

THE MUSEUM IS THE OBJECT: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY IN HOW
CRITICAL THEORY CURRICULUM INFLUENCES STUDENT
UNDERSTANDING OF AN ART MUSEUM

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The purpose of this action research study was to determine how a critical theory curriculum implemented in a college-level art appreciation course impacted student understanding of an encyclopedic art museum. A critical theory-based curriculum unit was designed and implemented, and students were given assignments to assess their learning. The most significant assignment centered on a self-guided student visit to the art museum in which students made detailed observations of the museum spaces and responded to articles critiquing museum practices. These documents, together with class discussions and my personal observations, were analyzed and described in this research study. The data revealed that students had a high level of regard for and interest in art museums, were capable of understanding how history and context influences museum practices, detected multiple instances of bias in art museum galleries, and self-reported high levels of cognition and empowerment based on their experiences. The data suggested that, in college students, both art appreciation instructors and museum educators have an ideal audience in which to facilitate sustained, higher-level, critical theory-based museum learning experiences.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Introduction

The purpose of this action research study is to determine how a critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum impacts college student understanding of an encyclopedic art museum. Although much art education research has analyzed how visitors learn about the art within the art museum, little attention has been paid to how visitors learn about the processes, functions, and histories of the art museum itself (Tapia, 2008). There are a few examples of art museums inviting reflection on the nature and practices of museums limited to the past decade, but those examples are not yet in the mainstream of museum education (Hein, 2000). Additionally, museum and university partnerships remain minimal, particularly when compared to museum involvement in K-12 education (Speight, Boys, & Boddington, 2013).

Although many art museums possess individual identities, according to the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 1974 and the Museum Services Act of 1977, the concept of the museum has been repeatedly defined by basic directives to preserve, collect, display, and interpret art objects (as cited in Hein, 2000). The American Association of Museums, in 1973, concurred with a definition that includes owning, caring, and exhibiting objects as central to the missions of contemporary American art museums (as cited in Alexander & Alexander, 2008). Most novice

museum visitors are unaware of these missions and the specific methodologies employed to fulfill them. Understanding the history, functions, and processes of the art museum, particularly from a critical theory-oriented point of view, constitutes the major characteristics of museum understanding as defined by this study. This research study explores the intersecting spheres of art museums, college students, art appreciation curriculum, and critical theory. In this dissertation, I demonstrate how college students enrolled in an introductory art appreciation class developed an understanding of an encyclopedic art museum through the application of a critical theory-based curriculum.

Historical Role of the Museum

Historically, most post-Enlightenment, Western art museums have functioned primarily to collect, preserve, display, and interpret art objects (Hein, 2000; Roberts, 1997; Alexander & Alexander, 2008; Zeller, 1989). However accurate these four objectives are in describing the avowed objectives of art museums, they do not capture all of the critical complexities inherent in the day to day governance and practices of art museums as institutions, nor do they acknowledge the complicated histories and politics often involved in the building of a great encyclopedic collection (Sandell, 2002; Karp, Kreamer, & Lavine, 1992). Museums are complex (Alexander & Alexander, 2008). Many large encyclopedic museums in the United States have enormous endowments and operating budgets, large numbers of staff in a variety of positions, and sophisticated administrations and governance (Weil, 2002; Alexander & Alexander, 2008). They also often have histories and collections dating back a hundred years or more (Alexander & Alexander, 2008). The details regarding museum administrations and histories, while

familiar to those who work in the industry, are not widely known to the members of the general public who visit the art museum.

From the public point of view, a museum is primarily understood by what the museum chooses to present, whether in the form of exhibitions of art objects, public programs, or other formal presented experiences (Tapia, 2008; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). However, through guided observation, critical thinking, and questioning, the casual museum visitor can begin to see beyond the construct of an art museum as a simple building that contains important objects, but also as a highly complex, culturally and historically constructed institution with other, less exposed facets that most of the general public never considers: meeting rooms where exhibitions are developed and programs are planned; auction houses and archaeological sites where objects are acquired; conservation labs where works of art are preserved, repaired, and sometimes irrevocably altered; and cocktail parties where donors are courted and rewarded. Underpinning all of the physical locations where the daily business of the art museum is carried out are the histories of the development of the art museum in Western society, which heavily contributes to the current societal position and identity of art museums today.

Some museum education researchers have noted that in the past half century, there has been a noticeable shift in the priorities of some American museums (Roberts, 1997; Hein, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 1999; Hein, 1999). Many museums are focusing more resources on developing a wide array of interactive educational programs, where previously museums had assumed visitors would understand the objects and become enlightened simply by entering the object-laden museum (Zeller,

1989; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). Many of the new museum education programs specifically avoid the traditional transmission-absorption model of learning espoused by programs such as academic lectures and instead favor constructivist-oriented education programs that enable the visitors to determine what and how they learn based on their own interests and experiences (Hein, 1998; Roberts, 1997). This shift reflects various postmodern theories of meaning making, especially in bypassing traditional academic expertise, and has democratized museums significantly by empowering visitors to understand works of art in a deeply personal way (Hein, 1999, 2000; Roberts, 1997). The new methods of art education in museums, specifically focused on art objects, have opened up art museums to newer, younger, and more diverse audiences, but it seems to have stopped just short of encouraging visitors to inquire after or critique museum practices.

Critical Theory as a Process of Critique

This study seeks to expand the art object-oriented educational practices employed by contemporary museum educators (Cuno, 2004; Hein, 1998), and the traditional art appreciation curriculum employed by college art instructors, and apply a college-level art education curriculum that focuses critical inquiry onto the museum itself. While museum education methods that focus on works of art are understandably the primary function of many museum educators, the critical exploration of the art museum itself, as an institution subject to historical, economic, and social contexts, can be a central aspect of college-level art education.

The intended benefits of focusing a college-level art curriculum on the critical exploration of an art museum are numerous. First, it can introduce college students to an institution with which they may not be familiar and potentially build life-long museum goers. Second, it allows for an expanded classroom learning experience that takes place in the real world, instead of a regular campus classroom or a theoretically constructed space. Third, it can be an early experience with exploring an institution from a critical theory point of view, with a goal for students to gain an understanding of how historical and economic systems have shaped the identity of the encyclopedic art museum. Finally, there is always the possibility that visiting an art museum to conduct a specific investigation could simply be interesting and fun for the students.

Critical theory is essential to this study because it focuses on breaking through constructed environments and exposing concealed infrastructures. “For instance, by examining notions such as money, consumption, distribution, and production, it becomes clear that none of these represents an objective thing or fact, but rather all are historical contingent contexts mediated by the relationships of domination and subordination.” (Giroux, 2003). By examining art museums through the lenses of money and consumption, for example, the student will gain a more critical understanding of art museums as complex institutions. This study seeks to encourage college-aged museum visitors to ask difficult questions about museum practices and demonstrate the educational benefits that occur when college students attempt to better understand and deconstruct both the public and private spaces of the art museum.

Critical theorists fundamentally believe that the world abounds with the inequalities created by power and privilege (Giroux, 2003, Darder, Baltodano, & Torres,

2003; Held, 1980; McLaren, 1989). Thus, concepts of emancipation and social change are central to critical theory, as the enlightenment that comes from the ability to recognize and overcome constructs of power and the resulting advantage/disadvantage are the purposes of an education based on critical theory (McLaren, 2003). The act of critically exploring art museums may benefit students, because as students discover complexities, problems, and/or contradictions in museum practices, particularly those related to power and privilege, they may be able to apply their newly-found critical lenses to other entities, like politics and healthcare. Thus, the exercise of exploring an art museum through the lens of critical theory can be a transformative educational experience for college students, impacting far more than simply their understanding of an art museum.

Emerging Adults

College students, traditionally between the ages of 18 and 25 years old, are perfectly positioned to experience the critical exploration of the art museum environment. Their status as adults enables them to explore high-level concepts inherent in contemporary museum methodologies, and their status as adolescents necessitates that their minds are relatively open to new ideas and instruction. The most interesting current research on college student learners that reinforces the unique potential of this particular age group is the new psychological theory of emerging adulthood. Emerging adulthood is a life phase concept, first proposed by American professor and psychologist Jeffrey Arnett in 2000. The transitional period of emerging adulthood is characterized by young adults ages 18-25, in developed countries,

experiencing a period of experimentation and exploration that will eventually guide them into full-fledged adulthood. Arnett (2004) has identified five main features of emerging adulthood (p. 8):

- 1) It is the age of identity exploration, of trying out various possibilities, especially in love and work.
- 2) It is the age of instability.
- 3) It is the most self-focused age of life.
- 4) It is the age of feeling in-between, in transition, neither adolescent nor adult.
- 5) It is the age of possibilities, when hopes flourish, when people have an unparalleled opportunity to transform their lives.

Part of the tendency of this life stage is to explore the world around them in ways they were not previously capable of due to the uncertain self-confidence inherent in adolescence. Exploring the world and seeking new experiences are essential components of self-improvement and identity building, which are key characteristics of emerging adults. According to Falk and Dierking (2002):

The search for personal identity is a task that we find ourselves trying to accomplish continuously throughout our lives, a process begun in adolescence but further developed during young adulthood. Carl Jung called this process "individuation"; Abraham Maslow called it "self-actualization." Unlike adolescence, it is the stage in development in which we have achieved the self-confidence and ego-strength, the confidence and self-assurance to really take on the world (p. 104).

Emerging adults are therefore in a transitional period in which their experimentation and exploration will guide them into adulthood, when presumably they will assume a more fixed and permanent identity (Arnett, 2004).

The features that characterize emerging adults, such as exploration, self-focus, and possibility for personal transformation, dovetail nicely with the types of learning that

many postmodern museums practice, particularly informal and social learning programs framed in constructivist theory (Falk & Dierking, 2002). Interestingly, many museums, with the exception of some art museums located on university campuses, do not target university student audiences with the same resources that other museum audiences, such as K-12 teachers, families, and community groups, are targeted. Perhaps new research focused on the potentially exceptional relationship between art museums and college students can help justify the direction of more museum resources towards educational programs for emerging adults. College students, in the midst of their transition from adolescence to adulthood, are uniquely positioned to experience a critical theoretical approach in their art appreciation curriculum, which will prepare them as they experience encyclopedic art museums (as institutions of power and privilege) for the first time.

Statement of the Problem

Personal Experience in Art Museums

After working for five years as the Manager of University Programs at the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas (UT), I consider myself an expert in the specialized field of teaching college students in the art museum. My personal experiences teaching college students in the art museum corroborates the emerging adult theories by Arnett (2004), which identify young adults, ages 18-25, as occupying a unique life phase particularly suited to higher-level exploration. While working at UT, I led thousands of students in gallery tours, facilitated hundreds of programs for students

and student groups, and using the collections as a resource, co-taught dozens of interdisciplinary classes with University of Texas faculty. Based on my experiences, I believe that the traditional college student is inherently interested in the types of constructivist-based learning that art museums seem to be naturally designed for.

When teaching in the galleries, I asked students questions to guide them to knowledge not only about the specific works of art, but about the museum itself. While the students found the object-based discussions interesting, especially when relative to their own disciplinary studies, our conversations about the museum itself were the most compelling. Stories about how objects were acquired, why a collection area existed, or recalling the provenance of famous works of art produced the most complicated and intense discussions. I became convinced that college students, because of their position as emerging adults capable of understanding complex systems and their interest in developing knowledge through higher education, are a uniquely positioned, extraordinarily ideal museum audience. Most traditional college students are exploring their personal environments as independent adults for the first time in their lives. The discovery and exploration of the art museum as a constructed environment mirrors their discovery and exploration of themselves as independent adults.

The museum environment is a special space for learning, especially for college students. For most college students, after spending twelve years learning in traditional classroom spaces, the idea of learning in in an art museum can be different, exciting, and even transformational. I am convinced that the unique intellectual status and capabilities of college students, and the unique and rich environment of the art museum, can combine to become ideal partners in learning.

The Dallas Museum of Art

My first professional positions were in the field of museum education. I worked as an unpaid intern at the Arlington Museum of Art, and then as the McDermott Intern in Family and Community Programs at the Dallas Museum of Art. Eventually I accepted a position as the Assistant Curator of Education at the McNay Art Museum in San Antonio, Texas. In all of these positions I facilitated family programs, school visits, and community outreach and learned the fundamental practices of museum education. I have selected the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) as the setting for my research study based on its proximity to the Tarrant County College Southeast campus, and also because of my tremendously positive personal experience working there as an intern. I have a good understanding of the DMA's collections and gallery orientation, as well as some essential professional contacts in the education department. Having kept up with the major developments at the DMA, I believe that it is a top-caliber encyclopedic art museum that is an excellent example of current best practices in museum methodologies and the ideal setting for my research.

There is another aspect of the Dallas Museum of Art that makes it an ideal setting for my research. While an intern at the Dallas Museum of Art, I noticed that, just like the curricula in my first art history survey courses, the collections of the DMA reinforced similar ideas about the comparative values of Western and non-Western artistic cultures. Reading Fred Wilson's *Silent Message of the Museum* (1996) certainly aided in my discovery of these ideas; it had a transformative effect on how I perceived

traditional, encyclopedic Western art museums like the DMA. After becoming familiar with this essay, I began to notice “silent messages” everywhere.

At the time that I was an intern at the DMA (1999-2000), there were approximately eight curators that focused on collection areas specific to Europe and the United States. At the same time, there was one adjunct (part-time) curator focused on the African collection, one visiting curator focused on the Latin American collections, and no curator for the arts of Asia and Oceania. I noticed, just like Fred Wilson (1996) pointed out, that the non-Western galleries were on higher floors, they were painted exotic colors, the lighting was dim, and there were dozens of objects cluttered together in the glass cases in those spaces, making them feel more like an ethnographic museum. When compared to the galleries filled with European works of art, which were painted white, flooded with natural light, and the objects (mostly paintings) were well spaced, it seemed that the museum was simultaneously exotifying and lessening the relative value of the non-Western objects through their methods of presentation.

As a result of my personal discovery, I realized that museum displays are not neutral (Knutsen, 2002) and the differences in how objects are presented can have a powerful effect on visitors who see them. The realization floored me. Few educational experiences have had such an impact on me. There was indeed a silent message of the museum. However, once I became aware of the cultural discrepancies, the message was not so silent. The realization of the bias in the art museum enabled me to begin looking at the world with a similar perspective, and begin to critically examine other facets of my life for potential bias.

As an art museum in the United States, I do not believe that it is necessarily wrong for the Dallas Museum of Art to prioritize art from Western cultures. To deny or suppress that the staff of the museum has a worldview would be difficult if not impossible. However, I believe that there is an ethical responsibility to acknowledge and disclose this worldview, and the resulting imbalances in how objects might be displayed and thereby interpreted by visitors. Unfortunately, among most American art museums there seems to be a tendency to present a united, formal façade to the public that some would argue actually discourages visitors from asking questions about the museum and potential biases in its treatment of objects. The anonymous, expert information presented in the forms of gallery guides, audioguides, tours, lectures, and other programs and interpretive materials is almost without exception focused on the form and content of works of art, not the decisions the art museum makes about how the works of art are collected, displayed, and interpreted.

There are dozens of people that work at the Dallas Museum of Art, and for the most part, the general public has little idea of what those staff people do. Within most museums, there are no resources readily available to educate the public about the museum itself. The public might be interested in knowing the history of how art museums developed out of Enlightenment-era philosophies, how objects are acquired, who decides which objects to acquire, and what experience and education that person possesses to enable them to make those decisions. As an intern with access to object files, I found myself learning about the entirety of an object: provenance, insured value, acquisition, condition, etc. This information changed how I saw the object and how I understood the object. Realizing that there are details (such as value) that a museum

would not want to publicize, there are still many details about object history that audiences might find interesting. Learning about the entirety of an object, and the methodology behind collecting can give art museums and their objects a new and potentially fascinating dimension for their audiences.

Disclosing this type of information could better enable museum visitors to evaluate a work of art in its entirety. One might wonder how museum visitors can make informed interpretations of artworks without comprehensive information about that object and the decisions that were made about it. It can be argued that visitors cannot have a complete understanding of the object without having a semblance of understanding about the complexities of the institution that houses the object. These types of critical ideas, questions, and observations continued to collect in my mind as I worked as an intern at the DMA, and they continue to influence my museum worldview today.

The Blanton Museum of Art

In 2002, I embarked on what would be another transformative experience in my career as a museum educator: I accepted a position as Manager of University Programs at the Blanton Museum of Art, the campus art museum at the University of Texas. It was a new position; previously there had been no dedicated staff person for faculty and students on campus. Over the next five years, I developed a comprehensive program for the University of Texas campus community, including interdisciplinary resources for UT faculty, a comprehensive graduate internship program, a one-hundred member student organization consisting of student volunteers, docents, and advisors, and a

variety of fun and educational programs open to the entire student body. Beyond the satisfaction of building a campus-wide university audience where there previously had been none, I left the Blanton with a profound desire to continue to explore what I had discovered to be a most precious connection: the particular type of learning that university students seem to be primed for, and the particular type of critical art education an art museum can provide.

My position at the Blanton Museum of Art consisted of facilitating visits from university classes and student groups, as well as facilitating programs for members of the Student Guild, a UT student organization that offered students a way to be involved in the Blanton Museum. In a given week, I led four to five gallery visits from a variety of academic disciplines ranging from nursing to astronomy to political science, and I also facilitated several evening meetings for Student Guild members. The gallery visits made general connections between works of art and the visiting discipline, and the Student Guild meetings focused on introducing students to the museum itself. After five years in this position, I had visited with thousands of UT students. Without exception, I found that the students I encountered had never considered the complex practices of art museums. In fact, based on informal polls given to visiting student groups, I was able to roughly estimate that a slight majority of the college students I worked with had never visited any art museum at all. This knowledge left me with the strong feeling that this audience was very much in need of museum experiences.

Tarrant County College

In my current position as Assistant Professor of Art at Tarrant County College (TCC), I incorporate critical theory as a lens for my art appreciation classes on a regular basis. This practice is based on a personal discovery made while working at the Blanton Museum of Art: College students are particularly interested in learning what you are *not* telling them. Based on my personal classroom experiences over the past nine years, TCC students also continue to be interested in significantly more than the official information presented by their textbooks. They are interested in hearing about the historical relationship between Napoleon and the Louvre and ownership and repatriation issues from World War II and beyond, for example. Once the seed of curiosity was planted, they were interested in knowing how art museums came to be filled with so many expensive and important objects, each with its own history.

By taking an interest in the hidden facets of the museum, students begin to consider the structures of power inherent in the museum, and understand the museum as a space constructed by those who have traditionally enjoyed positions of dominance within society. When students are asked, “How does an institution amass a collection of such wealth?” it elicits a tremendously complex response, deserving of a thorough examination. By thoughtfully considering an answer to this question, the students (perhaps without the formal realization) are intuitively taking a critical theory approach to their own education. This tendency to desire deeper levels of information has extended into all of the art appreciation classrooms in which I have taught.

It is towards college students enrolled in ARTS 1301, Art Appreciation, that my museum- and student-based research now turns. My proposed research combines all of

my previous experiences teaching in museums and current occupation teaching introductory-level art classes to college students. I intend to explore the intersecting spheres of encyclopedic art museums, college students, art appreciation curriculum, and critical theory in the hopes of potentially impacting student learning.

Research Questions

The main research question guiding this dissertation is: How does a critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum impact college student understanding of an encyclopedic art museum? Sub-research questions include: Can a critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum create empowerment among college students? What does a college-level critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum look like?

Definition of Terms

Art Museums

In this dissertation, the general term art museum(s), unless specifically noted otherwise, refers to encyclopedic art museums in the Western tradition, particularly those located in major cities in the United States. An encyclopedic art museum by definition collects works of art from a wide variety of cultures and time periods, so that the museum visitor might see works of art that represent the world at large.

Museum Literacy

Museum literacy is a term that may be further defined, or revisited, through this dissertation research. However, in general terms, museum literacy refers to the ability of a person to understand the complex dimensions inherent in art museums, beyond the simple displays of art objects. Museum literacy requires a person to think deeply and critically about particular aspects of the art museum, including how objects are acquired, displayed, interpreted, and cared for.

Emerging Adults

Coined by American psychologist and professor Jeffrey Arnett in an 2000 article in *American Psychologist*, emerging adults refers to a relatively new phase in the human life span. Young adults between the ages of 18 and 25, in developed countries, can often be considered emerging adults due to their burgeoning, but not complete, independence. The traditional college-aged students participating in this study can be considered as emerging adults.

Critical Theory

Critical theory as established by the Frankfurt School, which can be understood as both a critique process and a school of thought, generally refers to the belief that the human world and all of the institutions within that world are beholden to complicated histories involving constructs of privilege and power. By educating students to critical theory, students can actively empower themselves against said constructs of privilege and power and even create social change (Giroux, 2003).

Empowerment

Empowerment is considered an essential, culminating aspect of both critical theory pedagogy (Giroux, 2001; Friere, 1970; Darder, 2003; Held, 1980; McLaren, 1989; Love, 2011) and action research (Johnson, 2008). In this study, empowerment can be achieved by both the students and the faculty/researcher and is simply defined by acts of cognition followed by action or intent to action.

Significance of the Study

There is a potentially very large audience for this study. According to Busbea (2006) every year in the United States about 300,000 college students register for art appreciation courses. This is attributed to the fact that most of the major college accreditation associations require the course as part of their core curriculum (Busbea, 2006). It is quite ambitious to think that my research study could have such an enormous audience to generalize about, but I hope to demonstrate the need for and the benefits of an increased critical theoretical perspective in an art appreciation curriculum. The fact that there is such a large potential audience for the findings of the research is a tremendous bonus. While the research is specifically being implemented in art appreciation classrooms, it is possible that the results will be generalizable to similar college-level art courses, particularly art history survey courses.

While my study focuses specifically on an art appreciation course, critical theory as a theoretical base can be implemented into a wide variety of multi-disciplinary college-level courses. While not a discipline expert in history, literature, psychology, or

philosophy, because of the significance of historical context to critical theory, I can imagine that instructors can also embed critical theory perspectives in those disciplines as well. Further in the study I discuss in detail several different lessons inspired by a critical theoretical perspective and intended to encourage students to view historical constructs of power within the discipline of art. These examples can potentially be mirrored by faculty across a wide range of disciplines. Because the research study is designed as an action research study, it focuses on the improvement of teaching practices through reflective teaching (LaPierre & Zimmerman, 1996). Should the research produce results that are thought to be successful and generalizable, the research can encourage art appreciation faculty to conduct their own action research studies or to incorporate critical theory frameworks into their other courses. Ultimately this research study can impact dual audiences: faculty researchers and their students.

Critical pedagogical theory advocates for education to be an emancipatory process aimed at empowering students by challenging prevailing educational norms (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003). And according to Zimmerman (1997, p. 230), "...several proponents of action research believe that through developed and enlightened understandings of those engaged in conversation, critical discourse, and inquiry that empowerment, social action, and reform are not only possible but desirable." Both the dominant theoretical and methodological frameworks of this study encourage emancipation and empowerment among participants, which means that the study can be significant by encouraging transformation by the simultaneous reflections of both students and faculty.

This study demonstrates how art appreciation curriculum can teach students about art museums, however, it has the potential to impact art museum education as well as higher education. While there are increasing amounts of art museum programming dedicated to teen audiences in the past two decades, most are envisioned as after-school programs and focus on teens still in middle and high school, ages 13-18 (Schwartz, 2005; The James Irvine Foundation, 2005; Speight, Boys, & Boddington, 2013). University and college students, traditionally aged 18-25, appear to be one of the last audiences sought out by art museum education departments (Speight, Boys, & Boddington, 2013). With their ability to process high-level information, as well as their need for personal exploration (Arnett, 2004), it is hoped that this study will demonstrate a need for museum programming for college-aged students. It is also hoped that it will demonstrate the unique partnership(s) that can be forged between college students, art museums, and colleges and community colleges.

Researcher Bias and the Role of the Researcher

Becoming an Art Historian

My academic background through the master's level focused on art history, with a specific focus on art of the Mexican diaspora, including ancient Mexican art, colonial Mexican art, and contemporary Latino art in the United States. I have always sought to focus on parts of the artistic canon that have historically been marginalized. From the time I took my first survey of art history course, I noticed that the textbooks, as well as the instructors, consistently overlooked art of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania.

This is sometimes justified by acknowledging a focus on the art of the Western tradition, however, it can be indicative of a general tendency for the Western artistic establishments to marginalize “other” cultures. The implicated textbooks and instructors do not necessarily have bad intentions; the cycle of overlooking non-Western artistic cultures can be traced to a lack of funding and research, which no doubt leads to a lack of expertise and an unwillingness to teach subjects that are not well known (Marzio, 1991; Lavine, 1991).

When I first began teaching the art history survey classes to undergraduate students, I was completely unequipped to teach the arts of Asia, Africa, and Oceania, due to the fact that I had not been taught them myself, despite having a master’s degree in art history. However, with some personal research and practice, I am proud that I find myself more and more proficient in the art of these cultures each time I teach them. Although my desire to learn more about my own cultural artistic heritage drove my initial interest in art history, my current professional teaching career has allowed me to refocus on the Western canon of art history, and I now have a strong background in general art history of Western and non-Western cultures. My experience in discovering the art historical bias found in university instruction and textbook production mirrors my experience making similar discoveries about the treatment of Western and non-Western objects and collections within art museums. I believe there is cultural bias in how art museums collect and display art objects, and I believe there is cultural bias in how art appreciation textbooks treat non-Western subjects.

Critical Theory as a Lens for Art Appreciation Curriculum

Because emerging adults are capable of identity building to a degree that other age groups simply are not (Arnett, 2004), I believe higher education instructors should acknowledge this unique, age-specific ability in their classes by presenting curriculum that challenges student concepts of the world and their identity within that world. I find the theories of Karl Marx to be compelling, but an instructor does not have to be a Marxist to present information from a critical theory perspective. In my classroom, critical theory is used to spur interest, debate, conversation, and critical thinking. My dissertation specifically examines college students as they explore art museums from a critical theory perspective; however, there are many other institutions within the fine arts that can also be examined from a critical theory perspective. The curriculum I teach in my classroom focuses on students deconstructing art museums, however, I also briefly introduce students to the structures of power in place within fine art institutions such as universities, galleries, auction houses, and publishing (including textbooks).

Taken all together, all of the fine arts-associated institutions and the people who make them up comprise a culture or entity of fine arts that, by employing a critical theory lens, can be critically explored by art appreciation students. In doing so, students will explore and understand a specialized facet of the world in a way they had not previously considered. The curriculum is taken out of the abstract art world, and into concrete, tangible locations that can be explored. And, in discovering the cultural hierarchies of the fine arts, students may gain a better understanding of themselves in relation to such a culture, which may lead to self-empowerment and perhaps even taking socially-conscious action, which is a desired end-product of many critical theory-based

pedagogies (Giroux, 2001; Friere, 1970; Darder, 2003; Held, 1980; McLaren, 1989; Love, 2011). By employing a semester-long art appreciation curriculum consistently based on critical theory, students are better prepared for an in-depth, critical theory-based exploration of art museums.

Critical theory is a particularly well-suited theoretical approach to use in a college-level art appreciation curriculum. A critical theory approach to art appreciation curriculum focuses on exposing and examining power structures and positions of domination and oppression within the culture of art. It allows college students to fulfill their age-appropriate interest in deeply examining the world around them by presenting the culture of art as a historically constructed power structure bursting with complex relationships of power and subjugation. Students can reflect on their own position relative to these power structures, and achieve deeper knowledge of their own self-identity. Art appreciation, when influenced by critical theory, encourages students to learn aspects of the culture of art that may not be presented in the formal textbook, and in some cases that may encourage them to bypass the traditional, establishment narratives perpetuated by their textbook.

For example, a critical theory perspective in an art appreciation classroom might trace the life of an art object from the Renaissance, from its creation until its arrival at a museum in contemporary times. A critical theory approach would initially focus on the original wealthy collector who commissioned the work of art and closely examine the historical, cultural, and social circumstances that allowed the wealthy collector to amass his wealth and power and therefore have the ability to commission a work of art.

Students could examine the relationship between the artist and the patron (the employer and the worker), and critically evaluate the cultural forces that dictate their relationship (which may or may not reflect critical theorist concerns with domination and oppression). A critical theory approach would examine the act of art collecting and art producing from a historical, cultural, and social perspective and ask critical questions, such as: Historically, which segment(s) of society and/or institutions have been able to collect and/or commission art? How might wealthy collectors and patrons control the production and dissemination of art? What role does art play in reinforcing the culture of the upper classes and even the state (Peterson, 2003)?

Continuing the instructor-led hypothetical scenario, students can follow the work of art after the death of the original owner/patron, as it worked its way through subsequent generations of inheritors (the ability to maintain ownership of a work of art through generations also provides myriad critical theory points of discussion), until one generation decides to sell the work of art in the present day. At this point, students can learn about other institutionalized practices in fine arts culture, such as the role of auction houses in selling an artwork, or the role of an art museum or collector in buying an artwork. How does an auction house determine the value of a work of art, in conjunction with an art market that might devalue other works of art? How might the selling price of this work of art affect the value of other works of art by the same artist (some of which might be in influential museum and private collections)? What are some of the reasons an art museum might seek to purchase this work of art and where does an art museum get the money to do so? How might the practices of art museums and

auction houses represent and protect the interests and status of the wealthy institutions and individuals they deal with?

After identifying and examining the culture and structure of fine arts institutions, and how the various separate institutions work together to form a unified system of fine arts, the desired student learning outcome is for students to begin to grasp critical concepts such as hegemony, domination, and oppression. Ideally, through a critical theory art appreciation curriculum, students understand each work of art as an object within a historically constructed network of knowledge and wealth. A chief goal of critical theory is to develop a consistently critical perspective of social practices that contribute to knowledge (Held, 1980). The commission, production, collection, etc., of works of art are social practices that contribute to how the academic discipline of art appreciation is constructed.

While the central aim of the proposed critical theory art appreciation curriculum in this study is to guide students toward a critical understanding of the structures of fine arts institutions, and to measure and record the development of their critical understanding, it is hoped that students' newfound awareness may inspire change within their lives. Many educators and critical theorists who write about employing critical pedagogies do so with the ultimate goal of guiding their students toward personal emancipation and social action (Giroux, 2001; Friere, 1970; Darder, 2003; Held, 1980; McLaren, 1989; Love, 2011).

The exposure of hidden infrastructures within the fine arts world and understanding of knowledge as a historically constructed condition are significant educational events for an emerging adult. After realizing these critical issues, students

may be better able to examine their own identities and positions relative to the historically constructed structures in the world they are now capable of identifying. Specific to the art appreciation discipline, a student who has achieved an understanding of fine arts establishments from a critical theory perspective might begin to see how a person (perhaps themselves) can navigate the hierarchy of the art world in order to participate and find their own voice within the vast system. Or, alternatively, a student who does not have ambitions within the fine arts discipline might be able to apply their newfound understanding to a variety of other disciplines and social structures.

Incorporating critical theory into the art appreciation classroom may also be personally appropriate to community college students because a key tenet of critical theory focuses on the exploration of notions of hegemony, defined as the powerful classes establishing and enforcing rules and culture that reinforces their status and position over oppressed classes. (McLaren, 2003). The discipline and culture of fine art is one that historically has been accessible to and dominated by the very top of the social classes, while excluding middle and lower classes (Efland, 1990).

Based on my personal observations and informal surveys of previous classes, most students enrolled in art appreciation courses at Tarrant County College have limited experience in or knowledge of the arts. American community colleges are open-access institutions that enroll about 45% of the nation's undergraduates (American Association of Community Colleges, 2013). 62% of students attending community colleges full-time have full- or part-time jobs, 36% are the first generation of their family to attend college, and 17% are single parents (American Association of Community Colleges, 2013). With a global perspective, perhaps, it can be argued that community

college students in the United States are not overwhelmingly oppressed, as they are capable of electively attending an institution of higher education. However, when considering students in the United States who attend four-year universities with higher tuition rates, students attending private colleges, or students attending very elite historical colleges, perhaps one might deduce that community college students are typically not elite, or not at the highest levels of socioeconomic power within the United States.

By questioning the power structures that have traditionally perpetuated artistic culture, which has maintained the interests of the ruling class, students are taking an active critical approach to understanding their particular social position in relation to the high culture of fine arts. There is a compelling intersection between the emerging adult tendency to build and explore personal identity, and the critical theory principle of self-reflection leading towards self-empowerment.

Examples of Critical Theory Curriculum

Introduction

My relationship with critical theory as a theoretical basis for my art appreciation curriculum began before I had a formal knowledge of what exactly critical theory was. Early on in my college teaching career I recognized the need to incorporate social, historical, and economic contexts into the curriculum in order to address the “so what?” factor that can be especially applied by community college students to the abstract and elite art world. Based on my personal observation, many of my students had never had

meaningful encounters with art or art museums, and many also thought that art was something that did not pertain to them or their families. I began informally incorporating critical theory-oriented curricula throughout my art appreciation classes, noticing that there are several standard curricular areas where they worked particularly well. I have included several of the critical theory curricular connections below that have enhanced my teaching experience and my students' learning experience in the hopes that they will paint a detailed picture of how critical theory can be incorporated in art appreciation classes as well as college classes across disciplines.

Traditional Art Appreciation Curriculum

The academically accepted curriculum for Art Appreciation courses in higher education is relatively standard, as demonstrated by a brief review of art appreciation textbooks published by major textbook publishers. I chose to examine *Living With Art*, 10th edition, written by Mark Getlein and published by McGraw-Hill (2013); *A World of Art*, 7th edition, written by Henry M. Sayre and published by Pearson (2013); *Prebles' Artforms*, 10th edition, written by Patrick Frank and published by Prentice Hall (2011); *Gateways to Art: Understanding the Visual Arts*, written by Debra J. DeWitte, Ralph M. Larmann, and M. Kathryn Shields and published by Thames & Hudson (2012); and *Understanding Art*, 10th edition, written by Lois Fichner-Rathus and published by Wadsworth Cengage Learning (2013). Without exception, each of these five art appreciation textbooks cover definitions, values, subjects, and purposes of art; art elements and design principles; techniques and processes of two-dimensional and three-dimensional media; and a brief chronological review of art history. None of the

textbooks offer any significant discussions (defined as more than two pages of content per topic) of the history or structures of fine art institutions such as universities, art galleries, art museums, or auction houses.

The textbook I use in my art appreciation courses is *Living With Art*, 10th edition, by Getlein, published by McGraw Hill (2013). This textbook includes 23 chapters and over 500 pages of information, and is very similar in size, content, and arrangement to the four other textbooks reviewed. Art museums are mentioned briefly on five separate occasions in the textbook, but as with the other art appreciation textbooks reviewed, they are not given any serious consideration as an entity worthy of further explanation. According to the index, art galleries and auction houses are not mentioned at all in the textbook, though there is a *Thinking About Art* section that briefly covers European art academies. The *Thinking About Art* essays, located approximately every other chapter, are intended to provide students with a more in-depth examination of a complex issue in the arts, such as aesthetics, conservation, repatriation, and cultural ownership. The *Thinking About Art* sections are about one page each, and tend to ask questions in addition to providing factual information about the selected topic, however, they only number about 12 pages out of over 500 of content, and therefore cannot be considered a significant portion of the textbook.

When I first started teaching art appreciation seven years ago, I began teaching from the *Living With Art* textbook starting on page 1, which begins by (according to its own titling) introducing readers to art. The *Living With Art* textbook introduces students to art by attempting to explain where humans get their impulse to make art, what artists do when they make art, and what viewers do when they look at art (2013). It is a fairly

common introduction to art, but it is not an introduction to art influenced by critical theory. When teaching from the textbook, and starting at the first chapter, students occasionally raise questions that indicate a deeper level of inquiry: Why does the textbook not feature the kinds of art I am interested in, like customized cars or tattoos? Who decided what art is and what art is not? How can that ugly painting by Cezanne possibly be worth \$250 million?

In my attempts to answer these (excellent) questions, I found myself engaging in long-winded diatribes about art experts and the universities that produce them, the publications that employ art critics, the art museums and galleries that solidify artists' reputations and set the monetary value of their work, and the collectors and investors that drive the entire market. Attempting to quickly explain what I had slowly learned in nearly 20 years of hands-on experience working in art museums and universities was not possible. A quick answer did not exist. At this point, it occurred to me that *Living With Art*, as well as the other art appreciation textbooks, had perhaps missed the real introductory chapter: Chapter 0, Introduction to the Art *World*.

Teaching the Art World

Determining precisely where to begin teaching students (almost entirely art novices) about art is no easy affair. However, after a few years of teaching art appreciation, based on student inquiry during class, I decided that students needed a prequel to the textbook. My prequel introduces students to what I refer to as the "art world," or the institutions and people, and their collective interworking through history, which determine the information they found in their art appreciation textbook. The

textbook presents fine arts information in an authoritative voice, without contextual information about the social and historical forces that create the discipline of fine art as it is known today. This is a common complaint about various textbooks in various disciplines (Peterson, 2003). After teaching my prequel curriculum, “the art world” is a term which is referred to throughout the semester by students and myself.

I begin my introduction of the art world using myself as an example. I introduce myself to my students as their “art world representative.” I bring several props to class to support my assertion: my diplomas for my bachelor’s degree in art and master’s degree in art history and my bound master’s thesis; several nametags from previous jobs and internships at different art museums; several membership cards for professional art organizations such as the National Art Education Association (NAEA) and American Alliance of Museums (AAM); and international art magazines and journals that I subscribe to. One by one, I explain how each one of these props indicates the existence of a community or society of Art, and my long-standing participation in it.

My diplomas represent my education in the discipline of art. I explain to my students that in order to receive my degrees in art, I had to complete coursework consisting of reading books about art, creating art from a variety of different media, and writing papers about art, among other things. I explain that a number of art professors supervised my attainment of the degrees, and that they were qualified to do so based on their own degrees and professional experience (and that this type of generational transfer of learning goes back many generations). I chose to attend a university and attain bachelor and master degrees because it would be much more difficult to have a

professional career in the arts without an official degree that essentially certifies a basic level of knowledge of art. My nametags represent my professional experience working in art museums. I became qualified to work in art museums based on my formal university education in art and art history. My colleagues in the numerous art museums I worked at also had similar educational backgrounds to me, and therefore we generally shared the same knowledge about the discipline and history of art and worked together to continue and build upon our shared knowledge.

I pass around my membership cards in the National Art Education Association (NAEA), the College Art Association (CAA), and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), and explain to students that there are dozens of professional art organizations that support arts professionals. I explain that many arts professionals maintain membership in professional associations by paying annual dues, and they provide myriad professional and social opportunities for the art community. Annual conferences are held so that colleagues can share ideas and understand best practices in their professions. Professional organizations also connect business-oriented aspects of the art world, such as museum exhibition suppliers and materials providers. The professional organizations are discussed in the context of how they each build and support specific sub-communities within the bigger world of art.

I also show classes examples of magazines and publications like *ArtNews*, *Art Bulletin*, and *American Art*, as examples of how scholarship is created, reviewed, and disseminated. Although we do not initially discuss each of these separate institutions (universities, museums, professional organizations, publications) in depth during this initial exercise, it is an important initial step in introducing students to the ideas that art

as a discipline is complex, has a longstanding history, and multiple intersecting institutions that make up a complex whole. Then, taking all of these institutions together, I am better able to answer the question, “who decides what art is and what it is not?” I can now respond that there is a complex system in place of educated arts professionals that work at universities, museums, galleries, auction houses, journals, and magazines, and that while there is not always a strict consensus, there is a general culture, comprised of a variety of institutions and built over time, that collectively determines the “rules” of art. Identifying and acknowledging the existence of a variety of institutions that make up the culture of fine arts is the first step for students, who may eventually be able to understand these institutions as representing the interests of power and privilege, which is the essential component of a critical theory-based curriculum (Giroux, 2001; Friere, 1970; Darder, 2003; Held, 1980; McLaren, 1989; Love, 2011).

Teaching the History of Art Education

Related to the teaching of the art world is a brief introduction to the history of how the discipline of art has been taught. The objective of this lesson is for students to understand that the creation of art is subject to a historical and social context, and art has historically been commissioned and heavily influenced by people and institutions of wealth and power (Efland, 1990; Zolberg, 1992). This lesson takes a Western perspective, and highlights cultures and time periods that are traditionally featured in a standard art history survey class curriculum: Greece and Rome, Medieval and Renaissance Europe, and the Enlightenment. Rather than teaching about the form and content of specific works of art in a historical context, as a traditional art history

curriculum would, this lesson focuses on the power structures that control the production of art within these cultures and time periods. By emphasizing the social conditions under which the art object is made, the critical theory perspective is emphasized.

In order for students to understand the history of art education (specifically artist training), and how it may reinforce historical power structures, it is necessary to briefly introduce them to historical time periods and the roles that artists and patrons have held throughout history. Through a powerpoint presentation, students are informed about the role of art education in various time periods. To briefly summarize, students become aware that in ancient Greece, the arts were esteemed, but painting and sculpting were not seen as worthy professions for aristocratic families, who were therefore not substantially educated in art production. As a result, artists were seen as inferior tradesmen, a tradition which continues nearly 1500 years into the Medieval period (Efland, 1990). Both Plato and Aristotle wrote about the arts, but interpreted the role of art as something that could serve the needs of the state rather than as an object of aesthetic value. And powerful leaders in both Greece and Rome began patronizing artists and collecting their works, not necessarily simply for the pleasure of looking at the works of art, but because, according to Efland (1990), “the possession of art objects of high quality began to characterize their owners as men of refinement and culture; but the maker of these objects remained a mere artisan.” (p.9)

So, from the onset of the formal production of art in Western society, an immediate dichotomy is seen between a dominant group (patrons) and an oppressed group (artisans). Foregoing here the instructional level of detail that is presented in

class, students are also made aware of the Church-produced art that served to endorse Church doctrine (not a form of individual expression) among a largely-illiterate population in the Medieval period; the development of the concept of artistic genius and art academies during the Renaissance (which served to raise the general profile of artistic production); and the Enlightenment ideals that all humans were deserving of education, and the arts could be a civilizing and significant influence on the general population (and the subsequent increased democratization of the arts) (Efland, 1990).

During each of these eras, history presents the production of art as something that is heavily affected by the influence of power, whether from the state, the Church, or wealthy individual patrons. Historically, art has been used as a tool by powerful interests—whether to propagandize a religious doctrine, to demonstrate ones' own taste and wealth, or to indoctrinate the uneducated (among other things) (Efland, 1990)—and it is because art production has typically been subject to powerful entities throughout history that this lesson is of interest from a critical theory perspective. For the students, the lesson demonstrates that the role of artists and artistic production has evolved throughout history, but one constant is that artistic production and consumption is rarely completely free of powerful societal interests.

Teaching Textbook Inequality

Another important art appreciation lesson touching on critical theory (and critical race theory) introduces students to the cultural worldviews that may be held by their textbook (and its authors), and how that might reinforce concepts of cultural inequalities (Peterson, 2003; Green & Hurwitz, 1980). While the other art world institutions

previously introduced (museums, galleries, publications) also may be subject to issues of cultural inequalities, this exercise focuses on the textbook used in my art appreciation class and the influence it has over what is taught. I ask students to look at the first few pages in their textbook to see the acknowledgement pages and note that the textbook, while having only one author, has many advisors and reviewers. I have the students look over this page and note the number of art experts that agree with the content, and to also note which colleges the art experts are affiliated with.

This brief exercise serves to reinforce the ideas of the art world in the previous lesson (textbooks are representative of and reinforce the academic discipline of art), but also serves as evidence that the advisory board and reviewers are from colleges within the United States. The conclusion that most students come to is that the textbook, therefore, is written by Americans for a largely American audience, and therefore has a cultural worldview. One can talk about ideas of education and privilege and how likely it is that the collection of textbook reviewers have a true diversity of perspective. This is particularly important, in my opinion, for students at Tarrant County College Southeast campus, because of the high percentage of cultural diversity and international students enrolled (TCC students are 18.7% African-American; 49.1% Anglo; 6% Asian; 23.3% Hispanic; 0.5% Native American; and 2.3% identify as “other”) (Tarrant County College, 2014). For the sake of all of the students, I feel it is necessary to point out that their textbook does not necessarily represent a global perspective.

In addition, I have students get into small groups of 2-3 people, and perform two tasks. First, I have them select a random chapter and count the total number of images in that chapter. I then ask them to speculate on the culture that produced that object,

and assign it to a European, American, Asian, African, Oceanic, or another culture (often times this is easily done, but occasionally students are unsure of the area of origin of an object, and those objects are not counted). After this exercise, students are asked to turn to the table of contents and look at the chapters in the art history part of their book, called "Arts in Time." I ask students to count the number of pages devoted to European/Western art history, and the number of pages devoted to non-Western art (these terms often need to be explained). For both exercises, students find significantly more pages and images dedicated to European/Western artists and works of art. I attempt to not associate the textbook's cultural perspective as necessarily negative, but as an essential piece of information in order for students to fully understand what components of the art world they will learn from their textbook.

If the textbook is the guiding force in the class, learning about art is not a culturally neutral act. The *Living With Art* textbook, though likely greatly improved in cultural inclusivity to textbooks from previous decades, does have a clear worldview and bias towards Western art. This represents a critical theory perspective because the traditional art appreciation textbook serves to reinforce ideas about value and prestige by the inclusion of more works of art from Western cultures, and less works of art by non-Western cultures. Because critical theory identifies inequalities created by powerful institutions, the discovery of their textbook as a representative article from powerful art world institutions is essential.

Teaching Art Museums

It is not possible, due to time and curriculum constraints, to teach in depth each individual institution that is part of the art world. The traditional art appreciation curriculum focuses on media, techniques, and helping students understand the form and content of specific works of art. Because art museums maintain high numbers of visitation (more than 850 million visitors in 2013, according to the American Alliance of Museums, 2014), and because it is good practice to require art appreciation students to visit an art museum to see original works of art (as opposed to projected reproductions seen in class), my art appreciation curriculum also spends a considerable amount of time introducing students to art museums. The curriculum objective is to introduce students to the art museum as a complex institution with specific functions, understand basic vocabulary associated with art museums, and explain the traditional function of art museums to collect, preserve, display, and interpret (Hein, 2000; Alexander & Alexander, 2008). The curriculum also touches on the financial workings of art museums, including endowments, capital campaigns, and membership programs; various staff positions at art museums; some of the issues surrounding collecting and conservation; and looks in particular at the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA).

Because the DMA is a public museum, there is information available online about the institution. The class is able to examine the mission, budget, staff, board of directors, collection areas, exhibitions, programs, and view the annual report of the DMA. This enables students to get a sense of the size, scale, complexity, and purpose of the institution. A learning objective of this lesson is for students to understand the fundamental existence of and appreciate the complexities of a large, encyclopedic art

museum in the United States. While this lesson does not yet attempt the critical deconstruction of the art museum, it does serve an essential step in a critical theory art appreciation curriculum: it makes students aware and builds their knowledge of the art museum as an institution, so that they are better able to understand it from a critical theoretical perspective in a subsequent lesson (not featured in this document).

Teaching Ownership and Repatriation

Another art appreciation lesson taking a critical theory approach is one of ownership and repatriation, which is also related to the historical and current practices of art museums. This lesson focuses on three instances of the ethically questionable acquisition of art objects by art museums, using the Parthenon Marbles, the Rosetta Stone, and Benin Bronzes as examples. The histories of these objects is widely known: the objects were taken under extenuating circumstances by dominant cultures over cultures that could be considered oppressed. The class is presented with the story of the Athenian Acropolis, specifically the Parthenon and its sculptures, thought by many art historians to represent the greatest artistic achievement of classical Athens. Students are then assigned to read part of their textbook which deals with the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of the sculptures by the British Museum via Lord Elgin, and then a class discussion is facilitated. Students are asked who they think is the rightful owner of the Parthenon Marbles, and whether or not the acquisition of the marbles by the British Museum is indicative of historical relationships of domination and oppression.

Students are then asked to write a letter to the Board of Directors of the British Museum, in which they are free to express their personal opinions by either expressing support for the British Museum's continued possession of the statues or expressing their desire for the British Museum to return the statues to Greece. This lesson, and the letter writing activity, are examples of critical theory curriculum because it is a specific (and rather famous) instance of how historical and cultural power structures affect the art world. In this particular case, one culture is exercising a dominant position over an oppressed culture, and because the positions of the art museums (the British Museum and the New Acropolis Museum) represent their respective governments, it is a particularly rich example of critical theory, as critical theorists have traditionally been concerned in matters of the state (Held, 1980). The culmination of this lesson in a letter-writing activity also fits notions of self-empowerment and social action, which is fundamental to critical theory in pedagogy (Merriam, 2002; Friere, 1970; Peterson, 2003; Darder, 2003; Giroux, 2003).

Positivism v. Critical Theory

According to Paolo Friere, "the only way to truly understand the curriculum of the classroom is to go beyond its walls into the society" (as cited in Peterson, 2003, p. 377). Rather than presenting a traditional, textbook-based art appreciation curriculum, which presents knowledge as neutral, autonomous, and positivist, a critical theory approach to art appreciation delves into the societal histories and structures of the arts. Many critical theorists, starting with the Frankfurt School, have critiqued positivist analyses of culture (Darder, 2003; Giroux, 2001). By presenting culture as autonomous and unrelated to

political, social, historical influence, the traditional art appreciation textbook is similar to a traditional art museum. Both entities are authoritative and present knowledge, whether through a written narrative or a collection of objects, as absolute and positivist, rather than as subject to complex histories. According to Peterson (2003):

In most schools, facts are presented as value-free. Conceptual analysis—to the degree it exists—does not make contact with the real world. History is presented as a series of nonrelated sequential facts. Scientific “truths” are presented without historical context with little regard to the ramifications such matters have on the learners’ environment or global ecology. Students are expected to learn—usually memorize and occasionally “discover”—such facts without regard to the values or interests which inform such perspectives (p.377).

The critical theory art appreciation curriculum used in my classroom, by teaching concepts of the art world, the history of artist training, textbook bias, art museums, and ownership and repatriation, subjects which are not substantially covered in most textbooks, can “help them [students] reflect on why they think the way they do; to discover that knowledge is socially constructed, that truth is relative not only to time and place but to class, race, and gender interests as well” (Peterson, 2003, p.377).

The ability to independently interpret an institution like an art museum—a traditional symbol of wealth, power, and imperialism—demonstrates empowerment on behalf of the students, which is a key goal of critical theory curriculum. By making these student outcomes (student empowerment and the ability to think independently) a goal of my art appreciation curriculum, when students do visit an art museum they are prepared to experience it not as an institution of absolute knowledge and truth, but as a space influenced by society and history, where truth is relative to the beholder. For a freshman-level college course, typically filled with emerging adults, this type of critical

theory-based learning is timely, invaluable, and will continue to benefit them throughout their academic careers and personal lives.

Limitations

This research study was implemented with two art appreciation classes at a community college, with a total enrollment of 76 students, and a total participation of 68 students. It is a small study specifically featuring two-year college students, which some may consider to not be generalizable to four-year college students. Because college students enrolled in art appreciation typically are first- or second-year students, I believe that the results from this study can be interpreted as pertaining to all college students regardless of enrollment at two- or four-year institutions.

Whether or not it is a large enough or general enough population to be applied to all college students is an additional matter. Kemmis and McTaggart (1992) suggest that both the action and research aspects of the methodology justify that action researchers work with a small group, though they do not offer specific numbers to define what constitutes “small.” While 68 students is not a tremendous number, it is a reasonable size for two separate classes. Both of the classes were taught the same curriculum separately and produced similar data results which supports the interpretability of the data produced. The results found throughout the two separate classes also fit in with my informal observations of the past ten years.

This research project was designed and implemented as an action research project because it attempts to solve a classroom problem, is collaborative, and attempts

to enhance or empower those who participate (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Action research relies heavily on the teacher-as researcher, which causes some to question the reliability of the data and speculate that the potential for bias can contaminate the data (Johnson, 2008; McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2003; Craig, 2009; MacIntyre, 2000). However, researcher knowledge of participants as well as a trusting bond is considered necessary for successful action research to be implemented, as the learning process is shared (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003). Additionally, any subjectivity can be identified in the data analysis, and the benefit of passing along subjectivity lies in the ability of readers to determine their own meanings (Stake, 2000). Lastly, as encouraged by Macintyre (2000), action research should be strongly grounded in academic literature to address any issues of credibility, and I believe this study is very thoroughly supported by literature.

One area that may be wanting is in the overall lack of prior research specific to college student interactions in art museums. Within the last decade, some academics and art museums have started to publish work in this area, but it is still underrepresented within art museum education. This applies doubly or triply to research specific to community college audiences learning within art museums. It is hoped that this research study will add to the small community of academics interested in college student learning within art museum, and potentially inspire more research in this area.

Regarding the gathering of data, the data collection instruments I designed were prohibitively complicated. Over the four data collection instruments/classroom assignments completed by students, a total of 161 questions were asked. It was my intention to create data collection instruments that would triangulate data and capture

enough data to effectively answer the research questions. However, after thoroughly reviewing the data collection instruments, I determined that the excess of questions seemed to lower the value of each in the eyes of students. Students did not respond as thoughtfully, thoroughly, and consistently to the questions, and therefore did not consistently produce focused data. The reason for the complicated data collection instruments lies in my intent that they focus as an assessment tool as well as data for the research project.

The data collected was effective, but the data was not consistently of a high quality across all four data collection instruments. There were a handful of students in each class that provided deep, thoughtful, and substantial comments every step of the way, however, there was a larger number of students that provided inconsistent information: some questions were not answered at all, some questions were answered with one word answers, some answers seemed to indicate that the questions were not understood. One potential complication for the data collection instruments is that they were designed by an instructor to assess student comprehension of the subject matter, as well as by a researcher attempting to answer the research questions of this study. This double-duty use for the class assignments may have over-complicated the instruments and therefore account for the somewhat disappointing data results.

If I could go back and redesign the data collection instruments, I would simplify them considerably. Instead of asking 161 questions over four instruments, I would try to consolidate and clarify the questions into 6-7 questions per instrument, for a total of 24 to 28 questions. Time is always an issue in the classroom, but I would make time to have the students get into groups to discuss the questions for 15 to 20 minutes, while I

walked around and helped the groups with any clarifications they might need. This would help with students seeming to not understand some questions, and also help them develop their opinions with the support of their classmates, both of which would probably improve the quality of their responses.

Some of the questions asked were not specific enough to really assist in the answering of the primary research questions. One question that I wish I asked is what, if any, comparisons students saw between the Dallas Museum of Art and the Louvre. The intent of that question is specifically focused on the connections between history, power, and art museums, and it would specifically address whether or not students are able to apply what they know about the history of one museum to another. Another question I would add to the instruments is to specifically measure how the museum curriculum impacted their confidence levels for future visits to the art museum. This question could directly answer questions about student empowerment, which is central to this study.

Because the quantity of data was initially overwhelming, I briefly considered adjusting the methodology of this research study. I considered creating a mixed methods study that focused equally on the data gleaned from the questionnaires as well as creating an action research case study in which I only analyzed the data from the selected students that displayed a high level of subject matter comprehension. However, after much debate and deep thinking, I decided to implement the methodology as it was originally designed because the data collected wholly represents the entirety of two class experiences with a critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum. While the quality of the data is not as highly concentrated as I would have

liked (perhaps due to unrealistic expectations), there was more than enough to effectively answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Overview of Critical Theory

Introduction

Many museums focus their interpretive efforts, like programs and labels, on helping visitors understand the art objects on display (Cuno, 2004). Few, if any, attempt to direct their interpretive energies on helping visitors understand the museum institution itself. The purpose of this action research case study was to determine how a critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum impacted college student understanding of encyclopedic art museums. At this stage in the research, college student understanding was generally defined as developing knowledge of the history, processes, and practices of art museums. This dissertation recorded and analyzed the experiences of students enrolled in an entry level art appreciation course as they were guided towards museum literacy based in critical theory. As a class requirement, students visited the Dallas Museum of Art and completed a three-part, observation-based exercise. In the classroom, students completed formative and summative exercises as well as an activity exploring issues in object ownership. Their responses to questionnaires, assignments, and class discussions, as well as my personal observations will all be analyzed in order to answer the research questions fueling this research.

There were multiple existing theories and sources that significantly influenced this study. This section was divided into two main parts: Theory and Studies Directly

Related. In the theory section, critical theory was identified as being essential to the formation of the study. The bulk of the section was devoted to the understanding of critical theory and its application to the research. There were also several areas of existing related literature that also significantly influenced this study. Essential publications in the areas of museum literacy, general learning in art museums, emerging adulthood psychology, and critical perspectives on art museums and learning were discussed.

Foundations of Critical Theory

The First Generation of Critical Theorists

The first generation of critical theorists, active in the early to middle part of the 20th century and collectively known as the Frankfurt School, are heavily influenced by the German philosopher and economist Karl Marx, who was active in the 19th century. While Marx's works are wide-ranging, it is his writings on the problems of unequal class distinctions within society (specifically between those who have the means to purchase labor and those who provide the labor) that largely influenced the Frankfurt School's development of critical theory (Schechter, 2007). Karl Marx "sets out to prove that it is within humanity's power to liberate itself from all forms of consciousness and social relations that reduce its individual members to passive roles in the hierarchies operative in the church, state and civil society" (Schechter, 2007, p. 11).

While Marx primarily views his theories through the lens of economics, the Frankfurt School is fundamentally concerned with applying critical and emancipatory social theories to traditional concepts of knowledge (the German philosophers Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel, who are among Marx's greatest influences, mainly theorized about epistemology), democracy, and capitalism (Schecter, 2007). The Frankfurt School rejected a strictly orthodox interpretation of Marx due to global events such as the escalation of Nazism, Fascism, and Stalinism, as well as the increasing power of capitalism, and therefore deemphasized the plight of workers and the political economy and focused instead on larger, societal-based inquiries (Giroux, 2003; Darder, Baltodano & Torres, 2003; Schirmacher, 2000; Schecter, 2007).

In 1924, the Institute for Social Research was founded at the University of Frankfurt, led by Max Horkheimer and including principal members Theodor Adorno, Leo Lowenthal, Herbert Marcuse, Friedrich Pollock, and Erich Fromm. The collective writings produced by this group over the next decades are based in the Western European Marxist tradition, and became known as the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School (Giroux, 2003; Schirmacher, 2000; Schecter, 2007; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2013). Although there is considerable theoretical diversity in the works of different members of the group and therefore no single, precise definition of critical theory, there are underlying commonalities (based on the Western European Marxist tradition) that unite the Frankfurt School.

According to Leo Lowenthal, the desire to work "in opposition to existing conditions" (as cited by Schirmacher, 2000, p.i) is the fundamental tenet of critical theory. Marcuse wrote that the entire basis of human action should be in the service of

“compassion [and] in our sense of the sufferings of others” (as cited in Giroux, 2003, p. 28). In the words of Max Horkheimer (1982), the director of the Frankfurt school, what distinguishes a critical theory from a traditional theory is the critical objective of emancipation, or, “to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them” (p.244).

In addition, Horkheimer (1993, p.21) specifically identifies the following three criteria as essential to any critical theory (as cited in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2013):

Critical theory is adequate only if it meets three criteria: it must be explanatory, practical, and normative, all at the same time. That is, it must explain what is wrong with current social reality, identify the actors to change it, and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation. Any truly critical theory of society, as Horkheimer further defined it in his writings as Director of the Frankfurt School's Institute for Social Research, “has as its object human beings as producers of their own historical form of life” (Horkheimer 1993, 21).

Unifying these characteristics, we see a common thread through critical theory that is primarily concerned with self-conscious critique, hegemony, epistemology, and emancipation, among many other things.

Original members of the Frankfurt School produced tremendous amounts of complex ideas that served to define central tenets of critical theory, as well as provide a basis for the second generation of critical theorists (currently dominated by Jürgen Habermas). Since their origin in Germany nearly 100 years ago, much has been written both in support of and in opposition to the Frankfurt School, whose ideas retain great interest because of the dichotomy of the beautiful promise of emancipation and the incredible difficulty in achieving it (Schechter, 2007).

The Second Generation of Critical Theorists

The second generation of critical theory is dominated by German philosopher Jurgen Habermas, also of the Frankfurt School (Duvenage, 2003; Giroux, 2003; Schirmacher, 2007). Because of their location in Germany, and because most of their members identified as Jewish, the Frankfurt School relocated several times during the rise of Nazism in Germany. In 1950, the Frankfurt School returned to Germany, when it was rediscovered by Habermas, who was an assistant to Theodor W. Adorno, a founding member. It is at this time that Habermas began reading the foundational essays written by critical theorists in the 1930s, and also became more critical of their theories of society, with a particular focus on their interpretations of history and reason (Duvenage, 2003).

The differences and similarities between the first and second generations of critical theorists are complex. The first generation of critical theorists based their theoretical studies in more concrete, modernist understandings of society, specifically within Marxist frameworks of labor inequalities, though broader in scope. They also experienced firsthand several traumatic crimes against humanity in the name of socialism, which impacted their work (Sitton, 2003). The unwavering reliance on reason, which extended from Enlightenment beliefs, ultimately concerned critical theorists because they saw that:

The employment of reason in modern society is overwhelmingly informed by a project of controlling the natural world. The danger, as critical theorists saw it, was that this modern project would be (and in fact, has been) extended to subduing and manipulating social life in a variety of ways” (Sitton, 2003, p. xiii).

According to Duvenage (2003), the second generation of critical theorists did not have personal experience with the atrocities associated with World War II, but they were aware of the histories of cruel authoritarian regimes and therefore continued to question the positivist reliance on reason (which some saw as affecting authoritarian regimes) and fervently pursued liberal, democratic ideas.

Habermas in particular sought to reconcile the modernist reliance on reason by deconstructing it in order to “create a more balanced social life in which all the dimensions of reason are given their due” (Sitton, 2003, p. xiv). He proposed an alternate understanding of different dimensions of reasons, thereby sidestepping the contemporary societal tendency to place too much faith in singular reasoning (most specifically the rationality of capitalism). “Instead of a radical critique of reason, he recommends a reason existing in the unity of diversity of its voices” (Schirmacher, 2000, p. xix). According to Schecter (2007), the second generation of critical theorists were not necessarily looking to completely reject previous claims but instead they were attempting:

To rethink the Enlightenment project rather than a romantic or communitarian rejection of the aims of Enlightenment. The ideal of a rational society free of prejudice, obscurantism and the arbitrary exercise of power is not abandoned and given up for lost. Instead it is reconceptualised in the light of some of the more brutal realities of twentieth-century history (p.74).

Reconceptualization and deconstruction of theoretical concepts is heavily associated with poststructuralism, which captures much of the essence of second generation critical theorists: the relinquishment of formal Enlightenment systematic (and positivist) thought and a belief in plurality, both of which are grounded in experiences within the general turbulence of the 1960s (Schrift, 2010).

Poststructuralist plurality, as well as the original intent of critical theorists to include a broad cross-section of disciplines, contributes to the current field of many critical theories, such as feminism, critical race theory, LGBT theory, and post-colonial criticism, which all touch the periphery of this study, but the unifying factor amongst them is still the unchanged goal of emancipation from oppression (Stanford Encyclopedia, 2013). Many of the theories above originated in critique of critical theory, which was significantly criticized from the perspectives of feminists and people of color for being dominated by white males (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003). Critical theory has also been critiqued from a class perspective as being elitist, with an academic perspective and language that is inaccessible by the very communities it sought to emancipate.

Central to this study are critical pedagogical theories, which can be traced back to the philosophers Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault for their explorations into the impact of power on the development of knowledge. Both explored the understanding of power: Gramsci wrote about the changing nature of domination from military or physical means to more subtle means of societal leaders reinforcing universal norms (particularly through schooling); and Foucault, who questioned the legitimization of knowledge through various power relationships and viewed power as a dynamic, continuous process (rather than a fixed object) (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003). Gramsci wrote extensively about students receiving socialization (through implementing rules of standards and behaviors) that is contrary to their own class interests while supporting the interests of the elite classes. Foucault theorized both about how knowledge was

continuously validated through myriad societal power structures, but also about resistance, particularly from the perspective of students.

Both Gramsci and Foucault influenced the Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire, who is widely acknowledged to be the single most influential critical pedagogical theorist (Giroux, 2003, Darder, Maltodano, & Torres, 2003). Rather than focus exclusively on practices of teaching:

Freire forthrightly inserted questions of power, culture, and oppression within the context of schooling. In so doing, he reinforced the Frankfurt School's focus on theory and practice as imperative to the political struggles against exploitation and domination. Through his views on emancipatory education, Freire made central pedagogical questions related to social agency, voice, and democratic participation—questions that strongly inform the recurrent philosophical expressions of critical pedagogical writings even today (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003, p.6).

While exiled from Brazil, Freire became a professor at Harvard University, and his seminal publication *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was translated into English, which had a tremendous effect on education (and many other fields) in the United States.

Philosophical Tenets of Critical Theory

Anti-Positivism and the Critique of Reason

Critical theorists saw the Enlightenment ideal of positivism, often defined as an unbending faith in singular rationality, objective knowledge, and science, as perhaps the worst product of the Enlightenment. Positivist thinkers relied strictly on what could be observed, and could not conceive of knowledge outside of the factually empirical. In their seminal *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972), the authors

strongly censure such ideals, saying, “In the most general sense of progressive thought the Enlightenment has always aimed at liberating men from fear and establishing their sovereignty. Yet the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant” (p. 4).

According to Giroux (2003), Horkheimer felt that positivism “presented a view of knowledge and science that stripped both of their critical possibilities” (p. 33). The ideological impossibility of self-critique and the concept that knowledge is universal drives the critical theorists’ skepticism of positivism. From the critical theory point of view, enlightenment rationalists were unwilling to practice self-awareness or examine their reasoning and societal purpose in a meaningful way. Reason was not an inherently evil concept, but positivism seemed to embody reason without critique, ethics, or value, because those concepts could not be mathematically or scientifically quantified. Positivism seemed almost deliberately ignorant to critical theorists concerned with oppression and emancipation. The Frankfurt School believed that:

The suppression of ethics in positivist rationality precludes the possibility for self-criticism, or, more specifically, for questioning its own normative structure. Facts become separated from values, objectivity undermines critique, and the notion that essence and appearance may not coincide is lost in the positivist view of the world.

For critical theorists Adorno, Marcuse, and Horkheimer, the rationalist belief in value neutrality “served as a form of ideological hegemony that infused positivist rationality with a political conservatism that made it an ideological prop of the status quo” (Giroux, 2003, p. 35). Because the essence of critical theory is to contradict existing conditions and the status quo, the resulting discord is unavoidable.

As institutions founded primarily from Enlightenment-era values seeking to educate and civilize lower classes, many art museums are abound with positivist ideals.

The position of the museum, while certainly changing over time, has traditionally been seen as transcendent, representing one perspective (of elite classes), with important objects removed from their context, presented on pedestals, and existing beyond debate and criticism (Efland, 1990; Alexander & Alexander, 2008).

A contemporary museum can certainly be seen as appearance-oriented, without many opportunities for the voicing of perspectives that may differ from their own point of view, often representing a single (highly educated) curator. A critical theorist might be concerned with the separation of an object from any values considered in the act of collecting the object. For example, the Dallas Museum of Art displays a mummy in their Egyptian galleries. The positivist perspective towards the mummy would hold that a mummy is an object of historical value, curious audiences will be interested in seeing it, learning from it, and therefore it should be on display. The value-oriented critical theorist might point out that a mummy is a deceased human body, ask how a body of an ancient Egyptian is on display in a museum in Texas, and wonder as to the ethical appropriateness of displaying a deceased human body next to vases and other inanimate objects. A critical theorist also might look at the historical relationship between the United States, a wealthy and powerful country, and Egypt, which has a long and distinguished history, but experienced economic and political declines in recent centuries.

Culture, History, and Epistemology

Critical theorists also rejected the positivist interpretation of culture, which held that culture was somehow neutral, and produced independently of history, politics, and

other societal factors. Critical theorists postulated that culture was produced and used by the economic elite in order to continue social and political dominance, as opposed to the Enlightenment belief that culture rose from the masses. Adorno and Horkheimer (1972) followed Gramsci's theory that domination and oppression were no longer overtly enforced by physical force, but were now enforced culturally, through common institutions such as schools, churches, media, etc. Adorno coined the term "culture industry" to better identify "a concentration of political and economic groups who reproduced and legitimated the dominant belief and value system" (Giroux, 2003, p.41)

In Marxist theory, human events or products cannot be understood without understanding the historical context in which they occur. Critical theorists have significant problems with objective appearances of culture and positivist interpretations of history because they are seen as facades that often conceal social relationships abound with inequality (Giroux, 2001). According to Tyson (1999):

In Marxist terminology, economic conditions are referred to as *material* circumstances, and the social/political/ideological atmosphere generated by material conditions is called the *historical* situation. For the Marxist critic, neither human events (in the political or personal domain) nor human production (from nuclear submarines to television shows) can be understood without understanding the specific material/historical circumstances in which those events and productions occur (p. 50).

The disavowal of a singular, or universal, history that fits all human experience is largely based on the notion that such histories have traditionally been associated with Eurocentric domination (Vazquez-Arroyo, 2008) and are therefore not representative of anyone who may fit outside of that dominant, privileged, European classification: women, the poor, and people of color, among others. The phrase (often attributed to Winston Churchill, but origins unknown) "history is written by the victors" could apply

here, particularly when histories that are presented by textbooks, political parties, art museums, etc., are predominantly presented from a Western worldview. An essential aspect of critical theory is that history is not universal or permanent, but on the contrary, history has multiple perspectives and is in a constant state of flux (LaCapra, 2004).

Knowledge and history are deeply linked, according to critical theorists, with knowledge being subject to the history in which it is created. While traditional knowledge derived from history might focus on an objective, continuous and certain interpretation of events, perpetuated by dominant classes with substantial influence, a critical theory perspective focuses on developing knowledge by acknowledging the subjectivity, discord, and contradictions within history (Giroux, 2003). Traditional knowledge, from the Marxist perspective, has served to produce and maintain a passive labor force that will continue to serve dominant forces in society. Critical knowledge empowers the individual to self-create knowledge based on their own identities and situation within the larger world.

From a critical theory perspective, an art museum is abound with critical issues in these areas. Art museums largely present histories, culture, and knowledge, formulated from positivist Enlightenment- and colonial-era ideology (Mesa-Baines, 1992; Zeller, 1989). Museums have the power and position to be builders and enforcers of culture, involved in the soft, continuous domination that Gramsci, Foucault, Adorno, and Horkheimer identified. Indeed, in the 19th century, upper classes envisioned art museums as character-building, and sought to use them on the lower classes “to refine citizens and to raise their standards of beauty and taste” (Zeller, 1989, p. 213). Art museums also predominately represent Eurocentric, Western culture, but are not candid

about disclosing bias, instead presenting their point of view as normative and objective (Berger, 2005).

Finally, many public art museums are “funded by the state and guided by official cultural policy, no matter how enlightened, public museum are by their nature governmental” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006, p. 35). Marxists and critical theorists believe that “getting and keeping economic power is the motive behind all social and political activities, including education, philosophy, religion, government, the arts, science, technology, the media, and so on” (Tyson, 1999, p. 50). According to Marx, the ultimate human struggle lies between those who have substantial economic power and those who do not. The Frankfurt School is less specifically focused on economic theory, but it is significantly concerned with capitalism, and the historical and social power structures and the systems of domination and oppression that result from an unequal economic system such as capitalism.

As bastions of the state, art museums can perpetuate power through constructs of culture, race, history, power, and knowledge, and thereby serve as an oppressive force on those who do not have economic power. Giroux (2003) identifies the practice of assessing the burgeoning culture of capitalism and its resulting effect of domination as the primary goal of critical theorists. Therefore, as institutions grounded in Enlightenment-era positivism, capable of producing culture (purveyors of the “culture industry”) and participating in cultural domination, representing Eurocentric bias in a normative fashion, and funded by the state, art museums seem to be the antithesis of critical theory ideals, and ripe for assessment.

Praxis, Counter-Hegemony, and Emancipation

Critical theory is not only a theory for the sake of theory; it is also seen as a means to a practical and tangible end. Theory and practice are deeply connected. According to Darder, Baltodano, & Torres (2003), “All human activity is understood as emerging from an ongoing interaction of reflection, dialogue, and action—namely praxis—and as praxis, all human activity requires theory to illuminate it and provide a better understanding of the world as we find it and as it might be” (p.15). Marxism is specifically concerned with material cause(s) rather than isolated, abstract principles, and there is only value in an idea when it has a practical application (Tyson, 1999). Critical theory ideas of emancipation are also grounded in Marxism, though perhaps not to the degree that Marx sought proletariat revolutions and the creation of classless societies.

Critical theorists are known for avoiding the trappings of ivory tower ideology, and instead attempt to maintain a position of being “a social philosophy in touch with social reality” (Schirmacher, 2000, p. vii). “The Frankfurt School stressed the importance of critical thinking by arguing that it is a constitutive feature of the struggle for self-emancipation and social change” (Giroux, 2001, p.8). Ideas of emancipation, social action, and resistance are grounded in the belief that “all people have the capacity and ability to produce knowledge and resist domination” (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003, p. 15). The act of resistance is also an essential empowering concept in critical pedagogy; counter-hegemony reconstructs spaces “to make central the voices and experiences who have historically existed within the margins of mainstream institutions” (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, p.14).

Teaching college students about art museums, using a critical theory perspective, had a practical application: it was ultimately concerned with acknowledging systemic inequality and achieving emancipation from it. Art museums are merely the vehicle, through an art appreciation curriculum, with which to examine basic tenets of critical theory. By combining art museums with critical theory, students may learn to identify and assess history, culture, knowledge, and hegemony, and identify how art museums (and other institutions) can be improved so that students might be empowered to enact social change.

Critical Theory Critiques of Art Museums

Recent critical theory critiques of art museums begin with the decline of modernism, and the paradigm shift towards postmodern theory-based practices in museums. In the second half of the 20th century, many contemporary museums shifted their focus towards postmodern visitor-centered practices based on personal meaning-making, rather than the modern practices in which objects and institutional expertise dominated the visitor experience (Roberts, 1997; Anderson, 2004; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Tapia, 2008). According to Fraser (2006), Douglas Crimp is the first to connect the critical theories of Foucault to museum studies in his essay *On the Museum's Ruins* (1980). Personally, Fred Wilson's famous *Mining the Museum* intervention at the Maryland Historical Society in 1992 was the transformational moment I realized art museums could and should be critiqued. Since then, there are a number of museum studies-oriented publications taking a critical approach to museum practices. In contemporary literature (within the last ten years), many critical theory-based work deals

with myriad issues of culture and representation within art museum exhibitions (Bennet, 2006; Blackwood & Purcell, 2014; Cuno, 2006; Karp, Kratz, Swaja & Ybarra-Frausto, 2006; Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, 2006), diversity and multiculturalism in museum access and inclusivity (Acuff & Evans, 2014), and a number also dealing with critical pedagogy within museums (Ebitz, 2007; Mayer, 2005a; Mayer 2005b; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Anderson, 2004; Fraser, 2006; McKenna, 2014; Tapia, 2008; Wexler, 2007) .

Many contemporary art museums have struggled to fully expand beyond their histories as Enghtenment-era institutions (authoritative, positivist, inflexible) in the last century, however, it is undeniable that some change has taken place. According to Anderson (2004):

The museum is no longer sacred or untouchable; rather, the museum is open to scrutiny, from within its walls and from an increasingly discriminating public...The last century of self-examination—reinventing the museum—symbolizes the general movement of dismantling the museum as an ivory tower of exclusivity and toward the construction of a more socially responsive cultural institution in service to the public (p. 1).

The act of dismantling a museum (from ivory tower to socially responsive institution) can take many forms. When a museum undergoes a process of deconstruction, should that involve collection areas, installations, exhibitions, educational programs, staff, boards of directors, and/or museum missions? It seems that all of these areas are fair game for critical inquiry.

Many American art museums represent wealth, exclusivity, and prestige, in the European tradition of art museums (Anderson, 2004). According to Cuno (2004, p.3), national museums and others must acknowledge their histories as “developed from princely or private collections and cabinets of curiosity, with collections expanded

through colonial expansion, imperial plunder, scientific exchange, and aristocratic, elite, industrial, and state patronage.” While that might not be the history of every art museum, being affiliated with the state, the aristocracy, great wealth, colonial expansion and imperial plunder, from the critical point of view, the art museum is associated with authority and oppression.

Critical theory, critical race theory, critical postcolonial theory, and critical multiculturalism can all be found in issues with exhibitions, representation, and culture. Practices of display can be contentious because of the museum’s position as an authority: museums are in the practice of representing cultures via collections, exhibitions, and displays, though not always accurately, and that is inherently a complicated issue (Cuno, 2006; Bennet, 2006; Berger, 2005). According to Blackwood & Purcell (2014):

The racial history of much of this dominant cultural narrative is decidedly Western and white and yet, portrayed as neutral and normative. Thus, the choices of the curatorial staff illustrate their power to reproduce the dominant cultural narrative of whiteness and white privilege, which in turn becomes the social reality and is therefore construed by the public to be both normal and legitimate (p.240).

Exhibitions representing the racially marginalized, or cultures outside the dominant Western and white narrative are often “othered” in relation to the dominant group. Blackwood & Purcell (2014), write that “‘Othering’ is defined as the reductive representation of an entire group into dichotomies of ‘us versus them,’ or ‘primitive versus civilized’ to be used as a marker of identity within a social hierarchy predicated upon power and status” (p.242). As a means of improvement from these unequal situations, part of the process of democratization within an art museum lies in the ability for “disparate groups to present and claim their histories and values within the public

sphere” (Cuno, 2006, p.3). This has occasionally resulted in museums that function less as privileged display spaces and more as centers for the community (Anderson, 2004). From the critical theory perspective, the increased democratization of art museums based on greater influence from diverse communities is an example of empowerment and social action.

Critical Theory Pedagogies in Art Museum Education

As teachers within the museum environment, museum educators seem like prime conduits to implement critical pedagogies, through which museums can become more equal, accessible, democratic, and emancipatory. However, the majority of contemporary art museum education literature focuses on the practical aspects of teaching effectively in art museums, and there has been an historical tendency to omit the connection between museum education practices and theory of any kind (Mayer, 2005b). When museum educators cite theories that influence their pedagogical practices, often they are psychological or social theories such as Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligence theory, Visual Thinking Strategies (an inquiry-based teaching technique), or the pedagogical theories of John Dewey or Jean Piaget (Ebitz, 2008).

It is less common (but not impossible) to find museum education literature, influenced by true critical theories, examining issues of knowledge, power, privilege, and culture via the art museum or art objects. According to Ebitz (2008) museum educators have rarely deliberately employed critical pedagogies, but rather focus on “objects, people, and learning, not about gender, race, class, and relations of power” (p. 18). The reasons for this are not perfectly understood, though Wexler (2007) speculates

that, “Reasons for the selection and display of works of art in museums are often omitted from pedagogical dialogue in favor of vigorously encouraging young people to become life-long museum goers” (p. 7).

The critical pedagogy-based literature focusing on critical multiculturalism and critical race theory points out issues with inequities, hidden curricula, and the overwhelming whiteness of the art museum. Rudham (2012) points out an inherent dichotomy as art museums attempt to increase accessibility and diversity of their audiences with school tours primarily made up of lower-income, racially diverse public school tours, yet overwhelmingly staff those tours with docents who are members of the privileged white leisure class. Rudham further points out the situational inequality by identifying a tendency among docents to avoid potential conflict by ignoring discussions of race, and identifies this practice as a hidden curriculum that normalizes dominant culture in the United States. When writing about critical multicultural museum education, Acuff and Evans (2014) suggest that educators have the power to create a counterdiscursive space:

A museum that is or has the working elements of a counterdiscursive space has addressed very specific structural details at both the micro and macro levels, some of which include: How does the location and/or display of cultural items position otherness or suggest cultural insensitivity? How do museums embrace and/or encourage cultural autonomy? And, how do museums recognize communities of difference and communities of collaboration? (p.23).

The validity behind employing critical pedagogies within the art museum is strong. Ebitz (2008) points out the benefit of the ethical nature of critical theories, which can result in self-critique, self-reflection, and even emancipation. He advocates for the use of critical theories in art museum education as a responsibility to the world and its society. Even if

the art museum remains committed to modernist interpretations of display, a critical pedagogy can distinguish itself from those practices. According to Tapia (2008):

If practitioners and theorists in the field of art museum education can hone their sense of self-awareness and purpose through the development of critical theory and practice and through the implementation of such strategies...then it is less likely that museum education will be a mere reflexive reaction to the ideology and agenda of the museum as a whole. ...The museum educator can be empowered to develop programs that deliberately facilitate voices from diverse arenas to express alternative and meaningful interpretations of museum collections.

Museum educators are responsible to their diverse audiences to provide programming that reflects their communities and has relevance to their communities. Additional support for the above idea is provided by Acuff & Evans (2014), who write, “We believe that educators have a pivotal role to play in increasing the multicultural awareness of art museums and in pushing them towards actualizing their potential as true counterdiscursive spaces of educational equity” (p.24). Critical theories, including multiculturalism, postcolonial theory, queer theory, feminist theory, and others, have a valuable role within art museum education. They can continue to deliver upon the paradigm shift towards increased democratization of the museum.

This research project is somewhat aligned with Carole Stapp’s 1984 article *Defining Museum Literacy* in which she introduces the term “museum literacy.” As cited in Mayer (2005a), Stapp is among the first to view museum education through postmodern theory, and puts forward that:

Basic museum literacy means competence in reading objects (visual literacy), but full museum literacy signifies competence in drawing upon the museum’s holdings and services purposefully and independently. Museum literacy therefore implies genuine and full visitor access to the museum by virtue of mastery of the language of museum objects and familiarity with the museum as an institution. In a word, the museum literate visitor is *empowered* (p.364).

Although Stapp does not specifically cite critical theorists (few critical inquiries into museum education practices do), her vision for full visitor participation in the museum—via critically learning about the museum as a constructed institution—is aligned with critical theorist ideas for explanatory, practical, and normative experiences for those who oppose existing conditions in art museums.

This research project puts critical theory concepts into practice by teaching a critical art museum curriculum to art appreciation students. The goal is for students to gain knowledge about art museums as institutions, but also for them to visualize an art museum as it relates to their knowledge of the world, and empower them to better understand—and perhaps even influence—the institutions around them.

Studies Directly Related

Museum Literacy

Museum literacy is a concept that is difficult to pinpoint. While the term seems to be used occasionally in museum education literature, there is not one specific source to credit for its introduction, and there is no universally accepted definition. The Excellence and Equity report (1992) presented by the American Association of Museums Task Force on Museum Education, reflects visitor attainment of museum literacy as a goal of art museum educators. However, the definition of museum literacy in this report is brief, and focused on the ability of museum visitors to “read” museum exhibitions (Heltne, 1992). Many publications mention, but do not focus on, museum literacy; others allude to the concept of museum literacy but do not mention it specifically by name (Stapp,

1992). For a visitor to simply visit a museum and view objects does not make them museum literate.

Stapp's (1992) concept of museum literacy equaling museum empowerment corresponds to Friere and Macedo's (2003) ideas of general literacy as an educational process. The concept of literacy, regardless of the particular environment or institution in which it is implemented, is an integral part of the general education process, and the terms "literacy" and "education" are often used interchangeably (Friere & Macedo, 2003), with critical reflection as an essential component of literacy. Friere and Macedo (2003, p. 354) write of emancipatory literacy as having two main dimensions, "On the one hand, students have to become literate about their histories, experiences, and the culture of their immediate environments. On the other hand, they must also appropriate those codes and cultures of the dominant spheres so they can transcend their own environments." Although Stapp's definition of literacy is specific to art museums, and Friere and Macedo's definition is more general, both definitions share commonalities of empowerment, reflection, and critical understanding.

Learning in Art Museums

The free-choice learning concepts proposed by Falk and Dierking (2002) clearly represent the advantages of learning within art museums. The central thesis of free-choice learning is that most of what people learn throughout their lives is the result of free-choice learning, as opposed to formal, school-based learning. Falk and Dierking argue that the learning that occurs for intrinsically motivated reasons—for example, a person learning to play golf for the joy of the outdoors and the pleasure of competition—

is more effective than the learning that occurs for extrinsically motivated reasons, like a person learning to play golf to earn a physical education credit for college. Free-choice learners are motivated mostly by a desire for enjoyment, entertainment, relaxation, and self-satisfaction (Falk and Dierking, 2002).

Art museums are a natural setting for free-choice learners, because their methods of presenting exhibitions and programs are inherently self-selective. Museumgoers choose to visit a museum, they choose which exhibitions and works of art to view, which programs to attend or not attend, and how much time to spend at the museum. Because of the multiple offerings presented by most art museums on any given day, an art museum can be understood by many different people on many different levels of engagement. Some museum visitors will have a high level of skill in terms of their capability of understanding the artworks presented, while others may have low to medium skill levels. The art museum can be understood by all of its visitors because they each have the ability to create their own learning challenges, specific to their own level of engagement, rather than having the museum dictate each visitor's experience.

Falk and Dierking (2002) specifically connect their theories of free-choice learning with young adults, an age range they place at twenty to twenty-five years old, by identifying two major learning needs of young adults. Young adults find themselves with "increased opportunities to fill discretionary time, build identity, and begin establishing intimate relationships, and a desire to improve oneself, either personally or professionally." (Falk and Dierking, 2002) Falk and Dierking point out that the young adult time period is chiefly about building identities partially created during adolescence,

and a central part of building identity is searching for new things to learn. The concept of building identity is hardly new; it has been referred to by Carl Jung as “individuation,” and by Abraham Maslow as “self-actualization” (as cited in Falk and Dierking, 2002). However, the concepts of building identity and free-choice learning are inextricably tied, due to the belief that much of what is learned is about affirming self. Free-choice learning affirms the individuality of the learner in highly personal ways. A learner with the benefits of choice and control will exercise their freedom to reinforce and expand upon their personal knowledge, histories, and experiences. Thus the intrinsically-motivated, young adult learner experiencing a free-choice encyclopedic art museum is primed for great learning.

Closely related to concepts of free-choice learning are museum learning models based on the constructivist learning theory, originally proposed by Jean Piaget. Hein (1998, 1999) and Hooper-Greenhill (1992, 1999) write extensively on how constructivist learning theories are applied in contemporary art museums. The essence of constructivism is based on the prior knowledge of the learner, and the ability for learners to construct their own learning experiences based on their own prior knowledge. In the constructivist method, those that are traditionally responsible for the transmission of information transform into facilitators of learning for active audiences, rather than the traditional role of “experts” who give information to passive audiences (Lachapelle, 2007). The more personal connections that a learner can make between new information and the information they already possess, the more established their new knowledge will become (Hein, 1998; Hooper Greenhill, 1999a).

The uniqueness of the art museum environment makes it an ideal laboratory to employ constructivist learning. Over the past two decades, the Journal of Museum Education has published extensive articles supporting this idea. According to Jeffery (2000), "They allow visitors to move and explore freely, working at their own pace. They encourage group interaction and sharing. They allow personal experience with real objects. They provide a place for visitors to examine and expand their own understanding." However, simply because art museums lend themselves to constructivist learning theories does not necessarily mean that all visitors experience meaningful learning while freely exploring the museum environment. A slightly radical form of constructivism states that, because constructivist learning relies on personal knowledge, all learning is equal and valid in the learner's mind (Jeffery, 2000). While this is philosophically intriguing and appropriate for a less formal museum environment, the nature of college enrollment is one of instructor assessment. Therefore, while self-directed, empowerment-oriented learning is central to this study, some objective knowledge is transferred. The intent, though admittedly idealized, is that the careful, instructor-led facilitation of an art museum learning experience will ensure that an objective reality is constructed within a valid base of knowledge, rather than a completely open experience that may promote misconceptions or misinformation.

Emerging Adults or College Students Aged 18-25

The publication on emerging adulthood by Arnett (2004) provides further context for evaluating specific characteristics of this age group and how those characteristics may influence the students' experience of museum literacy. Arnett details collective

tendencies among emerging adults in western industrialized countries that make them ideal candidates for the type of learning that art museums are naturally positioned for. The five primary features that unite many emerging adults are identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between childhood and adulthood, and a tremendous feeling of possibility for life transformation (Arnett, 2004). While all of the features are significant, it is the last feature, the feeling of possibility for future transformation, that is most vital to this study.

Traditionally, students who attend college spend four years between the ages of 18-22 completing their college degree. The years of emerging adulthood continue beyond this four-year period, expanding as many as 10 years after reaching legal adulthood at the age of 18. According to Arnett, one of the characteristics of emerging adults during this period is the overall feeling of possibility at this time of life. Emerging adulthood is an era of openness, when most do not yet have firm plans set for the rest of their lives. According to Arnett (2004)

“...More than any other period of life, emerging adulthood represents the possibility of change. For this limited window of time—7, perhaps 10, years—the fulfillment of all their hopes seems possible, because for most people the range of their choices for how to live is greater than it has ever been before and greater than it will ever be again” (p. 17).

Thus, many emerging adults are experiencing the feeling that they have the possibility to transform their lives in significantly meaningful ways, such as choosing a major, or a city in which to live.

Critical Perspectives on the Art Museum

In 1990, Maurice Berger published the highly influential article *Are Art Museums Racist?* Berger insists that most art museums have behaved like other privileged institutions in America by working to maintain their mostly white, upper-class clientele, at the expense of the diverse, middle-class communities in which they operate. In his article, Berger questions why artists of color are so infrequently collected and displayed by mainstream art museums, and hypothesizes that institutions whose staff and boards are almost entirely from the white, privileged upper classes will always have problems with embedded institutional bias. The depth and breadth of racism in art museums is thoughtfully and convincingly documented with numerous examples of segregation, tokenization, and stereotyping in a number of well-received exhibitions curated by prestigious art museums.

Berger cites the historic 1969 Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition “Harlem on My Mind” as the quintessential example of the problems that can occur when a predominately white institution attempts to interpret an unfamiliar culture, in this case African-American. The exhibition was filled with photographs, film projections, and audio recordings, showing an anthropological and sociological curiosity on behalf of a museum staff that did not apply the same critical methodology to the institution that employs them or to their positions as museum curators. Museum staff did not involve historians or experts from Harlem, but rather reinforced the positions of “us” as insider museum staff and “them” as foreign objects to be academically studied (Berger, 1990).

Another example of institutional bias found within art museums is what Berger refers to as Black cultural separatism, or ghettoization, which is the rarity of mainstream

art museums to acknowledge and collect African-American artists who have participated in European art traditions. According to Berger, artists such as Hale Woodruff, who is often classified as an Abstract Expressionist, is not of interest to museum curators because his work is not visibly black, and therefore does not fit into the white perception of black art (Berger, 1990).

Also of seminal importance in documenting inequality in American art museums, Fred Wilson's keynote paper, *Silent Message of the Museum* (1996), recalls the many installations he assembled at various American art museums in the 1990s. In his installations, most notably at the Baltimore Historical Society, the Longwood Arts Project, and the Seattle Museum of Art, Wilson intervenes in the authoritative museum and gallery spaces created by curators, exposing significant biases in almost every facet of how objects are displayed. It is important to note that Wilson was invited by the institutions, and given carte blanche to create his installations based on their collections. At the Longwood Arts Project, a gallery in the Bronx, Wilson experimented by creating three separate spaces, each with a different "look." One space he painted entirely white, like the quintessential contemporary gallery space; another he painted a darker color and was appointed rather poorly in an attempt to make it appear as a smaller, ethnographic museum; and the third space was appointed like a 19th century salon space, with multiple works of art hanging from floor to ceiling. Wilson installed art by the same thirty artists in all of the spaces, and was stunned by how each environment affected how the works were interpreted by the public (Wilson, 1996).

At the Seattle Art Museum, Wilson continues his exploration of how environment influences interpretation. Wilson notes how many encyclopedic art museums treat their

Western and non-Western collections differently by their geographic placement within the museum (Greek and Roman art and artifacts are placed near contemporary art in prime locations, while non-Western art is segregated on upper floors), the quantity of artworks within any given space (galleries with Western art contain fewer works, with more space between them, while a similar size gallery with non-Western art might have hundreds of works cluttered together), and how the galleries are decorated (non-Western galleries are painted dark/vivid colors and lit with spotlights to create a sense of the dramatic, while Western galleries are brightly lit with natural light and white walls). Wilson correctly argues that the presentation of the objects directly influences how visitors will interpret the objects. The greatness of Western art is strongly implied by their relative rarity, their proximity to great classical cultures, and their normalized appearance in simple galleries, and non-Western art is significantly less important due to how cluttered the objects are, placed in the dim and colorful museum attics (Wilson, 1996).

At the Baltimore Historical Society, Wilson even focuses on messages that individual works of art might be transmitting. Focusing on one historical painting depicting a plantation family having a picnic, Wilson changed the title given by museum curators, *Country Life*, to *Frederick Serving Fruit*, a title acknowledging the role played at the picnic by the family's slaves. Fred Wilson's significant work in terms of critically investigating museum spaces is supported by the research on museums and inequality by Karp and Lavine (1991) and Karp, Kreamer, and Lavine (1992). "Every museum exhibition, whatever its overt subject, inevitably draws on the cultural assumptions and resources of the people who make it" (Karp, 1991). Therefore, while Wilson's work

points out specific cultural assumptions within the particular museums he is exploring, the problem exists within every museum exhibition.

Critical Perspectives on Learning

Lastly, to represent the types of significant learning that I believe can take place when college students critically experience art museums, are the seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, by Paulo Freire (1970), and Jack Mezirow's more contemporary *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood* (1990). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is one of the single most influential contributions to learning in the modern era. More than simply a learning theory, Friere links education to social change by emancipating learners from oppression. While this dissertation does not necessarily intend to create mass social change, or make implicit political statements about the oppressors and oppressed in contemporary American society, it does recognize the empowerment that a significant, critical learning experience can produce.

The core concepts of banking education and problem-posing education are critical to this dissertation. The banking concept of education consists of the traditional mode of teachers, who hold knowledge, bestowing the gift of knowledge to students, who are assumed to not have knowledge. In this model, students are discouraged from actively participating in their own education, and forced to accept their role as passive learners. In the problem-posing educational concept, the students are encouraged to critically explore their own education as co-participants with their teacher. It is a type of learning that is more creative, active, and relevant. According to Freire (1970):

Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to

maintain the submersion of consciousness; the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality. Students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge. Because they apprehend the challenge as interrelated to other problems within a total context, not as a theoretical question, the resulting comprehension tends to be increasingly critical and thus constantly less alienated. Their response to the challenge evokes new challenges, followed by new understandings; and gradually the students come to regard themselves as committed (p.81).

The problem-posing concept of education fits into the model proposed by this dissertation. By discovering the art museum as a constructed space, dependent on specific cultural and ideological worldviews, students will be able to apply that newfound knowledge to their individual worlds.

Jack Mezirow's similar but distinctive investigation into transformational learning also influences this research. Mezirow defines transformational learning as the event of a learner changing a previously held perspective, known as "perspective transformation." Transformational learning is often triggered by a "disorienting dilemma," which is often a major life event, but can be anything (even a teacher-staged experience) that causes a student to reconsider or question a previously held belief. Mezirow's concept that a student can experience a significant life change as a result from an educational experience requires significant critical reflection on the part of the learner, a meaningful amount of discourse among the participants in the learning experience, and a willingness to apply the lesson learned to their lives (Mezirow, 1990).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Action Research Project

Introduction

Understanding how a critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum impacts college student understanding of encyclopedic art museums is better fitted to qualitative research as opposed to quantitative. Rather than starting with a hypothesis and using a deductive, top-down approach to confirm an original theory as is the norm in quantitative research, this study began with a classroom problem and used inductive reasoning and a bottom-up approach to arrive at a theory, as is the general practice of qualitative research (Mertler, 2006). This dissertation identified a classroom problem and sought to understand the problem and ultimately improve classroom instruction based on the research findings, therefore, action research is the chosen research methodology (Acuff, 2012; Johnson, 2008; McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2003; Craig, 2009).

While action research is not an entirely new methodology, as recently as forty years ago, action research as a methodology struggled for legitimacy (McNiff, 2013). In the early part of the 20th century, John Dewey was an advocate for empowering educators to test ideas, examine practices, and to act on their theories (Tomal, 2010; Efron & Ravid, 2013). Kurt Lewin is widely acknowledged as the founder of action research in the 1930s and 1940s. Lewin developed action research as a participatory

methodology that promoted democratic social change, and Stephen Corey, a dean at Teachers College, brought action research to the attention of classroom educators (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Action research has gained popularity and legitimacy in recent history, as, according to McNiff (2013), “a global epistemological shift has been taking place in recent decades in relation to what counts as knowledge, how it is produced, where, and who by” (p.2).

Because this research questioned practices within my classroom and sought to improve student and instructor learning, it aligned well with action research. Action research is practitioner based, it emphasizes learning, it is systematic, and it focuses on change and/or improvement (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2003; Johnson, 2008). As cited in Acuff (2012), The McGraw Hill Companies identify action research as “teacher-conducted, classroom-based research whose purpose is to measure the effects of new instructional strategies, activities or techniques; the overarching goal is to improve student learning” (p.85). A central aspect of action research is that it is implemented by a practitioner-researcher from within the situation being studied, and is often associated with teacher-researcher empowerment:

Teachers are empowered when they are able to collect their own data to use in making decisions about their schools and classrooms. Empowered teachers are able to bring their talents, experiences, and creative ideas into the classroom. They can implement programs and strategies that best meet the needs of their students. Empowered teachers are also able to use the methodologies that complement their own particular philosophy and teaching style. When teachers are allowed to take risks and make changes related to teaching and learning, student achievement is enhanced (Johnson, 2008, p. 33).

The empowerment aspect of action research is of particular importance to this study, as it also aligns with essential aspects of critical theory, which seeks empowerment and emancipation.

Action research, though not specifically detailed in terms of how to collect and analyze data, is systematic, planned in advance, and relies heavily on methodological observations (Johnson, 2008). Researchers must identify a question, plan the research study, implement and observe the research study, and then reflect and report any results. According to Acuff (2012), the four steps of action research are “*Plan, Act, Observe, Reflect.*” As with other types of qualitative research, action research does not begin with underlying assumptions or hypothesis, but the researcher must attempt impartially observe any positive or negative results of the action research (Johnson, 2008). A key aspect to action research is the act of reflection, which is continuous throughout the research process. Because action research is based in concepts of discussion, reflection, and reconsideration, “the process is cyclical—it is not straightforward at all” (Macintyre, 2008, p. 2).

Action research conscientiously blurs the lines between theory and practice by encouraging practitioners to become researchers. According to Hendricks (2009), Kurt Lewin first described action research as a theory claiming that “democratic workplaces produces employees who take ownership of their work, which increases both morale and productivity” (p.6). Historically, there had been a divide between academic researchers and practitioners, with only a few 20th century advocates promoting the idea that academia traditionally devalued the judgment of educators, and conscientiously

encouraged educators to design and implement their own research based on their own classroom experiences and practices (Hendricks, 2009).

With action research, some experts identify bias of the researcher as a central concern that can potentially have a significant effect on the research analysis, leading to questions of reliability (Johnson, 2008; McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2003; Craig, 2009; MacIntyre, 2000). However, the familiarity between the educator and the classroom is seen by some as the greatest asset of action research. Efron and Ravid (2013), explain the invaluable benefit that is brought to research when teachers are empowered within their own classrooms:

Understanding of students' social and historical circumstances and knowing their past and present successes and failures, fears, and dreams enable the practitioners to gain insight into their students' worlds. This subjective insight provides practitioners with opportunities to explore systematically, and with care, multiple options for action, with sensitivity to the "here and now." (p.4).

While traditional research may have valued a researcher as an unbiased, detached observer, action research embraces an engaged, familiar, and subjective observer that is able to place data and observations within the appropriate context (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

Because action research is practitioner-based, it is inherently influenced by the researcher (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003). This element, which is seen by some to be a potential liability, is actually an essential element of action research.

According to Sohng (as cited in Craig, 2009, p.)

Action research is premised on the principle that the parties in an environment carry out the investigation themselves; it therefore excludes techniques that require a separation of the researcher from the people being researched—as when experimental subjects are kept ignorant of the purpose of the study.

Action research is insider research, conducted by researchers within a classroom setting who are capable of self-evaluating their own practices and participants (McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2003). The inherent subjectivity involved when the researcher collects and interprets data is a part of the action research process and can be identified in the analysis. Additionally, action research should be thoroughly grounded in academic literature, which gives the research and researcher credibility and confidence (Macintyre, 2000). Although Stake (2000) is specifically writing about case study research, his defense cited below applies to action research as well, and identifies bias as a normal characteristic of knowledge transfer between people:

Case researchers, like others, pass along to readers some of their personal meanings of events and relationship—and fail to pass along others. They know that the reader, too, will add and subtract, invent and shape—reconstructing the knowledge in ways that leave it...more likely to be personally useful (p. 442).

McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2003) also identify the personal benefits of action research as focusing on individual learning in company with other people. Because a goal of action research is personal improvement, action research must be practitioner-based. According to McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2003):

Action research is different from social scientific research which aims to understand and describe an external situation. Action research is a process that helps you, a practitioner, to develop a deeper understanding about what you are doing as an insider researcher. Action research has both a personal and a social aim. The personal aim is the improvement of your own learning, while the social aim is an improvement of your situation. Both are equally important and interdependent (p.13).

Since the 1940s, academic research has experienced considerable shifts in favor of increased democratization. Instead of consistently seeking one central truth, research has become more inclusive and often acknowledges multiple truths. Action research is

among the “new” research methods that emerges from a dialogue, and “consequently, knowledge exists as much ‘in here’ as ‘out there’ (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003, p.17).

In addition to concerns about bias, action research is often targeted for being less generalizable than quantitative studies because it is an insider-driven and focuses on context (Hendricks, 2009). Richard Sagor, as cited in Tomal (2010, p.14), explains why generalizability should not be an issue to practitioners of action research, “As action researchers, you do not need to worry about the generalizability of your data because you are not seeking to define the ultimate truth of learning theory. Your goal is to understand what is happening in your school or classroom and to determine what might improve things in that context.” Action researchers tend to view each setting and each participant as unique, and any conclusions drawn from the data should be understood from within their particular setting (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Far from being detrimental to the research study, the particularity of an action research study can also be interpreted as a strength.

Application to My Research

Action research as a methodology applies to my research study in several ways. My research study involved the intersecting fields of critical theory, college students, art appreciation curriculum, and art museums. I examined how the application of a critical theory-based curriculum impacted the learning of traditional college students enrolled in my art appreciation courses. The inquiry was based on my own insider-based observations of the inadequacy of current art appreciation curriculum in addressing the

history and practices of art museums as well as my observations of how well students responded to informal museum curriculum in my previous positions. My standing as teacher/researcher, identification of a current problem, and intent to improve my own classroom practice place this research project firmly within the domain of action research.

Because my research problem examined multiple spheres of critical theory, college students, art appreciation curriculum, and art museums, it was not easily quantifiable. Therefore, it was necessary to implement a broader, more holistic study to capture the context and complexities of the research. Action research is systematic, and involves a carefully laid-out plan (Johnson, 2008). I identified my site (my two art appreciation classes in the spring of 2015); and I identified the multiple sources of information that were collected (questionnaires, personal observations, and student projects). Although I implemented the action research with two classes during one semester, I hope that the findings can influence the wider population—in this case, any other art appreciation classes I teach in the future—and perhaps art appreciation classes taught by others as well.

This research project was also aligned with the action research methodology because of the variety of data collected. Students participating in the action research study completed questionnaires, open and closed writing assignments and projects, and class discussions, all of which were collected, analyzed, and reported on. In addition, my observations as the instructor were recorded daily and analyzed after the completion of the curriculum. According to Johnson (2008), too many forms of data may result in a loss of focus, and two to four types of data are recommended. The data analysis

describes how the application of critical theory impacts the learning of traditional college students enrolled in my art appreciation course.

My research inquiry best fit the methodology of qualitative action research, although certainly there was some overlap with other potential qualitative methodologies. Bogdan & Biklen (1998) define five primary features of qualitative research: selection of naturalistic settings, production of descriptive data, concern with process, inductive data analysis, and the incorporation of participant perspectives. My research study fit in with these five features because the setting was in a regularly situated, open-enrollment art appreciation course at Tarrant County College. There is nothing about the course that was appreciably different from any other course that I teach except that the regularly assigned student work that was produced was collected and analyzed (with permission, from those students who decide to participate).

The action research I implemented produced significantly descriptive data using words rather than significant amounts of numbers. This is of particular significance to my study as, according to Grady (1998), often research presented in a narrative format is less difficult to understand for a wider audience, as compared with statistical presentations of data. Busbea (2006) writes that:

Qualitative research gives the reader a clearer sense of what actually occurred during the study. Thus, not only scholars, but also art appreciation instructors can make their own interpretations of the data presented, draw their own conclusions...and apply aspects of their insight to their practice (p. 88).

I was also concerned with the process of the research, including the teaching interactions with my students and their contributions to the learning community, rather

than focusing solely on the data outcome. According to Bogdan & Biklen (1998), educational research particularly lends itself to process-oriented qualitative research.

Because action research can rely on a variety of data collection instruments, questionnaires are accepted method of collection data (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2005; Efron & Ravid, 2013). The questionnaires designed for this study (Appendix B) contained some closed-ended questions that did not significantly contribute to the qualitative description created by the data. Additionally, some of the data from the closed-ended questions did not directly answer the research questions. While the study was strongly within the realm of a qualitative research study, some of the information gleaned from the closed-ended questions was necessary to create benchmarks of information and/or important contextual data, such as how many students had visited an art museum before, how many times they had visited, and whether they are likely to return.

My research design did not seek to prove a previously held hypothesis and instead approached the research openly, taking an inductive, bottom-up approach. Because my research question focused on *how* critical theory affects students learning about art museums, it was not a question that can be easily answered using charts or graphs. It was a question that was answered by examining various layers of qualitative data and producing descriptions that offer a variety of answers. When first proposing the research, I did not know how critical theory affected student learning about art museums, but the data I collected provided multiple potential answers to that question.

Lastly, my data analysis showed the perspectives of the participants in the study in addition to the perspective of the researcher. Because qualitative research places an

emphasis on holistic approaches to research, it is significant to not only view a research inquiry through the eyes of the primary researcher, but also from the perspectives of the participants. The participating students produced significant amounts of open-ended assignments, papers, and class discussions, therefore their perspectives are a significant factor in my data analysis.

Paradigmatic Orientation

Of importance to any qualitative inquiry is that the researcher, as the primary research instrument, brings to their research their own “worldviews, paradigms, or sets of beliefs” that will inform the research process (Creswell, 2007, p. 15). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) identify a paradigm as a belief or beliefs that direct action and define the researcher’s worldview. Creswell (2007) identifies four paradigms that can influence qualitative research: postpositivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatism. In the mid-1990s, Guba & Lincoln identified positivism, postpositivism, critical theory, and constructivism as worldviews, to which they later added the participatory/cooperative paradigm proposed by Heron and Reason (1997) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

My paradigmatic worldview is best represented by an advocacy/participatory/cooperative orientation, as similarly defined by Creswell (2007) and Denzin & Lincoln (2005). As a matter of personal values, I wanted my students to feel empowered, whether there is research taking place or not. When we discussed historical and/or current injustices in my art appreciation classes, I wanted my students to feel as if they might be able to do something to change these situations, or they might

be able to apply what they are learning in class to situations of injustice in their personal lives. I often asked the question, “What can we do about this?” so that students actively envisioned participating and advocating for the changes they believe in. Additionally, I hold the advocacy/participatory/cooperative worldview because I did not see myself as the sole leader of the group, but as a participant and co-learner.

According to Creswell (2007), researchers often choose an advocacy worldview because many other worldviews do not include marginalized groups and individuals, or advocate for action or social change. Heron & Reason (1997) advocate for the participatory/cooperative inquiry paradigm because it confronts the positivist Western worldview and instead sees researchers as co-inhabitants of the world. The advocacy worldview should desire and work towards reform for the participants. Often, research taking an advocacy worldview confronts issues specific to marginalized or oppressed groups of people, and focuses on issues (also of concern to critical theorists): hegemony, domination, and oppression (Creswell, 2007).

Denzin & Lincoln (2005) point out that the paradigms and perspectives have naturally bled and overlapped into each other, and Heron & Reason (1997) assert that the advocacy/participatory/cooperative paradigm particularly overlaps with the constructivist paradigm, as both are self-reflexive. Heron and Reason (1997) define the advocacy/participatory/cooperative research paradigm:

In our articulation of this, which we call co-operative inquiry, people collaborate to define the questions they wish to explore and the methodology for that exploration (propositional knowing); together or separately they apply this methodology in the world of their practice (practical knowing); which leads to new forms of encounter with their world (experiential knowing); and they find ways to represent this experience in significant patterns (presentational knowing) which feeds into a revised propositional understanding of the originating questions. Thus co-researchers engage together in cycling several times through the four

forms of knowing in order to enrich their congruence, that is, to refine the way they elevate and consummate each other, and to deepen the complementary way they are grounded in each other (p. 8).

While my worldview did also incorporate aspects of constructivism, this research study also involved the researcher as a subject of the research, which is not an aspect of constructivism. Additionally, the subjects' ability to participate in the design of the research was also not a part of constructivism (Heron & Reason, 1997)

I applied an advocacy/participatory/cooperative worldview (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) to my research because when I addressed concepts of domination and oppression and institutional privilege to a group of emerging adults, it was important to enable them to consider ways in which they might be able to navigate and/or work to change such systems. When referring to the researcher as advocate, Stake (1995) writes:

It champions the interaction of researcher and phenomena. Phenomena need accurate description, but even observational interpretation of those phenomena will be shaped by the mood, the experience, the intention of the researcher. Some of these wrappings can be shucked, but some cannot. Research is not helped by making it appear value free. It is better to give the reader a good look at the researcher.

My worldview, and by extension my dissertation research, also overlapped with a critical theory paradigm. Bogdan & Biklen (1998) identify critical theory as a recent, significant ideological influence on qualitative research and states that "Critical theorists who do qualitative research are very interested in issues of gender, race, and class because they consider these the prime means for differentiating power in this society" (p. 21). Roman & Apple (as cited in Merriam, 2002, p. 21) identify critical theory-oriented qualitative research as interested in an "ethical and political act" that benefits those who

are marginalized in society. And Guba & Lincoln (2005) contend that “critical theorists tend to locate the foundations of truth in specific historical, economic, racial, and social infrastructures of oppression, injustice, and marginalization.” (p. 204).

Because qualitative inquiry “lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world” (Merriam, 2009), and critical theorists believe that knowledge and history are deeply linked, with knowledge being subject to the history in which it is created (Giroux, 2003), there is a natural affinity between critical theory and qualitative research. According to Merriam (2002):

The world, or reality, is not the fixed, single, agreed upon, or measurable phenomenon that it is assumed to be in positivist, quantitative research. Instead, there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context (p. 3).

The paradigm of advocacy/participatory, as defined by Creswell (2007) and the paradigm of participatory/cooperative, as defined by Denzin & Lincoln (2005) best fit my worldview. Although some of the characteristics of critical theory and constructivism paradigms overlap with my worldview, the advocacy/participatory/cooperative worldview distinguishes itself because of its focus on shared control and a nonfoundational relationship to truth and knowledge (as opposed to being anti-foundational as in constructivism or foundational with social critique as with critical theory) (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Trustworthiness

Compared to other, more established research methodologies, particularly quantitative methodologies, action research is relatively new and struggled for legitimacy as recently as forty years ago (McNiff, 2013). Even in the mid-1990s Lincoln (1995) continued to refer to all qualitative inquiry as undefined and still emerging. Thus it appears as if there are still questions as to the legitimacy of action research as a method of research, particularly among positivists and quantitative researchers. In order to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of action research, several researchers have identified methods that researchers can take. Lincoln and Guba (1985) have identified four constructs that contribute to trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

I believe my research project credibly and accurately presented a true picture of the research being undertaken. The purpose for the study was described in detail, the theoretical framework was strongly researched and presented, the data methodology was organized very clearly, and the data results were analyzed in detail. Nothing in the study was exaggerated, left out, or represented in any way other than in the most direct and unbiased manner I could. Throughout every step of the study I strove for accuracy and transparency in my thoughts and methods, which demonstrates the high level of credibility of the study.

Additionally, the environment in which I researched has a high level of transferability. The community college classroom and the local encyclopedic art museum are similar to other teaching and learning situations and environments. This is also related to dependability—future investigations of a similar nature can easily and reliably replicate the study, from the same geographic location or from similar

geographic locations throughout the United States. I am excited at the thought that an instructor at a high school, community college, or four-year university could reasonably repeat this study with their own classrooms and local encyclopedic museums.

Lastly, as a researcher and instructor, I was unsure what the results of this research study would demonstrate at the beginning of my research. In fact (probably like many researchers), I feared that the research would demonstrate nothing at all. The findings that I uncovered during the data analysis and interpretation were based entirely on the evidence found in the data, and not at all on any researcher predispositions or assumptions. The ability to trace the research question answers to the seven data themes drawn from the data instruments demonstrates confirmability—the interpretations emerged directly from the data.

In addition to the constructs suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), Mertler (2006) also suggests practices that can ensure trustworthiness: triangulation, member checking, and prolonged engagement and persistent observation. Triangulation consists of multiple data sources and multiple data collection instruments that independently affirm the findings (Mertler, 2006). My research study used three different data collection methods—student assessments, classroom discussions, and researcher observations—to arrive at my research findings. Each of the data sources confirmed the others and there were no contradictions in the data, which adds to the trustworthiness of this research study.

Member checking is perhaps the practice that I could have employed in greater quantities. Member checking involves sharing the data with study participants in order to check that their contributions have been accurately characterized. Although the

numerous class discussions served as a type of member checking, as the verbal opinions presented in class often mirrored the written assignments turned in by the students, perhaps the only form of member checking came in the form of my grading their assessments and returning them to the student participants. Students did have the opportunity to question and discuss their assignments, which was a type of member checking. However, because there were so many students and so much data collected, there was no specific attempt to review each piece of data with the student who submitted it.

The last form of trustworthiness suggested by Mertler (2006) is the need for prolonged engagement and persistent observation. Because of the long-term nature of this research study, which took place over the course of a 16-week semester, I feel that my engagement and observations of students were very deep and occurred over an extended period of time. Over the course of 32 class meetings, I was able to develop a relationship with my classes that was very much a sustained engagement with them. Together we explored many subjects in the art appreciation curriculum, and I had the benefit of being able to observe them both formally and informally. My ability to consistently engage and observe the classroom over a college semester is a strength of the study and another example of the trustworthiness of my research.

Procedures

Course Curriculum

The research involved students enrolled in a college art appreciation class (ARTS 1301, the introductory university art course) who were taught a critical theory-based curriculum and given the choice to have their class assignments and projects included in the research study. Students were required complete the museum assignments and projects as part of the requirements of the course, however, they did not have to give permission for their work to be included in the research study.

This study sought to answer the question of how a critical theory approach in a college-level art appreciation curriculum affected student understanding of art museums. The research question originated in my experience working with college students in an art museum (the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas, where I held the position of Manager of University Programs), where I found that students often were the most engaged in the museum when we discussed the museum itself. Many of the students I worked with were interested in the history and practices of the museum even more than they were interested in the works of art. The idea of teaching the museum, from a critical theory approach, occurred to me then, but at that time I did not have a structured classroom environment in which to teach a specific, critical theory curriculum.

In my current position as Assistant Professor of Art at Tarrant County College (TCC), I teach freshman- and sophomore-level Art Appreciation (Arts 1301) each year. I have taught six to nine art appreciation classes each year for the past seven years,

which adds up to my teaching Arts 1301 approximately 70 times. My depth in teaching this particular class has allowed me several opportunities. First, it permitted me to consistently experience a similar phenomenon to that which I experienced at the Blanton Museum of Art: my students are extremely interested in the lessons from a critical theory approach, which seek to expose historical examples of inequality, oppression, domination, etc. (for example, the history of the Benin Bronzes¹, from Nigeria, make for an excellent discussion about conquest, colonialism, power, hegemony, and repatriation). Without exception, the lessons based in critical theory have consistently had the highest rate of immediate student participation in the classroom as well as the most extended student participation after the lesson (I often received emails with relevant news articles as attachments, or with follow-up questions regarding the lessons).

Second, repeatedly teaching Arts 1301 has allowed me to develop a number of lessons that are based in critical theory, and gain proficiency in teaching them. The lessons I developed focus on the culture of the art world, inequality found in the art appreciation textbook, the history of art education/artist training, issues in ownership and repatriation, and about the cultural significance of art museums. These lessons were implemented into the course curriculum based on appropriate connections I saw with the textbook chapters. I incorporated the lessons as an extension of a topic that the textbook might allude to, but did not specifically or deeply address.

¹ The Benin Bronzes are a famous collection of sculptures made in Benin City between the 16th and 18th centuries. They were taken by the British during a punitive expedition in 1897 in which the Benin Palace was burned. Subsequently the Benin Bronzes were distributed throughout museums in Europe and the United States, where they remain today (Wood, 2012).

And third, it has finally given me the structured classroom environment and sustained student participation that was missing from the more casual museum environment. It was possible to implement a sustained critical theory-oriented curriculum as part of a standard, 48-hour college level art appreciation course in a manner that, while not strictly impossible to implement, would be difficult to replicate as a museum educator designing programs for public audiences.

It is important to mention that TCC district administration requires a relatively standard course curriculum and/or expected student learning outcomes for the Arts 1301 course, which includes traditional art appreciation concepts such as defining art, visual elements and principles of design, media, and art history (Getlein, 2013; Sayre, 2013; Frank, 2011; DeWitte, Larmann & Shields, 2012; Rathus, 2013). However, as an instructor I chose to teach these concepts from a critical theory point of view, and teaching the topics above in addition to the mandated curriculum also meets additional district guidelines that encourage critical thinking and multiculturalism, among other things. Therefore, the study implemented was in no way contrary to the curricular requirements I was expected to meet as an assistant professor at TCC.

In order to study how critical theory affects student learning in a college-level art appreciation class, I taught a number of self-designed critical theory-based lessons. Some of the lessons were general to the art appreciation curriculum, and had to do with textbook inequality and the history of artist training. Those questions had a critical-theory point of view as they considered questions of power and bias, but they were not directly related to art museums. There were other lessons that were designed to particularly focus on the major research questions of this project and significantly impact

the data collected. These lessons were part of a specifically designed curriculum unit titled “Understanding the Art Museum” (Appendix A) and consisted of four different lessons. Each of these lessons required class discussions and writing assignments, some of which were collected and analyzed. There are four primary data collection instruments, three of which were completed during class. Students enrolled in the course were required to visit the Dallas Museum of Art on their own and complete a guided museum project, which required observation and interpretation of works of art and galleries. These data collection instruments are explained in detail later in this chapter.

Research Site

The site that was studied were two Art Appreciation (Arts 1301) courses that took place in the spring of 2015. The class met for a total of 48 hours over 16 weeks in a long semester. The research was bound by the semester dates and schedules, and the two settings where the research took place: my classroom at TCC, and the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA), where the students visited independently.

I selected the sites based on my personal experience and availability. Because I taught at TCC and had access to students, it was a logical choice to conduct research within my own classroom. I selected the Dallas Museum of Art as the museum site for several reasons. During the 1999-2000 academic year, I worked as the McDermott Intern in Family and Community Programs at the DMA. It was a very positive and personally transformative experience for me, as it cemented my professional interest in art museums and launched my professional career as a museum educator.

My experience working at the DMA was entirely positive, and I remain professionally acquainted with several staff members working at the DMA. I am also knowledgeable about the collections, exhibitions, programs, and structure of the DMA, which will be an advantage to this study. And finally, the DMA is a large, encyclopedic art museum in the tradition of large, publicly-supported collections in the United States. While the DMA is unique in many ways, it is comparable to other large public museums in large cities, like the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, or the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and that is an important element that contributes to the potential generalizability of this study.

Participants

I recruited students from those enrolled in my art appreciation classes during the spring semester of 2015. Although specific classroom demographics are not known, I believed that the students were representative of the general population of TCC. The average age of a TCC student is 26 years, and the student body consists of 59% female and 41% male students. In terms of racial and ethnic composition, the TCC student body is 18.8% African American; 49.2% Anglo; 5.8% Asian; 27.2% Hispanic; 0.5% Native American; and 3.5% who identify as “other” (TCC Quick Facts, 2015). Individual racial and ethnic information was not central to the study, but it was important that the general makeup of the class was racially and ethnically diverse. The diverse identity of the student body of TCC may have increased the significance of concepts presented in the lessons identifying bias in the art world, in the art museum, and in their textbooks.

The majority of TCC students that enroll in art appreciation are not art majors, and according to the data produced, the majority have also never visited an art museum. This is crucial because the participants selected for this study are generally considered museum novices, defined here as a person who has visited an art museum one time or less during their lifetime and does not have any previous academic instruction about art museums. The average age of participants also fit into the age range of 18-25 years of age, identified by Jeffrey Arnett (2004) as emerging adults. According to Merriam (2002), there is not a strict percentage or numerical standard for what constitutes a sample size. The sample, as determined by the researcher, should encompass the correct number of participants necessary to determine patterns in data, but stop at the point that new patterns are no longer perceivable. This ideal number of participants is referred to as saturation, and once this level is reached, the data analysis will be complete (Merriam, 2002).

Recruitment in a traditional sense was not necessarily a concern for this particular study, because it was comprised of students that were already enrolled in my art appreciation class. The critical theory curriculum was taught as a part of the course, and all students were required to complete the same assignments. On the first day of class, students were introduced to the course policies and required assignments. Students were notified of their opportunity to participate in the research study after their participation in the course, on the second-to-last day of class. I presented a detailed picture of what participation in the research study entailed to the potential participants, and I handed out an official recruitment letter and letter of consent (Appendix C). Students were assured that their participation in the study would have neither a positive

or negative effect on their grade in the class, and they had the option of immediately signing the consent form or taking a few days to consider participating.

Simultaneously being a teacher and a researcher had the potential to create an issue with power relations between myself and my students. By establishing open communication regarding the study, providing the students with official documents for the study, and including the entire class in the invitation to participate, I believe that there were no issues with power between myself and my students. I designed assignments that applied to all of the students whether they participated in the study or not, and I believe that also helped to balance any power issues. Lastly, I did not know which students consented to participate in the study until after the course concluded, and therefore their participation, or lack of, had no effect on their final grade. Several students did decline to participate.

Data Collection and Analysis

I taught a traditional art appreciation curriculum to my classes, along with a number of lessons taking a critical theory approach that were not specific to art museums. In addition, I taught four museum-specific lessons as the central instructional component of this research study, upon which the four data collection instruments/student assessments were based. The research study focused on students' developing understanding of encyclopedic art museums and their interactions with the Dallas Museum of Art and the data collected centered on their developing experiences with the museum. The students made one independent visit to the DMA to complete an observation assignment that (if the student consented to participate in the study)

constituted data. In addition to the assignment associated with their museum visit, students also completed formative and summative questionnaires that measured their opinions and knowledge of art museums, and an assignment with questions about issues of art ownership and repatriation. While additional assignments were part of the course, they were not analyzed as part of this research project.

The assignments (that dually functioned as data) were generated as a part of the art appreciation curriculum, and they developed out of my own notions of what is pedagogically appropriate for an assessment over the given lessons. My primary goal was effective teaching and learning, and my secondary goal was to measure, record, and understand the teaching and learning relative to the research questions. The instruments/assignments attempted to gather data in a number of ways, and also measure how and what the students were learning about art museums.

After I determined a research topic, developed a research plan, and collected the data, the next step was to analyze the data. My research study generated a tremendous amount of data, and according to Mertler (2006) and Efron & Ravid (2013), it is normal to feel overwhelmed by the amount of data collected. Mertler (2006) suggests that one of the greatest challenges in inductively analyzing qualitative data is attempting to reduce the amount of information collected, which is a difficult but necessary step, while being careful to not minimize or oversimplify the data. When reducing the amount of information, the researcher also begins to recognize and organize the information into topics and patterns (Mertler, 2006).

My first step in analyzing the data was to review the data in its entirety and to immerse myself in the student work (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Mertler, 2006). After doing

so, I had an idea of how to proceed because themes in information emerged. It is essential to identify common themes within the data to begin to “identify units of meaning within the data” (Efron & Ravid, 2013, p. 169). Instead of starting with predetermined categories, I identified and sorted the data into seven categories based on the initial emerging themes seen in the data (Efron & Ravid, 2013), each of which contributed to the answering of one or more of the three primary research questions. The seven themes which emerged from the totality of the data based on the initial immersion in the data were:

1. Personal feelings about art museums
2. Knowledge of and understanding about art museums
3. Interest and curiosity in art museums
4. Knowledge and understanding of global/ethical/historical issues in art museum practices
5. Observations in the Dallas Museum of Art, including recognition of bias
6. Ability to determine connections between art museums, history, power, and money
7. Potential for personal change, transformation, and/or empowerment

Once these seven themes emerged from the data, each of the instruments were carefully examined to find specific segments belonging to each theme. This was an integral exercise to help in the reduction of excess data (Mertler, 2006; Efron & Ravid, 2013). From the data collection instruments, only questions that specifically correspond to one of the themes above were analyzed as data.

Because there were a total of 161 questions asked over the four data collection instruments, which produced over 270 pages of documentation, it was necessary to attempt to reduce the excess data and focus on those areas that were of direct relevance to the research study (McNiff, 2013). I created a chart (Table 3.1), seen below, that selected which specific data collection instrument questions best fit into the seven identified themes from the data.

	Formative Museum Survey Questions	Ownership and Repatriation Worksheet Questions	Museum Project Questions	Summative Museum Survey Questions
Theme 1	Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10,			Numbers 1, 2, 5
Theme 2	Numbers 8, 9a, 9b, 9c, 13			Numbers 3, 4a, 4b, 4c, 15
Theme 3	Numbers 11, 12			
Theme 4		Numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11	Numbers 5	
Theme 5			Numbers 1, 4, 7, 8, 9,	
Theme 6		Numbers 11	Numbers 6	
Theme 7	Numbers 13			Numbers 6, 8, 9, 15

Table 3.1: Specific data collection instrument questions identified to use as data

The data collected from these questions were used as data for this research project. The data produced by the other questions were eliminated as data for this particular research project based on issues of data saturation, redundancy, and irrelevance to the study (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010; Mertler, 2006; Efron & Ravid, 2013).

Once the data was categorized into broad themes, then further pared down into specific questions, I developed detailed coding schemes to further divide the seven categories into topics (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Coding data requires significant reading, re-reading, and reviewing in order to establish a set of applicable codes (Parsons & Brown, 2002; Efron & Ravid, 2013). A goal of coding is to continue to reduce the data and subsequently keep the number of codes to a reasonable number (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Table 3.2 features the coding scheme applied to my data set.

Pos	Positive Feeling
Neg	Negative Feeling
IB	Instructor Belief
Desc	Description
Comp	Comparison
OB	Observation
SE	Specific Example
CRef	Reference to Class Event
LW	Low Comprehension
MD	Medium Comprehension
DP	Deep Comprehension
CRR	Curriculum Connection
EMP	Empowerment
CP	Critical Perspective

Table 3.2: Coding scheme applied to data set

My coding scheme was manually applied, using different colors of highlighters, pens, symbols, and abbreviations. First, the two classes were kept separate as a different color was assigned to each class. Each of the documents was numbered in the particular color of their class, either red or green. After evaluating the data I determined that there was no appreciable difference between the two classes, therefore I would analyze the data as one whole rather than two separate parts. However, I needed to have the ability to identify and separate the two classes if later deemed necessary (McNiff, 2013).

Then, I drew a circle on the instruments of each student that had never attended an art museum before, a triangle on the instruments of each student that had visited an art museum once before, and a star on the instruments of each student that had visited an art museum two or more times. This was important so that I could track the responses based on the level of museum experience of each student. Next, I went through all of the instruments and I highlighted each question that was directly related to one or more of the seven themes originally identified, so that the data being used for the research study could be easily distinguished from the data that had been eliminated. I then proceeded to code the rest of the documents. During coding, I paid particular attention to frequency, sequence, relationships, and cause and effect (Efron & Ravid, 2013) in relation to my research questions.

The data collection instruments employed a number of techniques to increase the validity and reliability of the data. The multiple forms of data collected (questionnaires, observations, and student projects) effectively constituted triangulation, which is defined by Grady (1998) as gathering three different forms of data regarding

the same research question or issue. The goal of triangulation is to increase the validity of the study by providing multiple forms of overlapping evidence in support of research questions, known as corroboration (Grady, 1998). Finding corroborating data further validated the study. For every determination, triangulation ensures that there are various forms of evidence to support it (McNiff, 2013; McNiff & Whitehead, 2010; Mertler, 2006). Direct interpretation is employed when a single instance is identified and meaning can be assigned to it, without multiple instances (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002).

The nature of qualitative research involves reporting a description, which if done with enough detail and richness, can allow readers to decide on the transferability of data (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2007). In addition, the act of clarifying any potential biases on the part of the researcher by acknowledging worldview(s) allows readers to understand any potential prejudices or assumptions that might influence the study (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002). Because of my position as instructor for the study participants, I had the opportunity to observe and engage with the students over a period of 48 classroom hours. This enabled me to build trusting relationships with and engage in prolonged observations of the students, ultimately avoiding misunderstandings or misinformation that could result from poor communication.

While there is not one single method that can guarantee the comprehensive credibility and validity of action research, having triangulation, corroboration, and a clear chain of evidence can greatly contribute to it (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002; McNiff & Whitehead, 2010; Mertler, 2006). In addition, I feel that having a strong theoretical

framework and clear paradigmatic orientation also lend credibility and seriousness to the research study (Creswell, 2007).

According to Merriam (2009), simultaneous data collection and analysis are a distinguishing feature of qualitative research, due to the emergent, open-ended nature of qualitative studies. If the research is to be guided by data, and the research study is to retain a certain measure of flexibility, data must be analyzed during the study in order to possibly impact the future direction and outcome of the study (Merriam, 2009). In addition, in order to effectively organize and analyze data, a number of processes were employed, including keeping a detailed inventory of data collected, coding, and pattern finding (Efron & Ravid, 2013). As the data was collected, a system inventory was developed to maintain track of all of the data (Mertler, 2006). Because there were multiple sources of data from multiple students, the data was considerable. From the inventory, the ultimate goal was to consolidate, reduce, and interpret the data, including identifying anything in the data that responded to my research question (Merriam, 2009).

Data Collection Instruments

Formative Museum Survey

The first data collection instrument was a formative museum survey (Appendix B), that attempted to measure students' preliminary perceptions of and understanding of art museums as well as answer the primary research questions. To a lesser degree, it

also evaluated students' thoughts about previous museum lessons from class. The formative museum survey was administered on March 18 and 19, 2015, after several critical theory-based lessons had been implemented, but before students were allowed to visit the art museum and before students had received any curriculum specifically about art museums.

The survey attempted to measure the level of experience students had with art museums, and understand any preconceived perceptions students had about art museums. This survey consisted of 14 questions, and students were given time in class (approximately thirty minutes) to complete the assignment. Although 76 students elected to participate in the research study, only 53 students were present on these two class days and turned in this assignment.² The assignment counted as one daily grade out of approximately ten over the course of the semester, and would weigh approximately two percent of students' final average. Prior to this assignment, the curriculum implemented in the classroom was fairly standard and consisted of textbook-driven lessons on the subjects of art and art media and processes, such as drawing, painting, printmaking, etc. Some critical theory-oriented curriculum had been implemented, but nothing specific to museums. The formative museum survey was given to students prior to any museum curriculum being implemented in the classroom.

The first four questions of the survey attempted to gauge the level of museum visiting experience held by the student, and characterize the nature of their previous experience(s), if any. Questions 5 and 6 were open-ended, and asked the student to describe their current positive and negative feelings about art museums. Question

² There were approximately twenty-three absences on these two class days. I attribute this unusually high number of absences to the ongoing ice storms in Tarrant County that week, although this is speculation.

7 focused on student perceptions of museum staff and took the form of a multiple choice question with 36 potential descriptive options, with students able to choose all that apply. Question 8 was open-ended and invited students to supplement the provided list of museum staff characteristics with their own descriptive words.

Questions 8 and 9 were the most mentally rigorous questions of the survey, and go beyond simply measuring museum perceptions, opinions, and levels of experience. Question 8 asked students to consider why art museums exist, where their origins derive, and why they might be important in contemporary society. Student answers may possibly be based on personal previous knowledge or perhaps based solely on subjective speculation. Question 9 continued to explore student knowledge by asking a three-part question about how museums work. The first part of the question asked about who selects the objects on display, what qualifies a person to select the objects, and how objects are decided upon. The second part of the question asked where objects on display originate, and how museums go about acquiring objects. Lastly, the third question asked students to consider the cost of operating a museum and where the operating funds come from.

Question 10 took the form of a Likert scale (Efron & Ravid, 2013) and asked students to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with sixteen possible characteristics of an art museum on a scale of 1 to 10. The sixteen characteristics were: snobby, prestigious, racist, correct, intelligent, biased, fun, elitist, uneducated, important, boring, trustworthy, interesting, laid-back, incorrect, and prejudiced. The goal of this question was to determine any preconceived associations students may have

had about the general nature of art museums, and to gauge whether or not there was a shared overall perception of art museums.

The final survey questions were more summative in nature, and asked if students had ever considered how art museums work—questions about staff, funding, and acquisition, whether or not they are interested in learning about these things, and how knowledgeable overall students feel about art museums. The very last question was open-ended, and gave students the opportunity to contribute any additional thoughts or ideas they may have had about art museums.

Overall, the introductory museum survey was intended to measure student level of experience with art museums, their perception of museum staff and museum characteristics, their current understanding of basic museum functions, and their level of interest in art museums. The survey was presented in class as an in-class assignment with the value of a daily grade (over the course of the semester, approximately twelve in-class assignments were given, each of which counted as a daily grade that collectively counted for 15% of their final course average). The assignment was only completed by students who were present in class on the day it was assigned, and it is unknown which of the students who completed the survey were present or not on any previous class days, including the days in which critical theory-based museum lessons were implemented.

After the formative museum survey was implemented, the first two lessons in the museum curriculum unit were taught in class. The two lessons consist of one general introduction to art museums and another lesson focusing on understanding how art

museums work. The lessons were designed to be taught in consecutive class days, and serve as a foundation upon which future museum lessons are built.

Ownership and Repatriation Worksheet

The third lesson in the museum curriculum focused on the history of art museums, and it was the first of the museum lessons to have a decidedly critical perspective. The first two lessons were presented primarily as informational lessons, without a strong point of view. The museum history lesson focused on the development of art museums in Europe as a product of the Enlightenment, and specifically focused on the history of the Louvre, the Vatican, and the British Museum. The curriculum, chiefly presented via PowerPoint presentation, took an approach strongly influenced by critical theory, and presented concepts of power, wealth, imperialism, and conquest. The worksheet that accompanied this lesson (Appendix B) consisted of twelve questions, six of which asked students to summarize their opinions regarding the history and current ownership of the Rosetta Stone, the Parthenon Marbles, and the Benin Bronzes. Each of these objects was discussed in depth in class, with supporting media in the form of images and videos shown to give students a glimpse of the context of each object.

The other six questions focused on general and/or hypothetical scenarios, and students were asked if they felt the British Museum should repatriate the Rosetta Stone, Parthenon Marbles, and Benin Bronzes. Students were also asked if they feel art museums in the United States may have similar issues with objects, whether they should review their collections and to speculate on the number of objects in American

art museums that may have contested ownership. Lastly, students were also asked why they think the British Museum does not return these objects, and whether or not they would like to know about object provenance when they visit an art museum.

Museum Project

The museum project (Appendix B) was the most in-depth data instrument collected as part of this dissertation. There were two parts of the museum project that were included in this research study. The museum project asked students to visit a museum on their own and observe, analyze, and evaluate specific characteristics of and objects within the museum. The museum project also required students to read selected critical museum articles and respond to main ideas presented in those texts. The goal of the museum project was to investigate how students see the art museum, and how critically they were able to understand the art museum as a constructed space. The museum project also required students to do an art object analysis, which is a standard element of most art appreciation curricula. While an object analysis is an important method to measure students' ability to independently describe, interpret, and evaluate a work of art, it is peripheral to this study and will not be included in the data analysis.

The first part of the museum project consisted of six, in-depth questions, five of which required students to find specific galleries or works of art and record their observations and opinions. The final question was a summative question designed to encapsulate the totality of their observations and experiences in the museum. The first and fourth question of the museum project were the exact same questions asked about two different gallery spaces: a 20th century European gallery and an ancient American

gallery. The questions asked of each gallery are: Is this a prime or valuable location? How much space, relative to the rest of the museum, is dedicated to European/Ancient American art? Are the galleries spacious and roomy? Are the objects cluttered together or spaced apart? What color are the walls? Is the lighting sufficiently bright? Are the object labels in good condition? Are there artist names on the labels? Is this a Western or Non Western culture? Are there old or new works presented, or both?

The goal of the first and fourth questions was to encourage students to look carefully at the physical gallery spaces, and see any variances between how different cultures may be presented in the art museum. The first question was asked specifically about the European galleries, located on the second floor of the museum and containing a number of significant 19th and 20th century European artworks from the art historical canon. The fourth question asked specifically about the Ancient American galleries, located on the fourth floor of the museum and containing a number of significant pre-Columbian artworks from a variety of Mesoamerican and South American cultures. In my evidence-supported viewpoint, there were considerable differences between how objects are presented in each of the two selected galleries, which are also located in far-apart areas of the museum and represent Western and non-Western cultures. A careful description as well as images of these galleries are found in the upcoming data analysis chapter.

The second question of the museum project asked students to find a work of art made by a woman in any of the museum galleries. Admittedly, simply reading a museum label in search of a name that students recognize as female is an imperfect method of measurement, however, the general idea was for students to notice the ratio

of male to female artists represented in the art museum. A secondary goal of this question was for students to perhaps notice that the labels in some galleries are more consistent with the listing of artist names, and labels in other galleries are not.

The third question of the museum project focused on the presence of a mummy, housed within a wooden coffin, in the gallery of ancient Egyptian art. The questions about the mummy consider the provenance of the object and the ethics of displaying a deceased human body within an institution of art. The fifth question covered similar ideas of provenance and ethics, and was directed at a collection of Mimbres bowls, which are associated with Native American burial rituals.

The first five questions of part 1 of the museum project required students to tour a large portion of the museum, look carefully at the constructed spaces and displayed objects, and draw conclusions based on their own observations. The sixth and final question was a closing question designed to help students summarize their thoughts about their museum experience. It also required students to reflect on the museum collection as a whole by asking questions about the nature of building and maintaining a comprehensive, encyclopedic collection and what is required of a community to sustain a museum. Because the museum project contains only open-ended questions, the resultant answers were expected to be diverse and highly individualized. Not all of the data collected from them responded directly to the major research questions, and therefore not all of the data collected from this instrument was analyzed.

Summative Museum Survey

The fourth and final data instrument (Appendix B) took the form of a summative questionnaire. The goal of the final museum survey was to see what changes, if any, had occurred in student opinions of and/or understanding of the art museum since the initial introductory museum survey, and to gauge the general level of understanding that students had about the role of art museums in society and their significance as constructed spaces. Some of the questions asked on the final museum survey were repeated from the introductory museum survey so that any differences in student responses could be directly measured. Other questions were new and asked students to characterize and summarize their museum visit. As with the museum project, because of the quantity (there are 17 questions total) and open-ended nature of many of the questions in the summative museum survey, not all of the data collected from them responded directly to the major research questions, and therefore not all of the data collected from this instrument was analyzed.

The first question on the concluding museum survey asked students to characterize their visit to the Dallas Museum of Art. This was phrased as an open-ended question to illicit a detailed response. Because many of the students had never experienced a museum before, the question searched for a general, overall impression of student experiences. Question 2 was repeated from the introductory survey and asked students to describe their opinion of museum staff by choosing from a selected list of adjectives. The answers to this question were directly compared to those from the introductory survey, as were the answers to questions 3 through 5, which are also repeated directly from the introductory survey.

Questions 3 and 4 asked students about the purpose of art museums, the role of curators in art museums, their qualifications, the nature of collecting and acquisition, and the costs associated with operating a museum. The fifth question offered students sixteen adjectives that may describe art museums, and asks them to rate each adjective on a scale of “agree strongly” to “disagree strongly.”

The summative museum survey contained seventeen questions total, and the last twelve questions asked students to answer in the form of short answers. This generated a tremendous amount of data, much of which was consolidated for analysis or excluded as not being directly relevant to the research questions. The following questions were new questions asked on the concluding museum survey:

- Describe the most important thing(s) you learned about art museums.
- Overall, is your opinion of art museums any different now than it was before this class?
- Do you plan on visiting art museums in the future? Why or why not?
- Did you learn anything about art museums that can be applied to other aspects of your life?
- Compare and contrast art museums with another contemporary institution, such as universities, the government, or the Olympics.
- Do you, personally, feel represented and/or included by the Dallas Museum of Art? Why or why not?
- Do you think it is important for museum visitors to feel represented and/or included by the art museums they visit? Why or why not?
- Do you think it is important to know something about how an art museum operates before visiting an art museum? Why or why not?
- In the future, will you feel more comfortable visiting art museums?

- Do you think that art museums are interesting? Do you feel that learning about them was important? Explain.

Lastly, students were asked to rate their level of knowledge about art museums, something that was also asked in the introductory museum survey, and offered the opportunity to share any additional thoughts they may have about art museums.

Each of the four data collection instruments were assignments designed for the class curriculum and part of the course requirements. While a few questions on the introductory and concluding surveys were less pedagogically imperative, the majority of the surveys, such as asking students to reflect on the nature of their museum experiences and knowledge, were an essential aspect of assessing their overall educational experience as well as the efficacy of the museum curriculum itself.

Additionally, in addition to the four data collection instruments, I initiated class discussions about the museum-based curriculum and many of the questions on the surveys, so that students would have the opportunity to better understand the subject matter, survey and project questions, and hear some of their fellow students' thoughts and opinions. Whenever possible, I made notes of student statements and my own personal observations regarding the in-class museum lessons and the four data collection instruments.

Methodology Conclusion

This research project was designed to measure, qualitatively, how a critical theory approach in a college-level art appreciation curriculum affected students' understanding of art museums. The research was meticulously planned with a clear curricular goal as well as a solid theoretical base. For many reasons, this is not a research question that matches with quantitative methodology. This research best aligns with action research because it attempts to understand a classroom (and museum) problem identified by the instructor/researcher, and has several goals: to improve classroom instruction, improve instructor and student learning, and empower the instructor/researcher and students, which ultimately leads to enhanced faculty and student achievement (Johnson, 2008; Acuff, 2012; McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead, 2003).

Reflection is the final key step of action research (Acuff, 2012). When beginning this research, I held no underlying assumption or hypothesis about the overall effectiveness of the museum curriculum or the nature of the data collected. Because action research is non-linear (Macintyre, 2008), the instructor/researcher must constantly reflect on the nature of the research and be flexible to making adjustments, often in the midst of the research and data collection (Acuff, 2012; McNiff, 2013; Efron & Ravid, 2013). The specific curriculum and data collection instruments were designed to first introduce the critical-theory oriented subject matter of art museums, and then to measure how students were able to understand the concepts presented. The curriculum and data collection instruments were finalized in advance of the semester, though with the understanding that the ability to observe and reflect while in the midst of researching is an essential aspect of action research, and adjustments may have to be made to

improve the research. By the end of the spring semester 2015, the implementation of the critical theory based curriculum and the collection of the data was complete.

Analyzing the data according to the principles of action research was the next step.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

Analyzing the Results of a Critical Theory-Based Art Museum Curriculum

Introduction

Seventy-six students were enrolled in the two Art Appreciation courses I taught during the spring of 2015 at Tarrant County College. Of these students, 68 elected to participate in this study, and eight declined participation. Although the data that was produced came from two separate classes, I combined the data into one cohesive unit. The data was analyzed as one group of data, rather than as two groups. This decision was made because the two classes were taught the exact same curriculum throughout the semester, and they also were assigned the same projects. The classes also followed the same calendar, with only one day separating the Monday/Wednesday class from the Tuesday/Thursday class. Upon initial examination of the data there did not seem to be any appreciable difference between the data produced by either class. The documents produced by each class were marked so that should the data analysis produce results necessitating a separate analysis of each class, it could be done at any point.

I analyzed four data collection instruments for this research project (Appendix B). The first was a formative museum survey, intended to gather basic information about the level of museum experience of each student and to gauge their impressions of art museums. The second was an in-class assignment attempting to measure what

students have learned after a lesson about the historical development of art museums as well as major issues of ownership and repatriation. The third instrument was the largest, and was the museum project students were required to complete during a visit to the Dallas Museum of Art. Lastly, the fourth data collection instrument was a summative museum survey, similar to the formative survey but asking additional questions about what students may have learned about art museums. Details about the four data collection instruments, including their design and implementation, are included in the research methodology and procedures chapter.

Upon the initial analysis of these four documents, I identified seven themes that traced the development of students' experiences with the critical theory museum curriculum. These data from the seven themes also collectively answered the three research questions driving this research study. This data analysis chapter of this research study is organized into nine parts, or sub-chapters. The introduction presents the basic facets of the data analysis of the research study. The following seven sub-chapters each cover one of the seven themes identified from initial analysis in the previous chapter. Each of the seven sub-chapters analyze the data gleaned from the data collection instruments, class discussions, and researcher notes and observations, which altogether form the heart of the narrative of this research study. The final part of this data analysis chapter is a conclusion, which ties together the data produced by the seven themes prior to the final chapter of this dissertation, which heavily interprets the data.

Although action research primarily focuses on qualitative data, some action research studies incorporate quantifiable data in the form of questionnaires, surveys,

and rating scales (Mertler, 2006). In the instance of this study, a small amount of quantitative data was collected to provide easily measurable benchmark data, such as how many students have never been to an art museum or how many students believe the Parthenon Marbles should be considered stolen property. A small amount of the data has been illustrated in figures and placed in Appendix C at the end of the paper. Virtually all of the data analyzed in this chapter was the result of open-ended questioning, essay-style prose from students, responses to quotes or gallery observation directives, classroom discussions, and researcher observations. This qualitative data was heavily coded to find similarities and patterns in student thought and to measure depth of understanding according to developed matrixes. The qualitative data makes up the bulk of data produced, and takes up the entirety of the fourth chapter.

A tremendous amount of data was collected—four, in-depth data collection instruments from 68 student participants equals roughly 272 separate documents, each consisting of multiple pages—though not all of the data has been analyzed for this study. It is tempting to exhaustively include each tidbit of data, however, this would be both inefficient and ineffective. Some of the instruments produced information determined to be not specifically applicable to the research questions, and was therefore not included in this research. On some occasions, I deemed particular questions or parts of assignments ineffective, redundant, irrelevant, or the data collected was not considered valuable, and this data was also not analyzed or included in this research study. A general intent of this study was to provide enough data and

data analysis to effectively answer the research questions in detail, but to do so in the most effective manner possible with particular attention paid to efficiency.

Theme 1: Personal Feelings About Art Museums

While initially reviewing the data collection instruments completed and submitted by participating students, I identified seven themes that were both noticeable in the data and addressed the research questions central to this study. The first of these seven themes identifies data that signifies students' personal feelings about art museums. The data collection instruments that best accumulated and presented student feelings about art museum were the first and last data collection instruments. Specifically, questions 1 through 7, plus question 10 on the first data collection instrument; and questions 1, 2, and 5 on the last data collection instrument. The responses to each of these questions, as well as my personal class observations and students' verbal contributions to class discussions are detailed below.

Prior to passing out the first data collection instrument (Formative Museum Survey, Appendix B), I informed students that during the last eight weeks of class we were going to learn a little bit about art museums. I explained that I wanted to learn about their knowledge, experience, and feelings about art museums and the document was intended to measure these things so that I might better gauge the level of museum instruction for the rest of the semester. Based on my personal observations, the students seemed interested in learning material outside of their textbooks. I believe that because art museums are "real" places, compared with much of the standard art

appreciation curriculum, which is highly theoretical, it commands greater curiosity. When I introduced the art museum unit, I scanned the classroom, which is large and accommodates 70 students, even though the class is capped at 40, and each of the students in the classroom was looking at me, which indicates a high level of attention to the subject matter. There are many times during the semester when I scan the room and see that several students are not looking at me and are not engaged in the subject matter.

The absolute attention of the students at this time might be attributed to the fact that they knew they had a museum project coming up, and the lessons I would be implementing would help prepare them for their museum project and therefore strongly impact their grade. As a general rule, when I tell students “this is going to be on the test” or “this is going to be on your project” their attention level goes up. However, I can also attribute their attention to the possibility that museums are simply interesting to most students. I verbally asked both classes to raise their hands if they had never been to an art museum before, which resulted in a majority of students raising their hands. In addition, two students asked if other particular museums counted as art museums. Specifically, I was asked if the science museum or the wax museum were considered art museums, which then evolved into a discussion of what an art museum was.

The first question on the survey instrument asked students if they have been to an art museum before, and the second and third questions ask which museums they have attended and how many times. There was a large majority of students who reported that they had never been to an art museum before, a smaller number reported that they had been to an art museum once before, and only a few students reported that

they had visited an art museum two or more times. The data confirmed what I informally knew from previous semesters of teaching: most TCC students enrolled in art appreciation courses had never visited an art museum. Only a small number of students had visited an art museum once before, and an even smaller number of students had visited an art museum two or more times. Of the students who had visited an art museum two or more times, a majority of them had visited art museums extensively, with several writing that they had visited museums so many times they could not count, or that they had visited museums dozens of times. Students with this high level of museum experience were a very small minority of both classes.

The students that visited art museums twice or more prior to this study were tagged so as to look for more sophisticated or appreciably different responses than those of the majority. On the whole, though not without exception, the students who had extensive museum experience did have a deeper understanding of the curriculum and more sophisticated responses to questions throughout the semester. However, because the total number of experienced museum visitors is a very small number (only six total), any trends or patterns from this group may not demonstrate reliable data. Students were also tracked in order to compare to each other later in the research analysis. For example, any developments or changes seen in the responses of a student without any museum experience were compared to the developments or changes seen in the responses of a student with museum experience.

Questions 4, 5, 6, 7, and 10 on the first instrument, and questions 1, 2, and 5 on the last instrument all shared the same theme, identified as theme 1: personal feelings about art museums. In eight different questions, I sought to

gauge the feelings of students relative to art museums and art museum employees, whether they have visited museum previously or not. Some of the responses were open-ended, and others asked students to select pre-determined adjectives that they agreed with. These responses were coded mostly as either positive or negative responses, with some of the adjectives volunteered by students also containing descriptions of the museum space. The questions from the last data collection instrument, implemented at the end of the research study, sought to confirm or possibly negate students' perceived feelings about art museums, and were essentially the exact same questions asked again after students had experienced an art museum.

Of students who had previously visited art museums, their responses were almost entirely positive, with all of the students reporting affirmative previous experiences at art museums, though one student did also add that their museum experience was tiring as well as amazing. It was surprising to see how little variation there was among the specific terms used by students. Many students used similar or the same descriptive terms to report their museum experiences, with the most number of students using the terms "interesting," "fun," "exciting" and "enjoyable." As an instructor, I was extremely gratified to see how positively students perceived art museums, even though most had not visited one. I took this information as a representation of the level of curiosity and open-mindedness seen among the college students, as well as a signal of interest, acquiescence, and consensus that art museums were an important site to study in class. In potential future research, it could be interesting to compare students' level of interest in art museums with other standard

curricula themes in art appreciation courses, such as materials and processes or art history.

The next questions, numbers 5 and 6, asked students regardless of their previous museum experience to describe any positive and negative, respectively, feelings they may currently have about art museums. More students answered the question about what positive words they would use to describe their current feelings about museums than the question asking for negative words. These questions were designed to specifically illicit positive and negative responses from students in the hopes that, even if a student saw a museum as overwhelmingly positive, they might stop to consider any negative perceptions they might have about art museums, and vice-versa. The words students used to describe their current feelings about art museums were more diverse, which is perhaps not surprising given that a majority of students responding to these questions had never actually attended an art museum. Taken altogether, the positive and negative words students reported to currently feel about art museums were standard and not surprising, with significant variation in specific terminology but not necessarily in meaning or intent. Overall, the words described the positive feelings students had about the purpose of the art museum, the physical museum environment, and the idea and/or processes of visiting an art museum. The most commonly used positive word was “interesting,” followed by “fun,” “exciting,” and “enjoyable.”

Words not commonly used, but still reported by a few students were “amazing,” “clean,” “colorful,” “expensive,” “fun,” “happy,” “historical,” “neutral,” “opening,” “artistic,” and “wonderful.” There were many additional positive words used only once and they

are all applicable positive expressions of student feelings about art museums. Some that were particularly noteworthy, and not synonymous with previous positive words mentioned are “captivating,” “chill,” “cool,” “cultural,” “curious,” “illuminating,” “imaginative,” “mysterious,” “organized,” “peaceful,” “powerful,” “stimulating,” “thoughtful,” and “untouchable.” Again, as an instructor it was relieving to see how well students thought of art museums, and it reinforced my previous experiences that demonstrated college student interest in learning about and visiting art museums. It is not known what direction this research study would have taken if students had overwhelmingly reported feelings of disdain or negativity towards art museums. As previously mentioned, I perceived the fact that students overwhelmingly expressed positive interest in the art museum as generally supportive of the participatory nature of this study.

Although significantly more students reported positive words rather than negative words, there were still some negative words used with frequency. By far the most commonly reported negative word students reported was “boring,” with the next most common word being “crowded.” Some other negative words that were particularly interesting, although only used by one student each, were “authoritative,” “confusing,” “difficult,” “incomprehensible,” “lonely,” “pointless,” “pretentious,” “slow,” and “wasteful.” It should be noted again that the amount of positive terms used to describe art museums far outnumbered the negative terms used to describe art museums.

Question 7 on the formative museum survey took the form of a closed-response choice question (Mertler, 2006), and offered students an alternative method of describing their impressions of museum employees by asking them to select from a list

of 36 adjectives, both positive, negative, and neutral. Students could select as many terms as they liked, so it was possible for a student to select all of the terms or none of the terms. It was the second attempt to characterize students' overall impressions of art museums and/or art museum employees. The survey sought to differentiate (and yet still keep them somewhat associated, as it would be difficult to extrapolate one from the other) student feelings about museum employees from the physical museum because of future curricular distinctions that focused on the decision-making processes of museum staff and the construction of museum spaces and labels, although questions about both museums and museum employees were both placed into theme 1, which measured student feelings about museums.

It is important to note that, while gathering multiple forms of data to determine students' attitudes about art museums, a closed-response choice question could be problematic because students may feel obligated to select options that do not accurately represent their feelings (Mertler, 2006). However, students also had the choice of only choosing one or two words, or not selecting any of the options at all. When making their choices of predetermined words students overwhelmingly selected the positive options over the negative options. A majority of students perceived art museum employees to be smart, educated, creative, diverse, and interesting. No students selected the options indicating that museum employees could be ignorant, stodgy, poor, or racist. The choices selected by students were largely positive, although several of the choices can be inverted to indicate possible negative feelings. For example, only small number of students indicated that they felt museum employees were trustworthy, accurate, correct, and fair.

Question 10 was the final attempt to assess how students felt about art museums and/or museum employees. It distinguished itself from questions 4, 5, and 6, which are open-ended, and from question 7, which students select any terms they agree with. Question 10 provided 16 adjectives in the form of a Likert scale (Mertler, 2006), and asked students to rate them according to how strongly they agreed or disagreed with them. The 16 adjectives were similar to the 36 adjectives provided in question 7, with some terms, such as racist, interesting, trustworthy, and correct, being directly repeated. Other terms were not exactly repeated, but a synonym was selected, such as the terms biased or prejudiced in addition to the term racist. Students were instructed to rate each potential museum descriptor on a scale of 1 to 10, with the number 1 meaning the student disagrees strongly and the number 10 meaning the student agrees strongly.

The results of this data were aggregated for each individual question and then divided by the total number of responses to achieve a percentage number so that the collective, not individual, opinions of students are recorded. This also enabled this data to be compared with similar data from the summative museum survey implemented later in the semester. The results of question 10 analysis largely aligned with the data from the previous attempts to characterize student attitudes and impressions of art museums. As with the previous attempts to measure student opinions of art museums, the results of this question were largely positive. Students overwhelmingly associated art museums with positive adjectives, such as intelligent, interesting, important, and trustworthy. Students felt least strongly that art museums were uneducated, incorrect, boring, and racist or prejudiced. It may be important to note that, while most students

responded that they did not feel art museums were racist or prejudiced, some students did feel strongly that museums were. The minimum response for each question was “1,” therefore, if all students strongly felt that museums were not racist or prejudiced, the total aggregated numeric response for those terms would have been very low. However, the total aggregated numeric response for both of those terms was in the lower to moderate range, which means some students did feel that art museums could be racist or prejudiced. A small number of individual students rated museums as highly biased, racist, or prejudiced.

The two terms that were least selected by students were incorrect and uneducated, which indicated that there is a good deal of faith in the knowledge and education of the museum institution felt by the students. One could presume that students’ very low rating and endorsements of these qualities suggested a definite and high amount of trust in the institution and its employees, which may impact students’ abilities to deconstruct or critique it in later assignments. These particular findings were replicated in the responses to question 7, in which students reported very low agreement in thinking museum staff was ignorant, and very high agreement in thinking museum staff were smart, trustworthy, and educated.

In addition to the data collection instruments used to perceive student feelings about art museums, many students verbally expressed excitement about the opportunity to visit an art museum. Two students reported to me that they had heard from their friends (who had previously taken my class) that a museum visit was required, and they had signed up for the class because they wanted the requirement of visiting the museum. Another five or six students reported that they would be making

their museum visit a family affair, and planned on taking their children, spouses, and/or parents. While most of the verbal feedback regarding student museum visits was positive and indicated excitement, there were a few students that expressed concern at their ability to visit the art museum due to hectic work schedules, transportation issues, or overall anxiety about traveling to downtown Dallas. When students mentioned problems in visiting the museum, I did my best to alleviate their concerns by presenting them with information on the museum's late hours and carpool and public transportation options.

The last data collection instrument was implemented during class, after the students had visited the museum and turned in their projects (but before their projects were graded). Many parts of the last data collection instrument mirrored the first. Questions 1, 2, and 5 were replicated from the first data collection instrument so that student perceptions and opinions about art museums could be re-checked after they actually visited the art museum. The first question of the summative museum survey asked students to characterize their visit to the museum. There were a wide variety of responses to this question, with 22 distinct terms being offered. Many students offered more than one term, and all of the terms were recorded. Most students reported that they found the museum interesting and almost half of students found the museum fun, which were results that were simultaneously relevant to the research study and personally gratifying as an instructor. In addition to the most commonly reported terms, there were twelve terms that only one student reported, many of which were positive, though some were negative. One student each said that the museum

was informative, fascinating, refreshing, cool, great, amusing, intriguing, uncomfortable, awkward, stressful, attractive, and wonderful.

Question 2 of the summative museum survey was an exact replica of question 7 from the formative museum survey. This question was repeated so that students would have the opportunity to answer it again after their museum experience and thus I could measure any differences in student opinion before and after their museum visit. The question asked students to describe their impressions of museum employees, and offered 36 positive, negative, and neutral adjectives, from which students could choose as many or few as they want. There were some slight shifts in student perceptions of museum employees, but there was nothing significantly different. Students' initial positive impressions prior to their museum visits did not change after their museum visits.

Overall, student perceptions of museum employees stayed overwhelmingly positive, which was a good sign considering that students maintained their positive perceptions after their visit to the museum. In fact, student perceptions of several of the positive adjectives increased substantially. Students thought that museum employees were smarter, more interesting, kinder, cooler, younger, and more diverse after their museum visit than they did prior to their museum visit. The results were very pleasing, as their responses indicated very positive experiences at the museum and positive impressions of museum staff. This led me to believe that further explorations of museums would be welcomed and enjoyed by students.

Question 5 in the summative survey was directly replicated from question 10 on the formative museum survey, and it was the last question to concern itself with

student feelings about art museums. The question consisted of a list of 16 adjectives, and students were instructed to indicate how strongly they felt an art museum could be any of the terms. Students were asked to rate each adjective on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 given to a term that they disagreed strongly with, and 10 given to a term that they agreed strongly with. The results of this data were aggregated for each question, and then averaged to achieve a percentile that represents the collective of student opinions.

As with the same question in the formative survey, students continued to overwhelmingly associate art museums with positive adjectives, such as important, interesting, intelligent, and fun. While there was not a tremendous difference between the data collected in the formative and summative surveys, students did perceive museums as being more important, more interesting, more intelligent, and more fun after their museum visit. The terms that had the lowest numbers in terms of how strongly students agreed with them are the terms that are the most negative, such as uneducated, incorrect, boring, and racist.

After reviewing all of the data collected seeking to determine student perceptions of art museums, both prior to and after their museum visit, I overwhelmingly concluded that my students have very high and positive opinions of art museums and people that work in art museums. Why was it important to definitively know how my students feel about art museums? There were many reasons. First, I see a correlation between student feelings about art museums and their level of interest in them. If a majority of students responded negatively about their feelings about art museums, it would be much more difficult to attempt to teach about them. Second, establishing their interest

level and previous experience with art museums is a necessary first stage of data analysis if the story of how art appreciation students experienced a critical theory curriculum in art museums is to be told.

If the outcome of these questions was overwhelmingly negative, I might consider abandoning the curriculum altogether. In a way, because of their interest in the subject matter, this is a type of participatory teaching. Students, by expressing interest in and enthusiasm for art museums, are signaling that they are open to learning more about the art museum. Third, student perceptions and/or feelings about art museums may directly tie in to being able to determine how a critical theory curriculum impacts student understanding of art museums (which is one of the research questions of this study). By determining student feelings in advance of any curricular instruction a benchmark of perception and interest has been created that will be used as a standard against which to measure future learning, feelings, and perceptions.

Theme 2: Knowledge Of and Understanding About Art Museums

The first and last data collection instruments also provided most of the data that corresponds to theme 2, which addressed student knowledge of and understanding about art museums. From the first data collection instrument, questions 8, 9, and 13 were open ended questions that sought to measure what students know about art museums. The final data collection instrument exactly replicated these questions in numbers 3, 4, and 15 (though question number 15 is also associated with

theme 7). In the first data collection instrument, these open-ended questions were asked despite students not having any instruction in art museums in an attempt to see what, if anything, students could speculate or know about art museums. In the final data collection instrument, the questions were asked again to see if an increase in student knowledge could be measured. The responses to these questions were analyzed in a number of ways. First, answers were analyzed for frequency of terminology. Second, responses were coded according to the coding table in chapter 3 to find additional patterns. Lastly, a rubric was used to assess the level of understanding held by students (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Using assessment data in action research is an effective tool to assess multifaceted information that may be difficult to evaluate objectively (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

In the first data collection instrument, question 8 asked students why they thought art museums existed, where they came from, and why they might be important. Most students simply answered the first part of the question, and did not respond to the second two questions. Some students offered multiple explanations for why museums exist, each of which was recorded separately. Of the students that answered the first question, almost half of the students wrote that museums existed to display or showcase works of art. Tied for the next most frequent answer was that museums exist for the purpose of education, and for the purpose of historical preservation and/or collection, with only slightly fewer students responding with each of those determinations. A small but not negligible percentage of students mentioned that museums exist specifically as a function of displaying wealth, which is an answer that may be of particular importance to the critical theory aspect of this project.

It also may be of some importance to note that the percentage of students who mentioned wealth as a potential reason for the existence of art museums was much higher among students with previous museum experience. Only a very small number of students who had never been to an art museum mentioned wealth as a potential purpose for the existence of art museums. However, a much more significant number of students who had been to an art museum before mentioned wealth as a potential purpose for the existence of art museums. This question appeared to draw a correlation between the ability of students to connect the art museum with wealth and the number of previous museum visits made by students, even before any significant museum instruction was implemented.

Although students had not yet been given an in-class introduction to the history and function of museums, based on their answers to question 8 I felt they had a very good grasp over the basic function(s) of art museums. As previously mentioned, most post-Enlightenment art museums exist to collect, preserve, display, and interpret art (Hein, 2000; Roberts, 1997; Alexander & Alexander, 2008; Zeller, 1989). Despite their general inexperience with art museums, most of the students were able to correctly and independently identify purposes for the existence of art museums, with a majority of students being able to identify object display as an important function of art museums, just under half of the students identified education as significant within art museums, and another half of students recognized the central functions of either collection or preservation as it relates to historical objects. Most students were able to suggest these purposes of art museums prior to any in-class museum instruction, which establishes a

respectable baseline of their general knowledge and their ability to make inferences about art museums.

The main purpose of question 9 was to have students attempt to answer the question: How do you think art museums work? There were several sub-questions that ask for more specific answers about who selects objects, what qualifies a person to do so, where art objects in museums come from, how they are acquired, how much it costs to run an art museum, and where the operating costs come from. It was a complex, multi-tiered question that was difficult to analyze due to the open-ended nature and length of the responses. The question intentionally included multiple attempts to measure student understanding of art museum processes so that students would have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge (or lack thereof). However, in retrospect, listing so many questions seemed to overwhelm many students, who responded by skipping many of the sub-questions. Another unintentional result of asking so many sub-questions in question 9 was a large quantity of varied information in the responses, rather than concise answers.

Instead of cataloguing and listing each response, I created a coded matrix to gauge the level of museum understanding students communicated in their answers. This helped to view the answers holistically and get a picture of the overall understanding of art museum understanding that students possessed. The coding matrix, seen in Table 4.1, identified four different levels of understanding, each based on the accuracy of answers and levels of vocabulary and speculation offered. Each of the surveys were sorted according to the matrix.

Level 1 – No Understanding	Level 2 – Below Average Understanding	Level 3 – Average Understanding	Level 4 – Above Average Understanding
Student is unable to correctly answer or correctly speculate any of the questions about how art museums work. Use incorrect or misapplied vocabulary or incorrect speculation.	Student is able to correctly answer or correctly speculate at least one question about how art museums work. Students do not use one correct vocabulary term.	Student is able to correctly answer or correctly speculate at least two questions about how art museums work. Students use one correct vocabulary term.	Student is able to correctly answer or correctly speculate three or more questions about how art museums work. Students use two or more correct vocabulary terms.

Table 4.1: Matrix to measure student understanding of art museums

Almost half of student responses placed them within the level 1 or level 2 stage—no understanding or below average understanding—while just a few less of students responses placed them within the level 3 or level 4 stage—average or above average understanding. Therefore, the results were fairly evenly split, although there were significantly fewer students being categorized at the very highest or lowest levels of understanding. In other words, most student responses fit within the level 2 or level 3 of understanding. As with question number 8, which asked why art museums exist, the students with more museum visiting experience were more likely to score higher on this question, by incorporating more sophisticated and accurate vocabulary and correct speculation. About two-thirds of the students rated in the above average category had previously visited an art museum, and just over one-third of the students rated in the average category had previously visited an art museum. Of the students who were placed in the below average and the no understanding categories, only a small percentage had visited an art museum before.

Using the matrix, I determined that about half of students had no understanding or below average understanding, about a third of students possessed an average understanding, and only a handful had an above average understanding of art museums. Coding was also implemented and found that few students were able to give specific examples of who selects objects for the museum, though several students correctly suggested education qualified those employees to make those choices (this was admittedly a low-ball question). Virtually all students were unable to speculate as to where art objects came from or how they were acquired.

Several students who ranked in the highest understanding of art museums were able to correctly speculate as to where art museum operating costs came from by suggesting specific funding schemes, such as endowments, donations, and fundraising, although no students were able to give an accurate estimate of how much money a museum might need to operate. On the whole, while some students were able to provide quality responses to these questions, for the most part the answers were rather thin and unsubstantial. While my measurement of student knowledge and understanding of art museums determined that most students had no or below average understanding of art museums, students' estimation of their own knowledge roughly matched my own determination. The final question of the first data collection instrument, question 13, asked students to rate how knowledgeable they felt about how art museums operate on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all and 10 being extremely knowledgeable. The results were averaged for an overall class self-rating of their knowledge at less than 5 out of 10, which is just below an exact midpoint. The results for each of the questions were also averaged separately for students who had

previous museum experience, but the difference was less than 0.3 of a percent for each question, which is negligible.

The results for question 13 were within in the general range that was expected, however, it would not have surprised me if the class average was lower. I was surprised to see seven students who had never attended an art museum before (and had been rated at the lower levels of museum understanding according to their responses to question 9) rate their level of knowledge about how art museums work at an 8, 9, or 10 level. At this point, when analyzing the formative survey, I looked forward to seeing the results of the summative museum survey, in which the same question was asked, and measuring whether or not students' estimates of their own knowledge of museums has risen.

After the first data collection instrument was implemented, students received classroom instruction on art museums in the form of two specifically designed lessons (see Appendix A): Introduction to the Art Museum and Understanding How Art Museums Work, which were implemented in order on back-to-back class days. Each lesson consisted of a prepared PowerPoint presentation as well as discussion points and group activities for the class. In the first lesson, students were first shown video clips featuring art museums from the films *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and *The Thomas Crown Affair*, just for fun. Then, students were introduced to the functions of art museums as institutions that exist to collect, preserve, display, and interpret objects. These concepts were elaborated on in class, with each being discussed in specific terms so that students had a better idea of why each of these functions is essential.

The introduction of these terms culminated in a discussion of which of the four objectives students feel is the most important. The discussion was somewhat immaterial; I am not sure that one of the functions is more important than another, however, the purpose is to get students to think about the four functions. In the class discussions, several students voiced out loud that the most important function of the museum is to collect, while others asserted that the function of displaying objects is the most important. Their arguments were, respectively, “you wouldn’t have an art museum if it didn’t have anything in it,” and “but if no one goes to look at the objects you couldn’t have an art museum.” In total, eleven students contributed to the class-wide discussion about the four functions of the art museum, with smaller numbers of students claiming that the educational function of art museums was the most important, and one student saying that preservation was the most important thing, comparing an art museum to a zoo and saying that otherwise, “what is the point of collecting anything if you’re not going to take care of it?”

In this lesson, students also learned about the structure and governance of art museums, including information about non-profit status (art museums were compared to art galleries, which students often confuse with one another), boards of directors, and endowments. By far the most fascinating aspect of this lecture came when speaking of endowments. When discussing the four functions of art museums, I mentioned to students that museums have an obligation to care for their objects indefinitely. When we began to discuss endowments, I asked if anyone knew what an endowment was. I then proceeded to explain how endowments work, and I showed students a numerical list of the amounts of the endowments of local art museums. Without exception, all of the

students are attentive. I observe another moment when I scanned the room to see whether or not students are looking up at me or the displayed information and every student was engaged and attentive. The information was drawn from public documents, and students see the endowment size of the Dallas Museum of Art, the Kimbell Art Museum, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. We speculated about how long you would have to be saving in order to build funds of that size, who donated to endowments, and how they were managed.

After viewing the endowments of local art museums, I proceeded to show students the endowments from some of the wealthiest museums in the United States, including the Getty Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Smithsonian and the National Gallery of Art. Most of the students were stunned at the amount of money that art museums hold—at the time the information was presented, the endowments ranged from almost six billion dollars to five hundred million dollars. Audible surprise and murmurs of simultaneous disbelief and respect are heard. One student remarked that it was “stupid” to spend that much money on art museums, which other students agreed with. I responded with what has become my standard response to that statement (which I hear a few times every semester when we are discussing the monetary value of works of art), which is, “The Dallas Cowboys spent more than one billion dollars on a stadium, and they spend about 155 million dollars on salaries every year. Is that stupid too?” I said it to instigate discussion, and it worked, as some students immediately recognized and acknowledged the comparison and other students attempted to defend sports spending as more legitimate.

As a method of comparison, and for fun, I informed students that colleges also often times have endowments that serve to offer financial stability and perhaps indicate their status. I asked students to look up the endowment of the University of Texas at Arlington, the University of Texas at Austin, and Harvard and Yale Universities. Again, their participation was very strong and students were stunned to hear from their classmate that Harvard's endowment was currently valued at 35 billion dollars. There was audible shock and disbelief and several exclamations heard. At the same time, students were somewhat proud and gratified to see that the University of Texas's endowment was comparable to that of Yale's, at close to 25 billion dollars. One student found a Wikipedia list of college endowments, and independent discussion ensued when the student began randomly calling out endowment figures from American universities. To close the discussion on endowments, I asked students to search for the endowment for Tarrant County College, and no one was able to find information that a TCC endowment existed. Students then speculated about the prestige, tuition, history, and stability of an institution with a larger endowment, and one student offered up the conclusion that "rich people give money to Harvard so that it stays rich and they will have a place to send their kids."

To conclude the first museum lesson, students were divided into six groups of approximately six students and assigned a local museum to research. Students had to find the mission statement for their assigned museum on their website, as well as information about their collection (what type of art do they collect?), history (how old is the museum, and how did it start?), and staff (how many employees does the museum have?). The information was not presented formally, but I walked around the classroom

and asked students questions to determine they were participating in the lesson and learning about their particular museum. Throughout this lesson, I believe that the students from both classes were engaged in active learning and were accruing knowledge about art museums. It is essential that this lesson (and the other museum lessons that were implemented after this first one) took place prior to students visiting the art museum, as it begins to create a foundation of knowledge and understanding that will help them as they consider more critical issues within art museums later in the curriculum.

The second art museum lesson I taught served to familiarize students with the variety of tasks and functions performed within a museum. The lesson sought to help students achieve a deeper understanding of the various functions of an art museum and the education and training required of the people who work in an art museum by analyzing seven different art museum occupations. Information was presented in a PowerPoint presentation, and students were divided into groups and assigned one museum profession to research.

The museum professions presented were curator, educator, exhibition designer, registrar, preparator, conservator, and security. When introducing each of the individual professions and explaining their basic job functions, I asked students which of the four functions of art museums does this position serve? After some consideration, the students were able to relatively quickly match the museum occupation with the performed museum function. There was a high level of participation as students were able to recall the functions of collecting, displaying, preserving, and educating. This lesson also served to contribute to students' overall knowledge of and understanding

about basic art museum functions, which was demonstrated throughout the lesson with their participation in the lesson.

Later in the semester, after additional museum instruction and after students' visit to the art museum, a final data collection instrument was assigned. In the final data collection instrument, questions 3, 4, and 15 all corresponded to the second theme of student understanding of art museums and therefore have been analyzed together. The third question on the summative museum survey was another exact replica of question 8 on the formative museum survey. It was an open-ended question that asked students why they think art museums exist, where they come from, and why they might be important. The purpose of asking this question again was to see if students were better capable of answering the question using specific examples and vocabulary introduced in class. Although students answered the question fairly well in the formative survey, I wanted to see if their overall understanding had improved. Because it was a question with additional sub-questions, many students elected to simply answer the first part of the question and not provide any answers to the sub-questions. Some students offered several answers to the first question and did not provide any answers to the sub-questions, and some students did not answer the question at all.

Of the students that responded to the first question, the most popular answer was that museums exist to educate the public. This was a significant shift from the formative survey, in which education was the second most popular answer with far fewer students selecting it as a function of art museums. In other words, after visiting the museum students became more convinced of its function as an educational

institution. Prior to their museum visit, more students saw the function of a museum to display works of art. On the summative survey, displaying objects was the second most popular response. To further clarify, education and display had switched places in the minds of students after visiting the museum. While display was the initial student favorite, after visiting the museum more students felt that education was the more important function of the art museum. As the researcher, I found this to be a significant development in the research because it marks a collective change in opinion based on real-life experience.

Additionally, a number of students said that museums exist to preserve works of art, and only a few students said that museums exist to collect works of art. This data suggested that students view the art museum primarily as an educational space, which also suggests that students felt the space was dynamic, rather than static. If students overwhelmingly said that the function of art museums were to collect, I might have interpreted that response as students feeling the museum was lifeless, merely a building in which art is stored. But their collective opinions indicate that the museum space is primarily educational, and only peripherally about collection and preservation. The museum itself might not agree with that assessment, but given that the questions were based on opinions (from a brief museum interaction) it is a reasonable conclusion for students to reach at this point.

Interestingly, coding indicated that a small but not insignificant number of student responses referenced power, wealth, nationalism, and/or imperialism as reasons art museums exist. Of the students who mentioned these more complicated ideas that directly reflect the museum curriculum, the minority had no previous museum

experience, and the majority did have previous museum experience. The data continued to indicate that students who have previous museum experience tend to offer more sophisticated responses and responses more grounded in the critical theory theme of the curriculum.

Question 4 on the summative museum survey was another replica from the formative survey. Question 4, or question 9 on the formative survey, consisted of seven questions, clustered together in three groups. The questions asked were:

- Who selects the objects that are on display in an art museum? What qualifies these people to select the objects? How do you think they decide which objects to display?
- Where do the objects that are displayed in an art museum come from? How are they acquired?
- How much does it cost to run an art museum? Where does this money come from?

Because the question was complex, consisted of multiple sub-questions, and was open-ended, it was difficult to analyze. The question was intentionally written to be repetitive in order to give students multiple opportunities to consider and display their knowledge of the functions of art museums. Instead of cataloging and listing each response, I used the same matrix as previously used to gauge the overall level of comprehension students communicated in their responses. The matrix identified four levels of understanding based on use of vocabulary and accuracy of statements. The matrix used is seen in Table 4.2 below.

Level 1 – No Understanding	Level 2 – Below Average Understanding	Level 3 – Average Understanding	Level 4 – Above Average Understanding
Student is unable to correctly answer or correctly speculate any of the questions about how art museums work. Use incorrect or misapplied vocabulary or incorrect speculation.	Student is able to correctly answer or correctly speculate at least one question about how art museums work. Students do not use one correct vocabulary term.	Student is able to correctly answer or correctly speculate at least two questions about how art museums work. Students use one correct vocabulary term.	Student is able to correctly answer or correctly speculate three or more questions about how art museums work. Students use two or more correct vocabulary terms.

Table 4.2: Matrix used to measure student understanding of art museums

I placed most student responses within the average category, with equal numbers of students categorized as above average and below average. The smallest number of students were categorized as having no understanding of how art museums work. A majority of students who achieved the average or above average level were able to incorporate vocabulary specific to previous museum lessons, including terms like curator, non-profit, endowment, board of directors, and acquisition. These students were also more capable of correctly describing museum governance, object provenance and types of museum funding.

The results from the summative survey were compared with the results from the formative survey and definite movement was seen in students' understanding of how art museums work. While there was a general movement upwards in terms of the levels of student understanding demonstrated, the most notable difference was in the number of

students who demonstrated no understanding of art museums. Prior to the museum curriculum and museum visit, there were significantly more students in this category. As the instructor, this was both gratifying and expected. Had there been no movement that indicated increased student understanding I would probably have reconsidered the matrix or attempted another method of measurement for the results.

The results of this question were also analyzed to see which categories students with previous museum experience were placed in, and I found that most students with previous museum experience were placed in the above average category. Almost half of students in the above average category had previous museum experience, and a handful of the students in the average category had previous museum experience. In the formative museum survey fewer students with previous museum experience were categorized as above average, and about the same number of students with previous museum experience were also categorized as average. The data suggests that students learned information about art museums and were able to recall that information and vocabulary, however, students with previous museum experience continued to outperform their peers without museum experience. Regardless, the overall knowledge about and understanding of art museums rose across the board among students regardless of their level of museum experience.

The last question that specifically dealt with student understanding of art museums was question 15 on the summative museum survey, which was a replica of question 13 on the formative museum survey. In the formative survey, students were asked to rate how knowledgeable they feel about how art museums operate, using a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest. On the

formative survey, prior to their museum visit and any instruction on art museums, students self-reported an overall level of knowledge at just under 5 out of 10, which is just below the midpoint. The question and procedure was repeated in the summative survey. The data for this question was also aggregated and averaged. Students rated their overall knowledge of art museums at almost 7 out of 10, which can be described as an above-average rating. The data for question 15 indicated that student self-confidence in their knowledge and understanding of art museums grew at a significant rate. Although one can deconstruct the data as merely an estimate based on the personal feelings of students, I was pleased to see that, as a whole, students felt they understood art museums better as a result of their visit and the museum curriculum.

Theme 3: Interest and Curiosity in Art Museums

The third overarching theme identified in the methodology chapter identified student level of curiosity and interest, and there were two questions on the first data collection instrument and one on the ownership and repatriation worksheet that were related to this topic. On the first data collection instrument, question 11 asked students if they had ever wondered about how art museums worked, and question 12 asked students if they were interested in learning about art museums. On the ownership and repatriation worksheet, question 12 asked students if they would rather know object provenance about the objects they see in art museums. Of the students who answered the questions, a majority of students reported that they had never considered how art

museums worked, while almost all of students reported that they were interested in learning about art museums, which I found quite reassuring.

When these findings were compared to the quantity of positive associations students have with art museums, it became clear that my students were predisposed to think well of art museums while having low levels of understanding but high levels of interest. As an educator, this is practically a holy grail of a teaching opportunity—finding an audience with limited subject matter experience and knowledge but high interest in the subject matter is absolutely ideal.

The final question of the repatriation worksheet was included in the data analysis, and asked students if they would like to know object provenance of the works of art they see when they visit a museum. This was phrased as an open-ended question with two parts, but most students responded with simple yes/no responses, and a few students offered explanations for their answers. A significant majority of the students responded that they would like to know the provenance, and a smaller amount of students responded that they would not like to know or that they were not sure. A small percentage of the students, as indicated by their language, felt strongly about needing to know object provenance, but more students specified that knowing object provenance would be a nice feature but was not a necessary part of their museum experience. For each of the questions measured, the full set of student data was also compared to the smaller set of 17 students with previous museum experience, but there was no appreciable difference in how students with or without museum experience responded.

The fact that virtually all of the students responded that they would like to learn more about art museums or about object provenance is significant. To report this data in the reverse, it also means that virtually none of the students were disinterested in learning about art museums. In the future, I would like to (at least unofficially) survey my students to ask them if they would like to learn more about other aspects of the art appreciation curriculum. For example; would they also demonstrate the same level of enthusiasm for learning more about printmaking? Or sculpture? Or crafts? Though I have not attempted to measure this, my speculation as an experienced instructor of art appreciation is that the level of interest students have in learning about art museums would be significantly higher than the other examples listed above. Additionally, one of the goals of the first data collection instrument was to measure the level of enthusiasm and interest students felt about art museums. Three different forms of data showed the majority of these students had overwhelmingly positive impressions about art museums and art museum employees. The positive impressions students had about art museums, along with their lack of tangible experiences or deep understanding, combined to demonstrate a very strong level of interest in learning more about art museums.

The first museum lesson taught to the class focused on building basic knowledge about the history and function of art museums. At the end of the lesson, I took time to reflect on how the lesson was implemented and the level of student participation and interest. I noted that participation was high, with outspoken students participating the most, but with good levels of participation from other students as well. Attention was high as well, as I did not notice students sleeping, texting, or generally not paying

attention. I noticed that I was particularly tired, which may be a result of the emotional condition of implementing the first lesson associated with my dissertation research, or the fact that the lesson really did involve some heavy participation and considerable facilitation of critical thinking.

I was very pleased with the level of interest and participation that students demonstrated. When compared with a regular art appreciation lesson, for example, about printmaking or sculpture, the level of enthusiasm I perceived in students was much higher. I believe the discussion on endowments was the most successful aspect of the curriculum and served multiple purposes: it demonstrated that art museums can be very wealthy, well-supported institutions (which is an important concept to critical theory); it helped to seize student interest and provide an aspect of relevancy to the institution; and it demonstrated that art museums can be complex, well-established institutions.

The second museum lesson I taught specifically focused on learning about museum employees and the variety of professions found in museum staff. After the lesson, students were split into small groups and asked to report on the level of education required for their assigned position, speculate on the daily tasks of their position, and how this position serves the mission of a museum. Student enthusiasm for this lesson was lower than for the first lesson. A few students seemed to be interested in learning about art museum occupations because they held a high interest in art or museums and perceived a potential future career opportunity. When compared to the first lesson, student enthusiasm and participation was lower, though still respectable. The positions that generated the most interest were conservators and security, with

students being impressed at the level of education required of a conservator and students wondering if museum security was really like that seen in the Thomas Crown Affair.

There was no aspect of the second lesson that generated the amount of enthusiasm that endowments provided for the first lesson. When I surveyed the class to note participation levels, there were a few students that were not paying attention to the information presented or to my instruction. There were only seven students that verbally participated in the class discussions. While the lesson was quieter than the first, I believe students were still interested in the information and still somewhat surprised by the complexity of art museums. Several students asked questions about curators and their level of autonomy in making decisions about acquisitions.

After the lesson, I reflected on the relative lack of enthusiasm for the second lesson, and I debated whether or not the lesson was integral to the curriculum. The purpose of teaching about museum employees, their job responsibilities, and their education is for students to grasp the complexity of an art museum and the training and skill it takes to run an art museum. Out of the four lessons, it is considered a foundational lesson, necessary before the class can begin to critique the museum. Taken together, the first two lessons are intended to provide a basic level of information about art museums on which later in-class assignments and lessons will be based. Towards the end of my reflections, I decided that (based on the level of interest demonstrated by the students) the content of the lesson was necessary, but perhaps more interactive or more interesting methods of teaching could be implemented.

Theme 4: Knowledge and Understanding of Global/Ethical/Historical Issues in Art Museums

It is at this point that the research project turns towards the critical. While I do wish there was more time to spend building a neutral foundation of museum knowledge and experience before introducing critical theory into the curriculum, I also feel that, in a single-semester art appreciation curriculum, having four lessons devoted to art museums is appropriate and fundamentally effective. After I implemented two fundamental lessons about art museums, I taught a third lesson that focuses on the history of European art museums, specifically the Louvre, but also the British Museum and the Vatican. The third lesson in the curriculum, History of Art Museums (Appendix A), focused on the development of art museums in Europe around the time of the Enlightenment. It traced the specific history of the Louvre in Paris, its association with Napoleon (Bresc-Bautier, 2003), and also documented the provenance of specific objects in the collection of the British Museum, such as the Parthenon Marbles, the Rosetta Stone, and the Benin Bronzes (Shuart, 2004; Rose-Greenland, 2013).

The lesson was implemented through a 40-minute PowerPoint presentation and class discussion, followed by a worksheet to be filled out by students in class, working in small groups or separately. Students were given about 40 minutes of class time to complete the assignment. Because the worksheet was designed as an in-class group activity to assess student's grasp over the specific lesson, parts of the worksheet are not specifically applicable to this research study. Several questions (numbers 1, 8, and 11) have been selected from this worksheet as relevant to this study because

they correspond to themes 4 and 6, and only those questions have been analyzed.

The worksheet was assigned for students to complete individually, although they could consult with classmates. 59 worksheets were analyzed. The assignment counted as a daily grade, which represents approximately two percent of the students' final average.

If the first museum lesson captivated students with its discussion of museum endowments, and the second lesson only mildly interested students with details of museum professions, the third lesson was a return to extremely high levels of student interest and participation by telling stories of the circumstances of controversial museum acquisitions. Some portions of the lesson turned from simply high levels of interest to occasional anger and outrage being expressed. And, as the instructor and researcher, I had a wonderful time teaching this lesson because of the honest concern, interest, and occasionally even disbelief expressed by students. It felt powerful and rewarding to be able to share knowledge about art museums and have it perceived as relevant and even significant to my students.

The lesson began with a video clip showing a famous scene from the film *The Raiders of the Lost Ark*, which featured the archaeologist/hero Indiana Jones. The film begins with Dr. Jones "acquiring" a gold statue from a site guarded by indigenous people to whom the statue belongs. Also present in the scene is another Western collector, and thus the students have seen a fictional, but not completely far-fetched example of the most unethical type of object acquisitions. The video clip is followed by an image of the *Stele of Naram-Sin*, a work of art that is an early documented example of a treasure taken as war booty (Kleiner, 2016). The concept that I attempted to express was that as long as there have been treasures, their ownership has been

coveted and contested. Museums, as owners of great treasures, have naturally sometimes historically been participants in these controversies (Curtis, 2006; Karp, Kreamer, & Lavine, 1992).

This lesson was the first of the four lessons to take a decidedly critical approach toward the act of collecting. Students were introduced to the Louvre Museum in Paris through excerpts from two videos: *Treasures of the Louvre*, a BBC production, and *The Louvre: From Dungeons to the Pyramid* (Lecuyer, 2007) as well as information displayed in a PowerPoint presentation. Students were informed about the evolution of the Louvre from fortress to palace to museum, and some of the particular personalities that contributed to the Louvre and its collection throughout the years, particularly Napoleon and his contributions to the collection via his imperial conquests (Bresc-Bautier, 2003). I showed an 1802 print made by Pierre Gabriel Berthault, titled *Triumphant Entry of Monuments of Science and Art into France*, which documents a 1797 procession of Italian art being brought into France. The print illustrates a long line of exotic treasures, including the *Horses of St. Mark*, being paraded in front of dressed-up Parisians. The students are made aware of the Capitulation of Alexandria, which allowed for many objects taken by Napoleon to be removed from France and brought to England, though many would argue ownership claims by either country to be suspect (Wilson, 2001).

Terms such as colonialism, appropriation, imperialism, provenance and repatriation were introduced. At several points in the dispensing of information, students expressed surprise at the historical events. A handful of students expressed surprise that “no one did anything” to stop Napoleon from taking objects out of countries that he

had invaded. One student attempted to respond to their classmates' surprise by offering an explanation, "why else would you invade a place unless it had something you wanted?" A brief examination of the classroom indicated that all of the students were engaged in the discussion and history of the Louvre, many students viewed the acquisition of objects via conquest to be unethical, and some students were rather outraged that objects were taken as a result of military conquests.

The lesson continued by subsequently introducing three relatively famous objects owned by the British Museum: the Rosetta Stone, the Parthenon Marbles, and the Benin Bronzes (Rose-Greenland, 2013; Wood, 2012; Andrews, 1985). A history of each object was presented and supplemented with short video clips. Students learned about Lord Elgin removing the Parthenon Marbles from Greece, the British acquiring the Rosetta Stone from France after the Battle of Waterloo, and the British expedition and conquering of the Benin Empire and subsequent taking of the Benin Bronzes (Rose-Greenland, 2013; Wood, 2012; Andrews, 1985). When introducing the specific histories of each object, I did my best to remain neutral and present a factual account of the history of the object and their respective removals from their places of origin. I also attempted to represent both historical perspectives—the point of view of the object taker and the point of view of the original object owner.

These object-specific histories elicited the best classroom discussions of the semester, with many students expressing nuanced and enthusiastic opinions about some of the most critical issues in art historical ownership and repatriation. Some students passionately argued for or against the British Museum's keeping of the Parthenon Marbles, though most students felt that the Benin Bronzes and Rosetta

Stone were more clearly objects that should be returned. One student said, “The British Museum has the weakest argument for the Benin Bronzes. They’re very clearly stolen.” Many students expressed surprise that the 1897 invasion of the Benin Empire by Britain was so recent; the fact that the Benin Bronzes were only acquired in an act of war a hundred years earlier seemed to dismay students, who wondered why “no one” helped or interfered.

For many students, I think that learning about the relatively recent instances of European colonialism in parts of Africa was both surprising and eye-opening. Specifically in response to the information that today the Benin Bronzes are found in museum collections throughout Europe and the United States, a student suggested the practice was, “sort of like reverse Robin Hood, where the rich steal from the poor and then share it with other rich people.” Several students expressed amusement that the British Museum acquired the Rosetta Stone after it was acquired by Napoleon. One student characterized the transactions as a “rich country stealing from a poor country, then being robbed by a richer country.” There was a definite lack of sympathy for France’s loss, but still overall concern that the stone was not returned to Egypt. Despite the general feeling that the object should be returned to its country of origin, the students were thinking very carefully about the totality of object provenance. One student asked, “If Napoleon hasn’t found the Rosetta Stone [in 1799] would it still be in the ground today? Didn’t the stone help us understand hieroglyphs?”

Regarding the Parthenon Marbles, one student said that, “All is fair in war, and if Greece wanted to keep its treasures it shouldn’t have let itself get occupied.” A student countered that argument by responding, “So anytime a weaker country gets invaded

they deserve to lose all of their treasures?” Another student defended Lord Elgin by stating, “Those sculptures would probably all be ruined or stolen if he hadn’t taken them to England,” and referencing the current economic state of Greece. Other students agreed with the idea that by placing the objects in the museum, the British Museum is serving an educational purpose, which is seen as a positive, although another student responded that the statues could serve the same educational purpose in Greece.

The discussions surrounding the three objects were rich, spirited, and demonstrated a high level of interest among students. The most significant question of the discussion came towards the very end of the class, when one student asked, “What has changed, do you think? Why are we thinking about repatriation now? Is it globalism, that we’re more aware of the bad things we’ve done in the past? Or is it the fact that the general public knows other cultures better now, and they’re less foreign?” This question elicited some speculation from myself and other students, without a solid answer being given. Fourteen different students participated in the discussions over the objects, which was the highest level of participation noted. After the discussions piqued student interest in the subject matter, students were asked to complete a worksheet on ownership and repatriation.

The first question on the repatriation worksheet simply sought to learn whether or not students were surprised to learn that the British Museum was involved in ownership disputes over several specific objects in its collection. Almost unanimously, students were not surprised. In response to the second part of the question, which asked students to elaborate on their surprise or lack thereof, more than half of students who were not surprised referenced Britain’s history of power, wealth, imperialism,

colonialism, and/or explorations as reasons that they were not surprised to see that Britain was involved in disputes over object ownership. This demonstrates that students were able to clearly identify the association between wealth, power, and object acquisition, which is a key element of this critical theory-oriented curriculum.

Many students were philosophical, without displaying either strongly positive or negative feelings, about the benefits of being a world power. In response to question 1, one student wrote, “Britain, like the United States, has always been a world power. World powers are known for conquering and plundering.” Another student wrote, “Britain has always been a leading nation (or specifically a conquering nation), [and since] Britain has always been a country to conquer others, I do not find it surprising that they would take a ‘souvenir’ from their lands.” Another student wrote, “The British have always been explorers. With being explorers comes the opportunity to raid the other (losing) side.” And lastly, another student wrote, “The British Empire over the past later part of the millennium was the dominant imperialistic force in the world. It is only natural those things [art objects] would concentrate in their empire.” These four quotes are representative of the many explanations students gave for their lack of surprise at the British Museum being embroiled in ownership disputes with other nations. Some students rationalized the British Museum keeping objects that are known to be controversial by explaining, “If they return everything to the owners they will not have anything in their museum,” and, “If the artwork is given back the museum loses profit and there would be less people coming to it,” and “These works of art have become part of the British heritage.”

Questions 2 through 7 on the repatriation worksheet asked students whether or not they thought any of these three objects should be regarded as stolen. It was also mentioned orally in each class that the term “stolen” meant that it was acquired against the law, not necessarily against personal ethics. Prior to answering the question about whether students felt the objects should be considered stolen, there was a question that requests students summarize the ownership dispute of each object. This was my attempt to ensure that students understood the ownership dispute prior to their offering an opinion on it. Of the 59 worksheets analyzed, only one student had difficulty expressing the ownership dispute of one object.

Students overwhelmingly felt that the Benin Bronzes were acquired illegally by the British Museum. Almost all of the students reported that they felt they should be regarded as stolen, and just a few students believed that they were legally acquired. A very large majority of students also believed that the Rosetta Stone was acquired illegally, with only a handful thinking it was legally acquired. Of those that believed the Rosetta Stone was legally acquired, a majority mentioned that, because the Rosetta Stone was found and taken by archaeologists, it was discovered and not stolen and therein was their distinction (a phenomenon perhaps influenced by popular culture films such as Indiana Jones and National Treasure).

The objects that were the most controversial and most heavily debated were the Parthenon Marbles. Approximately half of the students believed that the Parthenon Marbles should not be considered as stolen by the British Museum, while the other half believed they should be considered stolen or could not decide one way or another. Of those who felt the Parthenon Marbles were acquired legally, approximately one third

stated that there was a difference between legally acquiring an object and ethically acquiring an object, and while they felt the acquisition was legal, it was not ethical. Even though many students said the statues were taken legally, several students specifically advocated for their return to Greece nonetheless.

Generating discussion over these three objects was a critical part of the curriculum. I felt that if a student was eventually going to be able to critically examine an art museum, as was the overarching goal for this curriculum, they must have experience in understanding art museums as institutions that are run by humans and therefore capable of committing errors of judgment. It was also extremely important to me that our class discussions instill at least a small amount of confidence in students of their own thoughts and opinions. In my experience, some students are not yet confident in the power and validity of their own opinions, and I wanted to demonstrate to them that not only was I interested in their opinions, but their opinions were necessary to the success of this art museum curriculum.

I was careful to point out (multiple times) that the purpose of the lesson was not to besmirch the British Museum, but to draw attention to the fact that sometimes object provenance was complicated and embedded deeply within a historical context. I also mentioned to students that the acquisition of each of the three objects presented in the lesson were associated, sometimes directly sometimes peripherally, with imperialism and colonialism, as the levels of power between the two countries involved was in no way equal. I felt this was a concept particularly fitting for a critical-theory oriented curriculum. This was further demonstrated by researching in class where other pieces of

the Benin Bronzes were currently housed, which included museums in the United States.

Overall, the lesson on museum history and repatriation issues and the ownership and repatriation worksheet were intended to encourage students to think about how objects are acquired by art museums, and measure their opinions and guided speculation about ownership and repatriation issues. While many students indicated (in the formative museum survey) initial positive impressions of art museums, students were also not surprised to discover that art museums might occasionally encounter controversy over ownership of art objects. Many students were quick to cite historical factors and events, such as colonialism and imperialism, when attempting to explain particular ownership controversies. Other students made connections between money, power, prestige, and object ownership by art museums. The class discussions over the three specific objects elicited passionate and intelligent debate. The two themes that this lesson and worksheet touched on, knowledge and understanding of global/ethical/historical issues in art museum practices and ability to determine connections between art museums, history, power, and money, were well represented in the student responses and discussions.

Question 5 from the self-guided museum project (data collection instrument 3) was a series of questions based on a number of Mimbres bowls just outside the Ancient American galleries. This question was the only one in the museum project that corresponded to theme 4, which tracked student knowledge and understanding of global/ethical/historical issues in art museum practice. Mimbres bowls originate from the late tenth century in the Mimbres River Valley in southwestern New Mexico. Many

Mimbres bowls that have a circular hole in them, called a “kill hole,” were used to cover skulls in Native American burials (Isabella, 2013). The presence of multiple black-and-white Mimbres bowls with kill holes in the museum may bring up issues with acquisition and repatriation, as well as power and privilege in art museums and was therefore directly related to this study’s primary research question.

Question 5 contains two particular questions that were deemed relevant to this study. Students were asked whether they think it is ethical to display human burial artifacts in an art museum, and whether or not knowing an object may have been once buried with Native Americans made students feel any differently about them. Although we discussed provenance and repatriation in class, we did not specifically study the ethics of human burial artifact display in class. As the researcher and instructor, I looked forward to analyzing student responses to this prompt, as I felt it was a good opportunity to see their independent opinions developing through the project. A handful of students did not answer the question effectively enough for their answers to be included in the data. Perhaps due to the large number of questions in the second part of the museum project (six questions with a total of 45 smaller sub-questions), some students did not directly answer all of the questions, so the total numbers for all of the questions included in the study were unequal. Although the question was open-ended, student responses were categorized into yes/no responses, and then their explanations were sorted into categories based on similarity of responses. Some students only answered with a yes or no, and provided no additional explanation.

Half of students felt that it was ethical to display burial artifacts at the museum, just over fewer felt that it was not ethical under any circumstances, and a small number

were unsure or felt that it was ethical only under particular conditions. Of those students who felt that it was ethical, a majority specifically commented that what made the display ethical was the educational or scientific use of the objects which created a situation that was positive overall. Of the students who felt that it was not ethical, a small number commented in detail about how the objects represent a moral, cultural, or religious violation of the wishes of the deceased. And of the students who were unsure or felt it was ethical only under particular conditions, three students specifically stated that they might have considered it ethical only if the descendants of the Mimbres people had given their permission.

The second part of question 5 asked students if they feel differently about the object knowing that it might have been part of a burial. A strong majority of students responded that yes, knowing that the object was associated with a burial made them feel differently about the object. The smaller number of students did not feel that the object perhaps being part of a burial made them feel any differently about it. There was no middle ground on this question—the students that responded did so definitively. Eight students volunteered in the course of their answers that they found this particular question/subject matter interesting or fascinating, which is extremely gratifying for me as an instructor. These comments indicated to me that students were encountering ideas that they had never considered prior to this lesson/museum visit, and they were really thinking and considering them during their museum visit. These particular comments were coded with EMP to suggest that transformational experiences were occurring.

Of the students who stated that the knowledge made them feel differently about the object, the responses can be sorted into two basic categories: positive and negative

(coded PF, NF, respectively). A small number of students reported a positive change in their attitude towards the object and that the knowledge actually made them appreciate the object and the representative culture more. A similar small number of students reported a negative change in their feeling towards the object because they felt it was a moral issue to separate an object from a burial, which is at least somewhat sacred. Two students wrote they feel differently about the objects because they were now aware that they are not being used for the purpose they were originally created for. One of the students explained, "I feel as though the bowls don't serve as much of a purpose in the art museum as they did when they were buried." The other student said, "Though I find it fascinating, it technically is unethical considering I don't think these objects were made with the hopes of being on display in some American museum someday."

Most of the students who reported no difference in their feeling towards the object regardless of its association with a burial did not offer an explanation, however, three students said that the bowls were simply another cultural product like all of the others in the art museum. Because it was an open-ended question, it elicited a wide variety of responses, with great range of sophistication in vocabulary and phrasing. I decided to further analyze question 5 by classifying the responses according to the level of issue understanding displayed by the students. The matrix used to classify the responses is found in Table 4.3 below.

Level 1 – Low Understanding	Level 2 – Average Understanding	Level 3 – High Understanding
Student demonstrates little to no understanding of the issue. Student response includes below average vocabulary, below average reasoning, and/or below average idea consideration. Student does not present any evidence of understanding ideas presented in the museum curriculum or museum project.	Student demonstrates some understanding of the issue. Student response includes average level vocabulary, average reasoning, and/or average idea consideration. Student presents some evidence of understanding ideas presented in the museum curriculum or museum project.	Student demonstrates careful understanding of the issue. Student response includes high level vocabulary, advanced reasoning, and/or innovative idea consideration. Student presents much evidence of understanding ideas presented in the museum curriculum or museum project.

Table 4.3: Matrix to classify student responses to question 5 of the museum project

Of the total responses received to question 5, the great majority were categorized as level 2, or average understanding, a small number were categorized as level 1, or low understanding, and the smallest number was categorized as level 3, or high understanding. I sorted the responses to question 5 through a blind process, without knowing which students were being placed into which category. Of the responses placed in the high understanding category, almost all of them belonged to students that had attended art museums before. This appeared to be a continuous, consistent, and very strong correlation between students who have attended art museums before, achieving success in the museum project and having a high level of understanding of critical issues in art museum practices, although of course causation cannot be established.

The data from the ownership and repatriation worksheet, the museum project, lessons, and class observations had a strong impact on the data analysis for theme

4. Throughout the exercises and assessments, I witnessed the development of understanding from students with little or no museum experience. The students indicated a strong level of interest in the subject matter and in increasing their own knowledge about art museums. The global, historical, and ethical issues they were introduced to seemed to particularly pique their interest, which was gratifying but not surprising to me as the instructor and researcher. In fact, student interest in these issues reminded me of the similar phenomenon that I experienced with college students a decade earlier (and for the first time) while working with college students at the Blanton Museum of Art.

Theme 5: Observations in the Dallas Museum of Art, Including Bias

The museum project, which assigned a self-guided museum visit, was presented and assigned after the final lesson in the museum curriculum, Constructing the Museum (Appendix A), was taught. Therefore, because of the amount of curriculum presented prior, it is the most in-depth project of the curriculum unit and was assigned after all four curriculum lessons had been presented. The objective of the lesson was to answer the question: How are art museums constructed environments, and who constructs them? The lesson was introduced through a PowerPoint presentation, and at the end of the lesson the museum project was introduced, discussed, and formally assigned. The museum project is a major project, worth 25% of students' final grade, so any discussion of the museum project is usually of interest to a majority of students.

The fourth lesson was perhaps the most abstract for students: it presented a series of potential problems in museums to students who have largely never attended museums. For most of the class, there was no frame of reference for the situations presented. However, I did incorporate many images into the PowerPoint presentation and hoped that rather than confusing or frustrating students, the fourth lesson served to pique their excitement about their upcoming museum visit. Based on the level of feedback and student interest I gauged, I determined that students welcomed more information and discussion about art museums, but they did have a hard time envisioning some of the concepts presented in the lesson.

The fourth lesson began by introducing students to various ways of organizing a museum. Inspired by Fred Wilson's (1996) discussion of differences in museum displays in his seminal article *The Silent Message of the Museum*, students were shown images of the same object displayed alone against a white background and again among a clutter of objects and asked to discuss the differences that a viewer might perceive in the value of the object based on its surroundings. Some students immediately grasped the idea and agreed that the object seemed more valuable and prestigious when it was displayed in a plain white area with lots of space around it. One student used the term "sacred" to describe their feeling when viewing the lone object in a white area, and another student used the term "junky" to describe the setting of the same object in an area that looked more like an ethnographic museum, with a variety of different objects placed close together within a display space (Wilson, 1996). Student participation in this exercise was low, with only five students contributing ideas, and

there were several students whose attention was not focused on me or the presentation.

After this exercise, I presented students the idea of an encyclopedic art museum displaying a variety of objects from different global cultures (Karp & Lavine, 1991; Wilson, 1996). The Dallas Museum of Art, an encyclopedic art museum, was introduced and printed maps of the museum were passed out. At this point I did not want students to actively begin their observations of the DMA, so I simply asked them to note the types of collections and galleries the DMA had. As a class, we recognized that the DMA had collections of contemporary art, ancient Mediterranean art, European, Decorative Arts, Arts of Asia, Africa, and the Pacific, and American and Ancient American art. I projected a photo of a DMA elevator directory to emphasize how many elements and display areas the DMA has and how diverse their collecting areas are (Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1 Elevator directory at the Dallas Museum of Art

At this point, I explained the museum project in depth. I presented the project as a problem or reconnaissance that they were going to investigate, and talked the students through each of the three parts of the museum project, detailing my intentions and expectations for each question. I estimated that it would take them about two hours of museum investigation while at the museum. After the museum project was presented, one student remarked, "This project sounds cool because we'll actually be doing something." I understood this comment to mean that the student appreciated the fact that much of the project was observation-based and that they would be making discoveries based on their own observations, almost as if they were going on a scavenger hunt at the art museum. There were a number of questions about the project, but they mostly were concerned with formatting, word limits, and other grading specifications. When I finished explaining the project, the lesson was over. During the lesson, I noticed that I had student attention when specifically discussing the museum project, but there seemed to be something defeating or sobering about introducing the project, which is a significant portion of their final grade.

The museum project (Appendix B) was the largest data collection instrument of this research analysis, at least as far as the efforts expected of the students. The assignment was a major part of the grade for students enrolled in art appreciation, worth 25% of their final average. This might explain why 67 assignments were submitted, as compared to relatively lower numbers of submissions for the previous assignments that weighed much less on students' final grade. The museum project was the data instrument that was intended to most deeply capture students' ability to critically evaluate museum spaces. While I recognized that there were limitations to how much a

student could comprehend from a single museum visit and a single unit of curriculum about art museums, I was hopeful that this lesson and the accompanying project would demonstrate the beginnings of students' critical thoughts about art museum spaces.

There were three parts to the assignment, with the first part being a simple, object-based visual analysis that was not included in this research study. The second and third parts of the assignment were specifically designed to complement the museum curriculum, and included gallery observation exercises and a reading response portion. The gallery observation exercises consisted of six observation-based questions, and the reading responses consisted of four questions based on assigned readings by Karp (1991) and Wilson (1996), however, not all of the questions were analyzed for this project. Data from the museum project corresponded with theme 5, which identifies observations at the museum, including student observations of bias. The questions that were identified as correlating to this theme and analyzed for this project were numbers 1, 4, 7, 8, 9 from the museum project.

Each of the gallery observation questions directed students to a particular gallery and then asked the students to record their observations in that gallery. While a majority of the students completed the project according to the instructions, there were several students whose entire projects did not meet the guidelines and were not included in this data analysis. There were also students whose projects were incomplete, or contained portions of incorrectly followed instructions, and those projects were also not included in this analysis.

For questions 1 and 4, students were directed to visit the European galleries on the second floor and the Ancient American galleries on the fourth floor, and make

observations about the locations, gallery spaciousness, object spacing, label quality, and wall color. These questions corresponded to theme 5, which was concerned with student observation at the Dallas Museum of Art, including the ability to recognize bias. These questions were also based on Fred Wilson's (1996) publication *The Silent Message of the Museum*, and Ivan Karp's (1991) article *Culture and Representation*, which both pointed out instances of bias and inequality in how Western art museums are traditionally arranged (these readings were also the basis for the reading response questions in the third part of the museum project). When teaching the lesson in class that showed different styles of presenting objects in display spaces, I sought neutrality in my language while teaching, and presented images showing different methods of exhibition design to discuss differences, but did not place value judgments on them. It was important to the results of the research study that they truly reflected whether or not students were able to detect any differences in the gallery spaces, and if so, why the galleries might be different based on what type of art was presented.

For question 1, the project directed students to find the European galleries on the second floor of the museum. A photo was included, so that students would have assurance of the correct location. Then, students were asked to look around and answer the following questions (only questions included in the data analysis are shown):

- Is this a prime or valuable location?
- Are the galleries spacious and roomy?
- Are the objects cluttered together or spaced apart?
- What color are the walls?
- Is the lighting sufficiently bright?
- Are the object labels in good condition?

Around the same time that I assigned the museum project to my students, I visited the Dallas Museum of Art to record my own observations about the spaces.

I found that the European galleries were in a prime location, directly next to the special exhibition galleries on the first floor and accessible through a very wide, half flight of stairs. The galleries were visible from the main hallway of the Dallas Museum of Art, and they do not require substantial stairs or an elevator to reach them. The galleries were spacious and roomy, with objects containing large amounts of space in between them, as seen in Figure 4.2.



Figure 4.2: Image of the European galleries at the Dallas Museum of Art

All of the walls were white, and the galleries were flooded with natural light from the ceiling as well as from an interior atrium area seen in Figure 4.3. Although the



Figure 4.3: Image of the atrium in the European galleries at the DMA

assignment does not specifically ask about security, the European galleries were very well staffed with security guards, with at least one guard present in each room of the galleries. Lastly, the museum labels in the European galleries were mostly in very good condition, with crisp edges and legible print, as seen in Figure 4.4. There were only one or two that I noticed were dirty, smudged, or had bent or broken edges.

Hans Hofmann

American, born Germany, 1880–1966

Untitled (Yellow Table on Green)

1936

Oil on board

Fractional gift of The Rachofsky Collection in honor of Dr. Dorothy Kosinski, the Barbara Thomas Lemmon Curator of European Art, 2001.344

The intensely colored forms of this still life seem to vibrate next to each other, heightened by the vigorously applied paint that is thickly crusted in some areas and dripped in others. The liveliness of color and paint application creates a space imbued with energy. This painting was made in the years after Hans Hofmann moved from Germany to New York, where he opened an influential art school that exposed the ideas of the European modernists to the generation of American artists who would become the pioneers of abstract expressionism in the 1940s and 1950s. Clement Greenberg, the influential critic who championed the abstract expressionists, called Hofmann “the most important art teacher of our time.”

Figure 4.4: Image of object label in European galleries

After observing the European galleries, I walked up four flights of stairs to observe the Ancient American galleries, where I completed the same observations.

First, because of their placement on the fourth floor, I determined that the Ancient American galleries were not in a prime or valuable location. Additionally, the galleries were not large, spacious, or roomy, and consisted of a series of small, enclosed rooms as seen in Figure 4.5. Without a consistent unit of measurement, it was difficult to say



Figure 4.5: Ancient American galleries at the DMA

that all of the objects in the Ancient American galleries were cluttered together or spaced apart, however, compared to the number of objects in the European galleries, there were more objects spaced together in a smaller area in the Ancient American

galleries. Some of the display cases had many objects cluttered together, as seen in Figure 4.6.



Figure 4.6: Display case filled with objects in the Ancient American galleries

The walls were painted three different colors: green-blue, grey, and deep red, as seen in Figure 4.7 below. The lighting was not bright, but there was enough light to see the objects, which had spotlights on them. There was no natural light in the Ancient American galleries, and the numerous spotlights throughout the gallery led to the creation of many shadows on objects, perhaps contributing to a sense of mystery in the gallery. Although the assignment did not ask to observe the presence of security, there was not a single security guard present in any of the rooms in the Ancient American galleries. I visited these galleries for a total of two hours and never encountered a security guard.



Figure 4.7: Dark red walls in Ancient American galleries

Lastly, I observed the object labels in the Ancient American galleries, and found them to be in very poor shape. The majority of the labels were dirty, faded, and/or damaged and bent around the edges, and some had even been written on. Examples of the museum labels in the Ancient Americas galleries are seen in Figures 4.8 and 4.9.

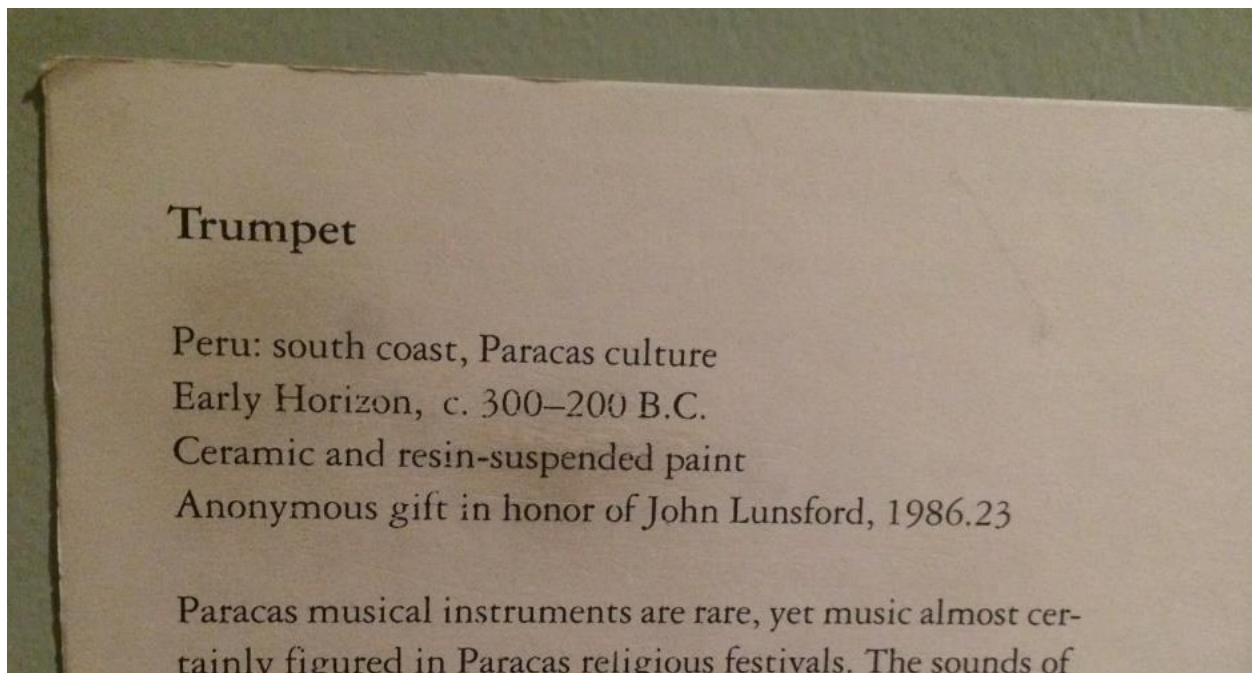


Figure 4.8: Detail from label in Ancient American galleries

When comparing the European galleries with the Ancient American galleries, I noticed significant discrepancies in how the galleries were designed, arranged, and cared for. The European galleries were in a prime location, they were more spacious, had more natural light and more security, they had bright white walls and quality museum labels. By comparison, the Ancient American galleries were not in a prime location, they were smaller and more cluttered, had neither natural light nor security guards, had multi-colored walls and damaged and dirty museum labels. I wondered whether or not my

Plaque with signs and symbols in the Olmec style

Mexico: Olmec culture or modern forger

c. 900–500 B.C. or c. 1950

Serpentine and traces of cinnabar

The Art Museum League Fund, 1969.11

In 1969 this plaque was considered a major addition to the Museum's ancient American collection. Dominated by the cleft head with jaguarian mouth and toothless gums, the figure was described as possibly representing an Olmec deity of fire or rain.

During the 1970s, several scholars questioned the authenticity of the object. Of particular concern were the profile partial heads on the shoulders, the monster face on the lower body area, the baselike band across the lower edge, the three circles incised on the forehead of the primary face, the scratches on the eyes, and the meandering line incised across the mouth. In addition, the opaque surface of the lower part of the plaque resembled an artificial patina used by Mexican forgers during the 1950s and 1960s.

During the 1990s, other scholars questioned the verdict of modern forgery and encouraged us to return the plaque to the galleries, where its authenticity could be openly discussed. We invite you to compare the plaque with the Olmec stone objects beside it, all of which are considered authentic. We will revise this label as our quest for the truth progresses.

Figure 4.9: Object label in Ancient Americas gallery

students would be as certain as I was that I was witnessing bias when comparing the two galleries.

Student observations of the European galleries agreed with mine. In their answers to question 1, virtually all of the students found the European galleries to be in a valuable location, spacious, without clutter, with white walls, bright lighting, and with labels in good condition. Despite the fact that the questions were open-ended, there was tremendous uniformity of responses for the observation-based questions regarding the European galleries. Although even simple examinations such as these could have been debatable based on the subjectivity of visual observation, there was considerable consensus about the European galleries among the students. Based on their observations, I concluded that the students were in the correct location and made accurate and factual observations of their surroundings.

Unfortunately, the results of question 4 were not as straightforward. Based on students' written observations, it became clear that about 25 students actually observed the incorrect galleries. Although students were directed to find the Ancient American galleries on the fourth floor of the museum, and although a photo was included on their assignment so that students would have assurance of the correct location, it seems that many students went to the American galleries on the fourth floor of the museum instead of the *Ancient* American. The two galleries are located directly across a hall from one another. I might have interpreted the difficulty of finding the Ancient American gallery as a comment on how prime of a location it was. Approximately 40 museum projects were determined to have correctly observed the Ancient American galleries, and these were the projects that have been included in the data for question 4.

There was not as strong of a consensus among student observations of the Ancient American galleries as there was of the European galleries. On some level, this was understandable, as whether or not a gallery is “light” or “dark” or “cluttered” or “spacious” is relative and subjective. However, a majority of students still agreed that the Ancient American galleries were not spacious, were cluttered, had dark colored walls and dim lighting, and contained object labels that were in poor condition. Many students thought the Ancient American galleries were in a prime location, and as this was a question that is largely based on perception, this is also not necessarily surprising. Many of the students who felt it was a prime location referenced the fact that the Ancient American galleries were located overlooking the large atrium in the museum, and could be reached directly by a flight of stairs in the atrium (though no reference was made to the stairs consisting of four full flights). The full set of student data for both questions was compared to the smaller set of 17 students with previous museum experience, but there was no appreciable difference in how students with or without museum experience viewed the Ancient American galleries.

For questions 1 and 4, students were not directed to compare the two galleries to each other, but merely to record their observations separately. This may have influenced how they observed each gallery, and there may have been more consensus within the Ancient American gallery if students had been instructed to compare it directly with the European gallery. I felt that the fact that students were virtually unanimous in their observations of the European galleries when compared to the divergence of opinions over the Ancient American galleries was enough to indicate that the two galleries were not designed equally. Based on my observations, there were

considerable differences in the locations, arrangements, size, and lighting of these two galleries. The European galleries were located in a prime location on a lower floor, just next to the contemporary galleries and the ancient Greek and Roman collections. The European galleries were spacious with white walls, and they contained natural light from nearby windows and courtyards. The galleries were also large, with European art taking up a large portion of the overall museum exhibition space. The objects in the galleries were spaced proportionally for a gallery of European art, with paintings evenly spaced apart on the walls. All of the object labels were in very good condition.

The Ancient American galleries were located on the highest level of the museum, which I considered a non-prime location. Compared to the space dedicated to European art, the Ancient American collection was considerably smaller, perhaps one fifth the size of the European collection. The Ancient American galleries were also considerably less spacious and contained more works of art, which made the galleries feel cluttered. There was no natural light, the walls are painted medium to dark colors, and the lighting was dark, with occasional spotlighting on individual objects. The galleries were extremely dark compared to the European galleries. Lastly, the object labels, collectively, were in poor condition. Many labels are worn down and have frayed edges and text that was faded to the point of being illegible.

The third part of the museum project consisted of asking students to synthesize their experience and thoughts with the assigned class readings by Fred Wilson (1996) and Ivan Karp (1991). Questions 7, 8, and 9 were included in the data analysis, and all three of them corresponded to theme 5, which tracked student observations of the Dallas Museum of Art, including recognition of bias. More than any other data collection

instrument, these open-ended responses to readings allowed students the opportunity to display what they have learned in class and through their experiences in the art museum. This portion of the museum project also was the most academically rigorous. The readings by Wilson were on a similar level to what the students were required to read from their textbook, but the Karp readings were written at a much higher academic level. This portion of the museum project would pose a challenge to an upper-level art history class, and was perhaps more academically appropriate for even a graduate-level course and admittedly an ambitious assignment for my students; therefore it was difficult to predict an outcome for this portion of the museum project.

There were three questions, with two sub-questions for a total of five questions that are included in this analysis, four based on the Wilson (1996) readings, and one based on the Karp (1991) readings. As with previous open-ended responses, these were sorted to find patterns in responses, coded according to the chart in chapter 3, and then each response was measured according to a matrix that measures the depth of student understanding. Where warranted, individual quotes were documented as they helped demonstrate particular levels of understanding. The questions that were posed to students and were measured are (they are numbered differently in this list than they were presented to students for ease in reference):

- (Sub-question 7A) How might the physical qualities of the space in which an object is displayed affect the perception of the object?
- (Sub-question 7B) Name an object that you saw at the museum whose significance might change if it were displayed in a different manner.
- (Sub-question 8C) How do the arrangement and locations of the museum galleries compare with Wilson's (1996) description?

- (Sub-question 8D) Do you think the locations of these galleries impart any meaning about the relative value of the collections?
- (Sub-question 9E) Does the museum, through their exhibition size, location, décor, or arrangement, place a greater value on any culture?

As previously stated, asking students to read high-level articles and apply them to what they have learned in class and at the museum was the most difficult aspect of the museum project. A sizable number of students did not complete that portion of the project. It was clear that another sizable number of students did not read the article, and therefore did not qualify to have their data assessed. The total number of valid submissions for part 3 of the museum project was the lowest of all the data collection instruments, with only 52 museum projects being analyzed (fifteen projects were determined to not qualify for analysis based on incomplete responses).

Of the total projects that were analyzed, some of the students did not effectively answer each of the questions, so some of the sub-questions have fewer responses than others. For sub-question 7A, the results were unanimous. All of the students responded that the physical qualities of a space can affect the perception of the object. Many students did not offer a specific example of an artwork they saw at the museum, but a few offered excellent examples. Two students pointed out objects located in the hallway outside the ancient American galleries on the fourth floor, the Aztec sculpture *Head of the Rain God Tlaloc* and the painting *El Ahorcado* by Octavio Medellin, seen in Figure 4.22. Both students commented on how their location in a hallway made visitors more likely to overlook them, or to view them as less valuable because they were not located in a proper gallery.



Figure 4.10: *El Ahorcado* by Octavio Medellín, in stairway at DMA

Another student remarked on a tripod cylindrical vessel (*Cylindrical tripod vessel with two goggled figures*, see Figure 4.23), also in the ancient American gallery, “It was in an enclosed glass case with 3-4 pieces of pottery from the same region, but you could only see half the pottery instead of the full 360 degree view. If the pottery would have been sitting on a pillar in the middle of the room, it would make people interpret the pottery as a more important piece of art.”

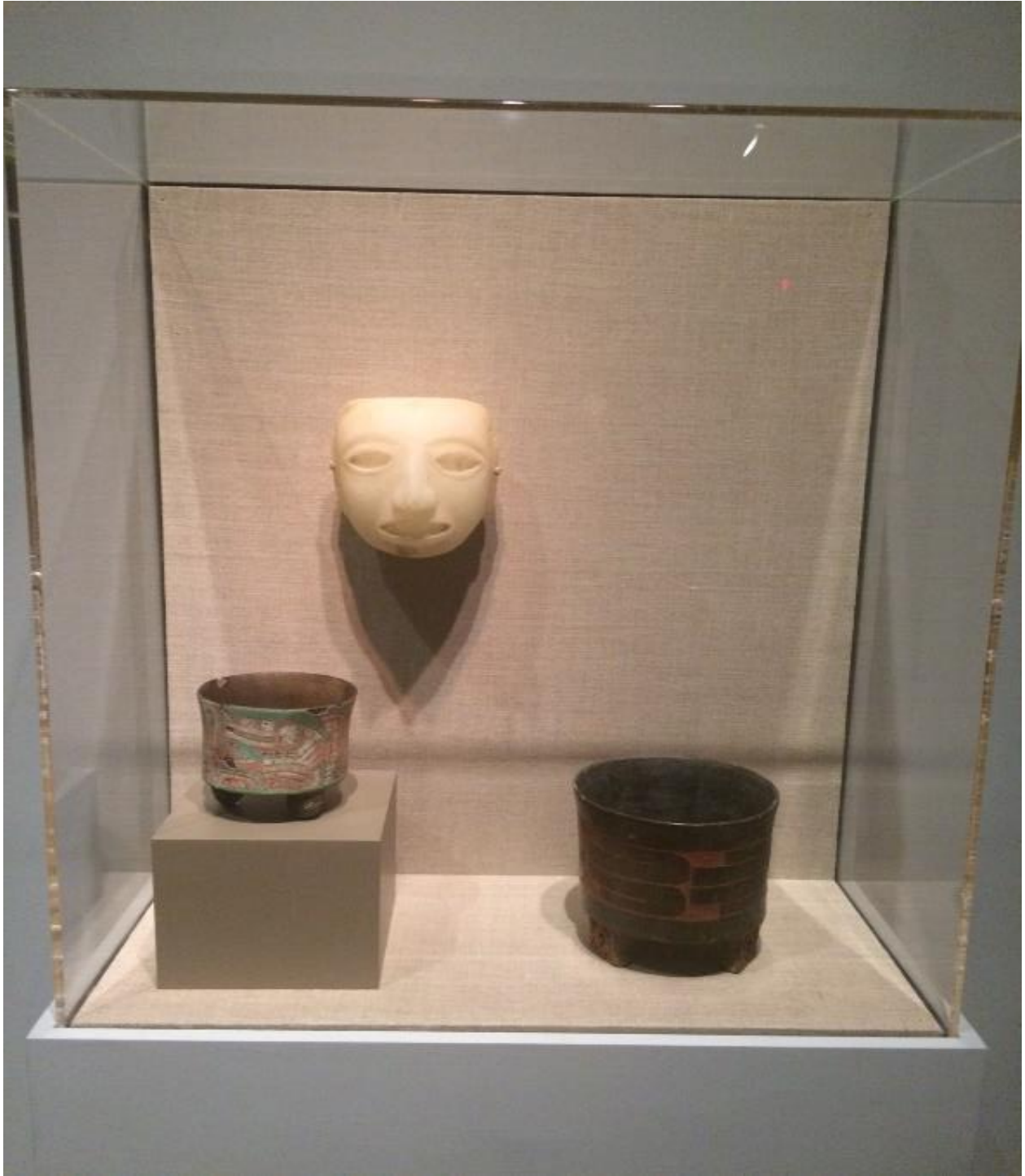


Figure 4.11: Pottery in the Ancient American galleries

Several other students made similar observations about different works of art in response to sub-question 7B. Regarding a work of art found in the Asian galleries (title unknown), a student wrote, “I saw a sculpture that looked like a festive, lion-like animal. If this were displayed in a white box [as mentioned by Fred Wilson, (1996)], one might think it is very valuable and perhaps belonged to an emperor. If it was displayed in a somewhat ethnographic way and [therefore] only looked to be one of many [objects] and then it would seem like it was not of significant value.” Another student commented on what appeared to her to be a deliberate “exotification” of art works (see Figure 4.12), “There is a huge statue made of fern-tree wood in the Asian gallery. Even though the original wall is white, they put a dark wall partition to set it against and put a spotlight on it. This gives it an eerie taboo sort of feeling, and to me, emphasizes that it is not a classical sculpture and degrades its significance as a piece of art.”

Lastly, another student commented on the overall feeling the different galleries gave her (see Figure 4.13 below), “I couldn't help but notice how much darker the areas where the ancient American gallery and African gallery were in comparison to the rest of the museum. Personally, I found it made the history of the artifacts have a darker past. Even something innocent as simple as beads from jewelry came off as somewhat daunting.”



Figure 4.12: Standing male figure statue, Dallas Museum of Art



Figure 4.13: The African galleries at the DMA

I was gratified to see that students were able to give specific—and valid—examples of how they saw bias in the ways the museum displayed objects from different cultures. Some students specifically compared their objects to the white cube Wilson (1996) wrote about in his article, and others used vocabulary introduced in class, such as ethnographic museum display or salon-style display. Although some students did not offer an example of an object whose significance would change if it were displayed in a different manner, those students who did offer answers came up with excellent examples.

When responding to sub-question 8C, the results were almost perfectly divided. About half of students felt that the museum galleries compared well with Fred Wilson's (1996) description of the galleries in the Seattle Art Museum. The other half of students felt that the museum galleries did not compare very well with Wilson's description. This is another question that may have suffered from the cumbersome way it was written; it had too many sub-questions and did not directly ask students where the ancient Greek and Roman works of art were compared to the European works of art. The Dallas Museum of art has located its Ancient Mediterranean galleries (filled with Greek, Roman, and Etruscan works of art) directly next to their modern European galleries. A Henry Moore sculpture bridged the divide between the two galleries, as seen in Figure 4.14.



Figure 4.14: The connection between Ancient and European galleries

Some of the students felt that the museum might have tendencies towards the arrangement Wilson describes, but many wrote that the presence of American galleries on the fourth floor of the museum was enough to dissuade them, as it represented a

Western gallery not in line with the Greek, Roman, and European works of art. In my opinion, this is a fair point, and I thought it indicated some real consideration and observation on the part of the students. However, I also thought that the American galleries on the fourth floor were more of an anomaly, and the majority of the Dallas Museum of Art galleries followed the plan that Wilson (1996) describes. In response to sub-question 8D, a very strong majority of students did feel that, generally, the locations of galleries within a museum could impart value. The minority of students did not feel that the locations of galleries can impart value, with one student suggesting that thinking so was a result of “being too sensitive.”

The last question on the museum project, sub-question 9E, asked students if they thought that the Dallas Museum of Art specifically placed greater values on any culture(s) within the museum. A great majority of students, well over three-quarters, felt that the museum did place a greater value on a culture through their exhibition size, location, décor, or arrangement, and all of those students found that greater value was placed on European or Western galleries. The remainder of students, a small minority, felt that the museum placed equal emphasis on all of the cultures represented within its galleries. Student comments ranged from the simple, “I would say the European gallery has more value than the others, everything seems to be so fancy,” and, “The Non-Western cultures were slightly more shoved together on the third floor but it was tolerable,” to the more sophisticated, “The works of art in a clean, white, spaced out gallery will give the impression of class, and sometimes of being more modern. All of the works of art in the African, Asian, and Pacific galleries were darker, less tidy, and

less spaced out. This gave it more of an ethnographic feel, and made it look more like ancient functional pieces rather than classy, fine art.”

Another student commented that “the DMA seems to place more value on European art, seeing as it is the largest collection, most well-kept, and most monitored.” And lastly, another student pointed out the differences in the galleries, as well as a potential motive for the differences, “The European galleries were extremely spacious, roomy, and the objects were balanced in a simple manner. In contrast, the ancient American galleries were much smaller and the objects were cluttered together. This shows us the DMA allows a better visual arrangement and places a higher priority upon the cultures that are most like [the United States of] America.”

In addition to sorting for patterns and coding the data gleaned from the part 3 sub-questions, the student responses were categorized according to the measured depth of their understanding of the concepts. The same matrix (Table 4.3) used for previous responses was used in this analysis. Overall, students demonstrated significantly higher levels of understanding with part 3 of the museum project than with earlier assignments, including the formative survey, the ownership and repatriation worksheet, and part 2 of the museum project. Almost one-third of students were rated at the highest level of understanding, about half were rated at the average level of understanding, and the smallest number of students were rated at the below-average level of understanding. Some of the inflation in level ratings may be attributed to 15 of the non-qualifying projects not being included in the data analysis. Overall, however, it was a good sign that so many students were able to correctly speculate answers and incorporate accurate vocabulary into their responses.

Lastly, when examining the highest level responses for the number of students who had visited an art museum before, there was still a high correlation, but this particular series of questions also contained a sizable number of first-time museum visitors. Many of the high level responses were written by students with previous museum experience, but almost as many were written by first-time museum visitors. This still demonstrated a slight advantage among experienced museum visitors, but also indicated that advanced museum concepts can be grasped during a first visit to an art museum and that students without museum experience can bridge any gap initially seen between them and experienced museumgoers.

The museum project was a large assignment designed for students to complete at the art museum, and it provided a large quantity of data for analysis. The intent behind the second part of the museum project was to see if students could recognize inconsistencies in the display practices in different art galleries at the museum and whether students had strong feelings about certain exhibition practices at the museum. The goal of the third part of the museum project was to attempt to tie student observations of the museum into academic articles, and determine whether or not students agreed or disagreed with the arguments presented. The data collection was successful, and it was determined that students did see a difference between the physical aspects of the European and Ancient American art galleries.

Almost all students agreed that the physical quality of a space can influence their perception of an object, and students were able to point out certain objects they felt would be understood differently should the physical aspects of its environment be changed. Lastly, most students also agreed that the museum does place greater value

on certain cultures in the museum. As with each of the previous data collection instruments, special attention was paid to students who had previously visited the art museum to measure any differences between those students and students with less museum visitation experience, and unlike previous data instruments, the differences in the quality of responses from students with museum experience versus students without museum experience is decreasing.

Theme 6: Ability to Determine Connections Between Art Museums, History, Power, and Money

Theme 6 is perhaps the theme that has the most direct connection to critical theory, as it seeks to discover how readily students' are able to find connections between art museums, history, power, and money. The question from the repatriation worksheet that contributed to this research theme was question 11, which sought to discover why students think the British Museum does not return the Rosetta Stone, Parthenon Marbles, or Benin Bronzes; and question 6 from the museum project, which asked a number of questions to see what connections, if any, students found between the Dallas Museum of Art and its collections and city.

For question 11, students were directed to speculate as to why the British Museum did not return the three objects discussed. It was an open-ended question, and therefore elicited a large variety of responses. However, the responses were consistent enough to be able to be coded and sorted into eight main categories. Some students

provided multiple speculative reasons, and their answers were placed into multiple categories.

A strong majority of students clearly connected British Museum ownership of these three objects to concepts of power, money, and prestige. The question was open-ended, and students suggested these explanations based on their own understanding. Only small numbers of students genuinely believed that the British Museum retained ownership of the objects due to their legal or ethical right to do so. Many students also took a practical approach to the British Museum retaining ownership, and they felt that if the British Museum returned one or two objects it could create a slippery slope resulting in demands for the return of more objects than they could afford to lose and that the objects were simply too valuable for the museum to let go.

The fact that so many students clearly identified power, money, and prestige associated with the British Museum's continued possession of the Parthenon Marbles indicates that students very clearly see the art museum as an institution of wealth and power. That students (from the ownership and repatriation worksheet) also repeatedly pointed to the imperialist history of England when explaining their ability to collect so many objects draws a clear connection between historic imperialism, wealth, power, and object acquisition and ownership. Student's ability to draw these connections, and their resultant understanding, is a major component of this research.

Question 6 from the museum project consisted of ten sub-questions, though only two of them will be incorporated into this data analysis. Question 6 was selected for inclusion in the data analysis because it corresponded to theme 6, which looks for connections between art museums, history, power, and money. The questions have

been identified within this chapter as sub-question 6A and 6B for ease in reporting. The questions included were:

- (Sub-question 6A) What does it say about the Dallas Museum of Art that they have collected so many works of art? What does it say about the city of Dallas that they own and maintain such a large museum? What does it take to own and maintain such a large museum?
- (Sub-question 6B) The Dallas Museum of Art owns over 22,000 works of art spanning 5000 years. Where did the Dallas Museum of art get the resources to acquire and maintain these works?

Question 6 was the only question from part 2 of the museum project that does not specifically guide students to a place within the museum and request a precise response to a particular object or gallery. The question was summative, and asks students to draw conclusions and synthesize what they have seen at the museum and learned from class. The answers provided by the students were grouped together to find patterns in responses, coded according to the chart in chapter 3, and also categorized in a matrix according to level of issue understanding demonstrated by the students. The same matrix used in Table 4.3 to categorize the answers to question 5 (from theme 4) was also used to categorize the answers to question 6.

There were a large variety of responses to sub-question 6A, and there was also considerable repetition in answers between sub-question 6A and 6B. Admittedly, I might re-phrase the questions in the future to make more concrete distinctions between them. When analyzing the results of sub-question 6A, I attempted to group them by similar concepts, and in doing so, consolidated the answers into thirteen distinct answers.

Students had a variety of responses to the prompt of what the museum says about the city in which it operates. All of the responses were positive, with students asserting that the museum reflected well on the city of Dallas in terms of its wealth, values, citizenry, organization, and resources. There were not any negative answers, nor were there any answers that questioned or criticized the history or practices of the art museum. Negative or critical responses were not a desired outcome, however, the lack of any negative or critical responses whatsoever should be noted. Sub-question 6B was perhaps more straightforward and thus received a significantly smaller variety of answers, almost all of which consisted of different variations of fairly standard methods of financial support.

I was disappointed that almost all of the students seemed to answer sub-question 6B more literally than I had intended, but this is perhaps a result of a vaguely-worded prompt. No student answered by referencing how historical power structures and privilege beget great wealth and privilege, or by associating art museums in the United States with art museums in Europe, and asserting our link in the chain of western imperialism. Instead they all offered specific financial sources as bases for establishing museum collections. Academically, this represents basic repetition of information delivered in class, but not any additional critical or ambitious thoughts on behalf of the students.

An additional disappointment was found in the lack of high level understanding found in students' answers to both sub-questions. After sorting answers according to the matrix, only a small number of students exhibited a high level of understanding of how art museums reflect the cities in which they are located and where museums get

resources to acquire and maintain their collections. As with the earlier questions, students with previous museum visitation experience made up a high proportion of this category, representing almost all of the high level of understanding group. Almost half of students offered responses that mandated categorization in the average understanding category, and about one third of students fell into the low understanding category. Because these two questions require more synthesis and consideration than previous questions, I had high hopes that I would find a large number of sophisticated responses indicating innovative thought. When compared to the results of other similar questions, more students fell from the average understanding category to the below-average understanding category, which does still indicate improvement in understanding from the earliest questions.

Possible explanations for this include questionnaire fatigue, which can result from answering too many questions on one assignment (Mertler, 2006), and also the questions being poorly-phrased. The questions were written generally enough that different students may have read the question(s) and had entirely different impressions of the intent of the question. If the research study is replicated in the future, many of the questions from the museum project will be rewritten for improved clarity and brevity, but the second part of the museum project is clearly the most in need of rewriting. My intent was to be thorough, but I believe that I overestimated students' ability and attention spans in this case. Regardless of the defects of the third data collection instrument, the data collected is usable and effective in answering the primary research questions.

Theme 7: Potential for Personal Change, Transformation, and/or Empowerment

Because they correlated with theme 7, questions 6, 8, 9, and 15 from the final data collection instrument were analyzed, as was question number 13 from the first data collection instrument. The final data collection instrument was implemented in class on May 4 and 5. These dates were after the museum projects had been submitted, but before students had received their grades for their projects. The dates were selected so that all students were able to complete the final data collection instrument with the benefit of now having art museum experience. It was also important to obtain the data prior to students receiving their museum project grades, as I did not want the data to be influenced by a student possibly receiving a negative grade on their project and that negatively affecting their answers on the survey. As with the first data collection instrument, students were given about 30 minutes in class to complete the final instrument, which was classified as a daily grade and weighed approximately two percent of their final average. Between the two classes, 63 final data instruments were submitted and analyzed.

The final data collection instrument was very similar to the first one. This was done so that any differences in student opinions and knowledge could be measured from prior to the museum curriculum being implemented in class and prior to students visiting the art museum. The initial analysis focuses on any changes in student responses to the same questions over the course of the semester, as these changes in opinions and knowledge can be indicative of personal change, transformation, and/or empowerment.

Questions 6, 8, and 9 were new questions designed for the summative museum survey, and they each corresponded to theme 7, which looked for the potential for personal change, transformation, and/or empowerment. Question 6 was an open-ended question which asked students to describe the most important thing(s) they learned about art museums. As was anticipated, many of the 53 students who responded had different things to say. However, upon reviewing and coding each of the responses to question 6, patterns were found, and seven general categories of response were identified, including a small miscellaneous category.

In decreasing order of majority, most of the students responded that their knowledge about the purposes of art museums, including educating, preserving, displaying, or collecting, was the most important thing they learned about art museums. Slightly fewer students wrote that critical issues within the art museum, such as controversies in the display of objects, the nature of collecting and acquisitions, repatriation, or funding as the most important thing they learned about art museums. Still fewer students responded by listing general positive things about art museums, such as how interesting they were, and an equal amount of students commented on how organized art museums were. The rest of students wrote that the most important thing they learned about art museum was the globalism/diversity of their collections; physical aspects of art museum visits, such as museum rules or admission policies; and financial aspects of art museums, such as funding and endowments, were the most important thing they learned about art museums. The rest of the student responses were placed into a miscellaneous category, including a few responses in which the main idea was difficult to determine.

For the purposes of this data analysis, some of the responses that indicated an interest in the more critical issues of museum displays are of particular importance. One student wrote that the most important thing s/he learned about art museums was that “Not all of the art is consistently displayed in the appropriate way according to that particular culture.” Similarly, another student stated that, “I learned that sometimes the way that exhibitions are curated can strongly affect your opinion on a culture or object.” Another student took interpretive responsibility for his own potential biases, and stated, “I have a subjective view of art and that might affect how I view other cultures.” Lastly, another student wrote, very simply, that the most important thing they learned about art museums was that, “some exhibitions are cared for better than others.” Each of these responses indicate that students developed a critical understanding of art museums and that the students were able to view art museums and their spaces as constructed environments, subject to bias and histories. When compared to the lack of knowledge students had prior to the curriculum being implemented, the sophistication of their answers shows considerable development of knowledge.

Question 8 was a simple question asking students if they plan on visiting art museums in the future. Almost all of the students said yes, with only a very small number of students saying no or maybe. Considering that very few of the students had ever visited an art museum prior to the class, this can be considered a transformational change in the interest of the students in art museums. Most of the students that elaborated on this question offered that they wanted to visit an art museum again because they were fun and interesting, and some students suggested they would like to return to the museum with family, friends, and significant others so that they could take

their time and see more. It is not known whether they would have had the same response if they had been assigned a more superficial museum assignment.

Question 9 asked students if they learned anything about art museums that can be applied to other aspects of their life. After much consideration, I decided that the data analysis for this question would treat it as a simple “yes” or “no” question, rather than attempt to place a value judgment of the level of what students had learned. This is mostly based on the quality of the responses after coding and attempting to find patterns. The quality of detailed responses were lower than I would have liked (for example, “I learned not to touch paintings,” and “I learned to eat before I go to the museum because a salad and a drink is \$20”), and many students did not provide anything more than a yes or no answer. I decided that if students felt that they had learned something that could be applied to their lives, then that alone warranted consideration and significance to the study. Almost all of the students responded that they had learned something about art museums that could be applied to other aspects of their lives. A small percentage of students responded that they had not learned anything about art museums that could be applied to other aspects of their lives.

The last data that was applied to theme 7 comes by comparing the same question from the first and last data collection instruments. Question 13 in the first data collection instrument and question 15 in the last data collection instrument both asked students about how knowledgeable they feel about art museums. This data was also used for theme 2, which analyzes student knowledge. As previously noted, students felt far less knowledgeable about art museums prior to learning about them in class. After receiving four separate lessons about art museums, as well as visiting and

investigating the Dallas Museum of Art, students self-reported much higher levels of knowledge and understanding about art museums. From my point of view, this indicated the personal change sought by this research.

The purpose of theme 7 was to see if any personal change, transformation, or empowerment was achieved by students who experienced the critical theory-oriented art appreciation curriculum. Several factors from the data indicated that the students who participated in this study did experience some degree of change, transformation, and/or empowerment as a result of their experience. Students reported that they were more knowledgeable about art museums and they were able to identify the most significant thing they learned about art museums; they said that they were going to visit art museums in the future; and they learned something at the art museum that could be applied to their lives outside of the museum. These factors indicate change, and possibly transformation and empowerment, did occur.

Conclusion

Throughout the course of the spring semester of 2015, four specific museum lessons, heavily influenced by critical theory, were implemented in the classroom, and four related museum assignments were also implemented in an attempt to assess student learning as well as collect data. As evidenced in the previous pages, the data collection instruments submitted by students gathered large quantities of valuable data. In addition to the data collection instruments, class discussions and instructor reflections

were also analyzed. In order to better organize the tremendous amounts of data collected, I organized the information into seven themes that correlated to the three primary research questions. The seven themes were:

1. Personal feelings about art museums
2. Knowledge of and understanding about art museums
3. Interest and curiosity in art museums
4. Knowledge and understanding of global/ethical/historical issues in art museum practices
5. Observations in the Dallas Museum of Art, including recognition of bias
6. Ability to determine connections between art museums, history, power, and money
7. Potential for personal change, transformation, and/or empowerment

Although a tremendous amount of data was collected, in the interest of efficacy, only portions of the data that corresponded to the seven themes (and ultimately lead to answering the three research questions) were analyzed.

Upon first glance, the most significant findings were the number of students who had never visited an art museum before, as well as the overwhelmingly positive impressions students had of art museums before and after their museum visits. After implementation of both neutral and critical theory-oriented museum lessons in class, many of the students seemed to be capable of viewing the historical context and contemporary situations of art museums as somewhat more complicated than they had previously understood. Student interest was highest during class lessons that traced the provenance of specific art objects owned by the British Museum, and class discussions provided an additional source of data. Additionally, during their visits to the Dallas Museum of Art, a majority of students were able to see fundamental differences in how the art museum exhibited works of art from different cultures and time periods. After their museum visits, students reported that their positive opinions of art museums

increased, their knowledge of art museums had increased, and they intended to visit art museums in the future. The data will be further interpreted in the final chapter of this research study as I attempt to answer the primary research questions using the analyzed data.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF THE DATA

Findings and Implications

Introduction

Three research questions, each focused on critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum, guided this study. This section focused on answering those questions by applying and interpreting the collected data, which supported and provided answers to the research questions. Each of the three research questions and their related findings were discussed in detail. While answers did emerge from the data, the open-ended phrasing of the research questions, combined with the reflective nature of action research, did not lend itself to producing simple, one-dimensional answers. Multiple, complex answers emerged for each question and occasionally the research produced additional questions. The seven emerging themes found upon the initial data analysis were instrumental in sorting the data and helping to funnel the large quantities of data into the framework of the three research questions. The data collected also produced additional, unanticipated findings and implications that were relevant to the fields of art education, museum education, and higher education that will also be discussed.

This chapter was organized into nine sections. The general introduction was followed by in-depth discussion of the findings for each of the three research questions. After the three research questions were discussed individually, other findings not specifically related to the three primary research questions were detailed in the fifth

section. The sixth section of the final chapter was devoted to the implications for this research study, and the seventh section focused on the limitations of the study. The eighth part of the chapter looks ahead to make recommendations for future research, and then the final section of the chapter concluded the research project.

Research Question 1

The primary research question sought to discover how a critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum impacted college student understanding of an encyclopedic art museum. The emerging themes that corresponded to the first research question are numbers 2, 4, 5, and 6. Theme 2 identified knowledge and understanding about art museums; theme 4 focused on knowledge and understanding of global/ethical/historical issues in art museum practices; theme 5 identified student observations in the Dallas Museum of Art, including recognition of bias; and theme 6 looked at student ability to determine connections between art museums, history, power, and money.

As previously stated, the themes created an organizational bridge between the bulk of data and the research questions, allowing me to directly and deliberately funnel data from the collection instruments to the corresponding research questions. Table 3.1 introduced in chapter 3 indicated which specific questions from the four data collection instruments were used to gather the data for research question 1. The data from twenty-three selected questions corresponding to the selected themes from each

of the four data collection instruments were analyzed, coded, and interpreted, resulting in evidence-based answers to the primary research question. I have included additional discussion of many of the twenty-three questions (found in the four data collection instruments) that correspond to themes 2, 4, 5, and 6 below. The purpose of the discussion below is to reveal answers to research question 1.

Based on the data collected, there were multiple ways the critical theory-based curriculum impacted the understanding of students enrolled in my art appreciation courses. From the changes seen in student responses from the formative museum survey to the summative museum survey, student understanding developed significantly throughout the implementation of the critical theory-based art museum curriculum. In their formative museum survey, students reported that they had never thought in-depth about art museums and they reported low knowledge about art museums. Their initial, pre-instruction understanding of the function of art museums was adequate, with many students accurately identifying display, collection, and education as primary functions of art museums. When asked to speculate on specific questions about how art museums work, including who selects objects and how museums are funded, most students knew very little.

When these results were compared to the summative museum survey, significant growth in self-reported understanding was seen. In the summative museum survey, student knowledge about art museums had risen considerably, from 4.52 to 6.83 out of a scale from 1 to 10. Their understanding of the function of art museums had evolved from a majority of students identifying the primary function of art museums as displaying works of art to a majority of students identifying the primary function of art museums as

educational. This indicated how students felt about their own experience at the art museum: instead of walking in front of display cases and passively viewing objects as they seem to have envisioned prior to having actual museum experience, their first museum experience was instead interactive and educational, which resulted in the shift in their reported understanding of museum functions. Also in the summative museum survey, a significant number of student responses were coded as specifically referencing critical theory perspectives, such as power, wealth, nationalism, and/or imperialism. In the formative museum survey there were no critical theory perspectives indicated.

In the summative museum survey, when comparing student responses that indicated their level of knowledge and understanding of art museum practices, the results rose across the board, with fewer students falling into the below-average category, more students falling into the average category, and the above-average category doubling in size when compared to the formative museum survey. This indicates a significant rise in student knowledge and understanding of art museums over the course of the semester. The critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum clearly impacted college student understanding of the encyclopedic art museum by increasing students' perceptions of their knowledge of art museums, evolving their opinions of the importance of museum functions from the more static function of display to the more active function of educate, and developing their understanding of art museum practices through appropriate use of vocabulary and ability to correctly describe concepts such as museum governance.

From the second data collection instrument, which focused on issues of repatriation, students indicated the ability to differentiate between the circumstances of three historical objects and their ownership by the British Museum. Students perceived the relationship between history, power, wealth, and object ownership, which is a critical desired learning outcome of the critical theory-based curriculum. Students reported differing opinions on the status of the Parthenon Marbles, Rosetta Stone, and Benin Bronzes, but clearly stated critical reasons for why the British Museum would not want to repatriate the objects to their countries of origin. Many of the students, when considering reasons for continued ownership of these objects by the British Museum, referenced power, wealth, and status as reasons.

From the third data collection instrument, students also indicated a strong depth of understanding of and interest in ethical display issues at the Dallas Museum of Art through consideration of the display of Mimbres bowls, often associated with burial rituals. While many students either strongly praised or condemned the display, a significant number of students also professed that simply their consideration of the subject was fascinating and compelling. This indicates that the critical theory-based curriculum found art museum-based concepts that students had never before considered, grasped their attention and encouraged deep and critical thinking of the subject matter.

The third data collection instrument gave students the opportunity to make comparisons and observations from the Dallas Museum of Art galleries, as well as synthesize their thoughts with assigned readings. It was gratifying that a large number of students, when comparing the European galleries with the Ancient American

galleries, saw differences in the physical environments. Almost all students indicated that they felt the DMA placed greater value in their displays of art from Western versus Non-Western cultures. Additionally, students were able to select specific objects that they felt were influenced by their environments, demonstrating their developing ability to critique the museum space and display practices. In selecting specific objects, students signified that they were not simply professing an opinion, but they were backing up their opinions with specific evidence based on their own developing understanding of art museums as constructed spaces.

Two questions on the second and third data collection instruments attempted to measure the ability of students determine connections between art museums, history, power, and money. When confronted with the provenance of the Parthenon Marbles, Rosetta Stone, and the Benin Bronzes, students were overwhelmingly convinced of the connection between the British Empire's imperialist history and their desire to maintain power and preserve wealth as it related to their continued ownership of the objects. Students were less able to determine similar connections within the Dallas Museum of Art, which suggests that students are able to make critical theory connections only after being presented with specific information about objects and their history. It also suggests perhaps a greater willingness to associate negative behaviors from foreign art museums rather than local ones, though a small number of students did indicate critical theory-based beliefs about the Dallas Museum of Art as well.

The critical theory-based curriculum impacted college student understanding of an encyclopedic art museum by providing a basic foundation of knowledge about the current functions and practices of art museums, including the widely accepted purposes

of art museums to collect, preserve, display, and educate; the wide variety of specific occupations and roles of art museum staff, as well as education and training necessary to qualify for those positions; and the day to day governance of art museums, including administrative structures and funding. Students, as part of their in-class discussion assignments, had to speculate as to which of the four functions of an art museum was the most important, select an art museum career that they might enjoy, and research endowment funds at specific universities and art museums. The information presented and the exercises implemented left students with a foundation of information on which to build their understanding of encyclopedic art museums. The information provided by the curriculum encouraged students to consider an institution about which their knowledge and experience was very limited.

Second, the critical theory-based curriculum provided students with historical context about how art museums developed in western society, using the Louvre and British Museum as examples. By presenting a historical context, students were provided with information central to a critical theory-based curriculum: they were not simply handed information about current-day art museums, but they were asked to consider how art museums developed from their historical and social contexts and how the histories of art museums impact their functions and positions in society today. Based on my observations, students were interested to learn about the objects that Napoleon brought back to Paris after his military exploits, they were amused at the reports of Parisians weeping when objects were removed from the Louvre after France was defeated by the British at Waterloo, and they were surprised to see that, after Waterloo,

some objects taken by the French were kept by the British as per the terms of the Capitulation of Alexandria (Wilson, 2001).

When students were asked to respond to the British Museum being at the center of controversies over ownership over objects like the Rosetta Stone, the Parthenon Marbles, and the Benin Bronzes, students reported that they were not surprised and a significant number were able to point to the history of England as an empire as a rationale for their involvement in ownership disputes. Students analyzed the individual provenance of each of the three objects mentioned above, interpreted their individual circumstances, and then evaluated the ethics and lawfulness of the British Museum's ownership of said object. The critical theory-based curriculum encouraged students to think critically by making personal value judgments as well as by making global and historical connections to the practices of a contemporary encyclopedic art museum.

The critical theory-based curriculum also impacted student understanding of art museums by encouraging critical thinking. Critical thinking was particularly encouraged in the ownership and repatriation worksheet (as noted above) and in the museum project. In the museum project, students were asked to visit a local encyclopedic art museum to make guided observations. Students were then required to analyze their visual evidence, interpret it, and ultimately offer an evaluation of the museum and specific objects in it based on their observations. In doing so, their understanding of encyclopedic art museums was impacted in a number of ways.

First, by examining multiple galleries in the museum, students gained an understanding of the variety of collections in the encyclopedic art museum as well as how the museum was organized by culture and time. Second, by asking students to

observe and document specific aspects of the galleries—paint color, lighting, object spacing, label quality, location—students were made aware of the myriad subjective decisions and physical considerations made by art museum staff. Third, when students were guided to speculate about specific objects in the museum, such as a mummy or bowls that may have been included in burials, they again considered provenance (they first considered provenance in the lesson on museum history and the ownership and repatriation worksheet) and considered whether or not a museum had any particular ethical obligations in the display of objects.

All of these concepts impacted student understanding of art museums, and do so in a manner particularly guided by critical theory. The critical theory embedded in the curriculum presented students with concepts of power, as seen in the museum's ability to collect objects from global cultures. It also presented students with postmodern theories derived from critical theory, like critical race theory, when it encouraged students to discover any biases that may be seen in how the museum represented objects from Western versus Non-Western civilizations. Although there was not a control classroom that implemented a non-critical theory-based curriculum as a basis of comparison, it was not difficult to infer that had my students simply gone to the art museum and completed a simple visual analysis exercise, all of these concepts would have remained unknown to them.

The critical theory-based curriculum also impacted student learning because it presented students with scholarly articles and asked them to respond to arguments on museum display practices. As the instructor/researcher, I wanted students to develop a perspective directed by critical theory, but I did not want to feel as if I forced them or

even heavy-handedly led them to that point of view. It was therefore important to present students with different points of view for their consideration in the form of articles written by Ivan Karp (1991) and Fred Wilson (1996). Students were asked to read and respond to these articles after visiting the art museum, which required them to synthesize what they had learned in class and observed in the museum with the points of view of the articles they read. For students, synthesizing information is a challenging task, but it impacted their understanding of art museums by demonstrating multiple points of view. This demonstrated the significance of the discipline of art museum studies to students who may have previously thought of art museums as a peripheral subject matter or as institutions of little concern.

Because so few students had visited an art museum prior to their enrollment in their art appreciation course, the critical theory-based curriculum also helped to make the art museum a tangible place, rather than an abstract facet of the often mysterious art world. The critical theory-based curriculum did not treat the art museum as a temple, but rather as a forum, to borrow the comparison made famous by Duncan Cameron (1971). By inviting students into the museum to conduct their own research and their own experiments, and asking students to formulate their own evidence-based opinions, students were empowered. They saw the space modeled as one in which active discoveries are made. They saw a space that was not above critique or debate. And they saw a space that is truly educational: by inviting and allowing discourse within its walls, the function of the museum was expanded and enlivened. As their instructor, it was my hope that they saw that their participation in the museum and their opinions of the museum mattered.

Finally, the critical theory-based curriculum provided students with a basic vocabulary of critique. At the beginning of the unit, students did not have an understanding of the process of or purpose for critique, nor did they possess the tools with which to implement a critique. By encouraging students to visit the art museum on their own, make guided observations about the galleries, draw conclusions based on their visual evidence and based on critical-theory curricula, students participated in a complex, multi-step critique process with the art museum as the object. As the researcher and instructor, my professional background working in art museums and my knowledge of art museum practices allowed me to model critique of the art museum and encourage the building of critical consciousness—collectively—among my students.

How did a critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum impact student understanding of encyclopedic art museums? The critical theory curriculum encouraged multiple instances of critical thinking, synthesis of information, analysis of observations, developing opinions based on visual evidence, evaluating physical spaces, consideration of multiple points of view, and the understanding of historical and social contexts, all of which added up to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of encyclopedic art museums. It also helped to initiate a vocabulary of critique that students can continue to build upon and encourages students to interact with art museums in a deep way—they hopefully now understand museums are places for consideration and participation, not simply passive viewing. It is unknown whether any other art appreciation curricula would have had similar impact, but the critical theory-based curriculum provided a strong theoretical framework that, through specific exercises and assignments, encouraged critical thinking and empowerment. This was

the impact that the critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum has on college student understanding of encyclopedic art museums.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked if critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum can create empowerment among college students. This question was perhaps the most difficult to definitively answer out of the three research questions. The question was central to the study because critical theory, critical educational theory, and action research all endeavor to guide students towards empowerment, liberation, or cognition (Horkheimer, 1982; Schechter, 2007; Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972; Freire, 1970; Johnson, 2008). Determining how to measure student empowerment in an art appreciation class was tricky. Achieving significant levels of empowerment during a single college course that required only 48 contact hours between students and the instructor was ambitious, and therefore it seemed prudent to temper my expectations for the levels of empowerment that may be detected. Freire (1970) succinctly defines a type of consciousness or empowerment that can stem from a critical-theory curriculum as “liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information” (p.79).

It is important to note that the research question did not signify how much empowerment, or what type of empowerment, but simply whether or not a critical theory-based curriculum can create empowerment. My personal goal as the researcher and the instructor of the course was to detect the beginning glimpses of

empowerment—or cognition—that would hopefully continue as students continued to take additional college classes. In other words, by experiencing a critical theory-oriented curriculum early in their college careers, perhaps students would be in a better position to apply their knowledge of the process of critique to their other classes throughout their four years at college. While this one art appreciation class may not have provided total empowerment for all students, it may have started the ball rolling and prepared students for higher, more thorough levels of empowerment and cognition achieved over sustained periods of intellectual stimulation (as they hopefully would encounter while earning a college degree).

Research question 2 corresponded to themes 1, 3, and 7 of the emerging themes identified in chapter 3. Theme 1 ascertained students' personal feelings about art museums; theme 3 gauged the level of interest in and curiosity about art museums; and theme 7 looked for any potential for personal change, transformation, and/or empowerment. This research question did not seek to measure knowledge, but rather to ascertain whether students were experiencing any degree of empowerment, cognition, or action. Therefore, questions that related to student feelings, perceptions, and attitudes were selected. There were eighteen total questions identified on the formative and summative museum assignments as corresponding to these three themes, and therefore likely to provide the necessary evidence to assist in the answering of research question 2. The results from those eighteen questions were used to determine an answer to research question 2: Can a critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum create empowerment among college students?

As previously presented, most of my students had not previously visited an art museum, and most students also reported highly positive impressions of art museums and art museum employees prior to their visits. I believed these were crucial pieces of information, as they indicated an audience that was both in need of and receptive to experiences in art museums. In other words, they were an audience primed to experience empowerment and/or cognition. Even though students already indicated their very positive impressions of art museums prior to their visits, their impressions grew even more positive after they experienced the art museum firsthand. In the summative museum questionnaire, students' felt art museums and their employees were even more interesting, fun, exciting, smart, kind, educated, diverse, trustworthy, and correct than they had prior to their visit.

This change in student feelings about art museums signified empowerment and cognition, as it indicates an evolution in thought after an investigation in which students took the lead. Students were not given information about how they should perceive art museums, but they were given the opportunity to develop their own opinions and perceptions about art museums after they conducted their own in-person investigation. This aligns with Paulo Freire's (1970) notions of liberating education as, "The students—no longer docile listeners—are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own" (p. 81).

Question number 11 on the formative museum questionnaire asked students if they had ever considered how art museums work, and a strong majority of students, around two-thirds, responded that they had not. This information also contributed to

whether or not students could be empowered because it points to an absence of existing knowledge, experience, and consideration about art museums. While it does not prove that empowerment took place, it presents another measure that the majority of students not only had never visited an art museum, they had never even considered art museums. A parallel question was the next question on the survey, which asked students whether or not they were interested in learning about art museums. Students overwhelmingly responded that they were interested in learning about art museums. One student responded, “Yes, it seems like a secret that no one knows, and that’s always interesting.” This information again indicated a student population poised and eager for a problem-posing learning experience in critiquing art museums, which ultimately led to student empowerment.

The need for students to be open to the idea of learning about art museums was essential to a successful critical theory-based, advocacy/participatory paradigmatic oriented, action-research curriculum. The theories and methodologies used to validate this research study all mandate that student learning and teacher instruction be cooperative (Giroux, 2001; Freire, 1970; Heron & Reason, 1997), and therefore if students had indicated hostility or indifference to learning about art museums, it is likely that the curriculum would have been abandoned in favor of subject matter more relevant and interesting to students.

The primary method of measuring whether or not this critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum can create empowerment among students was to analyze their responses to prompts asking them to describe what they learned from art museums, how their opinions of art museums evolved since the beginning of class, if they learned

anything about art museums that could be applied to other aspects of their lives, and whether or not they would visit another art museum in the future (all questions that linked to theme 7). In their answers, students convincingly described many facets of art museums they had learned from the curricular unit. Some of their newfound knowledge included basic information about museum governance, functions, and operations, but other students indicated critical theory-oriented understandings of museum history, connections to wealth and power, and potential problems and bias in the collection and display of objects. These deeper, critical admissions of cognition signal a true transformational impact experienced by some students: They did not simply learn facts about the museum. They considered, investigated, and concluded that art museums are complex spaces subject to the influence of history, power, and bias.

Most students also reported that they had learned something from their art museum experience that they could apply to their own lives. In its simplest form, I believe that can be considered empowerment as it indicated a new level of cognition. However, when I looked deeper at the question and student responses, while most students did respond positively, occasionally their specific examples of how their museum experience impacted their lives left much to be desired. Many students responded with the general idea that visiting the museum taught them to be more open-minded. I felt this was a fine answer, but wished students could elaborate as to why being open-minded was a quality they associated with museum visitation. Regardless of their lack of elaboration, I feel that the desire of many students to be more open-minded

in the future as a result of their museum experiences is definitely indicative of a transformational or empowering impact from the curriculum.

Some students responded with more practical answers, such as navigating traffic or understanding museum rules. Did these things constitute empowerment? Could I, as the instructor, dismiss how the museum visitation impacted them because it did not align with my own lofty ideas of what empowerment should be? As previously mentioned, I decided to take their words as definitive, therefore a student who responded that they did learn something from the museum that they could apply to their real life was at least a start to change, liberation, or empowerment. My conclusion was that if learning about museums affected something in their daily lives, that was reasonable evidence that critical theory curriculum can create empowerment among students.

Perhaps the most important indicator of empowerment, liberation, or cognition came from a very simple question from the summative museum survey. It simply asked students if they will visit an art museum again. All but three students responded that yes, they would visit an art museum again. When considering that the great majority of the population of the two classes just three months earlier had never visited an art museum, this was a tremendous transformation in the life experience and projected future life experiences for the students. It indicates that whatever intellectual considerations had begun with their first visit, students were willing to continue the educational process further. If empowerment had not been conclusively achieved with their first visit, students are interested in continuing the process, and are therefore much more likely to achieve higher levels of empowerment, liberation, and cognition.

The idea of empowerment that comes from critical theory and critical pedagogical theory rests on ideas of oppressed populations, which I already pointed out as a not completely perfect depiction of community college students in the United States. However, according to Paulo Freire (1970), “Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information” (p.79). Freire goes on to endorse the practice of problem-posing education, as opposed to the banking method, and says, “The students—no longer docile listeners—are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers his earlier considerations as students express their own” (p.81).

The curriculum met those criteria, and students were encouraged to consider the critical-theory based material presented about art museums. By asserting their own opinions, based on the visual observations they made, I would argue that students were academically liberated, and even empowered. I was reminded of the remarks made by one student after hearing about the project, who said, “This project sounds cool because we’ll actually be doing something.” It was as if that student immediately recognized that this assignment, more so than many others, would rely almost exclusively on their own critical thinking and reflection. Because the goal of the assignment was to demythologize the art museum, students were able to decide how much to do so, or even whether or not they were going to at all. According to Freire (1970):

Banking education (for obvious reasons) attempts, by mythicizing reality, to conceal certain facts which explain the way human beings exist in the world; problem-posing education sets itself the task of demythologizing. Banking education resists dialogue; problem-posing education regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality (p.83).

Students learned information about art museums, but they also learned how to visit an art museum, explore and observe it, and then consider and critique what they had seen.

Lastly, an important aspect of this research question was found in the use of the word “can.” The question asked whether museum curriculum can create empowerment, not if the museum curriculum did create empowerment (although I attempted to answer both iterations of the question). I strongly believed critical museum curriculum could create empowerment among college students. I believed this based on my own personal experience as a college student-aged intern working within an art museum, when I experienced my own transformative learning experience based on Fred Wilson’s (1996) publication *Silent Message of the Museum*. It was transformative to me because this discovery gave my career and education a focus and purpose. I also believed critical theory-based art curriculum could create empowerment based on my experience working at the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas, when I witnessed so many students involved with the Student Guild having transformational and empowering experiences within the art museum. And finally, it appeared so based on my experience teaching the critical theory-based curriculum in the spring of 2015, when I witnessed students enthusiastically participating in class exercises that provided a foundation for art museum understanding and also curiously visiting an art museum to draw their own conclusions based on their own investigations.

In conclusion, critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum can create empowerment among college students in a variety of ways. Learning about job positions within art museums empowered students to potentially consider working in museums. Learning about issues and controversies in art museums encouraged

students to look critically at any institution. Learning to make evidence-based arguments based on their own observations urged students to become participants in their own education. The critical theory-based curriculum would probably be more successful at creating more significant types of empowerment, and deeper levels of empowerment if the curriculum was more focused and sustained, instead of being a small part of an art appreciation curriculum, however, the research data indicated empowerment occurred.

Research Question 3

The third research question asked what a college-level critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum looked like. Unlike the first two research questions, this question did not seek to measure any data collected, but rather to reflect on the nature of a critical theory-based curriculum. A crucial step in the action research process is instructor/researcher reflection (Macintyre, 2008; Johnson, 2008). Therefore, this research question was largely answered by the personal observations and reflections of the researcher after the data collection and analysis processes were completed.

A critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum could likely take many forms depending on the instructor/researcher implementing it. My particular research study was heavily influenced by the theories and methodologies of critical theory, participatory/advocacy worldview, and action research. Because of my personal history and expertise, the critical theory curriculum I designed was heavily dependent on community college students, freshman-level art appreciation curriculum, and

encyclopedic art museums. All of these elements combined to create an art appreciation curriculum specific to my identity, experiences, and interests.

Although the curriculum created was tailored to myself, I identified essential elements of my critical-theory curriculum that may be universally applicable. After much reflection, I determined that the successful aspects of my critical theory curriculum focused on issues of inequality, history, and power; attempted to achieve enlightenment; were grounded in practicality; were problem-posing; taught students the process of critique; forged a cooperative/participatory relationship between students and instructor, and encouraged reflection from all participants. These are elements that can be applied to other critical theory based curricula across disciplines.

Perhaps the most fundamental concept inherent in critical theory is the issue of inequality. It stands to reason that any critical theory-based curriculum must strongly explore or address topics of power and/or inequality. By exploring large, encyclopedic art museums and their histories as present-day extensions of the state, issues of power and wealth were at the forefront of the curriculum. However, art museums were not the only institutions that could have been used to represent wealth and power. Auction houses, elite universities, the historical art academies, and/or the textbook industry could all be used as institutions to explore inequality through.

Because of the influence of critical theory, the curriculum was heavily based in historical and social contexts. It was necessary for students to understand the art museum not simply as a contemporary art institution, but as an institution that emerged from Enlightenment-era, colonial-era, positivist ideals that continue to have an effect on art museums today. Critical pedagogical theory, which specifically examines how power

impacts the development of knowledge, was also a significant influence on the curriculum, as students wondered about different ways the art museum fulfills its educational mission. Was the art museum reinforcing ideas about Western superiority in a banking model of education, or is the museum inviting in multiple points of view to democratically investigate their collections?

From its inception through the Frankfurt School, critical theory has sought emancipation as its primary objective (Horkheimer, 1982). A desired learning outcome must include a form of liberation, cognition, and/or empowerment as a result of implementing the curriculum. Ideas of emancipation are grounded in the belief that “all people have the capacity and ability to produce knowledge and resist domination” (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003, p. 15). Therefore, a critical theory curriculum should encourage students in their ability to produce their own knowledge, and determine their own learning outcomes. As previously mentioned, the research study did not attempt to measure the rate of emancipation achieved by students, but only whether students could achieve emancipation as a result of participating in the course curriculum. It was overwhelmingly clear that varying levels of cognition did occur, and thus the desired emancipatory outcome was achieved.

Horkheimer (1993) also identifies primary functions of critical theory as being “explanatory, practical, and normative” (p.21), which serves to advocate for a theory not relegated to the ivory tower. By placing the critical theory curriculum in the “real world,” meaning an actual, physical art museum site that students could visit and explore, the curriculum achieved the practical requirement of critical theory. The entire curriculum was explanatory and normative by grounding information in history and encouraging

students to base their opinions on their own observations. A critical theory curriculum that only takes place in a classroom or in an abstract reality would not be an effective example of critical theory. In my curriculum, students benefitted from learning about actual, local museums instead of hypothetical or example museums. Introducing basic information about art museums was necessary to provide a general foundation of knowledge on which students can then build their explorations. Even virtual field trips to connect to “real” places outside the classroom could still possibly create the practical and normative experience necessary for students participating in a critical theory curriculum.

In order to be properly rooted in critical theory and critical pedagogical theory, the curriculum was rooted in problem-posing, and allowed students to be co-investigators in art museum discovery (Freire, 1970). Based on my observations, the most successful part of the museum project was the idea that students were going to investigate whether or not there was bias in the galleries at the Dallas Museum of Art. The students had learned about histories and issues in other museums, and now they were given an opportunity to discover whether or not their newfound knowledge could be applied to another art museum. This presented a problem to the students, who became investigators who were empowered to make observations and draw their own conclusions. My successful critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum empowered students to explore and discover issues that might impact their realities.

Critique is an essential process of demythologizing an institution like a museum, and it is a process that Freire (1970) believed was central to the goal of empowerment. Critique is a language and a practice that was not well known among my students prior

to their museum curriculum. It can serve students throughout the rest of their academic careers and their lives by demonstrating all institutions are subject to it. Critique is closely associated with contemporary educational practices in art museums, which in the past half-century have experienced a shift towards postmodern, visitor-centered educational methods that focus on personal meaning-making (Roberts, 1997; Anderson, 2004; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007). By critiquing the art museum, students recognized that even art museums are subject to questioning, and they also gained firsthand experience in the idea that an art museum is a dynamic, rather than a static, institution.

A critical theory curriculum fits well with the advocacy/cooperative/participatory paradigmatic orientation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). My students were invested in the curriculum and considered themselves co-learners along with the instructor, which strengthened the curriculum and the research study. As indicated by my experience and supported by the tenets of critical theory and critical pedagogical theory, the curriculum should not be top-down but rather should have considerable student buy-in. Last, the final element that a critical theory curriculum should have is the act of reflecting on itself. After the final lesson is taught and the final assessment collected, students and the instructor must reflect on what they have learned and experienced.

Ideally, a college-level critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum should permeate the entire curriculum, and influence each lesson as well as assessments during the semester. The curriculum that was implemented in the spring of 2015 was only a four-lesson curriculum unit focused on art museums, plus a few other critical-theory based lessons having to do with textbooks and the art world infrastructure.

Because of the relative small size of the curriculum implemented, I suspected that students did not get to experience the effects of a full-power critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum. While many students did experience cognition after the curriculum was implemented, it was reasonable to conjecture that the relative empowerment could have been strengthened if the critical-theory based curriculum was more potent and regular.

The successful aspects of my critical theory curriculum focused on issues of inequality, history, and power; attempted to achieve enlightenment; were grounded in practicality; were problem-posing; taught students the process of critique; forged a cooperative/participatory relationship between students and instructor, and encouraged reflection from all participants. All of these factors related to my theoretical foundations, paradigmatic orientation, methodology, or personal expertise, and they are all therefore academically appropriate. It is probable that these factors can be incorporated into other curricula, whether in the arts or in other disciplines, however, these qualities are not presented as an absolute iteration of a critical theory-based curriculum. It is likely that critical theory-based curricula can take many forms based on the subject matter and personal interests of the students and researcher/instructor.

Other Findings

Most students enrolled in my art appreciation classes in the spring of 2015 at Tarrant County College had not visited an art museum (prior to being assigned to do so

as part of the class requirements). This was perhaps the easiest discovery of the research, and also a critical one. Although it was impossible to generalize this finding to art appreciation students state-wide or nationally, it is likely that the finding would be replicated among many freshman-level art appreciation students because, like students at Tarrant County College, most are non-art majors and entry-level college students.

In addition to finding most students had no previous museum visitation experience, it was also found that students had overwhelmingly positive feelings about art museums and art museum employees, as established by three separate questions on the formative and summative surveys. Students both with and without museum experience believed art museums were fun, interesting, exciting, and educational, and some students even reported words that bordered on hyperbolic, like the terms “amazing,” “illuminating,” “wonderful,” and “fascinating.” Students also reported a very positive outlook on qualities of museum employees, regarding them as intelligent, educated, creative, and diverse.

The lack of previous museum experience combined with overwhelmingly positive impressions of art museums established a fertile instructional foundation for art educators. There was a demonstrated need for art museum visitation along with a tremendous amount of goodwill and curiosity among students. I believe the combination of these two traits precluded instructors assigning a simple museum visit for a standard visual analysis exercise. In a college-level art appreciation curriculum, the art museum can become more than a peripheral component. Throughout the four-lesson museum curriculum unit and the self-guided museum visit implemented in this study, students’

attention was high and consistent. Students participated in the discussion components of each lesson, and they completed their assignments regularly and satisfactorily.

In addition to visual literacy and general knowledge about art processes, materials, and history, which are the traditional learning outcomes expected for students to achieve at the end of their art appreciation classes (Getlein, 2013; Sayre, 2013; Frank, 2011; Fichner-Rathus, 2013), having general museum literacy added both a theoretical and practical set of skills to their achievement. General museum literacy was likely not achievable within a standard, self-guided museum visit without any accompanying curriculum and whose sole purpose is to complete a visual analysis exercise. However, it can be argued that the multi-lesson critical-theory museum curriculum with guided museum visit came closer to leading students to full museum literacy as defined by Stapp (1984).

Prior to their assigned visit, students self-reported their own knowledge of the art museum at 4.52 out of 10, meaning they felt their knowledge is below-average. Approximately two-thirds of students also reported that they had never considered the function(s) of art museums. In addition, when students were asked to speculate about specific practices of art museums, half of students demonstrated little or no understanding of how art museums operate. Of the students whose responses were rated at average or above average, a majority had previous museum visitation experience, thus demonstrating the impact that even one museum visit can have on student understanding.

Although all of the students reported positive impressions of art museums, there were some instances of students not selecting positive options on their survey, meaning

that art museum employees rated low when evaluated on their trustworthiness, accuracy, fairness, and correctness. The purpose of a critical theory-oriented curriculum was certainly not to denigrate art museums or their positions as educational institutions, however, the fact that students' overwhelmingly positive impressions of art museums were not without some exception is a signal that students are receptive to information that may not always present art museums in an exclusively positive light. Additionally, while art museums scored very low in the categories of being racist, biased, or prejudiced, some students still felt that museums could be/were to a small degree.

The formative museum survey was presented to the classes prior to any museum instruction being implemented in the classroom, although a few critical lessons on the art world and textbooks were introduced within the first few weeks of the semester. After the formative museum survey was completed, students received three lessons from the critical theory-influenced museum curriculum. The first lesson introduced students to the basic functions of art museums: collecting, preserving, displaying, and educating (Hein, 2000; Alexander & Alexander, 2008). The second lesson expanded on the first and introduced museum governance as well as the variety of professions required to run a large encyclopedic art museum. The first two lessons were designed to simply impart basic information about art museums, without any particular point of view. The classes responded very well to the first two museum lessons, and they were among the lessons that elicited the most participation from students.

As the instructor, I believed that the high level of interest in art museums and participation in the art museum lessons is based in student interest in a tangible,

concrete site such as an art museum. Many of the other lessons in the standard art appreciation curriculum tended to be more abstract. When discussing the monetary value of art, for example, it was difficult for students to grasp concepts such as non-representational paintings selling for hundreds of millions of dollars, and auction houses facilitating the astronomical sales and purchases. Art museums were a reasonably accessible part of the art world, and thus could be visited, analyzed, and understood to a certain degree with some curricular guidance. In addition, students were somewhat automatically interested in art museums because they knew a good percentage of their final grade is based on their museum visit.

Once students possessed basic information about art museums, the third lesson of the museum curriculum introduced a history of art museums which incorporated a critical theory-oriented point of view. Based on central tenets of critical theory, including the belief that human institutions (such as art museums) are embedded within complicated histories involving constructs of history and power (Giroux, 2003; Giroux, 2001; Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003), the third lesson collected data measuring students' opinions of and understanding about issues in ownership and repatriation. Students were interested in the lesson, and intrigued to see how widespread issues in ownership and repatriation extended throughout art museums, with particular examples being made of the Louvre and the British Museum. Students were also presented with information about the Dallas Museum of Art returning a Roman mosaic that was discovered to have been looted from a site in Turkey (Richter, 2012), as an example of a local issue over ownership and cultural heritage.

Students reported that they were not surprised by art museums having issues in ownership and repatriation, which somewhat surprised me. I was gratified to see that students were well-versed in world history when more than half of students referenced Great Britain's history as a global imperial power to explain why the British Museum may have works of art whose ownership is contested. Their familiarity with British history, or their understanding of how imperialistic nations work perhaps contributed to their lack of surprise. I also speculated that perhaps the great diversity of the class also helped with their understanding of British history. Not only is the United States a former British colony, there were there a number of recent immigrants from parts of Asia and Africa in the classes and many students were descended from immigrants from areas with first hand familiarity of British imperialism as well.

Their ability to put an institution into the historical context of its national heritage demonstrated students' innate ability to at least grasp basic critical theory-influenced concepts. Students were also able to differentiate the individual histories of objects, as there was considerable diversity in opinion on the legality of the British Museum's ownership of the Rosetta Stone, Parthenon Marbles, and Benin Bronzes. I believe a lesson that carefully introduced specific contested objects and situations was an essential part of the curriculum, as it allowed students the opportunity to gain an idea of the complexity of ownership issues in art museums.

An additional overarching objective of this lesson was for students to sense the relationship between art objects and the possession of them as a paradigm of power. While I think many students did grasp this concept in this specific instance, I do not think many students grasped it deeply enough to be able to apply the idea to their own

museum visit, or to generalize the concept to other facets of daily life. I believe that in order for this association between art ownership and power to be deeply understood, it would have to be reinforced through additional curriculum. A single lesson did not appear to be quite enough.

After the final museum lesson, which introduced students to the idea of gallery spaces as constructed environments that could affect how objects are understood by museum audiences (Marzio, 1991; Wilson, 1996; Karp, 1991), students were released to complete their museum visit and assignment. The museum projects turned in by students were adequate, but not as revelatory as I would have liked. I suspect that the museum projects were simply too complex for students to complete entirely at the profound level that I would have liked. For example, in part 2 of the museum project, I ask six main questions, but each of the six questions is divided into further sub-questions, for a total of over 30 questions. This resulted in many students not answering each question, or only answering each question minimally.

The reason I included so many questions and sub-questions was to create a thorough assessment as well as to capture as much data as possible, and the relevance of that data would be determined later (probably out of a general concern that the assignments would not produce enough data or valuable data). Another problem with the museum project was that not enough of the questions specifically addressed the primary research questions, although many were intended to guide students in their discoveries. And lastly, there were so many questions that were entirely open-ended that doing textual analysis over each of the six primary questions and approximately 25 sub-questions in part 2, plus the 18 open-ended questions from part 3, was not

only incredibly time-consuming but also not productive in terms of generating quality data. At some point, the questions became redundant and difficult to differentiate from each other. If both parts of the museum assignment were pared down into a few carefully constructed questions that specifically address the research question, it might have produced more efficient data for this dissertation.

While there were plenty of opportunities to critique the construction of the museum project as a data collection tool specific to answering the three research questions, it gathered a good deal of valuable data nonetheless. 82% of students, an overwhelming majority, felt that the museum galleries were not constructed equally in the way they display objects. This was a significant finding. This was a discovery that can be built on and elaborated on through further exploration and instruction. In the curriculum that was implemented in spring 2015, there was no further instruction after the art museum visit. Students were invited to give reflections on their visit both in class and in their summative museum survey, but essentially their museum visit was the concluding learning event of the semester, as far as the critical theory-based curriculum was concerned.

Although students were not instructed to directly compare each facet of the European galleries with the Ancient American galleries, the next iteration of this curriculum should consider doing so, particularly if the goal is to encourage students to recognize disparities in displays and connect that to historical constructs of wealth and privilege both globally and within the art museum. In this curriculum, the comparison was implied and directly questioned in the second part of the museum exercise, but it

could have been more effective if the comparison was the central component of the original exercise, perhaps with a side-by-side table or graph.

Some of the most successful comments offered by students were in response to the question that asked students to give an example of an object whose significance might change if it were displayed in a different manner, from part 3 of the museum project. In this instance, some students did not offer a specific object, but the students who did suggest a specific example chose very wisely. Students pointed to Latin American paintings that were located in hallways and stairways, instead of in dedicated galleries. They noticed that a white wall in the Asian galleries had been replaced by a darkly painted temporary wall and spotlight lighting, which made the object feel “taboo” and intentionally differentiated from classical objects. Students also noticed that a vase in the Ancient American galleries was displayed in a poorly-lit case with several other objects, and visitors were only able to see the front of the vase. Students theorized that the vase would take greater importance if it was displayed alone, in a well-lit gallery and placed on a centrally-located pedestal so that it might be viewed in the round.

A final key finding not applicable to any of the three research questions is the correlation between higher levels of understanding demonstrated by students who had previous museum visitation experience. Students with previous museum visitation experience were much more likely to demonstrate higher levels of understanding about art museums, point out critical theory-oriented connections between art museums, art objects, and history, wealth, and power, and generally offer more compelling responses to class discussions and the data collection instrument prompts. Although this research study does not attempt to establish a cause for the higher levels of understanding

demonstrated, it is likely that multiple art museum visits would raise the levels of understanding among the majority of students participating. Further defining the relationship between higher levels of understanding of art museums and previous museum visitation experience can be a potential topic for future research.

Implications

Many art museums spend considerable resources reaching out to various groups of visitors, such as community groups, families, and K-12 school groups, and they tend to focus their educational programming efforts on bringing people to the museum and understanding the art objects on display (Cuno, 2004; Falk & Dierking, 2004; Hein, 1998). In some cases over the past decade educational programs in art museums have mutated into entertainment-oriented activities without strong educational objectives at all (Kundu & Kalin, 2015). Additionally, many art museums have overlooked college students as a potential audience (Speight, Boys, & Boddington, 2013). This dissertation seeks to counter some of the practices listed above by arguing for a deeper level of educational connection-making within the art museum by partnering college students (specifically community college students) with critical theory curriculum.

Art museum visitation should be a required component of art appreciation curriculum. Visual analysis exercises in the art museum are an important part of an art appreciation curriculum, but the benefits of expanding and deepening museum visits by incorporating a critical theory-oriented art museum visit into the curriculum of an art appreciation class were innumerable. Students gained knowledge and understanding of

a “real-world” institution by visiting, observing, and critiquing the museum through the lens of critical theory. By intentionally constructing a museum visit with a strong theoretical foundation and with the objective of encouraging student empowerment, instances of deep connection and understanding were achieved. I believe that not only will this enable students to better function in the world outside the classroom, it can also enhance their civic engagement in a number of other contexts. In addition to having curricular benefits, it also can have overarching public value by “addressing long-standing and pervasive social issues like race relations class, cultural identity, freedom of expression, equality, definitions of progress, and the relationship between humans and the natural world” (Munley, 2013, p.49).

Empowerment, defined in this dissertation as acts of cognition and action, is often a goal of critical theorists and action researchers alike (Giroux, 2003; Freire, 1970; Johnson, 2008). Students were able to demonstrate multiple acts of cognition by recognizing instances of bias in the museum, proposing alternate presentations of objects to counter the given museum displays, and participating fervently in classroom discussions about art museums (particularly the object repatriation lesson). After experiencing the critical theory art museum curriculum, student participants almost unanimously reported the intention of visiting the art museum again, which constitutes action, and by extension, empowerment. It is not known if similar outcomes are possible from a museum visit in which only a visual analysis is assigned.

While the curriculum implemented in this dissertation was moderately successful based on a four-lesson critical theory-based curriculum and one museum visit, it stands to reason that greater success could be achieved with a comprehensive critical theory-

based curriculum and multiple art museum visits. It was challenging to impart a comprehensive understanding of art museums to a freshman-level class through only one museum visit and a small portion of the overall curriculum. Students would benefit from regular, sustained museum curriculum, which would make a multiple-museum visit curriculum ideal. Preferably, the curriculum from this research study would be re-envisioned and implemented with a minimum of two museum visits: the first to gain a general idea of the art museum, the second to attempt to apply a process of critique to the museum. Within the course of a regular semester, at a community college occupied mostly by commuter students with full- and part-time jobs, and with a large group of non-art majors, requiring two museum visits in one art appreciation class was prohibitive.

While the implications of art museum/general college student/critical theory partnerships are indicative of a great potential for success, the implications of such partnerships for undergraduate art majors could be even greater. While this study was designed as a single-semester experience, a longer, more sustained experience with critical theory in an art museum could be more life-changing and profound. If students began to gain a critical understanding of art museums along with experiencing some modest levels of empowerment from a small curricular unit implemented in a freshman-level appreciation course filled with non-art majors, imagine if teaching art museums was part of the curriculum of every art class taken by art majors throughout their degree plan, from art appreciation until graduation. In other words, by the time a student graduates with a degree in art history, studio art, or art education, if critical exploration-based museum visits were embedded into each course, students would have visited art

museums dozens of times. Each visit would contribute to their developing knowledge and understanding of art museums, to the point that young adults with bachelor degrees in the visual arts would have not only gained a high level of museum literacy, but perhaps achieved far more significant levels of personal empowerment. As articulated by Kundu and Kalin (2015), sustained museum experiences have different outcomes from casual or quick experiences:

While we applaud the ongoing project of increasing representation of diversity within art museums and including participants' active engagement, we also believe in *sustained* engagement, where objects are not packaged as finite in the articulation of cultural histories, leading to closure or easy answers that shut down complexity and complicity. To enable civic engagement, museums must act as resources where expertise, assets, and ideas are used to shape the quality of community life through sustained engagement with diverse voices and perspectives through transcultural exchanges (p.46).

If contemporary art museums are able attempting to acknowledge their histories of wealth and prestige (Cuno, 2004) and move towards “the general movement of dismantling the museum as an ivory tower of exclusivity and toward the construction of a more socially responsive cultural institution in service to the public” (Anderson, 2004, p.1), inviting community college students in to perform curriculum-based critiques would be an excellent undertaking.

In a scenario that can best be described as a “dream situation,” the entire traditional art appreciation curriculum could be implemented within the encyclopedic art museum. This situation would (obviously) be ideal for college campuses that have encyclopedic art museums on their campuses—a rare privilege—or community colleges located closer to encyclopedic art museums. The general art appreciation curriculum could be implemented using objects from the collection to explore common themes

such as media and technique, with occasional lessons on the museum itself interspersed within the curriculum. After students have a general understanding of the art museum, the process of critique could begin.

Another significant implication of this research study is how effective the ownership and repatriation unit was among students. Out of the four lessons, students overwhelmingly demonstrated the most interest in ownership and repatriation as evidenced by the quality of their assessments and the amount of passionate discussion the lesson provoked. Issues in ownership and repatriation have the benefit of being simultaneously current and historical, incorporate critical theory and art museums, and can be entry points for current events and ideas of diversity, globalism, dominance and oppression. One of my favorite implications related to the lesson on ownership and repatriation is the potential to create more globally aware, conscientious student-citizens who are sensitive to historical events and how history continues to impact relationships between historically dominant and oppressed societies.

The last additional substantial consequence of this research study was the realization that university students remain an important but underserved audience for museum educators (Speight, Boys, & Boddington). Based on the enthusiasm and positivity reported by students throughout the museum curriculum, college students were eager for art museum experiences. While many museums focus on school and family programs, presumably in the hopes of connecting with visitors at a young age and forming a lifelong relationship, community college students (and college students in general) are an audience that has fallen through the cracks of museum outreach. The data from this research study demonstrated that college students would be a dream

audience for art museums: they were young and in a formative stage of development; they were inclined to think positively of art museums; they had little to no art museum experience; and they were capable of higher-level critical thinking.

Community college students, and probably college students in general, are in need of museum programming. As many art museums are seeking to diversify their audiences, focusing on welcoming and serving community college students such as those at Tarrant County College could be mutually beneficial in many ways. Students need opportunities to connect with their communities in fun and educational ways, and art museums need new audiences that will continue to patronize museums throughout their lives. For art museums, attempting to reach college students is important because it is one of the last opportunities to do so prior to adulthood.

Limitations

The size of this study was relatively small, as it was implemented on two average-size art appreciation classes of similar student makeup. I feel it would be preferable to implement the curriculum across a variety of classes, including art appreciation, art history surveys, and upper-level art history and art education classes. By doing this, it may become evident which students/classes are best poised to receive the maximum benefit from such a curriculum. It was also problematic to teach a critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum in one semester while simultaneously fulfilling all of the other curricular requirements of an art appreciation curriculum. It was suspected that, were the curriculum to be embedded throughout the entire curriculum,

and if it was possible to incorporate multiple visits to the art museum, the results would have been more powerful. It was possible that students would have reported higher level responses in their assignments and experienced a higher level of transformation and empowerment.

A large caveat to this research study was found in the students with whom this research was implemented. Teaching overly advanced concepts to students who are not academically or intellectually ready for them is perhaps a usual error committed by classroom educators, and I feared this was the situation with this research study. Although the data collection instruments did not ask for this information, I suspected that approximately 20 to 25 percent of the students enrolled in my art appreciation classes in the spring of 2015 were first time in college students. For those students who were not first time in college, the art appreciation course is still considered an entry-level or freshman-level course to college curriculum. Therefore it was natural to suspect that different results would be achieved if the curriculum were implemented to college students with more academic experience.

It was also natural to wonder if the results would have been more comprehensive and more powerful if the curriculum were implemented at a four-year university, rather than a two-year community college. Community colleges like Tarrant County College are open-access institutions that admit all applicants regardless of SAT scores or grade point averages. Even a not particularly prestigious four-year college is able to apply a standard of exclusion to applicants, and I therefore believe the data results would be of a higher quality if implemented at a four-year university. It also stands to reason that the results would be particularly different if the curriculum were implemented to junior- and

senior-level art majors at a four-year university. There is personal, anecdotal evidence to support this from my years working at the University of Texas, which were primarily spent working with juniors and seniors with established coursework in the arts.

Other limitations to this study were found in the data collection instruments and the results obtained from them. I believe the data collection instruments I created were largely too complicated, and therefore the data collected from them was of a lower quality than I hoped. Action research is a qualitative methodology, and though I had intended to incorporate some numerical data from the formative and summative museum surveys to establish foundational benchmarks, the quantitative data was to be extremely minimal. Because I felt it was necessary to more accurately support the story of the research, I decided to present some of the qualitative data in the form of graphs and tables.

Regarding the student assessments, while a consistent percentage of student responses demonstrated true critical thinking and effective communication of their thoughts and experiences, some students did not. A considerable amount of the responses obtained consisted of students skipping parts of questions or providing short and simple answers to highly complex questions. If I only registered the responses from the small percentage of students who consistently communicated effectively and answered each question thoughtfully in their assignments, the study would be biased, and also be of such a small sample size that any findings would be insignificant.

At least part of the responsibility for the somewhat low quality of responses to the museum project lay in the design of the data collection instruments. The formative museum survey was a fine instrument that produced the desired results. The ownership

and repatriation worksheet was also satisfactory in that it elicited responses that demonstrated student understanding and interest in the subject matter. It also produced satisfactory data to support the goals of this research project. The museum project and the summative survey were the least effective of the data collection tools. The museum project was overly complicated and overly ambitious, asking students to respond to 65 questions based on their own observations or academic readings. The summative museum survey was similarly complicated, and asked a further 16 questions in addition to those repeated from the formative survey. Because of the lack of focus of those instruments, the quality of data suffered. In order to more directly answer the research questions, there were only a handful of questions for each of these instruments that were truly necessary for students to answer in order to provide stronger and more reliable data answering the research questions. Before this research study is implemented again, the data collection instruments need to be reviewed and redesigned.

Another significant limitation to this study, and potentially one that impacted the quality of data collected is that the students' single visit to the art museum was self-guided. Though there were many class discussions about the art museum, I was inclined to suspect that students would have gained a deeper understanding of the art museum and therefore been able to apply a more thoughtful critique of the art museum if the instructor had guided their museum visit(s). Some of the more rudimentary issues, such as students mistaking the American galleries for the Ancient American galleries, would have been eliminated as well. It may be an interesting comparison to examine differences between self-guided museum visits and instructor-led museum visits.

Recommendations for Future Research

A great comfort of initiating a large research study with mixed results came from acknowledging that this research was merely a starting point for further research. In this case, there were many possibilities for future research related to this dissertation.

Perhaps the simplest and most obvious suggestion for future research is to improve the data collection instruments and redo the original research study to better analyze for signs of impact and empowerment facilitated by the critical theory-based curriculum. Simpler offshoots from that study would include having students visit the art museum and do a straightforward, observation-based comparison of the art galleries, perhaps in table or graph form, or have a class visit the museum and do a simple visual analysis and compare their depth of learning with a class that did critical theory museum observations.

Another simple recommendation for future research is to implement the same study with different art classes. Halfway through the project I considered that it might have been more effective to pair the curriculum with an art history survey I class. The art history survey covers a large span of history in which the three objects from the ownership and repatriation lesson (Rosetta Stone, Parthenon Marbles, and Benin Bronzes) are all studied within their cultural and historical contexts, which could provide a much richer learning opportunity. Within an art history survey II curriculum, the history of the art museum can be embedded within the chronological timeline of art, which can also provide a rich learning opportunity. A further advantage is that the art history

survey students have presumably already taken art appreciation, and therefore have a general foundation of art knowledge upon which to build.

Replicating the study with multiple visits to the art museum would likely significantly improve the quality of student understanding and therefore potentially raise levels of empowerment and/or liberation. While there are considerable barriers to making multiple visits to the art museum, it would likely have such a significant impact on student understanding it is very much worth pursuing. Early on in the data analysis an important correlation between previous museum experience and higher levels of understanding emerged. Students with previous museum visitation experience not only demonstrated greater understanding of the functions of art museums but a stronger ability to identify critical theory-based concepts within art museums. A study exploring the link between museum visitation and higher levels of art appreciation curriculum cognition is also an area that deserves further study.

The entire concept of a critical theory-based art museum curriculum can be expanded upon to develop an upper-level undergraduate or graduate-level course that focuses solely on art museum critique. Units on ownership and repatriation, associations with power and conquest, and contemporary issues with potential bias in collecting, programming, and display, can all be discussed. Having an entire semester to explore these issues in detail (with academically advanced students) would naturally produce richer data. Whether or not empowerment is achieved may be easier to determine with students who are experiencing a sustained museum relationship and are better able to communicate their experiences.

There are many opportunities for further research related to involvement from the art museum. Many art museums facilitate multiple-visit programs, usually for K-12 students under the belief that multiple or prolonged museum visits produce richer, more valuable educational results than a single museum visit. While there are more barriers in the way to having a sustained, multiple-visit program with college students, there are countless opportunities to invite students into the museum for a multiple-visit curriculum. Establishing a service-learning requirement having students volunteer at the art museum could support the end goal of empowerment among college students. Although it does not touch on issues of critical theory or empowerment, a simple survey of art museum programming for college students might be helpful in bringing attention to the lack of opportunities specifically for college students within art museums.

Lastly, additional research can be done on the strong link between essential facets of critical theory and critical pedagogy and art museums. Art museums are informal learning spaces that represent key elements of critical pedagogical theories: they have traditionally been associated with wealth, knowledge, and power, and are therefore compelling institutions to deconstruct with contemporary college students. This research study sought to determine the impact of critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum on college students as it was implemented in the college classroom, but the museum itself can also encourage critical inquiries into its spaces. By doing so, it is also possible for art museums to create transformational and empowering learning experiences.

Conclusion

Critical theory, as introduced by the Frankfurt School in the early 20th century under the influence of Karl Marx (Schechter, 2007), is an advanced concept, usually introduced in graduate school or upper-level undergraduate courses, along with other critical discourses, such as feminism or critical race theory. Critical pedagogical theories that explore the connections between knowledge and power are perhaps equally high concept. Teaching a critical theory-inspired curriculum to students enrolled in a freshman-level introductory art appreciation course for non-majors is therefore somewhat ambitious. Some might even consider it an unwise scenario, as students may not be academically prepared for higher concepts such as these before they have achieved a basic foundation of college-level knowledge. These thoughts weighed on me as the curriculum was designed and implemented, and it tempered any expectations that were held for extraordinary results that might demonstrate that deeply profound teaching and/or learning had transpired.

These concerns were warranted, as some concepts did prove too advanced for students to firmly and completely grasp. Additionally, it is possible that even if students were able to grasp the concepts, they may have lacked the communication skills necessary to effectively communicate the depth and subtleties of their experiences. However, some concepts were readily understood and even embraced by the classes. Almost without exception, students were interested in learning about the art museum and held positive views of the art museum. Students responded very strongly to lessons exploring the history of art museums and the ownership of controversial objects. When

beginning the curriculum, students demonstrated a relatively low understanding of how art museums operate. On visiting the art museum, most students observed disparities in the arrangements of the galleries along cultural lines, and many students were able to imagine that the spaces in which objects are presented affect how visitors perceive the object. After the museum curriculum was implemented, student understanding of how art museums operate was considerably higher, and the knowledge and understanding displayed by first time museum visitors caught up with the knowledge and understanding that had initially been displayed only by students who had visited museums multiple times. Additionally, students self-reported a higher level of understanding of the art museum as compared to prior to the museum curriculum and museum visit. Students also reported that their museum explorations and visitation enabled them to learn something that could impact other areas of their lives, which suggests at least a small level of transformation or empowerment generated by the critical theory-based art appreciation curriculum.

Although the research study design was imperfect, the data suggested that a critical theory-based curriculum was worth implementing in a classroom or in a museum gallery, as it encouraged critical thinking skills such as observation, interpretation, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. By facilitating a problem-posing model of inquiry to students, such as their art museum critique, they experienced intellectual transformation and even personal empowerment. By focusing on a real institution such as an art museum, students also developed critiquing skills that are applicable to other fields and other institutions. The intersecting fields of emerging adults/college students, art museums, critical theory and critical pedagogy, and higher education art curriculum are

a rich foundation for further study for college professors and art museum educators alike.

APPENDIX A
CRITICAL THEORY MUSEUM CURRICULUM

- Unit Title: Art Museums: A Critical Look
- I. Grade Level: Undergraduate college students
- II. Big Idea: The Art Museum
- III. Key Concepts: a) Museums are carefully constructed environments
b) Museums reflect a number of mainstream societal values
c) Museums are part of an establishment and system
d) Museums interpret history, culture, and identity
- IV. Essential Questions: a) How are museums constructed environments? Who constructs them?
b) What mainstream societal values do museums reflect?
c) What establishment and system are they part of? What role do museums play in the establishment and system?
d) How do museums interpret culture, identity, and art? Who does the interpreting?
- V. Overview: This unit takes a critical viewpoint and provides an introductory discourse into basic issues within art museums in the United States. Students will examine various aspects of contemporary art museum history, theory, and practice by visiting and analyzing the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA). Students will explore the DMA and identify works of art, exhibitions, installations, interpretive materials, and programs that address critical museum issues.
- Studio art, art history, history, cultural anthropology, and critical theory are involved, as issues pertaining to these fields are central to the investigation. This unit is a starting point, designed as a broad introduction, to inspire deeper investigations of issues and problems within US art museums.
- VI. Goals: a) Students will explore the art museums as institutions

- b) Students will critically analyze various aspects of art museums
- c) Students will independently interpret additional critical issues within art museums

VII. National Standards: While this unit is designed for undergraduate university students, it can be modified for advanced students in grades 11-12. It meets the following National Visual Arts Standards for grades 9 – 12:

Content Standard 2: Using knowledge of structures and functions

Content Standard 3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas

Content Standard 4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and culture

Content Standard 5: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

- I. Lesson Title: Introduction to the Art Museum
- II. Lesson: Lesson 1 of 4 (one, ninety minute class period)
- III. Key Concepts:
- a) Art museums have a lengthy history in Western culture
 - b) Art museums are spaces that represent the cultures that create them
 - c) Art museums are complex institutions
 - d) Art museums warrant further exploration
- IV. Essential Question: a) What is the history and function of art museums in the United States and Europe?
- V. Lesson Objectives:
- 1) Students will analyze the history of art museums in the United States and Europe
 - 2) Students will analyze the function of art museums in the United States, specifically the collection, preservation, display, and interpretation of art objects
 - 3) Students will explore the governance of art museums
 - 4) Students will compare and contrast local art museums
- VI. Art Content: Dallas/Fort Worth area art museums will be explored via the internet
- VII. Resources and Materials for Teacher:
- Alexander, E.P., & Alexander, M. (2008). *Museums in motion: An introduction to the history and functions of museums*, 2nd ed. Plymouth, UK: Altamira Press.
- Thomson, P. (1997). *The nine-ton cat: Behind the scenes at an art museum*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Books.
- Laptop computer with wireless internet access

Guides to the collection books from local art museums

VIII. Resources and Materials for Students:

Alexander, E.P., & Alexander, M. (2008). *Museums in motion: An introduction to the history and functions of museums*, 2nd ed. Plymouth, UK: Altamira Press.

Thomson, P. (1997). *The nine-ton cat: Behind the scenes at an art museum*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Books.

Laptop computer with wireless internet access

Guides to the collection books from local art museums

IX. Vocabulary:

Institution – a large organization that is influential in the community

Collection – a set of objects collected for their interest, value, or beauty; or all the paintings or objects of one kind held by an art gallery or museum; or the objects owned permanently by an art museum

Endowment – an amount of income or property that has been provided to a person or institution, especially an educational institution

Non-Profit – an organization that uses surplus revenues to achieve its goals rather than distributing them as profit or dividends

For-Profit – an organization that distributes surplus revenues to owners and investors

Governance – the act of state of governing a place; or the system or manner of government

Mission Statement – a statement that communicates the purpose of an organization

Board of Directors – a group of people responsible for the executive or managerial decisions for an organization and the hiring and supervising of a director

X. Instruction and Its Sequencing:

Procedure:

1) Instruct students to read Chapter 2 (The Art Museum) in *Museums in Motion*, and *The Nine Ton Cat: Behind the Scenes at an Art Museum*, in advance of class.

2) Present students with powerpoint presentation containing an introduction to the vocabulary terms listed above.

3) Divide students into small groups, and assign each group a local art museum. Ask students to use their computer and internet access to do independent research on a local art museum. Students should discover the following information about their assigned art museum:

Location: Where is the museum located?

History: When was the museum founded? Who were the main characters integral to the founding of the museum?

Collections: What are the main collecting areas of the museum? How many objects does the museum own?

Endowment: If possible, what is the endowment of the art museum?

Staff: How many staff members, and what are the departments, of the museum?

Board of Directors: Who is on the Board of Directors of the Museum?

Mission: What is the avowed mission of the museum?

4) After students have completed their group tasks, reconvene the class and discuss their findings. Have students complete a blackboard chart to visually compare and contrast the local museums from each other. Ask the following questions:

What is the mission of your art museum? How are the art museum missions similar, and how are they different?

Which art museum is the oldest?

Which art museum has the biggest collections? The smallest?

Which art museum has the biggest endowment? The smallest?

Which art museum has the biggest staff? The smallest?

How do the art museums differ in their collection areas?

XI. Summative Assessment and Evaluation:

Students will turn in their written answers to their independent museum research. The instructor will evaluate each student based on their participation and their understanding of the fundamental history and function of art museums.

- I. Lesson Title: Understanding How Art Museums Work
- II. Lesson: Lesson 2 of 4 (one, ninety minute class period)
- III. Key Concepts:
- a) Art museums can have large, diverse staffs
 - b) Art museum professionals are guided by academic and industry standards and guidelines
 - c) Art museum professionals carry great ethical and educational responsibilities
 - d) Museum staff function to support the mission of the museum
- IV. Essential Question: a) What do art museum employees do? How do they do it?
- V. Lesson Objectives:
- 1) Students will explore the variety of different occupations in art museums
 - 2) Students will analyze the function of specific occupations within the art museum, including director, educator, curator, development officer, preparator, registrar, conservator, and exhibition designer
 - 4) Students will understand the educational backgrounds of museum staff
 - 5) Students will choose their own museum occupation
- VI. Art Content: Dallas/Fort Worth area art museums will be explored via the Internet
- VII. Resources and Materials for Teacher:
- Alexander, E.P., & Alexander, M. (2008). *Museums in motion: An introduction to the history and functions of museums*, 2nd ed. Plymouth, UK: Altamira Press.
- Thomson, P. (1997). *The nine-ton cat: Behind the scenes at an art museum*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Books.

Schlatter, E. N. (2009). *Museum Careers: A Practical Guide for Students and Novices*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Computer or tablet with wireless internet access

VIII. Resources and Materials for Students:

Alexander, E.P., & Alexander, M. (2008). *Museums in motion: An introduction to the history and functions of museums*, 2nd ed. Plymouth, UK: Altamira Press.

Thomson, P. (1997). *The nine-ton cat: Behind the scenes at an art museum*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Books.

Schlatter, E. N. (2009). *Museum Careers: A Practical Guide for Students and Novices*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Laptop computer with wireless internet access

IX. Vocabulary:

Exhibition designer: a professional whose responsibility is to design the physical considerations of an art exhibition, including traffic flow, signage, and entrances and exits
Curator – a scholar and art expert that organizes and chooses the items in an exhibition at a museum or gallery; someone who builds and guides a museum collection
Registrar – somebody who keeps official records of each object in an art museum's collections or visiting exhibitions
Preparator – an art handler; someone who arranges art objects within an art museum environment
Conservator – somebody who preserves or restores works of art or other valued objects in an art museum or collection; understands both chemical processes and art history
Educator – an expert in the theories or administration of education within an art museum environment; a professional who organizes educational programs that enhance exhibitions or collections

Director – an administrator responsible for the governance of the museum, including financial, staff, and building considerations. Reports to the Board of Directors.

Professional Organization – an organization who helps to legitimize a professional field by establishing standards, publishing research, and helping educate members

X. Instruction and Its Sequencing:

Procedure:

1) Instruct students to read pre-assigned portions of Schlatter, E. N. (2009). *Museum Careers: A Practical Guide for Students and Novices*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

2) Present students with powerpoint presentation containing an introduction to museum careers, including the vocabulary terms listed above.

3) Divide students into small groups, and assign each group a museum profession. Ask students to use their computers and textbooks to do independent research on their assigned art museum profession. Students should discover the following information about their assigned art museum profession:

Summarize the job responsibilities of your assigned museum career. What does a curator, educator, director, preparator, registrar, conservator, exhibition designer do?

Describe the type of education required for your assigned museum career. Does a curator, educator, director, preparator, registrar, conservator, exhibition designer need a college degree? What about a master's or doctorate? What would they major in?

Describe four or five of the day-to-day duties a curator, educator, director, preparator, registrar, conservator, exhibition designer might engage in.

What is the chief goal of a curator, educator, director, preparator, registrar, conservator, exhibition designer?

What do you think an average annual salary is for your assigned museum career?

How does the museum career you have researched fit into the art museum's basic mission to collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret? Which one of those directives best fit your career?

4) After students have completed their group tasks, reconvene the class and discuss their findings. Have each group make a five minute presentation that presents the highlights of their assigned museum career. Their presentation should answer the fundamental questions about their assigned museum career.

5) After student groups have presented their museum career information, dismiss the student groups. Have individual students select a museum career from those presented that best fits their interests and skills. Each student must write a one-page essay in class that fulfills the following prompts:

What museum career would you choose? Why would you choose this career?

Why would you be good at this job?

What would be the best part of this particular job? What would be the worst part?

Which museum career would you not like to do? Why not?

What skills and interests do you have that you think match well with this museum career?

What do you think would be the best part of working in an art museum? What would be the worst part?

XI. Summative Assessment and Evaluation:

Students will turn in their museum career essays. The instructor will evaluate each student based on their

participation and their understanding of their particular chosen museum career.

- I. Lesson Title: The History of Art Museums
- II. Lesson: Lesson 3 of 4 (one, ninety minute class period)
- III. Key Concepts:
 - a) Historically, art museums are relatively new institutions
 - b) Art museums emerge from Enlightenment era philosophies
 - c) Many of the first art museums were created by the acquisition of objects through militaristic and colonial expansion
 - d) It is important to consider how objects are collected by art museums, both historically and in contemporary practice
- IV. Essential Question: a) How does an art museum build a great collection of objects?
- V. Lesson Objectives:
 - 1) Students will explore the emergence of art museums in Western, post-Enlightenment society
 - 2) Students will analyze the history of the Louvre museum in Paris, France
 - 3) Students will understand the relationship between collecting and wealth
 - 4) Students will analyze the role of art museums in representing and creating culture
- VI. Art Content: The Louvre Museum in Paris and other museums, including the Vatican and the British Museum will be explored via the internet
- VII. Resources and Materials for Teacher:

Alexander, E.P., & Alexander, M. (2008). *Museums in motion: An introduction to the history and functions of museums*, 2nd ed. Plymouth, UK: Altamira Press.

Buck, P. (2011). Collecting an empire: The Napoleonic Louvre and the cabinet of curiosities in Catherine Wilmot's An Irish Peer on the Continent. In *Prose Studies; History, Theory, Criticism, Volume 33, Issue 3*, p. 188-199.

Lecuyer, B. (2007). *The Louvre: From dungeons to the pyramid*. Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities & Sciences

BBC Productions: *Treasures of the Louvre*

Computer or tablet with wireless internet access

VIII. Resources and Materials for Students:

Alexander, E.P., & Alexander, M. (2008). *Museums in motion: An introduction to the history and functions of museums*, 2nd ed. Plymouth, UK: Altamira Press.

Lecuyer, B. (2007). *The Louvre: From dungeons to the pyramid*. Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities & Sciences

BBC Productions: *Treasures of the Louvre*

History Channel website: <http://www.history.com/news/six-things-you-may-not-know-about-the-louvre>

Laptop computer with wireless internet access

IX. Vocabulary:

Encyclopedic Museum – a large, often government-affiliated museum with a collection that spans different times and many different, global cultures

Imperialism – An unequal relationship, based on ideas of superiority and practices of dominance, involving the control of one state over another

Colonialism – the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.

Appropriation – the action of taking something for one's own use, typically without the owner's permission

Repatriation – the return of art or cultural objects, usually referring to ancient or looted art, to their country of origin or former owners (or heirs)

Provenance – a record of ownership of a work of art (its history/original)

Booty – valuable stolen goods, especially those seized in war

Plunder – stealing goods during a time of war or civil disorder

Napoleon – French military general and emperor, known for his imperialistic practices as well as plundering the areas he conquered

Waterloo – Battle in which British forces defeated the French and subsequently appropriated objects plundered by Napoleon

The Louvre – one of the largest encyclopedic museums in the world, created in part due to the large number of objects acquired by Napoleon

The British Museum – one of the largest encyclopedic museums in the world; several objects in the museums are the source of contention between the museum and the original object owners

NAGPRA – Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act is a federal law requiring institutions to return Native American cultural items to lineal descendants

Slack Farm and Dickson Mounds – two Native American sites that were extensively looted and often used as examples for the necessity of NAGPRA

X. Instruction and Its Sequencing:

Procedure:

1) Instruct students to visit and read the History Channel website about the Louvre museum in advance of class.

2) Present students with powerpoint presentation about the history of art museums, including the vocabulary terms listed above.

3) Watch one of the following videos in class: Lecuyer, B. (2007). *The Louvre: From dungeons to the pyramid*. Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities & Sciences or BBC Productions: *Treasures of the Louvre*

4) After the video, have students get into pairs and answer the following questions on a sheet of paper.

Does it surprise you to know that the famous and prestigious British Museum is at the center of disputes over ownership and repatriation of ancient artifacts like the Rosetta Stone, Parthenon Marbles, and Benin Bronzes? Why or why not? Elaborate.

Answer the following two questions about each of these objects: The Rosetta Stone; The Parthenon Marbles; The Benin Bronzes.

Summarize the ownership dispute over this object. Who made it, and how did it get to the British Museum?

In your opinion, should this object be regarded as stolen? Why or why not?

Do you think the British Museum should repatriate the Rosetta Stone, Parthenon Marbles, and Benin Bronzes? Why or why not? Give three arguments that support your position.

Why do you think the British Museum doesn't return these objects?

When you visit a museum, would you like to know the provenance of the objects you look at? Do you think art museums should disclose this information?

XI. Summative Assessment and Evaluation:

Students will turn in their answers to the questions listed above. The instructor will evaluate each student based on their participation and their understanding of their particular chosen museum career.

- I. Lesson Title: Constructing the Museum
- II. Lesson: Lesson 4 of 4 (one, ninety-minute class period)
- III. Key Concepts: a) Art museums are carefully constructed environments
b) The collection and display of art objects by art museums reflect a strong cultural perspective and point of view
c) Art objects are strongly influenced by the physical space around them
d) Art museums can construct and create cultural identities
- IV. Essential Question:
How are art museums constructed environments? Who constructs them?
- V. Lesson Objectives:
1. Students will explore the collections of art museums from the classroom
 2. Students will analyze cultural messages of art museums
 3. Students will identify several specific instances of messages that reflect cultural assumptions or prejudice in art museums
 4. Students will compare and contrast interpretive materials within the art museum
 5. Students will assess basic museum practices of collection and display
- VI. Specific Art Content:
A variety of museums will be explored via the internet
- VII. Resources and Materials for Teacher:
Karp, Ivan. (1991). Culture and representation. In Karp, I. & Lavine, S. D. (Eds.). *Exhibiting cultures: The poetics and politics of museum display*, 11-24. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Wilson, Fred. (1994). The silent message of the museum. In Fisher, J. (Ed.). *Global visions: Towards a new internationalism in the visual arts*, 152-160. London: Kala

Press, in association with the Institute of International Visual Arts.

Local museum gallery maps

Images of galleries within a variety of different types of Museums

Examples of museum gallery labels

Laptop computer or tablet with wireless internet access

VIII. Resources and Materials for Students:

Karp, Ivan. (1991). Culture and representation. In Karp, I. & Lavine, S. D. (Eds.). *Exhibiting cultures: The poetics and politics of museum display*, 11-24. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press.

Wilson, Fred. "The Silent Message of the Museum." In *Global Visions. Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts*. Edited by Jean Fisher. Pp. 152-160. London: Kala Press, in association with the Institute of International Visual Arts, 1994.

IX. Vocabulary:

Critical – involving or requiring skillful judgment as to truth, merit, etc.

Marginalized – to place in a position of marginal importance, influence, or power

Prejudice – any preconceived opinion or feeling, favorable or unfavorable

Assumption – to take for granted or without proof

Imperialism – the policy of extending the rule or authority of an empire or nation over foreign countries, or of acquiring and holding colonies and dependencies

Ethnography – the branch of anthropology dealing with the scientific description of individual cultures

Western – though the definition varies, it is widely accepted to include countries of Western Europe, the United States, and parts of Latin America; countries that are based on the classical ideals of ancient Greece and Rome

Non-Western – any country not belonging to those listed above, usually Asian, African, Oceanic nations

Curator – a scholar and art expert that organizes and chooses the items in an exhibition at a museum or gallery; someone who builds and guides a museum collection

Exhibition – public display of works of art

Encyclopedic Museum – a large, often government-affiliated museum with a collection that spans different times and many different, global cultures

Ethnographic Museum – a museum that specializes in the display and collection of cultural objects

Salon exhibition – a method of display originating in Western aristocratic culture; works of art are displayed hung from floor to ceiling

Representation – the description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way or as being of a certain nature:

Context – the circumstances that form the setting for an idea or object, and in terms of which it can be fully understood and assessed

X. Instruction and Its Sequencing:

Procedure:

1. Prior to lesson, instruct students to read two articles by Fred Wilson and Ivan Karp

2. Present powerpoint presentation that introduces vocabulary and shows representative images of lesson objectives

3. Present a variety of images of museum galleries, showing a variety of installation methods and cultures represented. Present a variety of museum gallery maps, showing how galleries are arranged. Present a variety of different museum labels.

4. Expand on these images and handouts by providing additional verbal explanations of each sub-heading and asking the following class discussion questions:

Gallery location – where is the gallery located within the museum? Is it easily accessible, in a prime location? Is the gallery spacious?

Lighting – is the gallery well-lit? Are the objects easy to see?
Object spacing – how many objects are in each gallery? Are they cluttered together, or spaced apart?

Gallery color – what color are the gallery walls?

Labels – what kind of information is presented in the explanatory labels? Is it detailed? What kind of language is used? Are artist names, dates, locations, mentioned? Western or non-Western – select the appropriate term
Other observations –does anything else stand out? Is there anything from your readings that applies to this gallery?

5. Remind students that they should take notes of other observations as well, as they will be beneficial for the final unit project.

6. Divide the class into groups of two. Ask students to work together to write down their answers to the following questions:

- a) Artist Fred Wilson writes about an experiment he conducted in which he displayed objects in three different physical settings: a white cube; a space that looked like an ethnographic museum; and a turn-of-the-century salon space. *How might the physical qualities of the space in which an object is displayed affect the perception of the object? Describe an object that you saw today whose significance might change if it were displayed in a different manner.*

- b) Fred Wilson writes about the Seattle Art Museum and the way the floor plans are organized. He describes a narrative as the visitor visits the first galleries, in prime locations (ancient Roman and Greek), then the 18th, 19th, and 20th century European galleries, “creating a linear history connecting the glories of ancient Greece and Egypt with the...European/American art.” *How do the arrangement and locations of the galleries shown in class compare with Wilson’s description? Where are most of the Western galleries located? Where are the non-Western galleries located? Do the locations of these galleries impart any meaning about the relative value of the collections?*

- c) Ivan Karp writes “The mode of installation, the subtle messages communicated through design, arrangement,

and assemblage, can either aid or impede our appreciation and understanding of the visual, cultural, social, and political interest of the objects and stories exhibited in museums.” *What did you notice about the arrangement and physical characteristics of the galleries? Compare and contrast the physical differences you noted on your handout, noting tendencies in the Western and non-Western galleries.*

- d) Ivan Karp also writes “What is at stake in struggles for control over objects and the modes of exhibiting them, finally, is the articulation of identity. Exhibitions represent identity, either directly, through assertion, or indirectly, by implication. When cultural “others” are implicated, exhibitions tell us who we are and, perhaps most significant, who we are not. Exhibitions are privileged arenas for presenting images of self and “other.” *How have you observed the construction of identity in the galleries you saw today in class. Based on your observations today, who is the “other in museum galleries?” Why?*
- e) Karp writes “From one point of view the most powerful agents in the construction of identity appear to be neither the producers of objects nor the audience but the exhibition makers themselves, who have the power to mediate among parties who will not come into face-to-face contact.” *Who is constructing the identities? Overall, do you feel that the exhibitions you observed today accurately reflect various aspects of the cultures themselves? Why or why not? What might be some further implications of art museums ability to construct various identities?*

XI. Summative Assessment and Evaluation:

Students will turn in their written answers to the questions listed above. The instructor will evaluate each student based on their participation and their understanding of the museum as a constructed space.

APPENDIX B
DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Art Appreciation Introductory Museum Assignment

1. Have you ever been to an art museum before? If the answer is no, skip to question 5.
2. If you answered yes, which art museum(s) did you visit?
3. Approximately how many times have you visited an art museum?
4. In a few sentences, how would you characterize your previous art museum visit? Was it fun, boring, interesting, painful, exciting, etc.?
5. What are positive words you would use to describe your current feelings about art museums?
6. What are negative words you would use to describe your current feelings about art museums?
7. What do you think the people who work at art museums are like? Circle all of the adjectives that you think might apply.

Smart	Laid-back	Snobby	Male	Sloppy	Interesting
Old	Attractive	Rich	Stylish	Kind	Creative
Privileged	Casual	Regular	Accurate	Disorganized	Stuffy
Boring	Female	Funny	Cool	Educated	Authoritative
Elite	Ignorant	Cold	Gracious	Stodgy	Diverse
Correct	Poor	Fair	Racist	Exciting	Trustworthy

Are there any other words that are not featured on this list that you think apply to people who work at art museums (please list)?

8. Why do you think art museums exist? Where did they come from, and why might they be important?

9. How do you think art museums work? Answer the following questions to the best of your abilities:

a. Who selects the objects that are on display in an art museum? What qualifies these people to select the objects? How do you think they decide which objects to display?

b. Where do the objects that are displayed in an art museum come from? How are they acquired?

c. How much does it cost to run an art museum? Where does this money come from?

10. Using the scale below, based on your current knowledge, please indicate how strongly you feel an art museum could be any of the adjectives below:

	Disagree Strongly				Neither Agree Nor Disagree				Agree Strongly	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Snobby	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Prestigious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Racist	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Correct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Biased	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Fun	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Elitist	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Uneducated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Boring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Interesting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Laid-back	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Incorrect	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Prejudiced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

11. Prior to this class, have you ever considered how art museums work? In other words, have you ever considered who works at art museums, who selects the objects on display, how the objects are displayed in art museums, and/or how the museum is funded?

12. Are you interested in learning about these things? Why or why not?

13. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being not at all, and 10 being extremely, how knowledgeable do you feel about how art museums operate?

14. Please share any additional thoughts or ideas you may have about art museums.

Questions about Repatriation and the Rosetta Stone, Elgin Marbles, and Benin Bronzes

1. Does it surprise you to know that the famous and prestigious British Museum is at the center of disputes over ownership and repatriation of ancient artifacts like the Rosetta Stone, Parthenon Marbles, and Benin Bronzes? Why or why not? Elaborate.

ROSETTA STONE

2. Summarize the ownership dispute of the Rosetta Stone. Who made it, and how did it get to the British Museum?

3. In your opinion, should the Rosetta Stone be regarded as a *stolen* object? Why or why not?

PARTHENON MARBLES

4. Summarize the ownership dispute of the Parthenon Marbles. Who made them, and how did they get to the British Museum?

5. In your opinion, should the Parthenon Marbles be regarded as a *stolen* object? Why or why not?

BENIN BRONZES

6. Summarize the ownership dispute of the Benin Bronzes. Who made them, and how did they get to the British Museum?

7. In your opinion, should the Benin Bronzes be regarded as a *stolen* object? Why or why not?

8. Do you think the British Museum should *repatriate* the Rosetta Stone, Parthenon Marbles, and Benin Bronzes? Why or why not? Give THREE arguments that support your position.

9. Do you think art museums in the United States should be required to review their collections to find objects that were taken under illegal or unethical circumstances? Why or why not?

10. If US art museums were required to review their collections to find objects that were taken under illegal or unethical circumstances, do you think they would find many questionable objects? Take a guess—what percentage of objects in US art museums *do you think* might have been acquired illegally or unethically?

11. Why do you think the British Museum doesn't return the Rosetta Stone, Parthenon Marbles, or Benin Bronzes?

12. When you visit a museum, would it make a difference if you knew some of the objects were stolen or acquired unethically? Would you like to know the *provenance* of the objects you look at in the museum when you visit?

Arts 1301 – Art Appreciation Museum Project

STEP ONE

Make sure that you have read the articles posted in Blackboard under “Museum Project.” You will have to reference these articles in your project and should read them **BEFORE** you go to the museum.

STEP TWO

Print out these Museum Project Guidelines and take them with you to the **Dallas Museum of Art**, 1717 N. Harwood St., Dallas 75201. You will not be able to complete your project without them.

STEP THREE

Check the Dallas Museum of Art’s location and hours, and plan a time and day to visit. The DMA is open until 8 pm on Thursdays, and on certain Fridays until midnight. I estimate that you should spend about 1.5-2 hours on your project at the museum, and about another 2-3 hours working at home.

STEP FOUR

Making sure you have your printed guidelines and a **PENCIL** (they will not let you use a pen in the galleries), visit the Dallas Museum of Art!

STEP FIVE

After you complete your museum project handouts at the museum, take them home, **type them up** in Microsoft Word, conclude your thoughts, and then turn in your **TYPED** version by the due date.

Vocabulary:

Contemporary – from the present day or from the past few years; current.

Critical – involving or requiring skillful judgment as to truth, merit, etc.

Encyclopedic – comprehensive in terms of information.

Ethnographic museum – a history or culture museum, often documenting ancient cultures.

Imperialism – the policy of extending the rule or authority of an empire or nation over foreign countries, or of acquiring and holding colonies and dependencies.

Marginalized – to be in a position of insignificant importance, influence, or power.

Salon exhibition – an aristocratic display of paintings in which walls are covered floor to ceiling with art.

Western – cultures deriving from and sharing values with Europe, the United States, Australia, etc.

Non-Western – cultures not deriving from Europe. Includes cultures from Africa, Asia, Oceania, Latin America, and the Middle East.

PART ONE: Looking at your Favorite Work of Art

Find your favorite work of art—any work of art that interests you—and then use your newfound vocabulary to describe its form, interpret its content, and evaluate its success. Make notes below, then type it when you get home. USE ONLY YOUR OWN WORDS! DO NOT COPY LABEL INFORMATION!

DESCRIBE FORM (using categories, visual elements, design principles learned in class)

INTERPRET CONTENT (what do you think it all means?)

EVALUATE SUCCESS (is this successful? Why or why not?)

PART TWO: Looking at the Dallas Museum of Art

1) Find the European galleries on the 2nd floor of the museum. Look around and answer the following questions:

- Is this a prime or valuable location? How much space, relative to the rest of the museum, is dedicated to European art?
- Are the galleries spacious and roomy?
- Are the objects cluttered together or spaced apart?
- What color are the walls? Is the lighting sufficiently bright?
- Are the object labels in good condition? Are there artist names on the labels?
- Is this a Western or Non Western culture? Are there old or new works presented, or both?



2) In any of the galleries (though I suggest the European galleries on Level 2 or American galleries on Level 4), find a work of art made by a woman (look at the labels to find names).

- List the artists name and the title of the work.
- Was it difficult to find a work of art made by a woman?
- Estimate, based on your observations, what percentage of works in the DMA were created by women.

3) On the third floor of the museum, there are the Arts of Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. Within these galleries there is an ancient Egyptian mummy.

- What year does this mummy date to?
- What educational purpose do you think this mummy serves?
- Speculate on how you think a mummy from ancient Egypt ended up in the Dallas Museum of Art. Be specific.
- If the descendants of this mummy asked for this body back, should the Dallas Museum of Art give it back? Why or why not?



4) Find the Ancient American galleries on the 4th floor of the museum. Look around and answer the following questions:

- Is this a prime or valuable location? How much space, relative to the rest of the museum, is dedicated to Ancient American art?
- Are the galleries spacious and roomy?
- Are the objects cluttered together or spaced apart?
- What color are the walls? Is the lighting sufficiently bright?



- Are the object labels in good condition?
- Are there artist names on the labels?
- Is this a Western or Non Western culture? Are there old or new works presented, or both?

5) Just outside the Ancient American galleries on the 4th floor of the museum there are a series of bowls made by the Mimbres culture (a Native American group).



“Mimbres pottery was a crucial element of the Mimbres death ritual. Prior to burial, a bowl to be placed on the head of the deceased was ceremonially and symbolically killed, the hole in the center of the bowl representing the fatal wound. The killing of the bowl freed the potter's spirit to accompany the dead person into the afterlife.”

- How many of these bowls have holes in them? Do you think that means the bowls were once part of human burials?
- How do you think an object that was once an important part of a person's burial come to be displayed in a museum?
- Do you think it's ethical to display human burial artifacts in a museum? Why or why not, or under what conditions?
- Does knowing that these bowls were likely once buried with Native Americans make you see them any differently? Why or why not?
- If the descendants of the Native Americans the bowls were buried with asked for these bowls back, should the DMA give them back? Why or why not?

6) While you are still at the museum, consider the following questions:

- What do you think about the DMA? What did you like and dislike about it? Explain.
- What does it say about the DMA that they have collected so many works of art? What does it say about the city of Dallas that they own and maintain such a large museum? What does it take to own and maintain such a large museum?
- The DMA owns over 22,000 works of art spanning 5000 years. Where did the DMA get the resources to acquire and maintain these works?
- Does every city and/or every country have resources like this? Why or why not? What are some cities and countries that might not have museums like this?
- Do you have any other concluding thoughts about the DMA, their collection, or your experience?

PART THREE: Synthesize Your Experience and Thoughts With the Readings

Answer the following questions, typing your answers in a separate document.

7) Artist Fred Wilson writes about an experiment in which he displayed objects in three different physical settings: a white cube; a space that looked like an ethnographic museum; and a turn-of-the-century salon space.

How might the physical qualities of the space in which an object is displayed affect the perception of the object? Name an object that you saw at the museum whose significance might change if it were displayed in a different manner.

8) Fred Wilson writes about the Seattle Art Museum and the way the floor plans are organized. He describes a narrative as the visitor visits the first galleries, in prime locations (ancient Roman and Greek), then the 18th, 19th, and 20th century European galleries, “creating a linear history connecting the glories of ancient Greece and Egypt with the...European/American art.”

How do the arrangement and locations of the DMA galleries compare with Wilson’s description? Where are most of the Western galleries located? Where are the non-Western galleries located? Do you think the locations of these galleries impart any meaning about the relative value of the collections?

9) Ivan Karp writes “What is at stake in struggles for control over objects and the modes of exhibiting them, finally, is the articulation of identity. Exhibitions represent identity, either directly, through assertion, or indirectly, by implication. When cultural “others” are implicated, exhibitions tell us who we are and, perhaps most significant, who we are not. Exhibitions are privileged arenas for presenting images of self and “other.”

Which cultures/identities are constructed by the exhibitions at the DMA? Does the DMA, through their exhibition size, location, décor, or arrangement, place a greater value on any culture? Why/why not? Why do you think the DMA doesn’t collect *contemporary* art from Asia, Africa, and Latin America? Why might the DMA only collect ancient art from these cultures?

10) Karp writes “From one point of view the most powerful agents in the construction of identity appear to be neither the producers of objects nor the audience but the exhibition makers themselves, who have the power to mediate among parties who will not come into face-to-face contact.”

Overall, do you feel that the exhibitions you observed at the museum accurately reflect the cultures themselves? Why or why not? Is it possible for a museum (intentionally or not) to reinforce stereotypes about an entire culture through an exhibition of objects? Do

you think this ever happens? Why/why not? When a museum only collects ancient artifacts from foreign cultures, does that impact how visitors may see those foreign cultures? Why/why not?

Art Appreciation Final Museum Assignment

1. In a few sentences, how would you characterize your visit to the Dallas Museum of Art? Was it fun, boring, interesting, painful, exciting, etc.?
2. What do you think the people who work at art museums are like? Circle all of the adjectives that you think might apply.

Smart	Laid-back	Snobby	Male	Sloppy	Interesting
Old	Attractive	Rich	Stylish	Kind	Creative
Privileged	Casual	Regular	Accurate	Disorganized	Stuffy
Boring	Female	Funny	Cool	Educated	Authoritative
Elite	Ignorant	Cold	Gracious	Stodgy	Diverse
Correct	Poor	Fair	Racist	Exciting	Trustworthy

Are there any other words that are not featured on this list that you think apply to people who work at art museums (please list)?

3. Why do you think art museums exist? Where did they come from, and why might they be important?
4. Answer the following questions to the best of your abilities:
 - a. Who selects the objects that are on display in an art museum? What qualifies these people to select the objects? How do you think they decide which objects to display?
 - b. Where do the objects that are displayed in an art museum come from? How are they acquired?
 - c. How much does it cost to run an art museum? Where does this money come from?

5. Using the scale below, based on your current knowledge, please indicate how strongly you feel an art museum could be any of the adjectives below:

	Disagree Strongly				Neither Agree Nor Disagree				Agree Strongly	
Snobby	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Prestigious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Racist	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Correct	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Biased	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Fun	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Elitist	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Uneducated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Boring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Interesting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Laid-back	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Incorrect	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Prejudiced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

6. Describe the most important thing(s) you learned about art museums.

7. Overall, is your opinion of art museums any different now than it was before this class?
8. Do you plan on visiting art museums in the future? Why or why not?
9. Did you learn anything about art museums that can be applied to other aspects of your life?
10. Compare and contrast art museums with another contemporary institution, such as universities, the government, or the Olympics.
11. Do you, personally, feel represented and/or included by the Dallas Museum of Art? Why or why not?
12. Do you think it's important for museum visitors to feel represented and/or included by the art museums they visit? Why or why not?
13. Do you think it is important to know something about how an art museum operates before visiting an art museum? Why or why not?
14. In the future, will you feel more comfortable visiting art museums?
15. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being not at all, and 10 being extremely, how knowledgeable do you feel about how art museums operate?

16. Do you think that art museums are interesting? Do you feel that learning about them was important? Explain.

17. Please share any additional thoughts you may have about art museums (if any):

APPENDIX C
TABLES AND FIGURES OF COLLECTED DATA

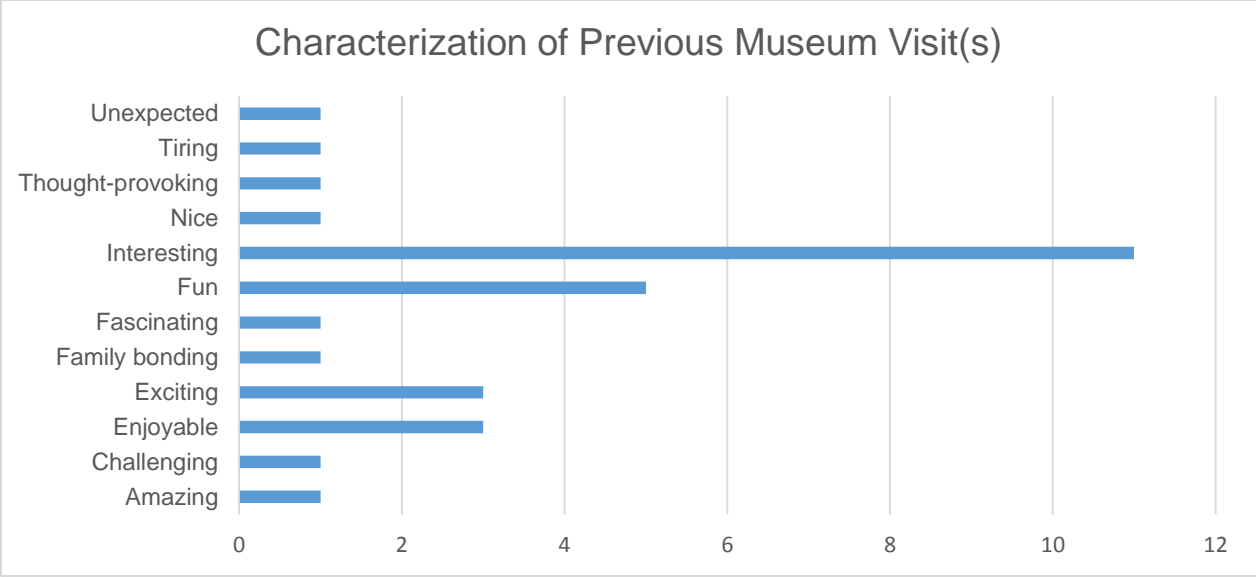


Figure C.1: Descriptions used to characterize previous museum visits

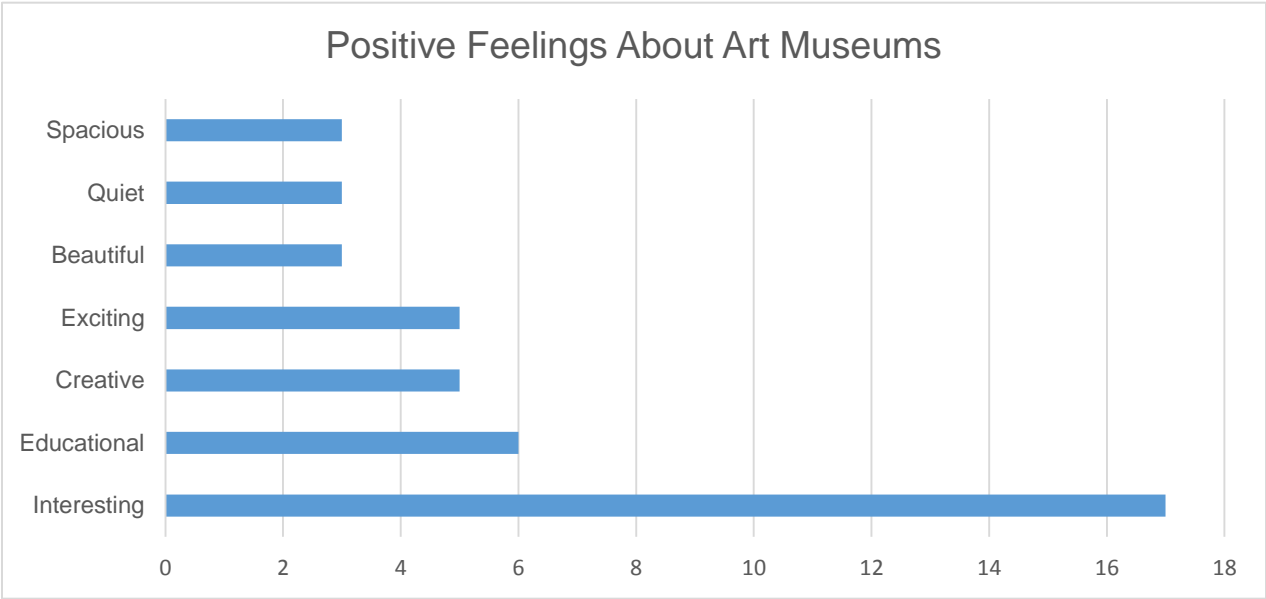


Figure C.2: The most commonly reported positive words about art museums

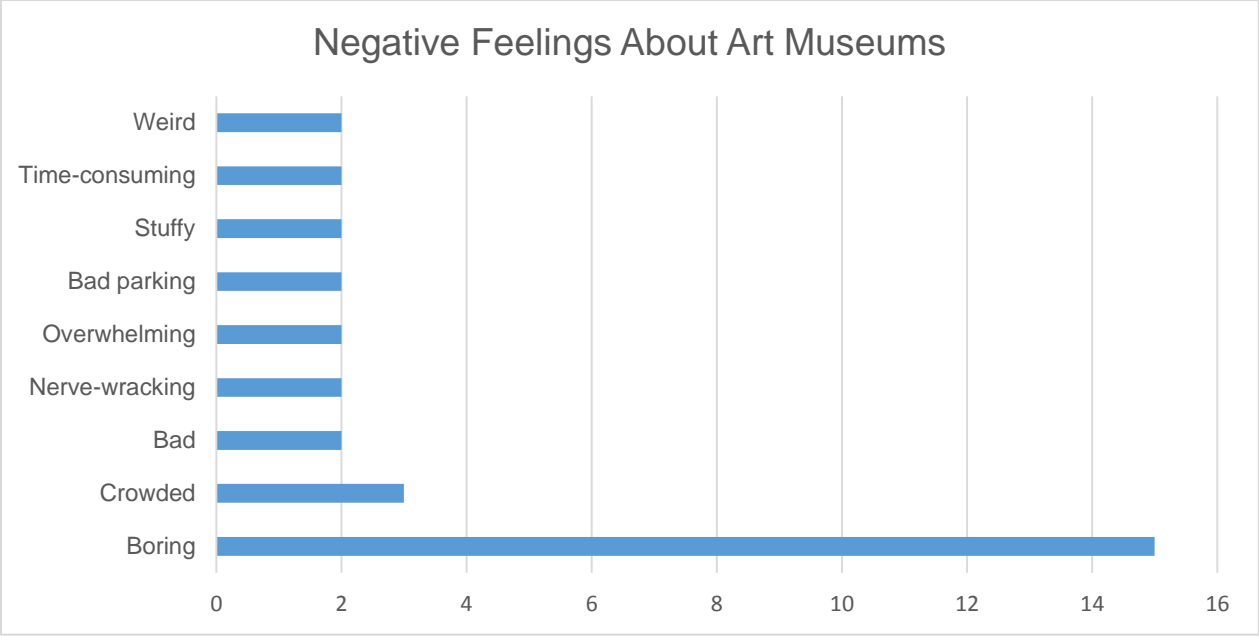


Figure C.3: The most commonly reported negative words about art museums

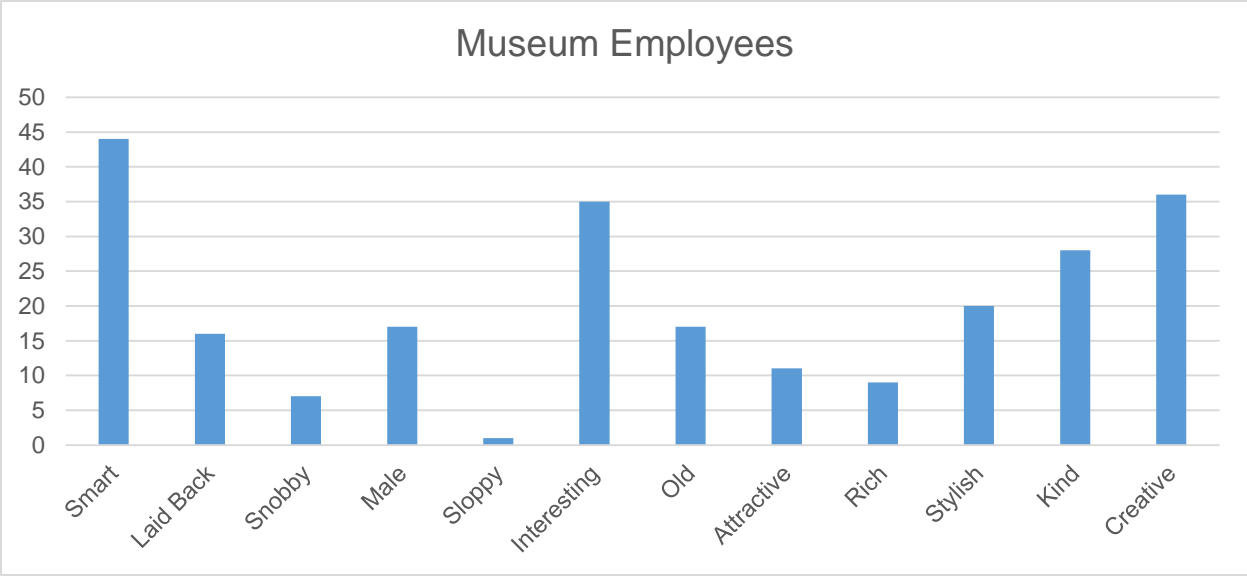


Figure C.4: Student perceptions of twelve qualities of art museum employees

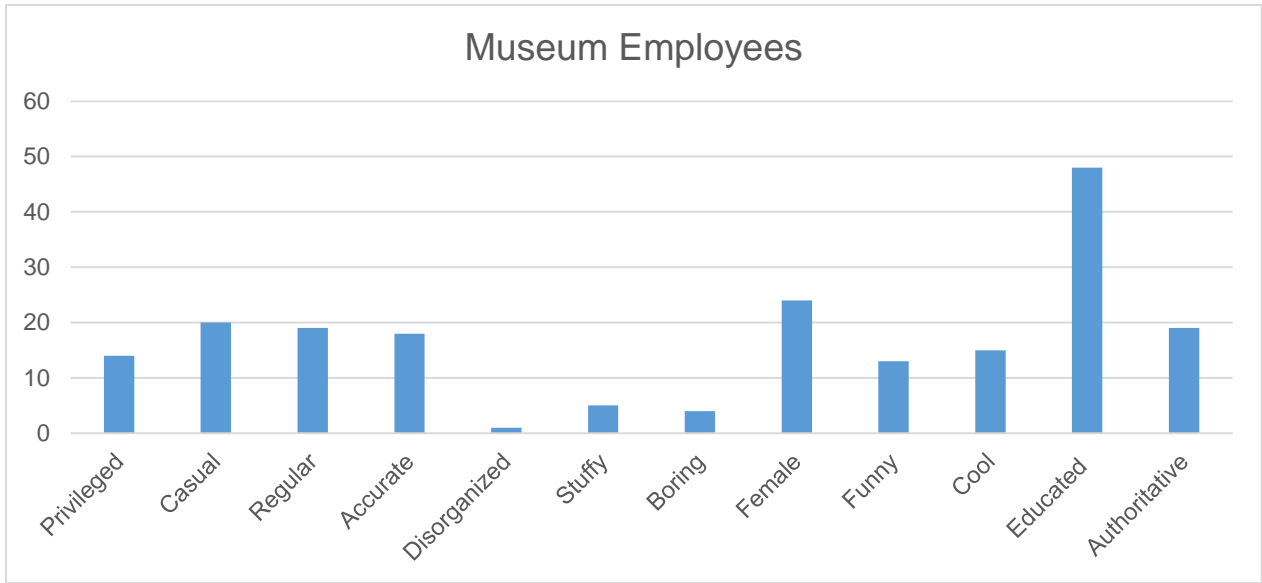


Figure C.5: Student perceptions of twelve qualities of art museum employees

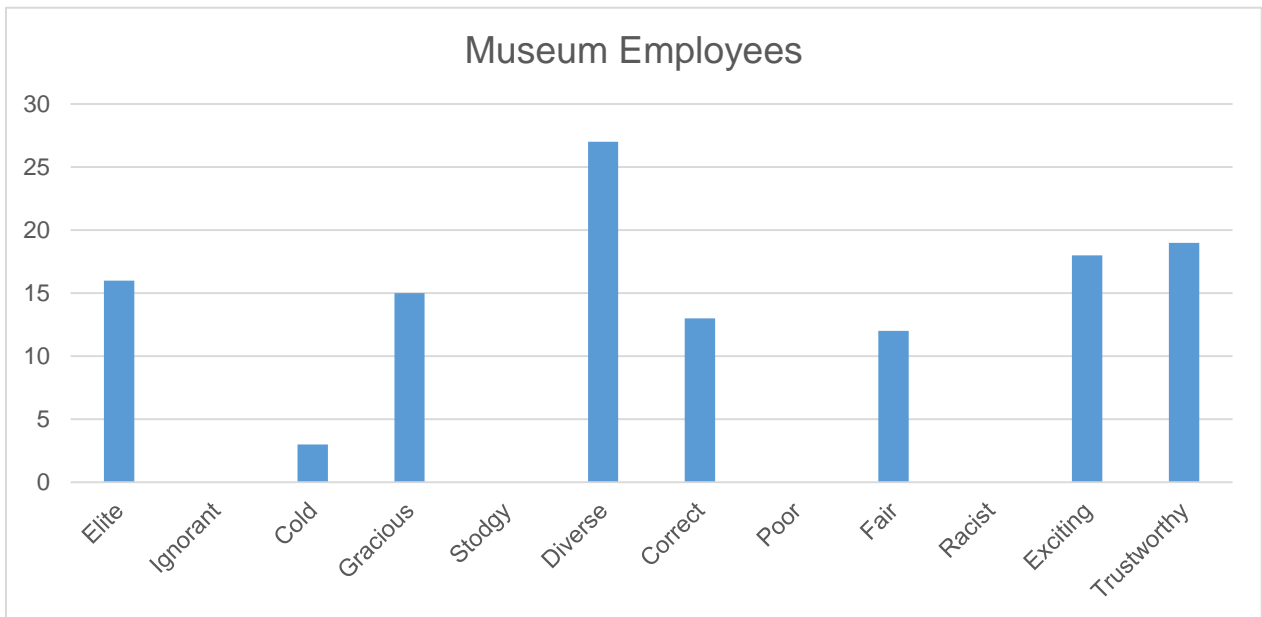


Figure C.6: Student perceptions of twelve qualities of art museum employees

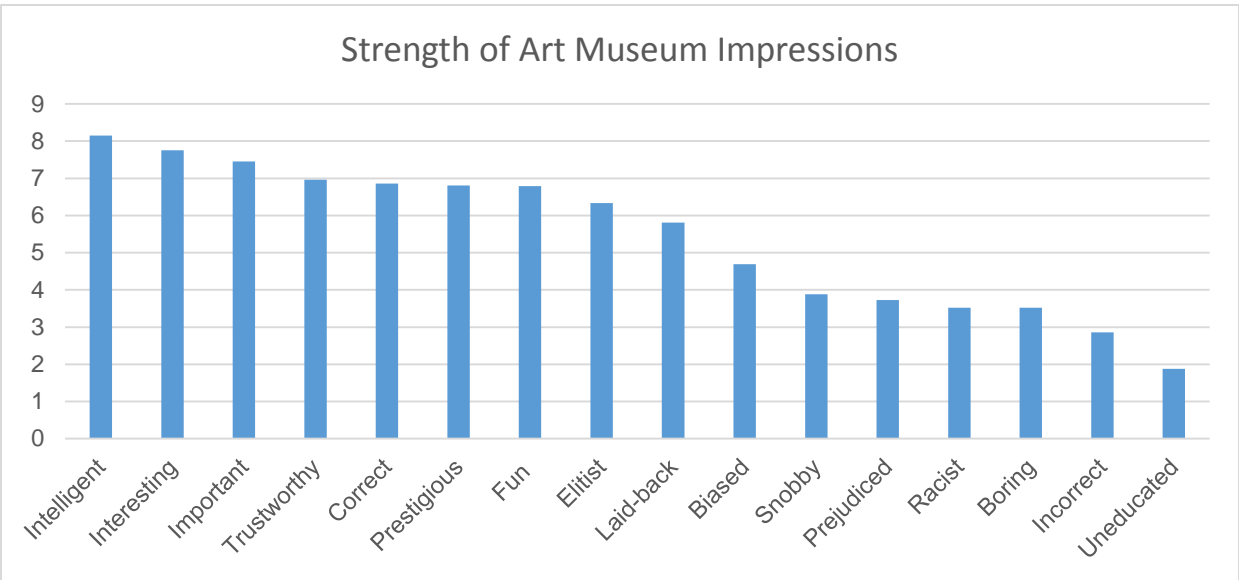


Figure C.7: Aggregated student impressions of art museums

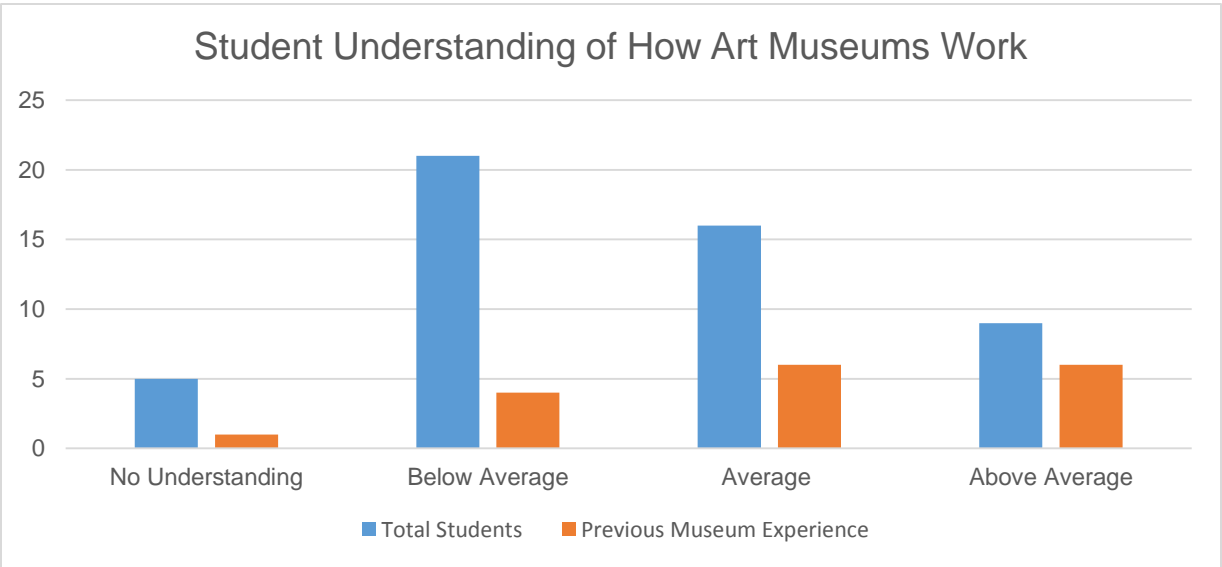


Figure C.8: Student level of understanding of art museums in formative survey

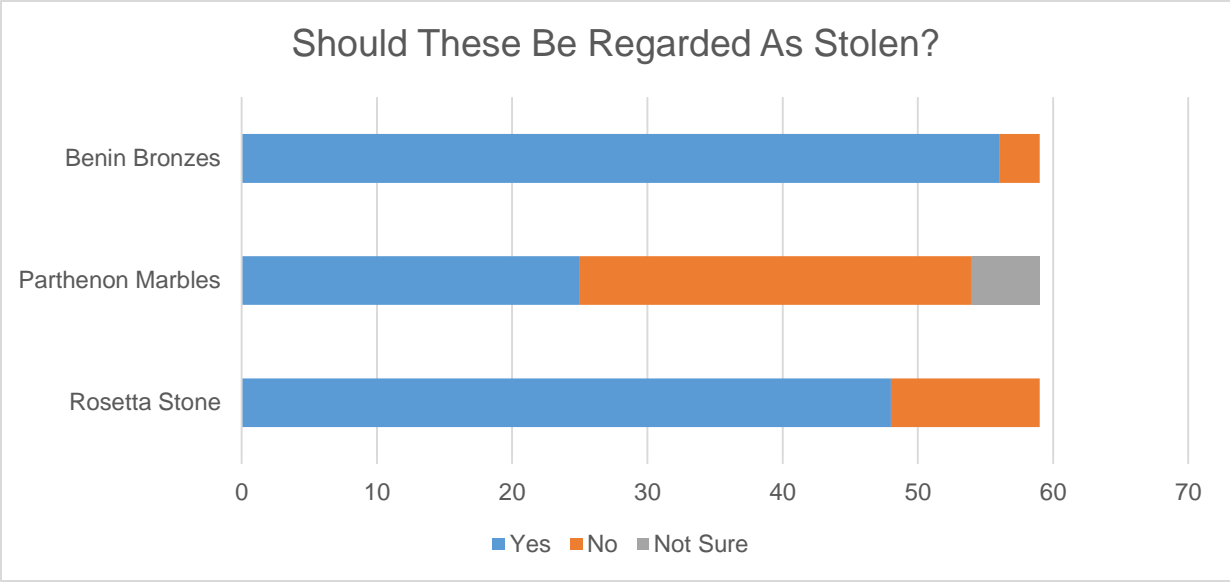


Figure C.9: Student opinions regarding legality of British Museum ownership

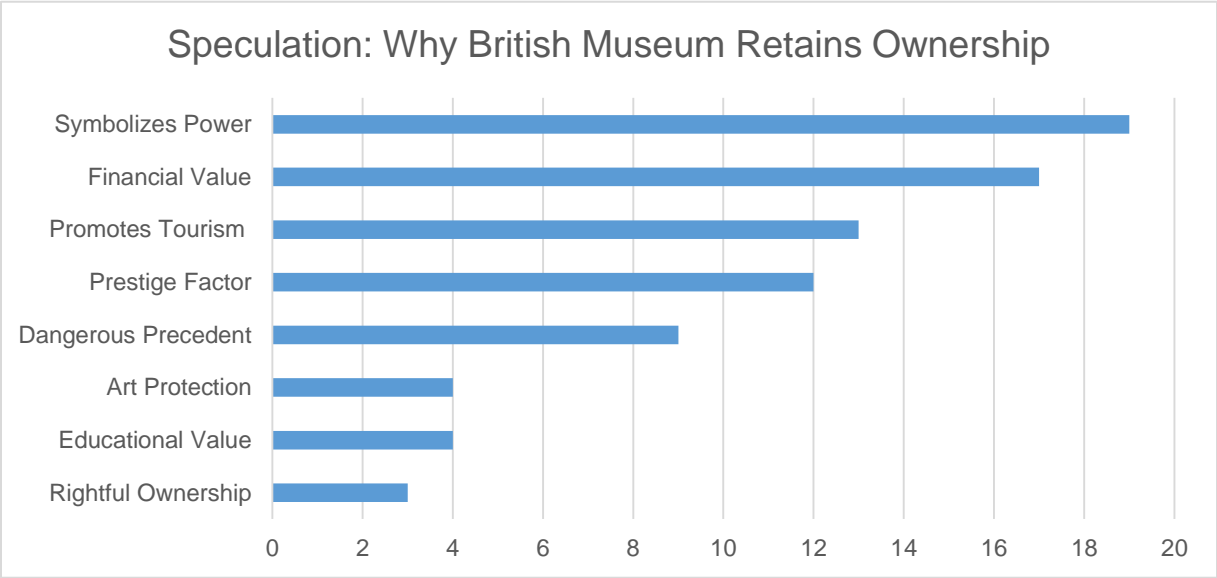


Figure C.10: Student speculation about why the British Museum doesn't return contested works of art

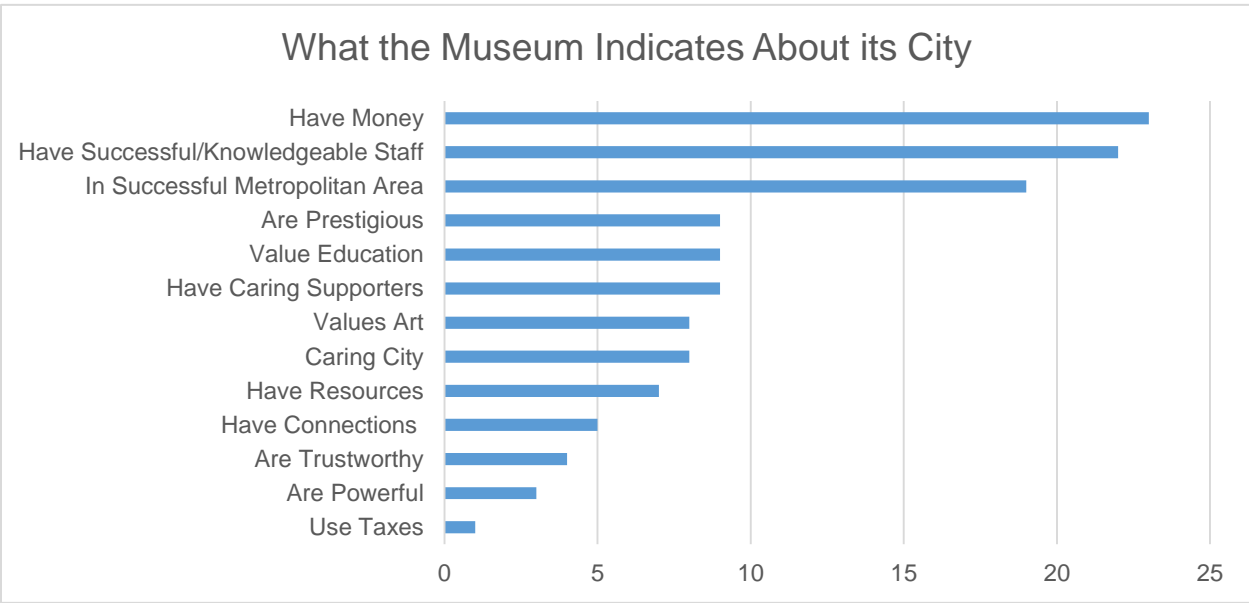


Figure C.11: What the Dallas Museum of Art indicates about the city of Dallas

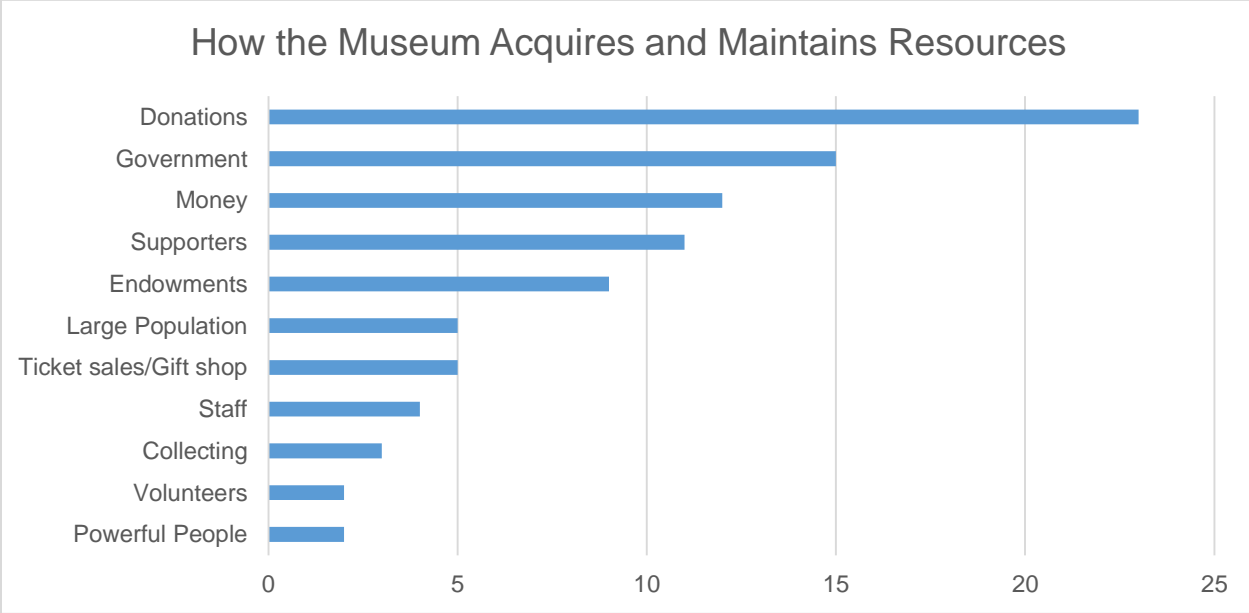


Figure C.12: How students believe the DMA acquires and maintains its resources

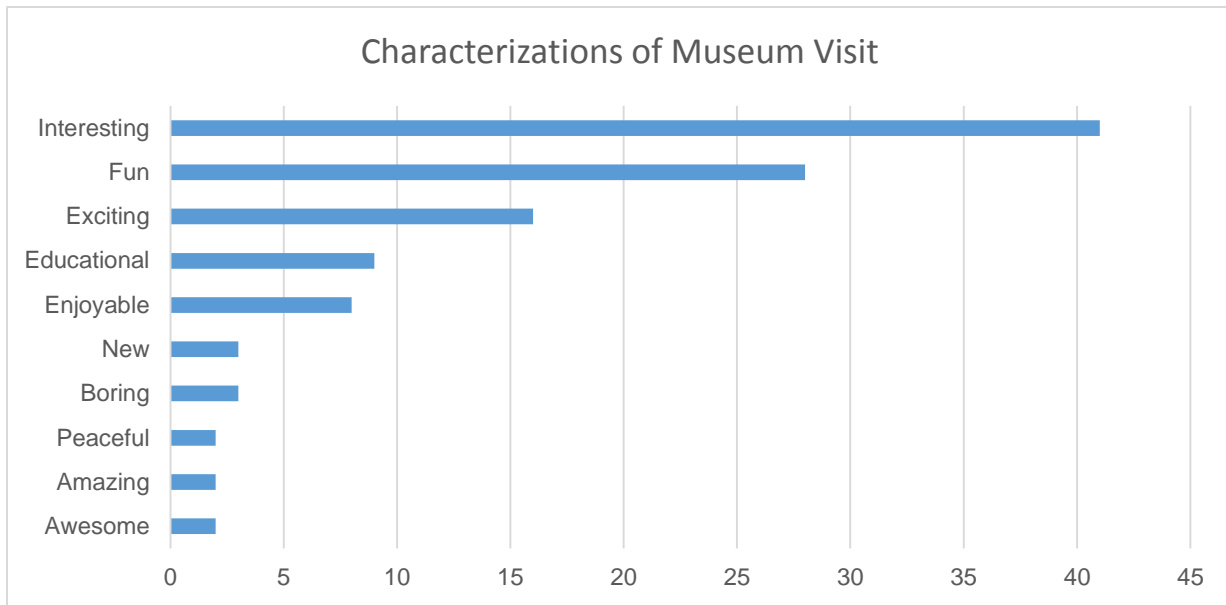


Figure C.13: Characterizations of Museum Visit

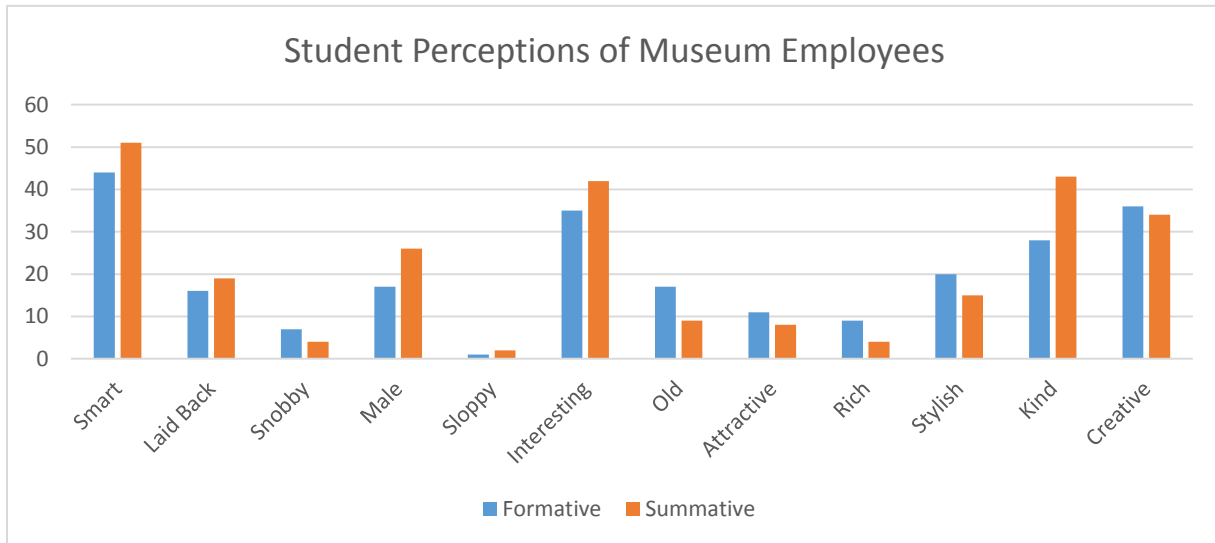


Figure C.14: Student perceptions of twelve qualities of art museum employees

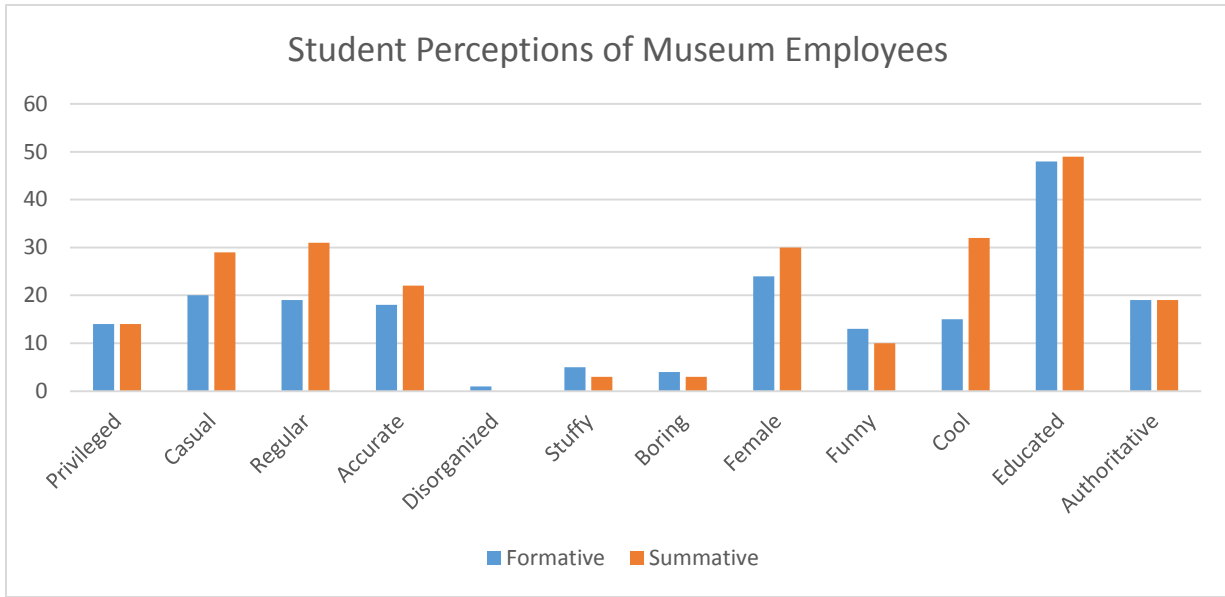


Figure C.15: Student perceptions of twelve qualities of art museum employees

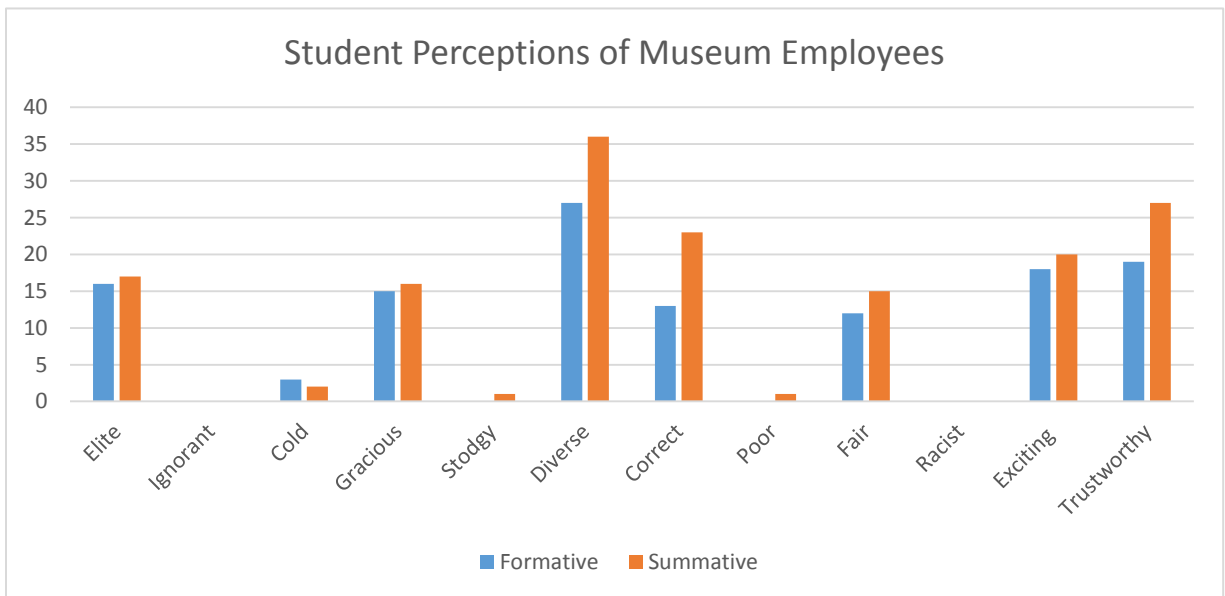


Figure C.16: Student perceptions of twelve qualities of art museum employees

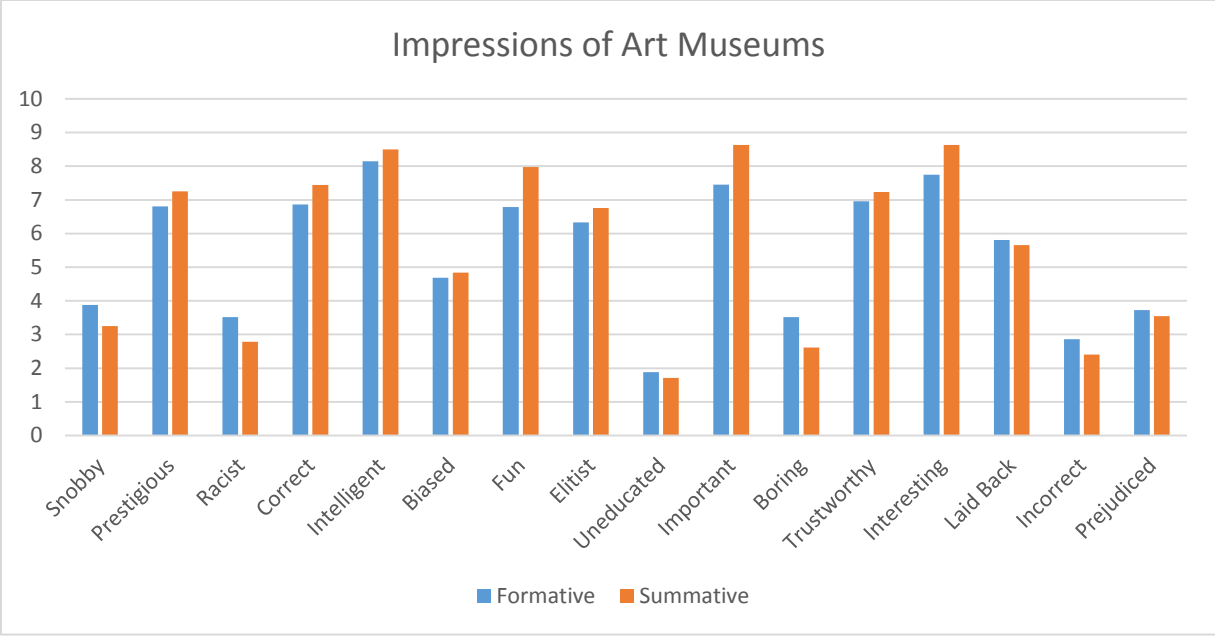


Figure C.17: Comparative student impressions of art museums

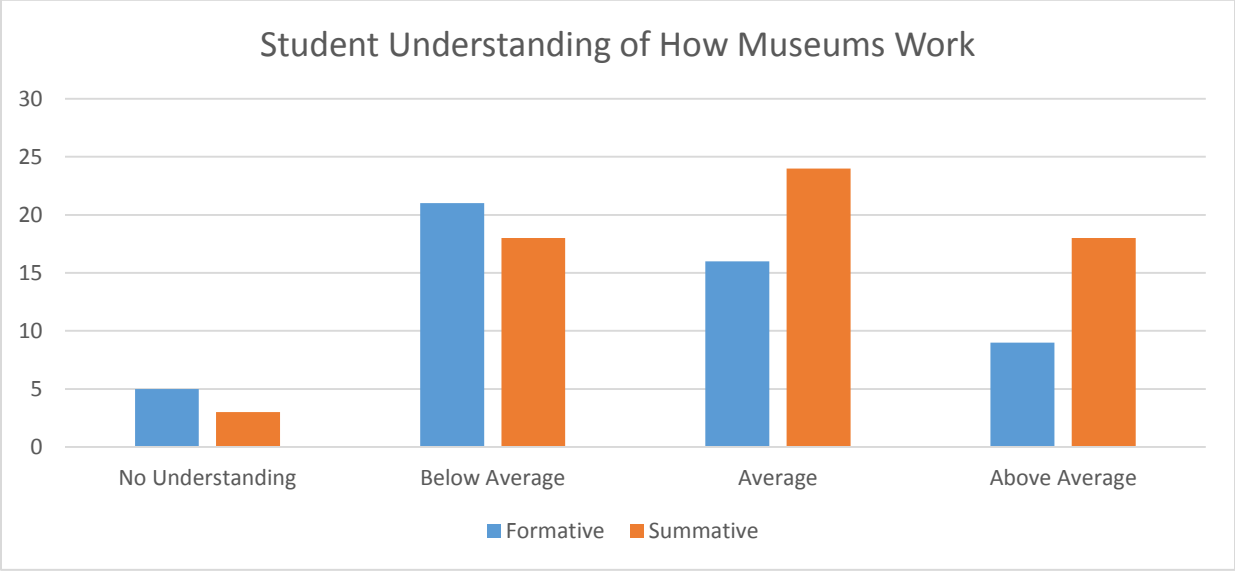


Figure C.18: Comparative student understanding of art museum functions

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