At the conclusion of our initial interview, Lisa had felt that the museum experience had not had any significant impact on her ways of thinking about enslaved peoples or the institution of slavery. She said, 'I think I'm in the same place as I was when I came in. Obviously [slavery] is not right.'

In our follow up communications through email, she revealed that elements of her professional work connected to her museum experience, specifically with regards to contemporary slavery:

At work modern slavery is an emerging problem, along with people smuggling and it's interesting to realise this is the modern face of a centuries old problem in a different and now illegal form.

While Lisa was making this intellectual connection between her work and the themes from the Slavery Museum, she still did not believe that her visit had contributed anything new to her understandings of slavery. Lisa once again pointed to her prior knowledge as a barrier to developing new or better understandings saying, 'I had read a fair amount about slavery before so it wasn't a big learning experience to visit the museum.'

Lisa's experience is quite a stark example of affective disengagement and provides insights into the ways in which some visitors distance themselves from a more connective museum experience. Lisa was clear that her career as a child abuse investigator, her identity as a white British woman who had no perceived personal experience with racial discrimination or systemic oppression, as well as her prior

knowledge of the subject gained through a degree in literature had been barriers which prevented her from developing more meaningful connections during her visit. It is also possible to see through her story the ways in which visitors reject challenges to their preconceptions; in this example the inclusion of pre-contact African culture. While her focus was on the execution of the Igbo compound, her initial statement on its presence in the gallery, 'why even have that,' reveals a lack of understanding of the importance of approaching the history of slavery from a non-European perspective and a lack of willingness to engage openly during the visit.

6.2.2 'I'm a pretty emotional guy but I'm usually not quite this susceptible to emotion in this way.' – Kenneth, visitor to the Center

I would like to juxtapose Lisa's experience with that of Kenneth, a white American seminary professor from the Midwestern United States. Kenneth was visiting the Center with his two sons while on family holiday. Kenneth had a deep interest in the topics explored in the Center. Part of his seminary teaching focuses on multi-ethnic discourses in theology and his own doctoral work centred on the involvement of white theologians in the ending of apartheid in South Africa. Whereas Lisa's prior knowledge and study had acted as a barrier to her ability to develop affective connections during her visit, Kenneth spoke at length during our first interview about the affective experience his visit had fostered. He discussed feeling moved by both the *Wall of Martyrs* depicting those killed during the American Civil Rights Movement, and the gallery portraying Martin Luther King's funeral. He also specifically singled out the interactive lunch counter as being a focal point for discussion with his sons:

We talked about [the historic lunch counter protests] as a family. We talked about those things a lot so to hear that and to see it I think was interesting to them and for me as well. Hearing the voices and feeling how it would have felt is one thing ... and to see the impact on people.

Kenneth began to get emotional at this point in the interview. Through tears, he went on to explain that he and his family had toured similar heritage institutions and he took

pride in having facilitated his sons' understanding of and familiarity with social justice leaders:

We've been to many sites. In fact, we've been to the Lorraine Motel and we've been to [Washington] DC and we've been to the Holocaust Museum. We've been to great sites in 47 states as part of my own research and interests and every one has a different impact. Every place has a different aspect and this one in some ways is very simple – simple layout but it reinforces a lot of what you hear [and] see on documentaries and read about. You see these faces and you recognise them and I like that my boys – I'm getting emotional because my boys recognise names and I feel good about that.

In some ways, his experience is not dissimilar to Caroline's in that Kenneth has toured numerous heritage sites which have continued to deepen his engagement with and understanding of civil and human rights.

When I asked Kenneth about whether there were aspects of his visit which surprised him, he referred back to the depth of his emotional engagement with the museum:

I mean, my emotion right now – my emotion throughout. I'm a pretty emotional guy but I'm usually not quite this susceptible to emotion in this way, in this public setting, but there were a couple times where I couldn't go on... I had to stop and just catch my breath because it had hit me unexpectedly.

Kenneth pointed to a number of elements throughout his visit which promoted affective connectedness. The immersive qualities of the overall narrative, provocative interactive elements, being in the presence of Dr King's handwritten notes and letters had all contributed to fostering emotional and empathetic connections for him and for his sons:

The interaction with the boys and the family experience of it – the stories that we were able to discuss and the things that they learned. To see and hear about the Freedom Riders and about the counter sit-ins, things that I feel like we've discussed and they were very familiar with but when they sat on the simulated bus and you saw some pretty real things, I mean I think it really

brought it home. When they sat at the counter with their hands on the counter and heard and felt those things I think that made it more than just academic – something you have to learn from your history class and I think it made it a little more real for them and certainly it was impactful to me as well.

An essential part of his ability to form these connections was the emphasis and inclusion of personal narratives as a framework for approaching much of the content in the Center:

I mean, I'm a minister at heart so I think the narrative idea, the big story—I mean a good preacher will tell you the stories are always better than the exposition. Our favourite teachers are like that, too, and so I think that combination of things where you really sense that you're getting good history but you're also getting those personal stories of people who many of them were just folks that you might see at the store or something or at church. That was pretty amazing.

Kenneth's statements harken back to the assertions made by Witcomb (2013) that the power of connecting emotionally and empathetically to personal narratives within exhibitions can be a driver for transformative change. This was especially apparent in our follow-up communication through email. Many of the elements of his visit were still fresh in his memory; he referred again to the *Wall of Martyrs*, the lunch counter, and viewing Martin Luther King's papers as being the most memorable parts of his visit. While Kenneth did not discuss the depth of his emotional engagement in his follow-up communications, he did speak about the changes within himself that his museum experience had fostered:

I think more than anything, the museum brought clarity and perspective to my own study and thoughts regarding the Civil Rights Movement ... I taught two courses that dealt with multi-racial perspectives and history since my visit and the museum helped solidify aspects of my own presentations ... I accepted an invitation to speak with a group of ministers in Texas regarding the history of civil rights and the recent Dallas, Texas police shootings. Part of my sense of needing to do this came from my visit.

Kenneth's visit to the Center had fostered affective connections which enabled him to connect more deeply to the past as well as to his sons in the present. They facilitated deeper understandings of civil rights and partly inspired Kenneth to share his experience and expertise through his teaching and through a speaking engagement.

What can we glean through both Lisa and Kenneth's experiences which might speak to the barriers and opportunities for affective engagement in the museum? In juxtaposing these narratives we can see the ways in which individuals negotiate their experiences is contingent upon prior experience, interest in the topic, and the extent to which they are open to affective engagement. What one individual perceives as a barrier another might perceive as an opportunity. In short, there are not easily generalizable trends in the data which speak to the fostering of affective connections.

Kenneth, like Lisa is white in a social and cultural context which privileges that identity above others. While Lisa felt her identity prevented her from engaging with racial justice, Kenneth did not. Lisa's prior knowledge of slavery closed down the possibilities for further understandings to emerge through her museum visit, while Kenneth's prior knowledge did not preclude the development of affective connections during his visit. Perhaps what defines the differences in their experience most was a willingness to engage affectively during the visit. Lisa, due to various perceived barriers had closed herself to that possibility. Kenneth, remained open to having an emotional experience characterised by empathetic connections and in turn felt that his visit had contributed to his understandings of the world and had partly inspired new actions. While perceived barriers will manifest differently for individuals, these narratives support the view that individuals who are open to affective connections will be more likely to have a visit framed by emotional and empathetic connections which in turn foster transformative possibilities.

6.3 Fostering critical reflection and its relation to affective connectedness

The ways in which visitors critically engage with activist museums shapes the kinds of affective connections they experience. It is important to preface this section by stating that museums should work to foster critical reflection of both the topics they present as well as their own practices. The following stories illustrate the complexities around critical and affective engagement and their relationship to one another. They will once again illustrate the importance of being open to affective engagement in forming transformational museum experiences.

6.3.1 'It's interesting to me that [The Center] wants me to think about Martin Luther King when I think about the Civil Rights Movement.' – Rachel, visitor to the Center

Rachel was visiting the Center with her husband Adam. Adam's grandparents had prompted the couple to visit the Center as they were members and had been many times previously. When I first inquired as to what parts of the museum they had been drawn to, Rachel responded, 'I particularly like the parts where I could sit down.' She paused before pivoting to discuss the simulated recreation of the Woolworth Lunch Counter protests:

One place where I could sit down was at the lunch counter where you sat down and you listened to racial slurs. It was very upsetting but impactful. I didn't think it was going to be a big deal because nothing bad was happening to me so I wouldn't be upset about it. But it was really upsetting. It just made me sad and angry and hurt and I was able to take it off and not feel those feelings anymore. I think it helped me [and] put me in the mind-set of someone who did that.

Rachel's responses throughout the interview oscillate between engaged and disengaged as illustrated by this exchange. She begins by revealing her favourite parts of the museum were where she could sit but then discusses an affective experience at the interactive lunch counter. Interestingly, she explains that by removing the headphones she was able to disengage from the upsetting emotions which it had elicited. Simultaneously, she alludes to the empathetic nature of the experience. This

characterises much of her experience with the Center – fluctuating between affective moments and disengagement.

Throughout the interview both Rachel and Adam were quite critical of the interpretative framework employed by the Center which focused on non-violent protest within the American Civil Rights Movement. It is best to provide a full account of their exchange in relation to this. Rachel began by discussing the overwhelming presence of Martin Luther King, Jr in the interpretation:

The museum was very focused on Martin Luther King and he kept coming up over and over again and Adam and I were noticing that other leaders maybe who had a different point of view than Martin Luther King were not as focused on or seen as much ... Or just ignored. There was a little bit of Stokely Carmichael, there was a little bit of Malcolm X, but there wasn't a lot of any other positions really talked about much in the museum. And so it's interesting to me that [The Center] wants me to think about Martin Luther King when I think about the Civil Rights Movement. I think that's the more palatable and easier to digest form and also a very effective form but it's much easier to talk about someone who is a pastor and who preaches love and preaches non-violence than it is to talk about people who were preaching violence as a response to violence and that came from a very real place.

Adam concluded:

Right well especially in the March on Washington display. I was surprised that there was no mention of any of the critique of the March from the African American community. Malcolm X's famous line was 'it's time to stop singing and start swinging' but that voice was silenced entirely and I found that interesting ... I think this museum has a very specific agenda.

Both Rachel and Adam fundamentally agreed with and supported the expansion of civil and human rights. They spoke about the ways in which their Jewish identities formed the lenses through which they thought about human rights and the experience of civil and human rights in the United States. Despite this deeply personal commitment to human rights, they found that the framing of the Civil Rights Movement through the

centring of non-violence as a form of activism had undermined their experience of the Center. For example, Rachel said the following about what she would take away from her visit:

I think for me, I learned that Atlanta loves Martin Luther King more than I ever realised. Possibly the whole state of Georgia because the museum was very focused on Martin Luther King.

Adam was similarly critical in the ways he thought about his visit to the museum:

It just reinforces to me how certain institutions want to promote a very specific vision of the Civil Rights Movement which raises all sorts of interesting questions about how we tell stories about American history. Which stories are more palatable for a broader audience and I don't know if that inspires me to do anything but I think I'm a generally critical person. I think it pushes me to be more critical of institutions like this – not critical in the sense of criticising it but of being aware of the stories that are not being told.

Unfortunately, I was unable to reconnect with Adam. I was, however, able to follow-up with Rachel through email. For Rachel, the criticality she and Adam had discussed had come to define the ways in which she reflected on the impact of her visit to the museum. She drew connections between her visit and other experiences framed through that criticality:

I saw the documentary about the O.J. Simpson trial and it spoke about racism in the US from the 60s through the 90s. I thought about [the Center] and how it seemed from the museum that racism ended with the death of MLK and there wasn't really anything else to learn but the documentary seemed to disagree.

Rachel did not feel as though her visit to the Center had contributed to her understandings, attitudes, or beliefs with regards to civil or human rights and indeed regarded the only benefit of her having attended as it gave her 'husband's grandparents a sense of satisfaction that [she] had visited.'

Rachel's experience of the Center is a complex interplay between her motivations for visiting and her critical reading of the interpretive framework within the Civil Rights Movement gallery. She was able to connect affectively in some instances but I would argue that these engagements were shallow owing to her ability to disengage easily from them as when she removed her headphones at the lunch counter. These barriers, it could be argued, were both internal (Rachel's fluctuating affective engagement with the museum) and external (the absences in interpretation of the American Civil Rights Movement) and contributed to her difficulty in viewing the museum as a potential transformative experience.

6.3.2 'I've been moved ... and the wheels are turning in a different direction in my mind.'
– Michael, visitor to the Slavery Museum

Michael and Janet, American colleagues working in the international education sector were in Liverpool preparing for an international conference when they decided to take some time to visit the Slavery Museum. Throughout our interview, both were deeply engaged in critically reflecting on their museum experience in terms of the ways in which the museum engaged with the topic of slavery. Poignantly, a great deal of our discussion centred on the ways in which museums have begun to embrace affective experience through their displays as this remark by Janet illustrates:

I actually love the way museums have now developed over the years in terms of the audio and visual and really having the visitor completely being enveloped in the experience.

She elaborated on this point by discussing one of the media elements in the gallery in which an actress portraying an enslaved woman discusses her daily life on a Caribbean plantation:

It kind of brings it home to a more humane, personal level that I could relate well with ... but I think what captures me is when there are actually people being interviewed and you're looking and you're listening to what they have to say. It just adds so much of the human element to it ... it just brings it so

much closer to myself ... It's not just going through a museum and seeing a display. You really stop and think.

Similarly, Michael reflected on the interpretive strategies in the museum but his thoughts were focused on the ways in which museum portray challenging histories in authentic ways. He was careful in his statements to emphasise that it was important for museums not to 'beautify' the experience through censoring the crueller aspects of slavery:

I agree, one way is you have to humanise the experience and try to, while not oversimplifying or beautifying the experience, trying to find common denominators. Things that are accessible for the person looking at it or trying to read the text or watch the film ... the first thing that comes to mind is the room with the video screens of the slave who was shackled and you're just trying to experience his experience as best you can on the boat and that to me – I had to force myself to stay because I really wanted to leave the room ... but I think it sort of counterbalanced some of what else [was on display] which was not as abrupt and as in-your-face as that experience was.

Both Janet and Michael were deeply engaged in critical reflection on the ways in which the story of slavery was portrayed by the museum. They discussed with each other the dangers of presenting the story in ways which were clinical and detached, both preferring more affective and personal yet still authentic interpretive techniques.

In terms of affective engagement, Janet revealed how she had attempted to capture the parts of her visit which had elicited strong emotional responses and her desire to share her museum experience with friends and family:

I was taking some photographs of some things – either some quotes or some objects that particularly moved me, shamed me, made me very sad, made me shutter and this is going to sound very trite but I can't wait to post it on Facebook and to share some of these images ... I can't wait to go home and tell my family. We always meet up and I tell them about different things I've gone to and this is definitely going to be one of – it's hard to say something like this is a highlight because you feel like this museum is about something so horrific but yet I'm definitely glad that I went today.

Michael was more measured in his discussion of the ways in which his experience at the Slavery Museum had prompted him to reflect more deeply about the concept of slavery:

I think for me it's just helping me think again. Think about different things and how perhaps slavery as a concept doesn't exist as a legal form in the US ... but slavery does exist on an economic level still. A lot of the communities that were impacted – I mean some of the vestiges unfortunately are more apparent in economic disparities between communities in the US and other parts of the world.

He went on to note how his affective engagement with the topic had begun to work on him. His remarks are reminiscent of Caroline speaking about having something rekindled in her:

I've been moved ... and the wheels are turning in a different direction in my mind. It's helping me think about some things that I hadn't thought about in a while so in that sense it has had an impact.

When I asked him to elaborate about what sorts of new ways of thinking the museum had elicited he spoke about drawing connections between the themes he encountered throughout the Slavery Museum and the refugee crisis which was occurring in relation to the civil war in Syria. He also spoke about coming away from the museum and being unsure about how to negotiate these new ways of thinking in relation to action:

Coming away from these museums which are, I hate to use the word more educational than others, is what's the next step? And that's something I need to figure out. Is there a next step? Does there need to be a next step? Is it just enough for me to feel that I've given it some thought, that I've had conversations and reached out to people? I don't know. That's something I need to figure out.

Michael felt that his identity as a gay man and as someone who is active in the LGBTQ+ community formed an important part of his thinking in regards to his museum experience. He drew on his own experience coming of age during the AIDS epidemic and having to be politically engaged in order to advocate for his own rights.

What shines through in the conversation with Michael and Janet are their willingness and openness to engage affectively within the museum and yet to balance this with a critically reflective lens which examines the ways which the museum interprets the story of slavery. In this respect there are certain parallels to Rachel's story. The difficulty she had in remaining both critical and affectively open possibly prevented her from having a more transformative experience. In the case of Michael, he spent a great deal of time discussing the interpretive strategies within the Slavery Museum as well as other museums and heritage sites he had visited. Perhaps one of the main differences between his experience and that of Rachel was that he approved of the interpretation at the Slavery Museum while Rachel felt that the absences within the narrative at the Center were too important to have omitted and so her reading of the experience naturally centred on those absences.

6.4 Visitor agendas, criticality, and the individuality of experience

Are there conclusions which we can draw from the data with regards to affective barriers? As stated previously, the complexities of individual experience and willingness to engage affectively complicate any attempts to generalise in this way. For some, identity and prior knowledge will present a block to engaging affectively, while for others these considerations will not pose any difficulties.

We might point to visitor motivations and agendas as being an important element in determining the extent of engagement during a museum experience. Work in this area (Falk, Dierking, and Semmel, 2012) supports the idea that affective engagement can partly be determined by visitor agendas. Lisa and her daughter were spending an afternoon at the Slavery Museum as something to do together before Lisa returned home, while Kenneth had come to the Center as part of a continuing trend in his life to visit museums of this nature and to continue to grow his understanding of the topic and share it with his sons. Rachel and Adam were visiting the Center because his grandparents had insisted that they experience it for themselves, while Michael and Janet had come to try to understand more about the history of the Trans-Atlantic Slave

Trade within the context of Liverpool. Clearly there is a case to be made that having a willingness to be open to affective experiences stems partly from visitor motivations.

There is also a point to be made about reflective criticality in relation to engagement with activist practice. Reflective criticality is not necessarily a barrier in and of itself; however, when visitors engage with the museum critically, there is the possibility that interpretation which is deemed incomplete or incorrect can become the overwhelming focus of the visitor experience. This is not necessarily a negative response and indeed, critical engagement is something to be encouraged in relation to transformative museum visits. One could argue that while Rachel felt that she had not benefitted from her visit to the Center beyond maintaining a pleasant relationship with her husband's grandparents, that she had used the visit as an opportunity to reflect critically on the ways stories are told about civil and human rights and had recognised that institutions like the Center do not approach this history from a neutral standpoint. I would further argue that while this was not necessarily the message the Center had intended Rachel to absorb, it is still quite a valuable experience.

The complexity of individual experience which fosters the development of affective connections within the museum context is arguably one of the most important findings to emerge from this study. The examples in both this chapter and the previous illustrate the importance of facilitating affective connections in order to foster transformative experience. Those individuals who formed these connections were more likely to have identified personal changes in attitudes, understandings, and ways of being within the world following from their visit. Barriers to developing affective connections are often unique to the individual and are related in part to their agendas which partly determine the extent to which a visitor is open to engaging with the museum. All this is to illustrate that there is a careful, complex, and nuanced balance between a myriad of elements which can either promote transformation or indeed, inhibit it. Developing a better understanding of the wider field of experience and how the museum visit is situated within it ties into this discussion.

6.5 Situating the museum visit within the wider field of experience

Throughout this thesis, I have continued to emphasise the importance of approaching transformation in a holistic way which takes into account the unique circumstances of the individual. I have also been careful to assert that owing to the complexity of human experience it can be difficult to extricate a single museum visit from the wider web of experience in order to examine its impact. Each experience shapes an individual's narrative of transformation and it therefore becomes essential to situate the museum visit amongst these other experiences in order to construct a more complete understanding of the impact of visits to activist museums.

I would like to begin this discussion with an analogy, we might think of the wider context of experience in terms of a symphony. Just as each musician, and in turn, section, and instrument family are important in the creation of the whole musical piece, each experience plays a role in the creation of the holistic understanding of the individual. If we indulge further in this analogy, we might find meaning in the relationships between musical parts. The timbres of each instrument add interest and nuance to the construction of the piece and as the melody is passed between different sections, the sound changes and reflects the character of each instrument. Layers of harmony add texture and while at times they support the melody, they can also create striking dissonances and counterpoints which can shift the tonal centre of the entire piece. There may be instances in which one solo instrument rises above the rest of the orchestra and the entire piece centres around that one melody carried by that one musician. We can think of our own narratives of transformations in much the same way. Each experience adds to the textures of our lives. Some support the ways in which we have been thinking, feeling, and being in the world creating rich harmonies of experience, but some may create dissonances which shift those ways of being fundamentally. Just as within musical compositions, these harmonic shifts might be temporary and we may find that we return once more to previous understandings but this is not always the case. There may be experiences which are so fleeting as to almost go unnoticed in the wider orchestral texture of our lives but there will be some which

stand apart from that texture – becoming defining moments in our lives which take on deeper meanings.

This sort of understanding of individuals' wider networks of experience is what constructivist learning describes. The idea that each experience adds to the overall understandings constructed within a person – that those experiences have relationships to previous experiences and indeed subsequent experiences and these relationships contribute to an individual's way of being in the world – is central to understanding the ways in which individuals transform throughout their lives. We can see allusions to this idea when considering previous longitudinal studies of the impact of museum visits which highlighted the importance of reinforcing experiences in the retention of post-visit attitudes and actions (Adelman, Falk, and James, 2000; Anderson, Storksdieck, and Spock, 2007; Storksdieck, Ellenbogen, and Heimlich, 2005).

The findings from this study provides a basis for understanding the types of experiences individuals bring with them into their visit as well as acknowledging and describing subsequent experience which continue to shape attitudes, understandings, and actions. Examples of the types of experiences, activities, and sources which participants identified as having shaped their understandings and ways of being in the world can be found in figure 6-1. They include formal education through school and university studies; media sources such as books, magazines, films, television, documentaries, and news outlets; visits to cultural institutions; and lived personal experience.

We can think about the ways in which museum visits fit into this wider context by returning to our symphony analogy. For some people, the visit might play a minor role; one of those inner parts which is nearly imperceptible against the texture of the entire orchestra. For others, the visit might play a more substantive role in either supporting current ways of being or perhaps initiating the dissonance which will eventually lead to a transformation. Understanding the relationship of the museum to these other experiences can help better define the importance of the role of the museum within individuals' narratives of transformation.

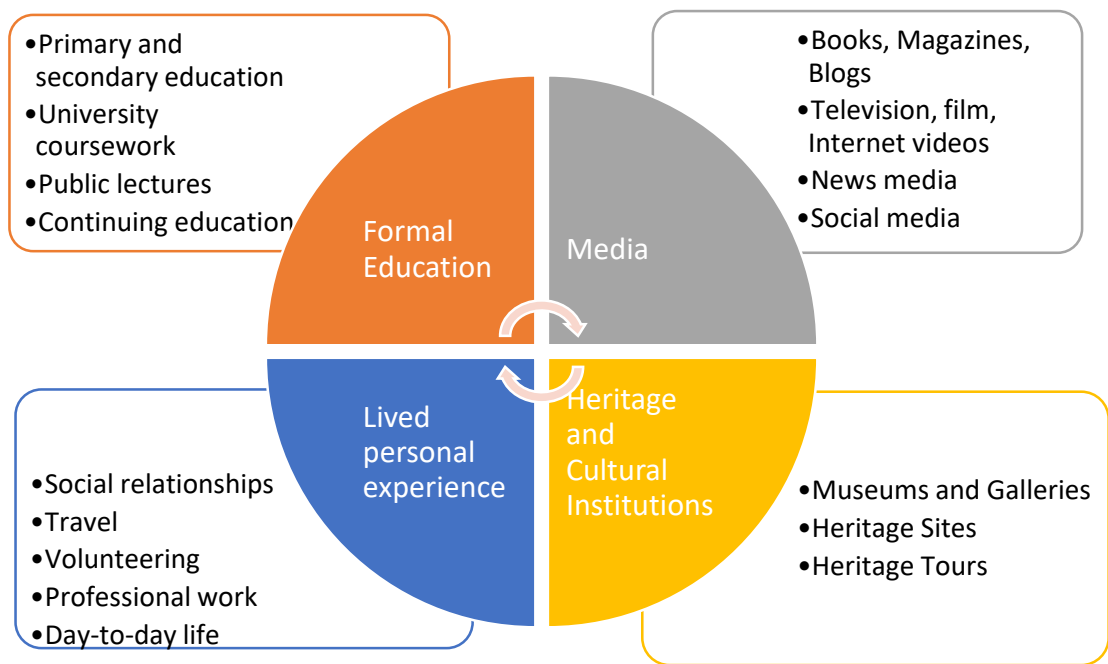


Figure 6-1: Experiences, activities, and sources relating to museum visits

In this part of the chapter, I will explore this relationship, focusing on how individuals described their visits within the context of their wider experiences. I will then focus on the idea of the museum visit as ‘a nudge’ in the overall narrative of transformation; one which works in conjunction with other experiences, activities, and sources to shape an individual’s understandings, attitudes, and ways of being in the world.

6.5.1 Drawing connections between the visit and other experiences, sources, and activities

Participants drew connections between their museum visit and a number of external sources, activities, and experiences which contributed to their transformation narrative with regards specifically to social justice, race, slavery, and civil and human rights. Out of 39 initial interviews with 57 participants, 11 references were made to formal education; seventeen references were made to media sources such as films, television, and reading material; 28 references were made to visits to similar institutions including Holocaust museums, civil rights museums, and heritage sites; and 40 references were made to personal lived experiences including personal experience with racism, having opportunities to meet and interact with people who participated in social movements,

volunteering, and travelling. From the pool of 13 participants who completed a follow-up interview and discussed subsequent sources and experiences, 4 references were made to visits to similar museums; 8 participants made 14 references to media sources; and 9 participants made 13 references to lived personal experiences. This is visualised in table 6-1.

Table 6-1: References to reinforcing experiences

	Formal education	Media sources	Visits to similar institutions	Personal lived experience
Interview I	11	17	28	40
Interview II	0	8	4	13
Total	11	25	32	53

Table 6-1: References to reinforcing experiences

Throughout this chapter and the previous, we have seen several of these references to other experiences and sources. For example, Silvia discussed having watched the film *Selma* and having read books and articles on the American Civil Rights Movement following her visit to the Center. Kenneth and Lisa’s narratives provided poignant examples of formal education and the ways it can relate to the museum visit. Caroline’s personal experiences with the Civil Rights Movement formed a central part of her experience and interactions with her granddaughter as well as her previous visits to similar museums. The following sections will delve more deeply into these other experiences and sources, to answer the question: what value did participants place on the museum visit in relation to these other sources, activities, and experiences?

6.5.2 Bringing history to life: the process of humanising and making the past real

Participants emphasised how their museum experience often enhanced their prior knowledge and understandings by bringing history to life. Bound within these sentiments were the ways in which museums worked to humanise history and make the past feel real and more immediate. Harry, the visitor to the Center we met earlier in this chapter reflected on this in his interview:

Having not lived through that period you treat it as just a textbook so going through a museum like this helps me to actually understand more that it really is something real versus something dusty that we talk about in a classroom to study and I think that's a healthy thing.

We might also return to Janet's remarks about how museums have adopted new technologies which all visitors to be 'enveloped in the experience'.

This is certainly the case with the Center's interactive lunch counter which was by far the most discussed element of the museum by participants with 30 references being made to it over the course of both round of interviews. Evonne's niece Sheri spoke about how the lunch counter had elicited strong emotion in her and that the experience differed from having seen the protests on television and hearing about similar experiences from her mother: 'I felt something. I felt like you watch it on TV and you hear about it because my mom would tell me stories about different things that she experienced but at the same time it was like I was there.' Similarly, Aniyah's husband Edward remarked:

People get into movements but you don't really think about the physical aspects of what's coming. And so to believe in something so deeply and to feel like, okay I'm going to go and I'm going to demonstrate, but when you actually get there and people are physically harming you and just the feel of the hatred is just unbelievable ... You read about it and you hear the stories and you watch the movies but [the lunch counter] was just such a realistic account of what happened.

Beyond simulated experiences such as the lunch counter and audio-visual technology, participants acknowledged the importance of collections in relation to other experiences. Robert, a visitor to the Slavery Museum compared the experience of seeing authentic objects to watching a film about slavery saying, 'It's one thing to watch a film but it's – you know – it's a film. This is the real thing. There's instruments and implements that we used and it just brings it to life a bit more really.'

One of the other important elements of the museum visit in relation to other external experiences is the importance of personal stories. As we saw in Kenneth's narrative earlier in this chapter, personal stories, when interwoven with wider historical narratives humanise history and facilitate relatable experiences. Michael remarked upon this as well in reference to the inclusion of local stories from Liverpool at the Slavery Museum. He was discussing the ways in which people can easily detach from painful or challenging histories and how personal stories provide a means to foster connectedness between people:

I just think people detach. We all detach for different reasons based on our experiences and what I found – I was just thinking about the portrayals of the Liverpoolian families – I found that really super interesting. I think of again making the story more accessible ... What the experience was like for a black family? What was that experience like at that time? I think in terms of making it accessible for the people who are immediately detached from the experience who don't even want to confront the experience I think those are hooks.

These personal stories not only provide empathetic anchors which, as we have seen, are part of fostering transformative experience, they also act to further humanise and bring history to life in more personal, relatable ways.

Participants tended to focus on the museum visit as an experience which lent authenticity and humanity to their understandings of the past and present – something which enhanced their understandings and knowledge gained through formal education

and media. The next sections will examine how visits to the Center and Slavery Museum were situated in regards to visits to similar heritage institutions.

6.5.3 Visits to other heritage institutions

Participants spoke about their experiences at the Center or the Slavery Museum in relation to other visits to similar institutions. Perhaps the most obvious examples of this are Caroline and Kenneth. Caroline spoke about seeking out museums which ‘document the Black experience’ as a way to continue to build appreciation and to remind her of the past and present. Kenneth discussed the unique impact of these heritage sites saying he had taken his family to ‘great sites in 47 states as part of my own research and interests and every one has a different impact.’ Across both rounds of interviews, participants related their experience of the Center or Slavery Museum to visits to other museums, galleries, or heritage sites which focused on slavery, civil rights, human rights, or genocide. A breakdown of these sites can be seen in table 6-2.

Participants spoke about the ways in which other heritage experiences had elicited similar affective responses. Silvia explained that after her visit to the Center, ‘I kind of have that same emotionally drained feeling’ that she had had following her visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Visitors also spoke more broadly about being reminded of these previous visits, or indeed having memories of their visits to the Center or Slavery Museum during subsequent engagements with other heritage sites. Michael discussed how visiting sites across the US, Africa, and Europe had helped develop a more complete understanding of African slavery:

I was in Ghana for the first time in October [we went] up to the Elmina Slave Castle. Having been there and having had that incredible experience, I just wanted to see the other side of the picture; the other piece of the puzzle. I've been to museums having to do with the plantations in the US and now that I've had the African piece of the puzzle I thought I would look at how Europeans, in particular the British in Liverpool and Bristol would make sense of [slavery].

Table 6-2: Related heritage experiences shared by participants

Type of institution	Specific examples provided
Museums and galleries	District Six Museum, Cape Town, South Africa International Red Cross Museum, Geneva, Switzerland National Civil Rights Museum, Memphis, TN, US The Warsaw Uprising Museum, Warsaw, Poland Troy University's Rosa Parks Museum, Montgomery, AL, US United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC, US Verzetsmuseum (Resistance Museum), Amsterdam, Netherlands Yad Veshem World Holocaust Remembrance Center, Jerusalem Tibet Museum, Dharamsala, India
Heritage sites	Auschwitz-Birkenau, Oświęcim, Poland Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site, Dachau, Germany Elmina Castle, Elmina, Ghana Martin Luther King, Jr National Historic Park, Atlanta, GA, US Robben Island, Cape Town, South Africa Swarthmoor Hall, Cumbria, UK
Other heritage experiences	Slavery History Tours, Liverpool, UK

Table 6-2: Related heritage experiences shared by participants

This table illustrates the type of heritage experiences participants discussed in relation to their visit to the Slavery Museum or the Center. Specific examples were not always shared with some visitors referring more generally to civil rights museums or Holocaust memorials. Where specific examples were given, I have included them here.

Michael's experience illustrates how visits to complementary institutions provides a more holistic sense of an historic issue – in his case the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Participants who visited civil rights museums in the United States also discussed how each of these visits continued to shape their understandings of the American Civil Rights Movement and its legacies in contemporary society. Participants connected their prior and subsequent engagements with similar heritage experiences emotionally as well as intellectually. These experiences were situated closely together in visitors' wider transformation narratives and worked together to strengthen and shape their understandings of the past and present.

6.5.4 Connecting to lived personal experience

Some of the strongest and most affective connections to the themes explored during their museum visits came from the connections participants drew to their own personal lived experience. These experiences were rich and varied, ranging from social interactions such as those between Ashley and her mother; to those of Grace, a Black American woman in her early sixties visiting the Center. She revealed how memories of being the first Black child in her school in New Orleans had flooded back during her visit:

You know I think the early part [of the exhibition] – the events that happened in the fifties and sixties were really emotionally – I can't think of the word. I just started crying. I went to the bathroom and I just cried ... I thought about what was happening in my own life in August of 1963 and it was very similar because in the city that I lived in in New Orleans, it was just a lot of resistance to integration and although my parents didn't talk to us a lot about what was happening in their own way they were also making strides and so that August/September I was taken out of a Black Catholic school and placed in a white Catholic school and I was the only Black child in my class in fourth grade and every day my brother and I would go to school in the morning and come home. We would be, you know– All the segregationists outside of the schools picketing. The [chants of] "2-4-6-8 we don't want to integrate" and there was just a lot of the same things we saw in there. You know we had to walk through those lines every day. So it made me think about that.

Similar to Caroline, Grace found reflections of herself and her past personal experiences throughout the Center. Her experiences as a child during the Civil Rights Movement

integrating an all-white school had powerfully shaped her understanding of the past and present and formed a central part of her museum visit. Creating opportunities to draw connections between visitors' lived personal experiences and narratives around civil and human rights provides powerful means for shaping understanding and ways of being in the world.

Lived personal experiences subsequent to museum visits continue to play an important role in shaping individuals' understandings and pathways. Importantly, how visitors express the relationship between these experiences and the museum provides insights into the larger transformative journey and the place museums have within it. This is certainly illustrated through the experience of Omar, an Australian medical doctor who was completing a diploma in tropical medicine in Liverpool. While there, he visited the Slavery Museum where he was particularly drawn to the personal stories of contemporary slavery in India.

In our follow-up interview conducted over Skype, Omar revealed the complex and varied experiences he had had in the intervening six months which synthesises many of the types of experience detailed thus far. For example, he referred to reading a book (*Half the Sky: How to Change the World* by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn) which referenced examples of contemporary slavery and which he described as 'quite inspiring on the back of the museum visit.' Omar also described visiting the Red Cross Museum in Geneva saying, 'I suppose as you're walking through [a museum] you have flashbacks to previous museums that you've been to that may have conjured up similar emotions and the [Red Cross Museum] was certainly one that did that.' He also visited the Tibet Museum while in Dharamsala and pointed to that experience as fitting in with his previous experience at the Slavery Museum.

Omar's narrative goes beyond reading and visiting heritage organisations; he was able to articulate clearly the way that his lived personal experiences following his visit to the Slavery Museum had continued to profoundly shape his understandings of human rights

and contemporary slavery. One important episode occurred while visiting family in Geneva:

I paid a visit to my grandmother's sister who lives in Switzerland and I learnt that she actually used to work with the World Health Organisation and one of the big things that she was involved in was – primary health care was one aspect – but human trafficking was another big aspect and her daughter is still campaigning about ending human trafficking. So paying them a visit and finding out what they were involved in and chatting with them contributed to my thinking.

Uncovering this family connection to anti-trafficking was an important part of Omar's transformative journey. He was able to draw more personal connections between himself and his family who have campaigned for human rights. As well as this experience, he also travelled to rural India to help run medical camps near Dharamsala. Though he did not have a strong sense of a specific connection to his museum visit, he felt that the Slavery Museum had provided contextualising understandings of the experience of living and working in India:

I can't really say it was concrete but I suppose the [museum] kind of came up because I was recently travelling through rural India. I suppose there weren't any situations where it was kind of, "oh my god this is child slavery at play" or anything like that but I suppose in terms of context and background and still being aware of that issue existing – that certainly goes through your mind; but I cannot really say that there was a specific moment on that trip where I had a flashback memory to "oh wow this really links to the museum that I went to" I suppose it just provided background, context to it.

The sentiments expressed here are generally echoed amongst visitors who spoke about subsequent lived personal experience in relation to their museum visit; the visit provides a context or framework and the personal experience plays a more prominent role in shaping understandings and thinking processes.

In addition to discussing the relationship of the visit to specific personal experiences, Omar spoke more widely about the ways in which multiple experiences shaped his

transformation narrative. He described the year in which he visited the Slavery Museum and articulated how the museum, discovering family connections to campaigning, and his time traveling had shaped his professional goals:

I don't think that I could say that the museum specifically has [prompted me to do anything differently] but I would have to say that it's certainly been a contributing factor in this year. Part of the reason why I was taking this year off was because I was having some uncertainties about career direction and things like that and I suppose the museum as well as other things that have been part of this year – you could say – inspired me to be more proactive with regards to human rights in general ... So I suppose in terms of thinking about the long-term I'm a lot more interested in working with vulnerable populations as a group. That's probably the thing I can say about it. The museum certainly added to the motivation or inspiration for doing something about it.

This brings to light an important question from this research – what emphasis should researchers and practitioners place on the role of the museum in the narrative of transformation?

6.6 Museum visits as ‘a nudge’

How might we understand the part museum visits play within the overarching context of an individual’s transformative narrative? Returning to our symphony analogy, is it the metaphoric soloist taking centre stage against the texture of the rest of the orchestra? Perhaps it forms the foundational bass part which girds the harmonic structure of the piece? Might it provoke the harmonic dissonance which catapults the melody into a new harmonic direction? Or perhaps it is simply an inner part of the harmonic structure, providing context for more significant experiences. Unlike a single line of a symphony, it is not an easy task to isolate one experience and make sense of its significance within the context of numerous other life experiences. Determining the significance of a visit to a museum within an individual’s narrative of transformation becomes an extraordinary task.

In reflecting on his own life and more specifically on the year in which his visit to the Slavery Museum took place, Omar suggested that his visit acted as a nudge – a subtle push in the direction of taking more personal responsibility for human rights:

[The museum is] one contributing factor. It's one thing where ... you become aware of an issue that you didn't necessarily know much about and then learning that it still continues to be an issue today and so ... that combined with other experiences, number one, it provides context to other experiences that you have and number two, it nudges you in a certain direction to perhaps doing something about it, getting actively involved.

Omar's experience suggests that for him, the museum was a small part of a wider set of experiences which slowly and subtly pushed him down a specific pathway, in this case towards wanting to work with vulnerable people.

When reflecting on the woman who experienced the epiphany around gender neutral bathrooms, David, the Manager of Visitor Experience at the Center, remarked that her revelations might have been 'infinitesimal in some ways but also possibly very significant for her.' In other words, while he could not gauge the extent to which that experience at the Center transformed her life, there was the possibility that it might be quite small, perhaps a nudge, or it might have been a much stronger push. Interestingly, David went on to discuss the ways in which the Center is a free-choice learning environment using language extraordinarily similar to that used by Omar:

I mean like it is very much a choose-your-own-adventure kind of experience. It's all here but you could easily walk past it if you wanted to. So that's a lot of the work is that we're trying to slowly nudge people into broadening their vision for the world that they live in.

Here, David suggests that the Center creates transformational opportunities which visitors are free to engage with or not.

These references to nudge are reminiscent of Thaler and Sunstein's (2009) work on nudge theory which combined behavioural economics and social psychology and argued for the adoption of positive reinforcement in order to achieve specific ends often related to public health. Thaler and Sunstein define nudge as:

any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people's behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives. To count as a mere nudge, the intervention must be easy and cheap to avoid. Nudges are not mandates. Putting the fruit at eye level counts as a nudge. Banning junk food does not. (ibid., p. 6)

The authors framed this theory around the idea of a *libertarian paternalism* which they argued was a philosophy which advocated for choice architects, those in a position to influence behaviours and decisions, to guide or nudge the public towards better, healthier outcomes while permitting individuals to retain freedom of choice. Thaler and Sunstein believed that freedom, the libertarian part of this philosophy, came from removing barriers to choice as then individuals could then either opt to accept or reject the suggested behaviour.

Criticisms of nudge theory include questioning its ethical ramifications, the potential for nudge theory to be coercive, and the improbability of behavioural changes from nudges to result in holistic transformation. Goodwin (2012, p. 86) maintains that nudge theory and its manifestations in public policy inherently disempowers individuals and is essentially a manipulation of 'imperfections in human judgement.' He continues by pointing to the necessity to approach issues such as public health and climate change systemically rather than solely on an individual basis. Further, a report by the Kings Fund suggested that the use of nudge to achieve public health policy goals found that there was insufficient evidence to suggest that behavioural changes based on nudges were longitudinally sustained (Boyce, Robertson, and Dixon, 2008).

These aspects of nudge theory are concerning and have led me to base my overarching theoretical framework of transformational experience on emancipatory and

transformative learning theories as well as clinical psychology as detailed in Chapter 3. This approach has foregrounded visitor agency within their own experiences and removed the focusing lens from the museum to the visitor. Framing transformation through nudge theory has the potential to once again centre the museum and more immediate outcomes rather than a deeper more authentic transformation. Despite its negatives, we might draw selectively from nudge theory in order to frame discussions on the significance of museum visits within the wider framework of interconnected experiences. In other words, thinking about that significance in terms of a nudge – a small, incremental push as part of a longer transformative journey.

For a visitor like Omar, visiting the Slavery Museum provided contextual understanding to subsequent engagement with literature (his reading of *Half the Sky*), his discussion with family about their role in anti-trafficking campaigning, other visits to similar museums, and for his experience working in rural India. Taken more holistically, each of these experiences nudged him towards a pathway resulting in a desire to foreground human rights in his professional career as a doctor who has found a desire to work with vulnerable populations. On its own, the museum visit likely would not have resulted in the same outcome – it is only when we take into account the ways in which the visit was reinforced, reflected upon, and was viewed in relation to other experiences do we discover its potential to transform.

As a counterpoint, we might think of Evonne's story as being illustrative of a case in which the museum visit played a much more significant role in the transformative journey – a proverbial push. The fact that her inspiration to lower her tuition fees was borne directly out of her visit to the Center provides evidence that we must consider the extent to which museum visits have the potential to transform is more of a spectrum. For some visitors, their experience of the museum will provide a small nudge which might move them through their narrative of transformation while for others it might provide the impetus for sweeping changes in understanding or action. This is dependent on a variety of factors including where someone is along their transformative journey,

the level of affective engagement during their visit, and the strength of the connections drawn between the museum and other experiences outside of it.

6.7 Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to contextualise the role activist museums play within the overarching narrative of transformation. Beginning with a discussion of the importance of affective connectedness in fostering transformative experience, we begin to understand that the individuality of experience shapes every part of the transformative journey – from having a willingness to engage affectively to how visitors relate their museum visit to other sources and experiences. This once again highlights the need for nuanced, contextualised approaches to studies of impact.

While it is not easy to generalise in this way what can be said is that visitors who open themselves to having affective experiences in the museum are more likely to attribute transformative characteristics to their visit. Barriers to forming affective connections are highly individualised though visitor motivations do play a role. Museum visits are situated within the wider context of an individual's life experiences. Museums are uniquely placed to humanise and bring history to life for visitors – fleshing out understandings gained through other sources and formal education. Visitors draw connections between visits to heritage sites which feed into one another providing expansive contextualising understandings from multiple perspectives. Personal experiences provide some of the most potent connections drawn both in the museum and afterwards. Finally, the extent to which museum visits are responsible for transformation is once again difficult to generalise. For most visitors, the museum is seen as a nudge which works in conjunction with other reinforcing experiences. In exceptional cases, the museum visit acts as an epiphany catapulting the visitor towards a more immediate transformation. Once again, this is contingent upon an individual's experience, depth of affective engagement, and place within their transformative journey when they enter the museum.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have attempted to demonstrate that a nuanced approach to impact which contextualises museum visits within the wider field of transformative experience – the narrative of transformation – provides an enriched understanding of the role of activist museum practice in promoting social justice and equality. This approach has reframed impact around the life experiences of the visitor. Defining impact in this way promotes an understanding of transformation which de-emphasises museum and researcher expectations and centres a fuller, richer understanding of the role of activist practice within the context of visitors' lives.

In this final chapter, I will synthesise the arguments I have made with regards to approaching impact through the framework of narratives of transformation. I will highlight the findings which speak to the roles museum visits play within visitors' lives and further make recommendations for future activist practice based upon the importance of fostering affective connections and the necessity of critical reflective spaces. I will conclude by discussing the limitations of this study and highlighting areas for further research.

7.1 Narratives of transformation as a way of understanding impact

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of this research has been to reinterpret the ways in which longitudinal impact is considered. Decentring the museum in this way and situating it within the wider life experience of the individual has provided new insights into how visitors define the impact, significance, and role of visits to activist museums for themselves. The need to contextualise impact is not new: indeed, the discussion of Falk's work in Chapter 2 (see Adelman, Falk, and James, 2000; Falk and Dierking, 1997; Falk, Dierking, and Semmel, 2012; Falk, Moussouri, Coulson, 1998; Falk et al., 2007) illustrates that longitudinal studies have acknowledged the importance of visitor motivations, agendas, and prior knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours in constructing understandings of impact. Despite this acknowledgement, the museum visit has tended

to be measured in relative isolation and has been privileged as central to the wider learning journey.

What I have attempted to do through this study is to decentre the museum's perspective and in turn to privilege visitors' experiences. This has precipitated a broader approach to impact which considers it as a narrative of transformation which is unique, contextual, and nuanced; a narrative which brings together the wealth of diverse experiences both inside and outside of the museum. Employing the idea of the narrative of transformation as a framework fostered a more open approach to understanding impact. It brought to the fore other experiences which informed participants' understandings, attitudes, and ways of being in the world. It was then possible to better define the relationship of activist museums to these other experiences and within the visitors' transformative journey. This approach also invited more of visitors' own interpretations of the impact of museum visits, opening a further window into how they reflected on their time at the museum.

Drawing together understandings of change from critical pedagogy, transformative learning theory, and the transtheoretical model of change provided a sound theoretical basis for developing the narrative of transformation framework. Reflected in each of these theories are a pool of common ideas which can inform the way we think about change. Each has its own way of framing an experience which sparks the transformational journey; from Paulo Freire's (1972) conscientization to Mezirow's (2009) disorienting dilemma, and Prochaska and DiClemente's (1984) contemplation phase. Change presented in each theory is accompanied by reflection and action. It is a cyclical, non-linear experience which can involve relapses to previous ways of thinking and being in the world. It is an emotional as well as an intellectual and behavioural process. These shared elements of the transformative journey provided the basis for my approach to impact and change in this study. By grounding my framework across disciplines and drawing together different views on change, the narrative of transformation emerged as a way of encapsulating, describing, and thinking about the impact of activist museum practice.

The findings which have emerged from this study reflect the strengths of this approach which centres visitor perspectives and situates the museum experience within the wider narrative of transformation. As illustrated in Chapters 5 and 6, activist museums certainly have a role to play within the narrative of transformation – a role which is facilitated through affective connections and which is bound up with other experiences. Visitors form their attitudes, understandings, and ways of being in the world not only from visits to museums, but also from what they read and watch, formal education, and personal experiences. These experiences can reinforce, enhance, or disrupt ways of thinking – they can raise awareness or inspire action. What is important to underline here is that museum visits form part of this transformative ecosystem. Museum visits have the potential to remind us of the past and to connect that past to the present and future. They raise our awareness, foster more meaningful understandings, and inspire action. They can also reaffirm our transformative trajectories – recharging us to continue fighting for social justice and equality.

A more recent study of visitor responses to activist museum interventions serves to underpin this assertion. Since my own study was completed, I worked with the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries at the University of Leicester to complete their evaluation of the National Trust's *Prejudice and Pride* programme which was introduced in Chapter 2. The national programme of exhibitions and events marked the fiftieth anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of male homosexuality in the UK. Together with my colleagues Jocelyn Dodd and Sarah Plumb (2018; see also Dodd, et al., 2018) we analysed visitor responses to the programme. Our evaluation indicates that visitor responses ran across a spectrum from the outright rejection of the programme and its underlying ethos to those who voiced unequivocal support for it. Within this spectrum were those for whom the visit stimulated reflection, shifted attitudes, and inspired action. These findings reflect similar experiences to those related in this thesis especially in the ways in which the museum visit raised awareness, fostered deeper understandings, and inspired actions:

Many of the events and activities associated with Prejudice and Pride stimulated a process of reflection and helped [visitors] to 'see with new eyes' ... Several visitors reported having their 'eyes opened', and credited Prejudice and Pride with expanding their knowledge and understanding of LGBTQ issues. (Dodd, et al., 2018, p. 55)

We also found a number of visitors who had shifted their attitudes about LGBTQ issues and those for whom their experience had inspired actions. We were able to conclude that:

The programme proved to be highly effective at stimulating reflection and dialogue between visitors around LGBTQ history, culture, identity and rights, prompting people to think, feel, and in some cases act, differently. (ibid., p. 61)

These findings echo those reported in this thesis – that activist museums play a role in visitors' narratives of transformation. What role the visit plays tends to be contingent upon where a visitor is in the transformative journey, related to affective connections forged at the time of the visit as well as the relationship between the museum visit and other kinds of transformative experiences before and after the visit.

While defining the role of the museum in relation to visitors' attitudes, understandings, and ways of being in the world formed the primary aim of this study, the framework provided by the narrative of transformation provided insights into how the visit is situated amongst other experiences. We might harken back to the analogy of the symphony in Chapter 6. For some participants, the museum visit was central to their transformative journey; in essence it was the main melodic theme of that specific transformative arc. For others, the museum visit played a minor role, perhaps even barely perceptible within the overall texture of the proverbial orchestra. Understanding and accepting that the museum may play a limited role in the transformative journey (or indeed no role at all) is important for practitioners and researchers alike. This does not necessarily represent a failure of activist practice but instead reflects the need for diverse transformative experiences and their complex realities. This is not to say that

efforts should not be made to reach all visitors nor that those visitors for whom the museum played a minor role or no role at all might not benefit from their visit in other ways which might lead to transformative experiences in the future. Perhaps the point I have emphasised most strongly throughout this thesis is that transformation is contextual and nuanced and more importantly – it is unique to the individual. One visitor's narrative of transformation may begin with the museum; for another it may begin decades before; and for still others it may not begin for years afterwards though potentially the smallest seed of transformation will have been sown at the museum.

7.2 Fostering affective connectedness

'How do we start an empathy revolution in museums?' is a question which Mike Murawski (2016) asked citing the work of Roman Krznaric (2013; 2014) founder of the Empathy Museum. Murawski was writing about the importance of empathy within museums to foster connections between diverse peoples:

Krznaric's work with the Empathy Museum is but one small example of the types of civically-engaged, human-centred practices that have been instituted in an effort to expand the role that museums serve in building empathy and human connection in our communities. Staff working for museums across the globe are launching new efforts to bring people together, facilitate open dialogue, and elevate the voices and stories of marginalized groups to promote greater understanding. (Murawski, 2016)

The growing emphasis and the recognition of the importance of empathy within museum practice bodes well for fostering continuing transformative experiences for visitors. Museums are more likely to promote transformation in their visitors if they can nurture emotional and empathetic connections in their audiences. Affective connectedness is the engine for change – fostering awareness raising, commitments to action, promoting richer understandings and meaningful remembrance.

Dina Bailey (2016, p. 140), the former Director of Educational Strategies at the Center, recognised the relationship between affective connectedness, specifically empathy and the impact of the Center's work and mission:

The role of empathy in the future of the Center is directly connected to the impact that the institution has the potential to have on personal, institutional, and collective levels. As the Center provides opportunities to engage a more complex collective memory, it will make itself more relevant and more credible. If the Center holds true to its foundation, it will continue to impact social change.

The importance of empathy and emotional connection in fostering deeply meaningful transformational experiences cannot be over emphasised. It is an essential ingredient in transformative change.

Returning once more to the evaluation of *Prejudice and Pride* reveals further evidence of the importance of emotional and empathetic connections. Authors of the evaluation report found that:

The research produced overwhelming evidence that the programme deepened connections for visitors, many of whom were existing members, whose experiences were characterised by unexpected levels of emotion. A couple who were long-term members of the Trust wrote a letter of support directly to John Orna-Ornstein, sharing the profound effect the programme had on them ... Others described their experiences of the programme as 'incredibly moving and powerful' alongside being both 'inspiring and deeply upsetting'. (Dodd, et al., forthcoming, p. 54)

Much of the language used by National Trust visitors mirror that used by participants in this study – illustrating the emotive and empathetic connections which are fostered through mindful interpretive techniques.

Visitors who were open emotionally and empathetically while in the museum, were more likely to attribute transformational qualities to their experience. This is the case

for interviews which were conducted on-site as well as follow-up interviews. It is also worth noting that the strength of the connections was reflective of the significance placed on the visit within the context of the wider narrative of transformation. This is certainly illustrated in the story of Evonne in Chapter 6.

Throughout the multiple narratives presented in this thesis, it is possible to divine a great complexity of individual experience which facilitated or indeed hindered the formation of affective connections. Elements such as visitor motivations, personal experiences, formal education, and the quality of the interpretation all form parts of the ecosystem in which affect is nurtured. Having a more nuanced understanding of the visitor experience aids in contextualising the emotions and empathetic connections which are made or missed in the museum. In much the same way that the significance of the experience is contingent – so is the possibility to connect emotionally and empathetically. Again the need for more agile frameworks which can aid in negotiating the complexities of experience and affective connectedness is clear.

7.3 Creating space for critical reflection

There is an argument to be made that the act of participating in this study prompted a deeper level of engagement and critical reflection which led in part to some of the transformative experiences related by visitors. In order to maintain a high level of rigor and to ensure the validity of their responses, specifically in the follow-up interviews, visitors were asked if they felt that participating in the study had influenced their museum experience and the ways in which they framed that experience. Twelve of the thirteen respondents who completed a follow-up interview admitted that their participation had had some sort of impact on the way they thought about their visit. Out of these twelve, all felt that participating in the study had facilitated deeper reflections on their visit, five suggested that it had also aided their recall of the visit, and one visitor suggested that participating in the study had nudged them toward making changes in her life. A selection of these responses appears below:

Getting surveyed about the experience ... incited a more immediate and deeper reflection on the content than I might otherwise have done. (Ian)

I think you're reflecting on [the visit] more by having a discussion with someone about it who's asking you pretty thought provoking questions about your experience of the museum. So I think you do reflect on it more but it's probably a good thing. (Omar)

[Participating in the study] has helped me to remember notable things about the museum and digest the information a little bit so that I retain more. It's good to discuss the information and the emotions because it helps to remember the information later on. (Ashley)

I would probably say that the study was something I was happy to provide some time to and it has also kept the subject and trip in my mind longer than it probably would have been. (Scott)

It has certainly encouraged me to reflect on it more. Your questions are encouraging me to seek opportunities for changing my life versus just having had a tourist experience. (Silvia)

These responses indicate that participating in the study did result in deeper reflections on the content and the museum experience. Far from being disappointing, this phenomenon indicates that there is strength in creating space for facilitated, structured critical reflection – an important ingredient in transformation.

As stated previously in this chapter the role of reflection and specifically critical reflection is detailed in both critical pedagogy and transformative learning theory. Recalling the discussion of Freire's conceptualisation of praxis from Chapter 3, as the cyclical relationship of critical reflection and action – both are continually informing the other and it is this process which ultimately transforms the world (Freire, 1972). In her discussion of critical reflection within transformative learning theory, Carolin Kreber (2012) unpicks the complex nature of critical reflection as being bound up in critical theory bringing the individual to recognise the underlying power dynamics which frame our assumptions of the world. The ability to critique one's viewpoint, to empathise with

others, and to negotiate the complexity and diversity of experience form part of the act of critical reflection (Kreber, 2012). She further emphasises the importance of critical reflection as part of the transformative process, though speaking specifically about adult education, her message is transferable to museum practice:

Nurturing critical reflection through our professional practice ... is linked to the understanding that education ultimately is aimed at making a difference to the problems faced by our societies ... Our world is rife with issues calling for people's capacity to reflect critically on their assumption and beliefs, and to show both courage and compassion towards those in need. One of the most pervasive human weaknesses may well be prejudice towards that with which we are unfamiliar. Such prejudice may be expressed in the attitudes displayed towards certain cultures and ways of living (as, for example, in 'Islamaphobia,' 'homophobia,' or racism), but it may also be expressed, for example, in one's sentiments towards a political party whose platform one never compared with that of another (for example, 'In my family we have always voted conservative'). Underlying these attitudes is an unrecognized irrationality and fear of that which is unknown or different from what one is used to, combined with a lack of capacity and willingness to engage in critical thought and, by implication, having one's assumptions challenged. (Kreber, 2010, p. 335)

Fostering this kind of critical reflection forms part of the visit to activist museums already. Through affective connectedness, interpretive strategies, personal narratives, and interactions with collections, visitors are prompted to reflect on their constructed understandings of the world and their place within it. What this research also illustrates is that creating space for individuals to respond to specific inquiries about their visit, to freely discuss their experience, and to reflect purposefully on it heightens the level of critical engagement.

The importance of including space for facilitated critical reflection was also found in our evaluation for *Prejudice and Pride* – 'a key element in the success of the *Prejudice and Pride* programme was its capacity to stimulate reflection (Dodd, et. al., 2018, p. 64). The space which was created through the use of comment cards and in-depth interviews in the evaluation of *Prejudice and Pride* mirrors the similar reflective space created within this study. This is not so much a physical space as it is an intellectual and affective space.

A space in which participants were able to share their experiences – some of which were deeply personal – and to reflect on the ways in which the museum formed part of their transformational arc.

The use of facilitated reflection has been used in museums previously. As detailed in the work of Simon (2014) featured in Chapter 3, the *Without Sanctuary* exhibit at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania included a space for facilitated dialogue at specific times within the gallery. The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio features a 'Dialogue Zone' in which trained facilitators prompt visitors to reflect on their experience at the museum and both its immediate and long-term impacts (Crew, 2007). The New York Tenement Museum purposefully integrates critical reflection throughout their tours through the use of dialogic engagements. We might also return to the interviews conducted with members of the learning team at the Center related in Chapter 5 which detail the approaches taken by staff to localise civil and human rights issues within the visitors' frame of reference. Visitors are more able to reflect on their place within society and the platforms from which they might take direct action in response. These sorts of strategies which invite visitors to reflect and share their experience, thoughts, feelings, and viewpoints have been shown to promote empathy and generate better understandings.

The creation of facilitated space in this way need not be as resource intensive as providing trained facilitators in dialogic methods, though this is certainly an option. Comment card systems, reflective pledges, dialogue starters, and provocations in interpretive text are strategies already employed within many museum galleries. An issue arises however, when these become passive activities which do not meaningfully engage visitors in critical reflection about themselves, their experiences, assumptions, and the world. To borrow a phrase from Arao and Clemens (2013, p. 135) we need to create 'brave spaces' which support visitors to confront their constructed meanings of the world and actively reflect on their place within it.

As Freire (1972) notes, however, reflection is not enough to transform the world. It is part of the transformation process of the individual but if activist museums are to be part of meaningful change within their communities and within wider society, the space they offer for critical reflection must in some way lead on to meaningful action. Within the narrative of transformation it is often the case that moving from reflection to action presents numerous challenges. Kreber (2010, p. 331, citing Mezirow, 2000) notes that 'when entrenched views and convictions are revealed to be 'distorted,' finding the mental space to be creative, and mustering the courage to develop alternatives, can be enormously challenging.' Encouraging visitors to take a mindful approach to any activity designed to foster critical reflection is essential as is recognising that each visitor will be in different places within their narrative of transformation; places which preclude the ability to take action or critically reflect on their experience. Acknowledging and validating the complexities of these individuals' journeys, and further, providing them with the guidance and tools to carry out this sort of reflection at future points can begin to break down perceived and real barriers. While the goal may be to inspire each visitor to take action, this must be tempered by the realities, nuances, and complexities of lived experience. When spaces for reflection are founded on these realities and generated from a place of understanding and care, or as Freire (1972) might say, love, visitors can be empowered in their own communities through their personal narrative of transformation.

7.4 Limitations and areas for further inquiry

Throughout this thesis I have emphasised the importance of a contextualised approach to impact, one which privileges the experience and voices of participants and highlights the ways in which museum visits are situated within their lives. I have argued that participants are best placed to relate the impact that museum visits have had on their understandings, attitudes, and ways of being in the world. It is important to admit that despite my best efforts to acknowledge and champion these points, it is nonetheless impossible for a researcher to perfectly capture the holistic experience of another. We can only ever hope to shed as much light as possible on the subjective experiences of our participants and point out relationships between them.

Additionally, longitudinal research is inherently limited owing to attrition rates among participants. In the specific case of this study, about one-fifth of visitor participants took part in a follow-up activity. It is also the case that all but one of these participants chose to complete their follow-up through email which, while allowing them to have more time to reflect on the questions, their experiences, and answers necessarily means that some of the nuance of response gained through vocal intonation, body language, and over the course of a conversation with the researcher was lost.

Whilst I maintain that the research design for this study was robust, apposite to responding to the research aims and questions, and suited to the circumstances of the study, namely a lone researcher within a limited timeframe there is nevertheless a case to be made for trialling different methodologies to gain further understandings of the long-term impact of activist museums on visitors. The narrative of transformation opens up possibilities for partnerships with visitors which go beyond participant and researcher and indeed can blur these lines.

Using action research methodologies in which participants share in formulating the research questions, methodologies, and analysis what insights might we gain into the experiences of visitors who have been inspired by museum visits to take action or who have developed better, deeper understandings of the experience of others? Might these methodologies close the gap even further in our contextual understandings of visitors' transformative journeys? What might be gained by extending the longitudinal study beyond the six-months timeframe used here? Is it possible to look at transformative journeys which have been years in the making to situate the museum visit within this wider (and more complicated) web of experience?

7.5 Contribution

There will always be challenges and limitations in conducting longitudinal studies, especially studies which involve visitors. They spend a small portion of their lives within the museum and understanding the role that fleeting visit has within the symphony of

their lives requires an appreciation of the complexities and nuances of transformation and subjective experience. What this study illustrates is that the museum visit plays a role within the transformational journeys of visitors. It is one that is fostered through affective connectedness and one which is interwoven with, contingent upon, and related to a person's wider narrative of transformation – encompassing myriad other experiences, understandings, and ways of being in the world. Museum professionals and museologists may take comfort in knowing that the museum is part of this process but must also share this role and reflect on the significance that a single museum visit might have for the visitor.

Throughout this thesis I have interjected brief glimpses of my own transformative journey – one which began on a summer's morning in Amsterdam at the Anne Frank House. That single museum visit set me on a journey to better understand my own experience and the experiences of others who have been inspired by museums. My narrative of transformation has led me to conduct this research and to critically reflect on the role of the museum within my own life and the lives of others. The act of sharing my findings through this thesis forms the latest part of my transformative journey – a journey which began with a visit to a museum.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Sample Interview Questions



Museum Staff Interview Protocols

What, if any, changes within individuals are discernible following a visit to a museum which actively seeks to engage audiences with themes relating to social justice and do any potential personal commitments to action made at the time of the visit persist in the three to six month period following the visit?

Interviews will be semi-structured. The aim is to better understand the long-term impact museums have on their visitors especially with regards to topics of social justice. The interview will consist of at least eight open-ended questions grouped under four headings:

General/Context

- i. What is your role within [INSTITUTION] and how long have you been at this post?
- ii. What sort of interactions do you have with visitors during a typical week?

Impact

- i. How do you understand “impact” with regards to visitors?
- ii. How do you see your role in creating impact?
- iii. Do you have any personal anecdotes or experiences you would be willing to share relating to visitor impact?

Approaches

- i. Have there been particular approaches or practices [INSTITUTION] has adopted within the galleries which you feel have been particularly effective at creating impact?
 - a. How do you know they have been effective?
- ii. Have there been any approaches [INSTITUTION] has tried which have not been particularly effective?
 - a. What have you learned from these experiences?

Closing

- i. Is there anything you would like to elaborate on or add which we haven’t discussed?

Museum Visitor Interview Protocols: Round I

General/Context

- i. What brings you to [INSTITUTION] today?
- ii. Where have you come from today? Is that where you live?
- iii. Are you visiting with anyone?
- iv. Have you visited [INSTITUTION] before?
 - a. If yes -
 - i. When was your last visit?
 - ii. What prompted you to return for a second visit?

The Visit/Approaches

- i. Were there any parts of the museum which struck you as being particularly interesting or poignant? Why?
- ii. Were there any particular parts of the museum which you didn't like or took less interest in? Why?
- iii. Were there any particular parts of the museum that prompted you to pause for discussion or to share your thoughts with your [FRIENDS/FAMILY/COMPANION/MUSEUM STAFF]?
 - a. If yes -
 - i. What kinds of things did you talk about?
- iv. Did anything about your experience surprise you?

Impact

- i. Do you feel that [INSTITUTION] has a particular message it is trying to get across?
 - a. If yes –
 - i. What do you think that message is?
- ii. What do you feel you will take away from your visit? (For example, is there anything you feel differently about as a result of your visit?)
- iii. Has your visit inspired you in any particular ways?
 - a. If yes –
 - i. How has it inspired you?
 - ii. How do you think you might act on this inspiration?

Visitor Background

- ii. Which of these categories best describes you?
 - a. 16-24 years old
 - b. 25-34 years old
 - c. 35-44 years old
 - d. 45-54 years old
 - e. 55-64 years old
 - f. 65-74 years old
 - g. 75+ years old
- iii. What is your occupation? (If unemployed or retired, please give previous job if applicable.)
- iv. Do you participate in community service activities or volunteer with any community organisations?
 - a. If yes-
 - i. Would you be willing to share what sort of community groups you work with?
- v. Are there aspects of your identity which made this visit/this museum especially meaningful to you?

Museum Visitor Interview Protocols: Round II

Recalling the Visit/Approaches

- i. What do you most remember about your visit to [INSTITUTION]?
 - a. Why do you think this part of your visit has stayed with you in particular?
- ii. Have you shared anything about your visit with anyone? (For example friends/family/colleagues)
 - a. If yes –
 - i. What particular aspects of your visit did you discuss with them?
- iii. Have you engaged with [INSTITUTION] in any way since your visit? (For example, through the museum website/social media exchanges with [INSTITUTION]/return visits/programmes at the museum)
 - a. If yes –
 - i. Could you tell me more about what interactions you have had with [INSTITUTION]?

Drawing on the Visit

- i. Have any particular situations or events prompted you to think about your museum visit?
 - a. Could you describe the specific circumstances?
 - b. Why do you think this situation evoked memories of your visit?
- ii. Do you find that you have thought differently about certain topics as a result of your visit?
 - a. If yes –
 - i. How so?

Impact

- i. Do you think your museum experience has benefitted you in the six-months since your visit?
 - a. If yes –
 - i. In what ways?
 - b. If no –
 - i. Why do you think this is?
- ii. At the time of your visit you were inspired by/to [INSPIRATION FROM INTERVIEW I]. In the past six months have you made any changes or done anything differently as a result of this inspiration from your visit?

- a. If yes –
 - i. Can you describe what changes you have made?
 - ii. Do you feel that anything in particular helped you to make these changes?
- b. If no –
 - i. Do you feel that anything in particular is preventing you from acting on that inspiration?
- iii. In the past six-months has anything outside of your museum visit contributed to your views on the topics you encountered during your visit?
 - a. If yes –
 - i. In what ways have they contributed?

Closing

- i. Do you feel like participating in this study has impacted on the way you view your museum experience?
 - a. If yes –
 - i. In what ways?
- v. Is there anything you would like to add that we haven't discussed?

Museum Visitor Interview Protocols: Round II: Formatted for email

Dear [PARTICIPANT'S NAME],

Thank you so much for your email and for agreeing to participate in a follow-up interview. I really appreciate your time and insights.

Just a few housekeeping things:

Participation in this follow-up activity is entirely voluntary.

By submitting a reply email, you are consenting for your answers to be used in the PhD research project, *Understanding the Long-term Impact of Museum Experiences on Visitors*.

As with the previous face-to-face interviews, your answers will be treated confidentially and your responses will be securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Your real name will not appear in any final papers or publications unless you indicate that you would like your name to be acknowledged.

This study will be carried out in accordance with the University of Leicester's Code of Research Ethics which can be viewed at: <http://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/ethics/code>

You may withdraw from the study at any point prior to 31 December 2016.

Thank you again for participating!

Please answer the following questions as thoroughly as you can. When you are satisfied with your responses, send them to me via email at jl61@le.ac.uk. If you have any questions or something seems unclear don't hesitate to contact me.

- i. What do you most remember about your visit to the Center for Civil and Human Rights? Why do you think this part of your visit has stayed with you in particular?
- ii. Have you shared anything about your visit with anyone? (For example friends, family, or colleagues) If you have, what particular aspects of your visit did you discuss with them?
- iii. Have you engaged with the museum in any way since your visit? (For example, through the museum website/social media exchanges/return visits/programmes at the museum) If you have could you tell me more about what interactions you have had?
- iv. Have any particular situations or events either in your personal life, regionally, nationally, or globally prompted you to think about your museum visit? If yes, could you describe the specific circumstances? Why do you think this situation evoked memories of your visit?
- v. Do you find that you have thought differently about certain topics as a result of your visit? If you have, which topics and how have you thought differently?
- vi. Do you think your museum experience has benefited you in the time since your visit? If yes, in what ways? If no, why do you think this is?
- vii. In the past six months, has anything outside of your museum visit contributed to your views on the topics you encountered inside the museum? If yes, what has contributed to your views and in what ways?
- viii. At the time of your visit we spoke about how the museum may or may not have inspired you. Since your visit, have you done anything differently, started new projects, or made any changes as a result of how you might have been inspired by your visit? If yes, can you describe what you have been doing? Do you feel that anything in particular helped you to make these changes? If no, why do you think this is? Do you feel that anything in particular is preventing you from acting on your inspiration?
- ix. Do you feel like participating in this study has impacted on the way you view your museum experience? If yes, in what ways?
- x. Is there anything you would like to add that I haven't asked?

Appendix 2: Sample Information Sheets



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER

Understanding the Long-term Impact of Museum Experiences on Visitors

Museum Staff Participant Information Sheet

Introduction

I would like to invite you to participate in this project which hopes to develop a better understanding of how museums affect the lives of their visitors. I am interested in knowing how and when visitors draw upon their museum experience and what impact, if any, it has had on their lives.

Why am I doing this project?

This project forms the basis of my PhD dissertation in Museum, Gallery, and Heritage Studies from the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. I am hoping that this project will help to give museum professionals and policy makers a better understanding of the impact museums have on their visitors in order to better serve their communities.

What will you have to do if you take part?

Please sign the informed consent form and return it to me.

1. I will contact you in order to set up a face-to-face, email, or telephone interview whichever is most convenient for you.
2. The interview will last no more than 15-20 minutes. I will ask you some questions about your experiences working with visitors at your institution, how you understand impact with regards to visitors, and what sorts of impact you have personally witnessed.
3. When I have completed the study I will produce a summary of the findings which I will be more than happy to share with you if you are interested.

Will your participation in the project remain confidential?

Any information you supply will be treated confidentially. Participants will be anonymised in all written assignments and publications. Any paper records containing your information (i.e. informed consent forms) will be stored securely and all electronic records (i.e. email correspondence) will be kept on a locked laptop.

Do you have to take part in this study?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the project at any time before **31 December 2016**. If you are uncertain or uncomfortable about any aspect of your participation please contact the researcher listed below to discuss your concerns or to request clarification on any aspect of the study.

Researcher:

Jennifer Bergevin
PhD Researcher at the School of Museum
Studies
University of Leicester
jlb61@le.ac.uk

Supervisor:

Dr. Richard Sandell
Professor of Museum Studies at the School
of Museum Studies
University of Leicester

Please retain this information sheet for your records. Thank you for your time.

Introduction

I would like to invite you to participate in this project which hopes to develop a better understanding of how museums affect the lives of their visitors. I am interested in knowing how and when you draw upon your museum experience and what impact, if any, it has had on your life.

Why am I doing this project?

This project forms the basis of my PhD dissertation in Museum, Gallery, and Heritage Studies from the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. I am hoping that this project will help to give museum professionals and policy makers a better understanding of the impact museums have on their visitors in order to better serve you and your communities.

What will you have to do if you take part?

Please sign the informed consent form and return it to me.

1. An initial interview lasting no more than 15-20 minutes will take place now in which I will ask you about your visit today.
2. With your permission, I will contact you in 6-8 weeks' time to set up a follow-up interview using your preferred method (telephone, email, Skype, etc.). This second interview should last no longer than 15-20 minutes.
3. Again, with your permission, I will contact you in 6 months' time to set up a final interview using your preferred method (telephone, email, Skype, etc.). This final interview should last no longer than 15-20 minutes.

When I have completed the study I will produce a summary of the findings which I will be more than happy to share with you if you are interested.

How much time will participation involve?

No more than an hour over the next six months.

Will your participation in the project remain confidential?

Any information you supply will be treated confidentially. Participants will be anonymised in all written assignments and publications. Any paper records containing your information (i.e. informed consent forms) will be stored securely and all electronic records (i.e. email correspondence) will be kept on a locked laptop.

What are the advantages of taking part in this project?

You may find it enjoyable and rewarding to discuss your museum experience within the interviews. Your voice and experiences will be heard and will help researchers, museum

professionals, and policy makers to make improvements in the museums within your community.

What are the disadvantages of taking part in this project?

You may not wish to be contacted in the weeks and months following your visit.

Do you have to take part in this study?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the project at any time before **31 December 2016**. If you are uncertain or uncomfortable about any aspect of your participation please contact the researcher listed below to discuss your concerns or to request clarification on any aspect of the study.

Researcher:

Jennifer Bergevin
PhD Researcher at the School of Museum Studies
University of Leicester
jlb61@le.ac.uk

Supervisor:

Dr. Richard Sandell
Professor of Museum Studies at the School of Museum Studies
University of Leicester

Please retain this information sheet for your records. Thank you for your time.

Appendix 3: Sample Informed Consent Sheets



Understanding the Long-term Impact of Museum Experiences on Visitors

Museum Staff Informed Consent Form

I agree to take part in the project *Understanding the Long-term Impact of Museum Experiences on Visitors* which is research towards a PhD in Museum, Gallery and Heritage Studies at the University of Leicester.

I have had the research project explained to me and I have read the Information sheet about the project which I may keep for my records.

I understand that this study will be carried out in accordance with the University of Leicester's Code of Research Ethics which can be viewed at: <http://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/committees/research-ethics/code-of-practice>

Material I provide as part of this study will be treated as confidential and securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

I have read and I understand the information sheet.	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and they were answered to my satisfaction.	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time before 31 December 2015 .	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to the interview being recorded and my words being used in a student assignment.	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to my words being used in related academic publications, including on the Internet.	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I give permission for the following personal details to be used in connection with any words I have said or information I have passed on:				
My real name	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
My institutional affiliation	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
The title of my position	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I request that my real name is acknowledged in any publications that reference the comments that I have made.	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name [PRINT]

Signature Date

In the event the researcher should need to contact you in future please indicate your preferred method along with the relevant information:

Telephone ☐ Email ☐

Museum Visitor Informed Consent Form

I agree to take part in the project *Understanding the Long-term Impact of Museum Experiences on Visitors* which is research towards a PhD in Museum, Gallery and Heritage Studies at the University of Leicester.

I have had the research project explained to me and I have read the Information sheet about the project which I may keep for my records.

I understand that this study will be carried out in accordance with the University of Leicester's Code of Research Ethics which can be viewed at:
<http://www2.le.ac.uk/institution/committees/research-ethics/code-of-practice>

Material I provide as part of this study will be treated as confidential and securely stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

I have read and I understand the information sheet.	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and they were answered to my satisfaction.	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time before 31 December 2016 .	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to the interview being recorded and my words being used in a student assignment.	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to my words being used in related academic publications, including on the Internet.	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I give permission for my real name to be used in connection with any words I have said or information I have passed on.	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I give permission to be contacted for follow-up interviews.	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
I request that my real name is acknowledged in any publications that reference the comments that I have made.	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name [PRINT]

Signature Date

Please indicate your preferred method of contact to set-up follow-up interviews and provide relevant details:

Telephone ☐ Email ☐

Appendix 4: Breakdown of visitor participants

Table 8-1: First Round of Visitor Interviews

		Slavery Museum	The Center	Total
Gender	Female	15	24	39
	Male	9	9	18
Age	16-24 years old	2	8	10
	25-34 years old	5	4	9
	35-44 years old	5	8	13
	45-54 years old	6	5	11
	55-64 years old	4	7	11
	65-74 years old	2	1	3
	75+ years old	0	0	0
Self-Identify As	Black American	0	15	15
	White American	2	13	15
	Latinx American	0	1	1
	Black British	1	0	1
	White British	14	0	14
	Black African	1	0	1
	White African	1	0	1
	Afro-Caribbean	0	3	3
	Asian	2	0	2
	South American	0	1	1
	White Australian	1	0	1
	White European	2	0	2

Table 0-1 Breakdown of visitor participants for Round I interviews

Table 8-2: Second Round of Visitor Interviews

		Slavery Museum	The Center	Total
Gender	Female	3	5	8
	Male	3	2	5
Age	16-24 years old	1	1	2
	25-34 years old	2	1	3
	35-44 years old	2	3	5
	45-54 years old	0	1	1
	55-64 years old	0	1	1
	65-74 years old	1	0	1
	75+ years old	0	0	0
Self-Identify As	Black American	0	0	0
	White American	0	6	6
	Latinx American	0	0	0
	Black British	0	0	0
	White British	4	0	4
	Black African	0	0	0
	White African	0	0	0
	Afro-Caribbean	0	0	0
	Asian	0	0	0
	South American	0	1	1
	White Australian	1	0	1
	White European	1	0	1

Table 0-2 Breakdown of visitor participants for Round II interviews

Table 8-3: Comparison of totals from first and second round of interviews

		Round I	Round II
Gender	Female	39	8
	Male	18	5
Age	16-24 years old	10	2
	25-34 years old	9	3
	35-44 years old	13	5
	45-54 years old	11	1
	55-64 years old	11	1
	65-74 years old	3	1
	75+ years old	0	0
Self-Identify As	Black American	15	0
	White American	15	6
	Latinx American	1	0
	Black British	1	0
	White British	14	4
	Black African	1	0
	White African	1	0
	Afro-Caribbean	3	0
	Asian	2	0
	South American	1	1
	White Australian	1	1
	White European	2	1

Table 0-3 Comparison of visitor participants from both rounds of interviews

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