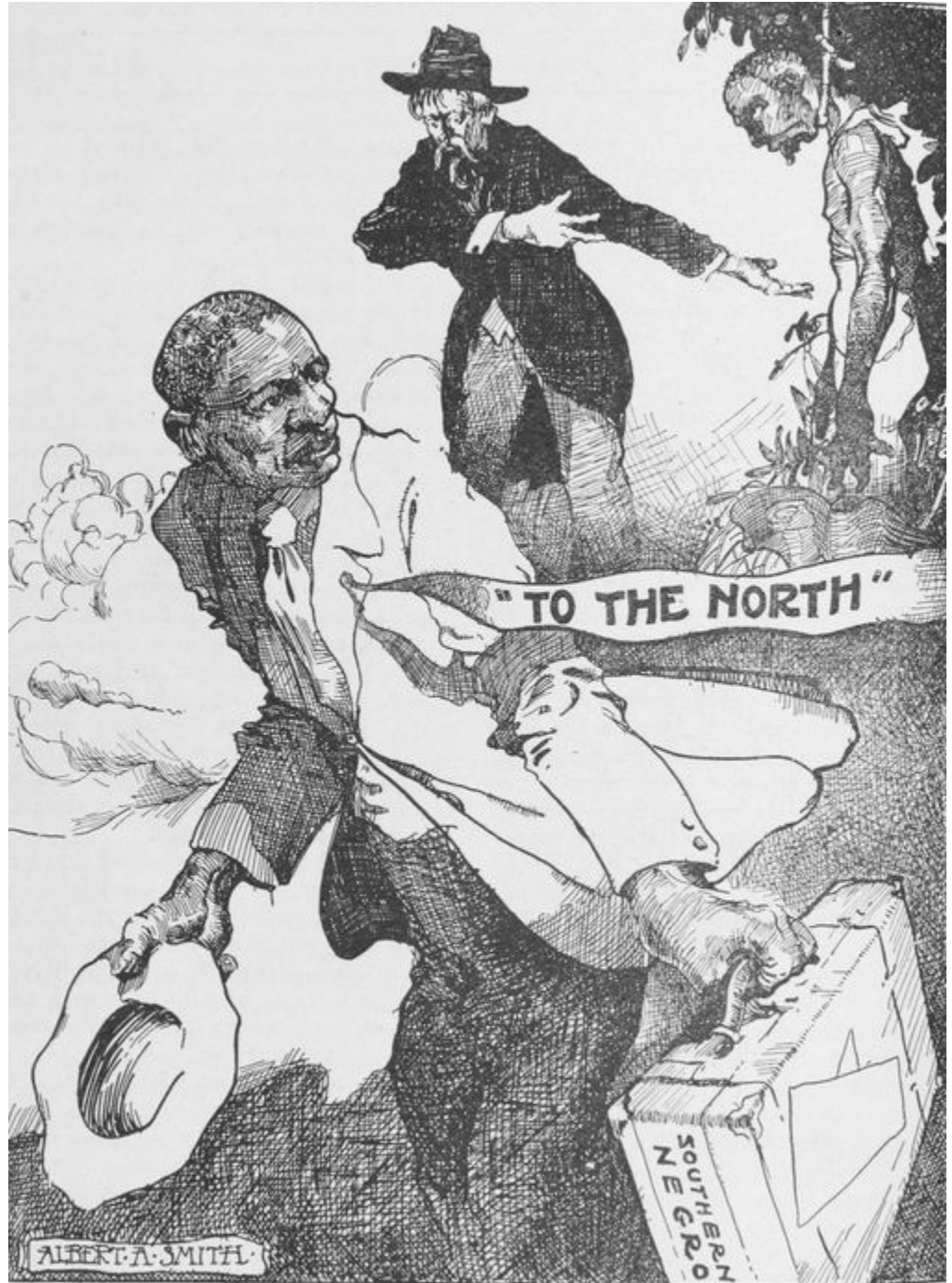


*(MIS)REPRESENTATIONS OF HISTORY:
DISPLAYS OF DIFFICULT HISTORY IN OREGON
COMMUNITY MUSEUMS*

BY ISABEL ENGEL



PRESENTED TO THE ARTS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON IN
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(Mis)Representations of History:

Displays of Difficult Histories in Oregon Community
Museums

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University of Oregon
M.S. in Arts Management

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Advisor Approval

(Mis)Representations of History: Displays of Difficult Histories in Oregon Community Museums

This project has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in the Arts and Administration Program by:



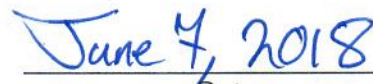
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Abstract

In Oregon, the vast majority of community museums are history museums focusing on local history. According to the Oregon Museums Association, of the 58 museums registered with them, 52 of those museums are focused on local and regional history. These museums have largely focused on pioneer history and display how white Europeans settled the land. While this is one aspect of Oregon history, many Oregon community museums fail to display difficult histories, or history that recalls trauma, oppression and/or violence. With current museology focusing on the diversification of exhibits through the inclusion of difficult histories, there is an apparent disconnect between this research and actual practice in Oregon museums. In this research project, I critically analyze visual representations at eleven (11) Oregon community history museums through site observations, document analysis and with three (3) of the museums, through interviews of curators and/or museum directors. I argue that as important sites of history and community outreach, these museums miss opportunities to educate the public and include minorities that have largely been left out of the Oregon narrative.

Keywords:

Difficult knowledge, museology, Oregon, exhibits, critical inquiry, observations, interviews, history museum, community museum, difficult histories

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my husband, Bradley, who supported me day and night. I love you.

To my cohort, thank you for being the most amazing friends and for your encouragements. You are all amazingly talented individuals and I cannot wait to see how you all will change the world.

Lastly, thank you Deana Dartt for encouraging me to investigate ethical displays of diversity and difficult histories in museums.

Resume

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Education

Master of Arts in Arts Administration, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, June 2018

- Focus in Museum Studies and Community Engagement

Bachelor of Arts in Judaic Studies, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, June 2015

- Minor in Western Art History

Education and Programming

Curriculum Design Intern, ArtCore Learning, Eugene, OR

April 2017-September 2017

- Organized, edited and designed 25+ arts integrated lesson plans that were made public on our website for any teacher to use for free
- Wrote blog posts showing snapshots of our lesson plans, explaining the key parts of the lesson and how the lesson benefits the student
- Collaborated with my team and local artists on our Summer Institute, a yearly conference for middle school teachers on how they can easily integrate the arts into their classrooms and curriculum
- Developed art experience activities for middle school teachers that culminated in a final performance and presentation
- Compiled confidential research data into meaningful spreadsheets and visualizations

Graduate Teaching Fellow, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR

2016 -Current

- Attended weekly lectures and meetings with course professor, ensuring cohesive instruction throughout course
- Assisted professor in lesson planning
- Led weekly classroom discussions on assigned readings to deepen student knowledge on material
- Held office hours for students to ask specific questions; provide detailed instruction on specific topics

Exhibition Interpreter, Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art, Eugene, OR

2015-2016, Volunteer

- Led tours of school children and adults through the Museum to facilitate learning and enhance museum experience

- Used Visual Thinking Strategies to enable visitors to experience art in an expanded way
- Created age-appropriate tailored museum tours to create the best possible experience for all visitors

Management

Member Services Coordinator, Downtown Athletic Club, Eugene, OR
2015-2016

- Managed Reception department and disseminated shift information in a timely fashion
- Maintained membership and lead tracking documents and created weekly reports on the Membership department's progress
- Ran the Membership Office of a Club of 2,000+ members, catered and adapted to client needs

Skills

- Microsoft Word, Excel, and Power Point
- Adobe InDesign and Illustrator
- Lesson development, execution, and evaluation
- Professional communication and presentation
- Eager to assist
- People oriented
- Community engager

1.

Introduction

Background

In America, people often seek out information about history from history books and from history museums. (Schlereth, 1978). Museums are a popular source of knowledge, as they provide objects of material culture, visual images and tangible connections to the past, and in a recent survey, American’s deemed museums as the most trustworthy place to receive this knowledge (Marstine, 2006, p. 4). Many schools even have their students visit history museums to supplement their curriculum (Dartt, 2011). In Oregon, almost 90%¹ of museums are history museums focusing on local history (“Oregon Museums Association,” n.d.). These museums have largely focused on pioneer history and display how Europeans settled the land. While this is one aspect of Oregon history, Oregon community museums often fail to display difficult histories, or history that recalls trauma, oppression and/or

¹ This number was extrapolated from the Oregon Museums Association website. They list all of the museums that registered with them. While the number on their website says 109 total museums, there are many duplicates within their list. Without duplicates, the total number of museums came to 58, with 6 of those museums were art or culturally specific museums. So a total of 52 museums focusing on local and regional history.

violence. With current museology focusing on the diversification of exhibits through the inclusion of difficult histories, there is an apparent disconnect between this research and actual practice in Oregon museums. The purpose of this research project was to analyze and observe Oregon community museums to determine if they display difficult histories within their exhibits. This survey examines eleven (11) community history museums throughout Oregon, with an in-depth look at three museums through additional interviews with curators and museum directors. After synthesizing and analyzing my data, I have discovered that my initial hypothesis was correct, and that most of the museums need to do some more work on improving their exhibits to have ethical displays of difficult histories.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this survey will be to analyze and observe Oregon community museums to determine if they are displaying difficult histories within their exhibits. This survey will examine eleven community history museums throughout Oregon, with an in-depth look at three of them through additional interviews with curators and museum directors. Through literature review, data gathering and analysis, this research will culminate with an evaluation plan and document for museums to help judge their exhibits for ethical displays of difficult histories.

Conceptual Framework

For this research, I analyze the representation, or lack thereof, of difficult history employed in Oregon community museums through their exhibits. This includes analyzing the

level of inclusion of recollections of trauma, oppression or violence within the museums exhibits as well as interview the curators and museum directors involved with creating these exhibits. For the purpose of my research, difficult history means the inclusion of narratives that recall trauma, violence, or oppression. This research will be approached with the understanding that the inclusion of difficult histories as an ethical imperative and indicative of best practices. As seen in Appendix B my research starts with the analysis of current literature, of difficult histories and new museology, and how research theorizes how they should be implemented in community museums. Using several theoretical lenses, I have analyzed several environmental factors (new research, cultural forces and censorship) that play into community museums and impact the display of difficult histories. This framework provides the background needed for my research, and demonstrates a gap in the research, which is where my study comes in.

The definition of difficult histories, as well as the rubric I have developed to analyze the level of ethical representations, are adapted from Julia Rose's "Three Building Blocks for Developing Ethical Representations of Difficult Histories" (Rose, 2013, 2016). Julia Rose was recently hired by John Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD as the Director and Curator of their Homewood Museum, largely because of her work and research with difficult histories in museums and historic sites (Stalfort, 2017). Through her own experience and research, she has developed the three "building blocks" that are needed to create an ethical display of difficult history. These three blocks, "The Face", "The Real" and "The Narrative" are concepts that need to be employed for museums to perform best practice.

Research Methodology

Methodological paradigm

The methodological paradigm this research identifies with is critical inquiry. Critical inquiry underscores how our existence has “multiple levels of reality” (Neuman, 2006, p. 94) and the paradigm places concern on the justness of the overriding social structures and social power. The concepts involved in my research are issues of ethical representations, displays of difficult histories and their importance in a social institution and a history museum’s role as a social institution in their community. The current representation of difficult histories in Oregon community museums is limited, and this greatly harms the museums standing in the community as an institution of social power and influence. The critical inquiry paradigm is a research lens and in the case of this study, it views museums as institutions of power and will assess the displays of difficult histories as necessary.

Role of the researcher

As a researcher, I bring my own set of biases to the data collection and interpretation. I approach the research with a museum and artistic background, with a strong interest in diversity and ethical representations of minority narratives. My interpretation of the role of the museum and the curator will be different than of another researcher analyzing the same museums and topic but can be better understood knowing the perspective of which I take my analysis. As I mentioned in my theoretical framework, I view the inclusion of difficult histories in exhibits part of best practices of museums, especially in Oregon. This research

will be approached with the belief that difficult histories are an ethical imperative and part of best practices in museum exhibits.

Research question

My research question was written before any data was collected. The purpose of the research question was to focus the data collection, analysis and help construct a conclusion for the research. The main research question is the following: Do community history museums in Oregon display difficult histories within their displays, panels, and programming?

My sub questions are: How long have the museums included in this research been displaying difficult histories? If museums do not include displays of difficult history, do they have a reason why? How do museums navigate controversial topics within the institution and the community?

Definitions

Some terms involved with this research need defining. These concepts are central to the purpose of this research.

Difficult Histories: The recollection of trauma, oppression and violence in history (Marstine, 2006; Rose, 2013, 2016).

Difficult Knowledge: For the purpose of this research, difficult knowledge may be used interchangeably with the term difficult histories, as they are both used in research discussing the representation of traumatic, oppressive, or violent events.

New Museology: Also called museum studies, the study of museums, museum curation, exhibits, programming, and collecting. New museology focuses on the social responsibility of the museum as a social institution, and directs that focus on what the museum is for its community, and cares less about methods (Marstine, 2006; Rose, 2013, 2016; Vergo, 1989).

The Other: This refers to anyone that is not a part of the dominant narrative. This also refers to an idea, where by instead of humanizing a victim of a violent story, a viewer will place them in the realm of The Other, and not associate with the Other as human; someone having feelings, pain, stories etc. (Dartt, 2011; Marstine, 2006; Sandell, 2011).

Minorities: Anyone who is not of the dominant race; anyone not of European American race (Dartt, 2011).

Community Museum: A museum that serves the need of a community and displays a social or local history.

History Museum: A museum that focuses on the display and collecting of historical artifacts and narratives, typically if the area it is in.

Delimitations

For the purpose of this study, only community museums, specifically history museums, in Oregon will be examined and analyzed. While art museums should be held to the same best practices of displaying difficult histories, art museums do not directly associate themselves with telling the communities' history, as can be seen in their mission statements. It is the role of a history museum to tell history, and to display the different narratives found within history. This study specifically focuses on community museums because state and university museums tend to get more funding and therefore more attention. Lack of funding or popularity should not affect the display of difficult histories. This study will examine eleven (11) museums from throughout Oregon, with at least one from every main region.

Limitations

One of the limitations includes the scope of this study. Ideally this survey would have included all Oregon community museums instead of just eleven sites. Also, I only interviewed curators and/or directors from four of the museums, instead of all eleven sites. These museums do not speak for Oregon museums as a whole, or museums in general, nor does my experience speak for museum researchers and advocates as a whole.

Benefits of the study

This research will benefit several entities. First, it will benefit the museums with which it analyzes, as it will hopefully illuminate their own work and exhibits, as well as realize the

importance of current museology and the display of difficult histories. By looking at their museum through this lens, they can enhance their current exhibits, and create future ones that focus on these unheard narratives. This research will also benefit the University, in that the findings will hopefully serve as a call to action for future students or arts researchers to look into how to best display difficult histories in the greater United States. Also, to the full extent of my knowledge, this kind of research has not been conducted in the United States before, so it will set the University of Oregon apart for being the first institution to be a part of this kind of study.

2.

Research Design

Research approach/dimensions of research

By observing and analyzing current exhibits from eleven community museums in Oregon, I was able to better understand how many museums are displaying difficult histories, and to what extent. Through interviews of curators and museum directors, I was able to understand the thinking and process behind these exhibits, and to see whether or not museum staff consider difficult histories in their exhibit and programming process. This was a qualitative study that will occur from December 2017 to March 2018.

Strategy of inquiry

The study of new museology and difficult knowledge is still relatively new, so most research on this subject is based textual analysis and observation. All current literature based their knowledge on analysis of previous research to learn more on the subject and to figure

out where the gaps in research are. The most popular form of research among was observation and interviews. These researchers were studying if the ideas of new museology are practiced in museums. Deana Dartt observed all 21 Alta California mission museums, including taking public tours of the exhibits and visiting the gift shops. She also interviewed staff members of these museums (Dartt, 2011). Monica Patterson observed the exhibits at the Jim Crow Museum in Big Rapids, Michigan, Slawomir Kapralski observed the landscapes, as he calls memoryscapes, of Poland and looks at the Judaic ruins, and the other three researchers looked at a wide range of museums (Lehrer, Milton, & Patterson, 2011). While Dartt's research is similar to my own, her emphasis was specifically on the representation of Native American history in Mission museums in California, since the Missions are used to supplement school curriculum. My research aims to look at community museums in Oregon, looking at difficult histories as a whole, which could include Native Americans, Japanese Americans, African Americans as well as others.

Overview of research design

Using site observation and interviews, I analyzed and detailed the current status of difficult history display in Oregon community museums.

Research Site Selection

I chose to examine Oregon community museums because I was born and raised in Oregon. I love the State, but I acknowledge that it is still behind on its efforts on inclusion and

diversity. The following are the eleven museums that I have selected based on specific criteria. When choosing the sites, the first requirement was that the museum must be a community museum. The main mission of that museum needed to be to tell the stories of the local history, and to represent the people of that community. This would exclude any museums focusing on a specific group, such as the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education in Portland, OR, or any tribal museums that can be located throughout Oregon. I tried to choose museums from throughout the state, but many areas, such as Southern Oregon, do not have a community museum, but instead science or art museums.

1. Lane County Historical Museum, Eugene, OR
2. Clatsop County Historical Society-Heritage Museum, Astoria, OR
3. Coos History Museum, Coos Bay, OR
4. The History Museum of Hood River County, Hood River, OR
5. The Klamath County Museum, Klamath Falls, OR
6. Willamette Heritage Center, Salem, OR
7. High Desert Museum, Bend, OR
8. Deschutes Historical Museum, Bend, OR
9. Springfield History Museum, Springfield, OR
10. Douglas County Museum, Roseburg, OR
11. Albany Regional Museum, Albany, OR

Participant Selection

Participants chosen for the interviews were staff members from several of the eleven museums. To analyze the thought process behind exhibit creation, these participants were either curators, or in the case that the museum is too small to have a curator position, the museum director. Staff members were recruited through email correspondence.

Observations

I recorded observations from these eleven museums based on the three building blocks laid out in the site rubric, adapted from Julia Rose's "Three Building Blocks for Developing Ethical Representations of Difficult Histories"(Rose, 2013, 2016). I included notes about "The Face", which could include stories about specific people, their relationships, the use of the empathetically active voice, "The Real", which could include use of artifacts, images, numbers, documents and dates, and finally "The Narrative" which could include interactive ways to tie the visitor to The Face and The Real, a story that elicits hope and other factors. All of these factors and the scale is laid out in my site observation rubric (See Appendix A).

Anticipated Ethical Issues

There is the possibility that my analysis and interpretation of the museum exhibits and staff interviews could be affected by my own biases. Also, my research points out museums that have not included difficult histories in their exhibits, and as previously stated, this research is operating under the understanding that difficult histories are indicative of best practice. By naming museums who are not within best practice, there is the possibility of

backlash or disagreement. To counteract this potential risk, I was in constant communication with professionals in this field to ensure my biases did not affect my interpretation and I will also share my research and analysis with the participants of this study.

Expectations

I expected to find that some if not most of the museums did not include difficult histories in their exhibits, based on my own experience with Oregon museums. I expected that some museums will have aspects of ethical representations and hoped that one or two would do well in displaying it.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Overview

Data collection only took place at the eleven museums listed in this proposal, and only in the form of staff interviews and site observations pertaining to the display of difficult histories. The ethical display of difficult histories could include but are not limited to: interactive displays or programs that engage the visitor to make personal connections to the exhibit, labels that provide numbers, dates, stories etc. These observations also included photo documentation when the museum allowed.

Interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes, taking place in the staff rooms of the interviewee's museum of employment, a video conference or over the phone. These interviews were recorded with an audio recording device, and only with participant consent. Only the sole researcher will have access to the recordings of these interviews, and will be

kept on file for five years. At the completion of this research project, after the final paper is finished, the audio recordings will be deleted from the device on which they are recorded.

Data Collection

Interviews

In the course of this research, participants answered questions in an interview format in meeting rooms of the participants museum of employment, or by telecommunication. If participants were willing, their interviews were recorded on an audio recording device to ensure proper wording and a higher degree of accuracy than memory and note taking. After the interviews were completed, part of the data processing included re-playing the audio recordings in a private office with headphones and summarizing or transcribing key parts for proper analysis.

Observations

Over the course of this research, the principal researcher visited each of the eleven museums included in this study. These observations lasted 2-4 hours, depending on the size of the museum. The principal researcher collected data about the exhibits through the use of a rubric to equally analyze the varying levels of representations of difficult histories. If the museum permitted, the principal researcher also used photo documentation to document aspects of difficult histories.

Data Analysis

Data from interviews and observations were analyzed qualitatively. All interview questions were about museum exhibits, and previous knowledge and opinions about the display of difficult histories, and all observations were in search of ethical displays of difficult histories. Using the conceptual framework listed in this proposal, all of the data was analyzed against Julia Rose's definition and descriptions of ethical displays of difficult histories.

Data Reporting

Data from interviews included the participants name and occupation, as outlined in the consent form signed by each individual before their interview. Audio recordings were only used by the principal researcher, and only for the purpose of analyzing and summarizing the data.

Research population and recruitment methods

Interviewees were chosen from the eleven museums included in this survey that either have the role of curator or director. Interviewees were recruited through email.

Informed consent procedures

Interviewees were informed of any and all potential risks they may incur during this survey. These risks were explicitly laid out in the informed consent document that the principal researcher provided. All forms were signed by the participants before their interviews occurred.

Provisions for participant and data confidentiality

Participants signed an informed consent form before their interview, authorizing use of their name and occupation in this study. All audio and written data collected in these interviews is stored on a password protected computer as well as a locked file cabinet. All data will be destroyed after one year.

Potential research risks or discomforts to participants

Social risk:

Discussing topics related to the research in the interviews may result in participants receiving a negative reaction from others, negative standing in a community, and/or decreased access to otherwise available roles or groups.

Economic risk:

Discussing topics related to the research in the interviews may result in loss of present or future employment, opportunity for career advancement, or other outcomes related to participation in this research.

Psychological risk:

Topics that are difficult to speak about or may provoke reactions from the interviewee may be discussed by either the researcher or the interviewee, resulting in potential mental harm, including but not limited to feelings of stress, guilt, embarrassment, or other emotions.

Potential benefits to participants

Research participants may not benefit directly from this study. However, many of the issues addressed in this study may bring up ideas and/or concerns that may help participants in their jobs. Ultimately, the goal of this study is to develop public policies and educational approaches to benefit the cultural sector, which may lead to sector-wide benefits to subjects.

Data collection and disposition procedures

All data was collected and disposed of by the principal researcher. After the final paper is complete, the principal researcher will dispose of all written documentation through shredding, and all audio recordings will be permanently deleted off any devices, except for the principal researcher's computer, in the case for any future question of the recordings.

Preliminary coding and analysis procedures

To analyze the data, the researcher referred to the conceptual framework and to the rubric based off of Julia Rose's article on ethical displays of difficult histories.

Strategies for validating findings

The principal researcher took all required methods to increase the validity of this study. To increase validity, the principal researcher engaged with all eleven museums involved in this survey through site observations and interviews for the length of time needed to gather all relevant data. Data was collected with a high degree of accuracy and professionalism. If participants requested further information and clarification, the principal researcher responded punctually and efficiently. Peers and advisors continually reviewed and

critiqued this study at multiple stages to ensure sound logic and analysis. All data that shows disconfirming evidence was included to ensure the researcher did not alter the final findings. Member checks were included throughout multiple points of data collection and synthesis to ensure quotes and thoughts were properly portrayed.

Investigator Experience

Isabel Engel has a Bachelor of Arts in Judaic Studies with a minor in art history. She has analyzed and studied aspects of Jewish history, such as the Holocaust, the Diaspora and immigration to the US, which can all be categorized as difficult histories. She also assisted with an exhibit about Native American life in Oregon, "Their Hearts Are in This Land", at the Lane County Historical Museum, in Eugene, OR, also including narratives of difficult histories.

3.

Literature Review

Museum studies as an academic field has grown exponentially over the past decade. Other disciplines that previously did not consider or care about museums and their role in society now pay attention to what the museum world is doing (Macdonald, 2011, p. 1). When considering the many facets of the academic discussion of displays of difficult histories in museums, there are several main areas of discussion that are interconnected.

New Museology

In 1989, Peter Vergo expressed in the introduction of his edited collection, *The New Museology*, that the “old museology” cared “too much about museum methods, and too little about the purposes of museums” (Vergo, 1989, p. 3). With the creation of “new museology”, scholars and practitioners have questioned what it means to be a museum and challenged the policies and practices popular within a museum (Patterson, 2011, p. 55). The ‘old’

museology was an institution of a site of worship and memory of a packaged culture for visitors to visit and understand. Museums now are a location to encourage critical thinkers and lobbyists for change. As Janet Marstine excellently states in her book:

Theorists call for the transformation of the museum from a site of worship and awe to one of discourse and critical reflection that is committed to examining unsettling histories with sensitivities to all parties; they look to a museum that is transparent in its decision making and willing to share power (Marstine, 2006, p. 5).

As institutions that have largely been about the displays of colonization and revered as an unquestionable authority, new museology is about giving the control back the cultural heritage of those represented. Museums professionals are no longer focusing solely on what kind of exhibits they should produce next, but they are expanding their thoughts to include the overall impact on the community and the museum visitors (Sandell, 2005).

As new museology has evolved since Vergo's book in 1989, Museums and museums workers have increasingly recognized their social responsibilities as educational institutions and as a result are placing an larger emphasis on social issues (Rose, 2016, p. 7). "Fueled by both financial and ethical necessity, museum workers internationally are boldly proclaiming a critical role for museums in facilitating social inclusion, and their power as agents of change"(Silverman, 2002, p. 69). Social justice is based on the ideas of equality and distribution of wealth, opportunities and privileges within society. Many history museums have started using their collections and buildings to focus on difficult histories to shift their institutions focus towards social change.

Difficult Histories

With the shift from methods to purpose and social change, the emphasis of the “Other” has been a growing trend in museums and historical sites. The Other, or the non-dominant narrative, was historically left out of museum displays, predominantly because the “old museology” cared more about the dominant narrative, which for Oregon history was the struggles of the early pioneers and the Oregon Trail. What many museums did not focus on or address was the struggles of other groups or the other side of the narrative, where the European settlers were not seen as heroes, but instead invaders.

For example, even though many people wanted to move to Oregon, many of the first settlers were African Americans fleeing slavery (McLagan, 1980). But, like a couple other states, such as Indiana and Illinois, Oregon passed an Exclusion Law that made it illegal from blacks to live in Oregon and required them all to leave. This law was passed in the Oregon constitution in 1857, and was kept on the books until it was finally removed in 1929 (McLagan, 1980, p. 31). Events like this are what academics and, slowly, museum professionals define as difficult histories.

Difficult histories “include the recollections of trauma, oppression and violence” (Rose, 2013, p. 2). Examples of this are found just about everywhere, and often include minority groups like Native Americans, Blacks and African Americans, Japanese immigrants, Chinese immigrants, Latinx, and Jews. Many museums have refrained from divulging and displaying difficult knowledge in their exhibits. This is very concerning, as the new museology dictates that museums need to be a ‘megaphone’ for all voices and stories and as a space for inclusivity and critical thinking. When Deana Dartt asked a mission museum staff member

why they did not share a specific, but important, fact about young Native American girls in the missions, the staff member responded that they wanted to be sensitive to the young audiences that visited on school fieldtrips and to not upset the Chumash people (Dartt, 2011, p. 103). This response, while is understandable and not unique, demonstrates that many museum and historic site professionals have not quite grasped the changing field of museum work and new museology. This intentional (or perhaps sometimes unintentional) withholding of difficult histories in museum displays is what Deana Dartt coined “erasure narrative.”

Erasure Narratives

This idea of the “erasure narrative” comes from Deana Dartt in her evaluation of the mission museums. Her definition of the “erasure narrative” is a “narrative that emphasizes the romance of a certain point in mission history and relegates all other periods (as well as people) to obscurity” (Dartt, 2011, p. 98). This idea that museums try to simplify and romanticize history leads to the total removal of historical stories and narratives. While Dartt relates it to mission history, it occurs in all types of history museums. Kapralski notes in his article about Poland’s memoryscapes that the Jewish narrative removed from history, such as through painting over Hebrew signs (Kapralski, 2011, p. 181). Schlereth also refers to this as one of the fallacies in his article, which he deems “History is Consensus” (Schlereth, 1978, p. 338).

Risks with Displaying Difficult Histories

In 1993, the National Air and Space Museum (NASM) in Washington, DC, began work on an exhibit about the *Enola Gay*, a B-29 air bomber that dropped the first nuclear bomb on Hiroshima during World War II. The curatorial team intended to have the focus of the exhibit be around the resorted fuselage of the *Enola Gay*, and lead critical inquiry into the powerful destruction and massive loss of human life because of the atomic bomb. The original script questioned the significance, necessity and morality of the decision to drop atomic bombs on cities of large civilian populations (Goldberg, 1996, p. 72). This exhibit incited internal controversy once the Smithsonian Secretary, Robert McCormick Adams, found out about the exhibit and that the focus was not on a commemorative and celebratory tale of an end to WWII. In 1995, the internal issues were somehow leaked to the public, and an uproar ensued from veterans, congressmen and the general public because this exhibit questioned and challenged the collective memory of the War (Crane, 2011; Goldberg, 1996; Rose, 2016).

Histories of oppression, trauma and violence are called difficult histories largely because of the risks associated with interpreting and displays these histories. There are several risks associated with displaying difficult histories, which is a large part of why many smaller, close knit community museums shy away from displaying them. The risks can be political, like the *Enola Gay* affair, or they can be more personal and too uncomfortable for the viewer to be able to continue with the exhibit. History and museum workers are “faced with finding the balance of interpreting difficult history accurately and ethically while not offending or overwhelming their visitors” (Rose, 2016, p. 35). As part of her research and her

new book, *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*, Julia Rose has compiled a list of possible risks associated with displaying difficult histories:

1. Persistent Resistance

Visitors choose to not read the labels or look at the pictures of a traumatic history because they would rather not know about it and be ignorant of the event. They can then convince themselves that the event did not really happen, and avoid feeling upset or uncomfortable (p. 35).

2. Traumatizing Effects of Difficult Histories

Difficult histories that involve human suffering can greatly affect the viewer, and cause them to have traumatizing reactions to the exhibit. This is especially true for viewers who themselves were victims of human suffering and violence, such as those that have been physically attacked or soldiers with PTSD (p. 37).

3. Shock

Difficult histories can be shocking and surprising and even offend the visitors. The question that workers should consider is how much is too much? The goal is to have visitors learn and understand, but not offend them to where they disliked the exhibit and even the museum (p. 38).

4. Guilt and Shame

Difficult histories can provide guilt and shame to the viewers. In the case of the Exclusion Law set in Oregon from 1857-1929, those in government in Oregon, or non-black citizens may feel guilt and shame for the events that could be associated as their

fault or their heritage. Guilt can present itself in many forms, and can even lead to anger. Museum workers need to remember that visitors may feel this way, and respect those feelings and give them a space to share and digest the material (p. 39).

5. Apathy, Irrelevance, and Passive Empathy

This can occur when the visitor feels they are not directly associated or connect to the history, so they think that the exhibit is irrelevant to them and can feel apathetic about the subjects and people in the display. This can also be a form of resistance if the viewer doesn't want to feel sad or ashamed, so they distance themselves from the narrative (p. 42).

6. Controversy

An example of this would be the incident with the *Enola Gay*. There can be controversy within the museum or with the public about the difficult history. While one group remembers WWII ending with victory, and the *Enola Gay* as symbol of patriotism and ingenuity, those that had families in Hiroshima would not feel the same way. Controversy can be good, though, as it can start a dialogue that can eventually lead to better understanding of both sides. But the dialogue needs to be properly and appropriately handled and mediated (p.42-44).

7. Public Safety

Of course, safety is a primary concern for museum workers. Emotional and physical safety needs to be considered when displaying difficult histories. Unfortunately, under controversy and extreme emotion, people can feel compelled to harm others. Hate groups tend to visit sites about controversy to promote their causes (p. 45).

8. Not Knowing Your Visitors

Museum workers have to accept the risk of not knowing their audience members and their past experiences. The exhibits are designed and presented before a large and diverse audience. They do not have a way of knowing about their audience's past and their emotions. There is also the risk of disappointed a visitor or group of visitors that feel especially tied to the exhibit, such as Native Americans attending an exhibit about Native life, but aren't satisfied with the displays or stories (p. 45-47).

Oregon Difficult Histories

To be able to determine if a museum is accurately displaying the history of their area, and of Oregon as a whole, I had to do some research into the history of Oregon.

Unfortunately, there are not many books about the history of Oregon that go past white settler history and the Oregon trail. I found that history books also follow the format of the erasure narrative, and omit many aspects of history that are violent, oppressive or anything else but positive and demonstrative of manifest destiny. Research into Oregon history books and what is being taught in schools is another aspect of recollections of difficult histories that should be studied in the future. With better educated citizens, we would no longer be able to hide behind the erasure narrative, and museums would have more accurate displays.

Thankfully, several researchers and authors within the last 30 years have also noticed the lack of representation of difficult histories in books and have sought to rectify the issue.

For example, there is *A Peculiar Paradise: A History of Blacks in Oregon, 1788-1940* by

Elizabeth McLagan (McLagan, 1980), which was a part of The Oregon Black History Project. We also have a book published by Linda Tamura, a third-generation Japanese American, titled *The Hood River Issei: An Oral History of Japanese Settlers in Oregon's Hood River Valley* (Tamura, 1993). More recently, we have *Seeing Color: Indigenous Peoples and Racialized Ethnic Minorities in Oregon* edited by Jun Xing, Erlinda Gonzales-Berry, Patti Sakurai, Robert D. Thompson Jr., and Kurt Peters (Xing, Gonzales-Berry, Sakurai, Thompson Jr., & Peters, 2007). This text also noticed the lack of texts focusing on the racialized minorities in Oregon and worked with several scholars to publish this book. The most recent text available was *Perseverance: A History of African Americans in Oregon's Marion and Polk Counties* published by the Oregon Northwest Black Pioneers (Oregon Black Pioneers, 2011).

From these books, I have been able to identify historical events from several areas of Oregon that are examples of difficult narratives from the area. For example, in 1851 a black man named Jacob Vanderpool, who owned a saloon in Salem, was arrested and jailed because he was black (McLagan, 1980, pp. 23-24). In 1849, Oregon passed the Exclusion Law, which barred anyone who was black from living in the State of Oregon, even if they had lived there previous to the law. This law was in the Oregon constitution until 1926. This story could easily be applicable for museums in the Salem area, and even into Albany.

Another example of an Oregon difficult history is the Hood River Issei. The Issei are the first generation of Japanese immigrants to the United States, who came between 1890-1924. There are few written records, and much of what was written was destroyed when or lost when the U.S. government uprooted them from their homes in 1942, sending them to

internment camps. In 1945, Hood River's American Legion Post (largely made up of World War I veterans) removed the names of all sixteen of the valley's Japanese American servicemen from the community's public roll of honor (Tamura, 1993, p. xiii).

Due to my limitations of time, there could be other events that I did not read about and that are not discussed in this literature review, but by demonstrating that there are in fact historical events that museums could display that are examples of difficult history, I can effectively gauge if a community museum is omitting events from history, or watering down the events in the effort to have a more pleasant ideal of history.

Since history museums are considered a safe space, there is a critical imperative for museums to implement the ideas behind new museology. With this important responsibility, history museums need to tell multiple narratives to get a more complete picture of the past and can do so by collaborating with minorities and native communities. This will be harder for smaller museums to do, as they have less resources to create new exhibits or make changes to current ones. There needs to be more research to find ways that smaller museums can implement these strategies.

4.

Oregon Community Museums

As part of this research, I visited the following eleven (11) museums over the course of two months, bringing with me my rubric (See Appendix A), observing and analyzing their exhibits in regard to ethical displays of difficult histories. This chapter is dedicated to these museums by including their history, mission statement (if there is one), and my observations. The following chapter will address my analysis and my overall findings. All photographs included were taken by the principle researcher.

Albany Regional Museum

Albany, OR

The Albany Regional Museum is a public non-profit that first opened its doors in 1984 and was originally located in the basement of the Carnegie Library until it purchased and moved into its current building in 1999. The museum was found by members of the community that felt that there was a loss of Albany area history, and they wanted a site to preserve the artifacts and stories of the area. According to GuideStar USA, Inc, an information

service specializing in reporting on U.S. non-profit companies , their mission is “to preserve, exhibit, and encourage knowledge of the history and culture of the Albany, Oregon area (“Albany Regional Museum Corporation - GuideStar Profile,” n.d.). Their mission statement was not stated on their website anywhere. The Albany museum focuses on historical events and figures from the Albany area, though they do have small sections that talk about Oregon history as a whole, specifically in regard to Native Americans and the first European settlers. This was one of the smaller museums in this survey, with only one side of the first floor dedicated to exhibits, roughly 1,200 square feet, with the other side set up for lectures and events. There was also a decent sized back room filled for research purposes that is open to the public. It contained images, transcripts and books pertaining to the history of the city of Albany.

The majority of this museum was dedicated to the history of Albany within the last century. For example, there was a dedicated area of the museum for the men who helped build the major metal factories in Albany that brought about a job boom in the area. This display included men like Stephen W. H. Yih (Figure 1), that moved here from Shanghai, China in 1947. The display included facts and stories about how Yih came to

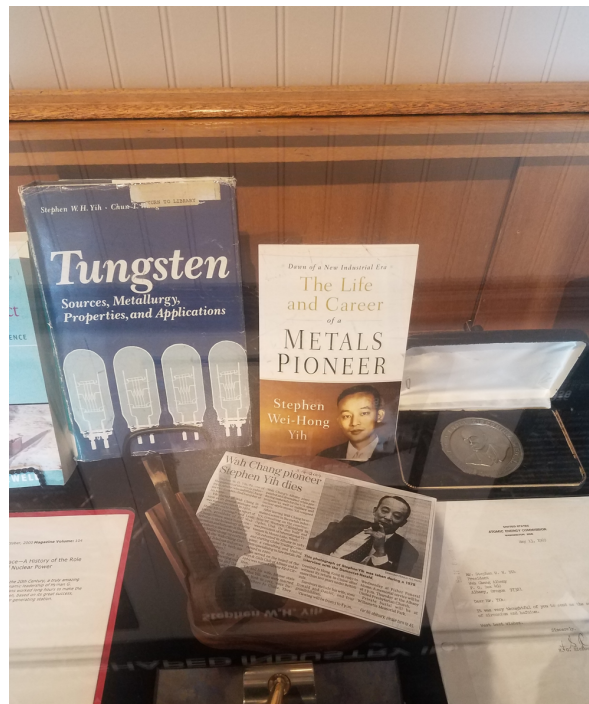


Figure 1 A photo of a large case that included newspaper article clippings, books and photos of men like Stephen W.H. Yih, the founder and CEO of the Wah Chang Corporation, based in Albany, a major Tungsten mining and trading company.

Albany and the work he did as the founder of the Wah Chang Albany. Several Asian families moved to the U.S to work in the mines and at the factories, and unfortunately many dealt with issues of unfair wages, and racist acts. It was surprising that with the inclusion of the stories of these “metal pioneers”, there was no mention of these hardships.

Clatsop County Heritage Museum

Astoria, OR

Originally built as Astoria’s City Hall in 1904, the building now houses the Clatsop County regional museum. Their website says that they “explore the history of Clatsop County



Figure 2 A picture taken from the Native American exhibit in the Clatsop County Heritage Museum. The dark room, old font and past tense verbiage gave the illusion that the Native American’s were no more and had died off. Here, Tsin-is-tum, is labeled as the “last of the Clatsop Indians”.

through temporary and permanent exhibits featuring Native Americans, early pioneers, immigrants, and local industries” (“Clatsop County Historical Society: Heritage Museum,” 2018). The mission of the Clatsop County Historical Society, who manages the Heritage museum is “the society is a private, nonprofit, educational organization dedicated to preserving and presenting the history of Clatsop County, Oregon and the surrounding area” (“Clatsop County Historical Society Inc - GuideStar Profile,” n.d.) . As their mission states, the museum exhibited stories and

artifacts pertaining to the town of Astoria and to the greater Clatsop County area. They had one small room on the first floor dedicated to the Native Americans that were there before the settlers came, but the display and the rest of the museum did not go past the early 1900s. The Native American exhibit was inside of a dark room with several panels and dioramas. The goal of the exhibit seemed to be to make the visitor step back in time to a specific setting, perhaps one where the Clatsop Indians lived before settlers arrived. While the exhibit did teach the visitor more about the Clatsop tribe and what they ate, how they lived and passed down stories, the whole setting created the feeling that the Native Americans had all died and perpetuated the “vanishing Indian” stereotype. There was also no presentation of the struggle and hardships with the encounter of the early settlers, as there definitely had been. If the visitor did not know better, they could leave that room thinking that the Native Americans were all gone, and that they peaceably let the settlers take over. As history has informed us elsewhere, this is simply not the case.

The rest of the museum was dedicated to the pioneers and early settlers of the area, and even included a full saloon bar on the second floor, and it was set up to feel like you were walking into a time capsule.

Coos History Museum

Coos Bay, OR

The Coos County Historical Society was founded on November 5, 1891 and is the second oldest historical society in the state of Oregon. The Coos-Curry Pioneer and Historical Association Museum opened in Coquille in 1947 after the society grew and realized the need

to collect and preserve artifacts and stories relevant to the area. The museum was open one day a week, and in those first ten years more than 400 items were donated to the museum. The Society moved the museum to North Bend's Simpson Park after attendance and income was low at the Coquille site. The Coos-Curry Museum in North Bend opened in 1958, and still serves as a site for a museum. When Curry county chose to form their own Historical society and museum in the late 1970's, the "Curry" was removed from the name, and the museum changed to Coos County Historical Museum, as it is known today. In the late 2000s the museum received an unsolicited donation for the construction of a new, larger museum. In Fall 2015, the Coos History Museum opened the doors to its new building, which is where it is currently located. The mission of the museum is:

The Coos History Museum creates a better understanding of life in Coos County and Oregon's South Coast, past and present, and our place in that life. We do this by collecting and preserving stories, artifacts, photographs, and documents, and by helping create opportunities for people to interpret them in meaningful thought-provoking, and engaging ways ("Our Mission and Vision - Coos History Museum," 2018)

The museum still maintains its original goal to preserve and display artifacts and events pertaining to the Coos Bay area, though they also have temporary displays on other historical events in Oregon and the greater United States. The majority of their exhibit space is all in one room, so the museum has artfully arranged the exhibits by rows, designated with a

different colored panel for each theme (Figure 3). The major themes are the “Uplands”, which include logging and lumbering, mining and overland travel.



The next theme was “Tidewater”, where the displays discussed shipbuilding, Potlatch (a Native American ceremonial feast where gifts and personal possessions are given away), and the many ways the water was important to the Native people of the area. The last



major theme was “Seashore”, which discussed stories of sailors on the sea, the First Encounter (with early settlers and Native Americans), removal of Native Americans during the “Indian Removal Act” in 1830, the Bandon town fire, and the natural history of the area.

Figure 3 All three of these photos demonstrate the different themes the Coos History Museum divided their exhibit space into. You can see in some of these photos that the museum also offered “points to ponder” for visitors to reflect on the exhibit.

What was interesting and refreshing about the Coos History

Museum, which will be discussed in depth later in Chapter 5, was that instead of having a dedicated display to the Native Americans, and then going into other parts of history that involved the early settlers, the Museum displayed through first hand stories and pictures that

these timelines are intertwined, as they were in real time, and not separated out as many museums make them to be.

Deschutes Historical Museum

Bend, OR

The Deschutes Historical Museum is a small to medium sized museum housed in the old Reid School building in downtown Bend. The Museum is managed by the Deschutes County Historical Society, which formed in 1975 after a major sponsorship from the Bend Chapter of the American Association of University Women. In 1980, the Historical Society and the Deschutes County Pioneer Association combine their artifacts into one museum to make room for a new law library for the county. The mission of the Museum is “to gather, preserve and make available museum, library and other historical material relating to the history of Central Oregon” (“Deschutes Historical Museum and Society,” 2018).

Each room of this museum had a different exhibit pertaining to the history of Bend and Central Oregon. The first floor was dedicated to local artist galleries, with the second floor dedicated to the historical artifacts and displays. The museum has several displays of antique clothing, dioramas showing how kitchens and bedrooms might have appeared for the early pioneers, and one panel detailing local activism from 1900-1912. While the museum did have some interesting displays of old artifacts, it was hard to find any mention of any groups other than the white European settlers. There was no exhibit about how the Native Americans lived before first contact with early pioneers, nor was there any mention of any other minorities. This museum operated more like a historic house museum, where each

room looked like it had been untouched for decades, and you as the visitor were stepping back in time. While historic house museums are valuable and can teach the visitor a lot about the past, the Deschutes museum unfortunately missed a huge opportunity to teach their visitors about the many sides of early pioneer history.

Douglas County Museum

Roseburg, OR

The Douglas County Museum is a fairly large, architecturally interesting history museum that can be seen driving on I-5 in Roseburg. The

Museum has several floors and buildings that house exhibits on the local natural and cultural history. The museum opened in 1969 and was designed by Howard Becker, originally from Roseburg area, as an interpretation of prune drying buildings that use to be seen all around the Umpqua Valley one hundred years ago. According to their website, the Douglas County Museum has "Oregon's largest natural history collection on display," with more than 7,500 items on display. They also have over 8,640 items in their artifact collection that are specific to that area, and over 24,000 images going back to the mid-19th century ("Douglas County Museum," 2018). They do not state anywhere on their website or at the museum what their mission statement is, nor did they provide a statement for GuideStar, but their website

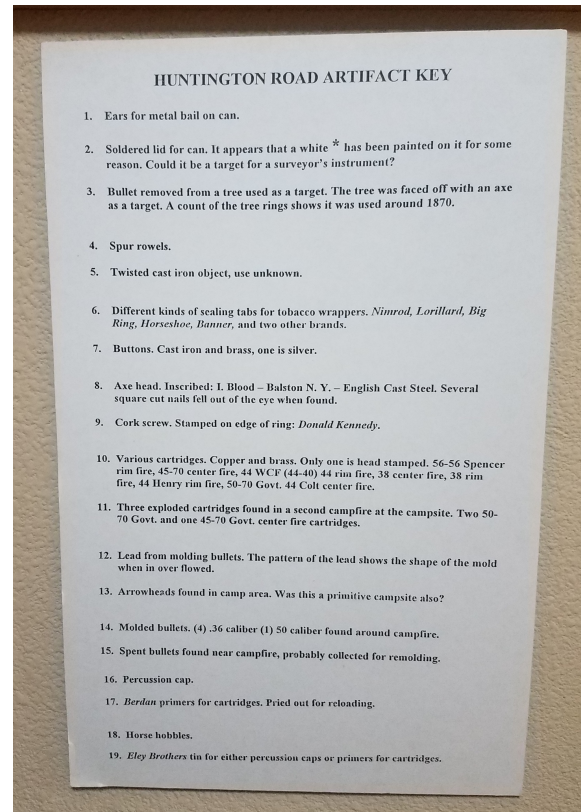


Figure 4 A panel from the Deschutes Historical Museum. This panel mentions the location of arrowheads at a "primitive campsite".

heavily boast that they collect, preserve and display artifacts specific to the Umpqua Valley history.

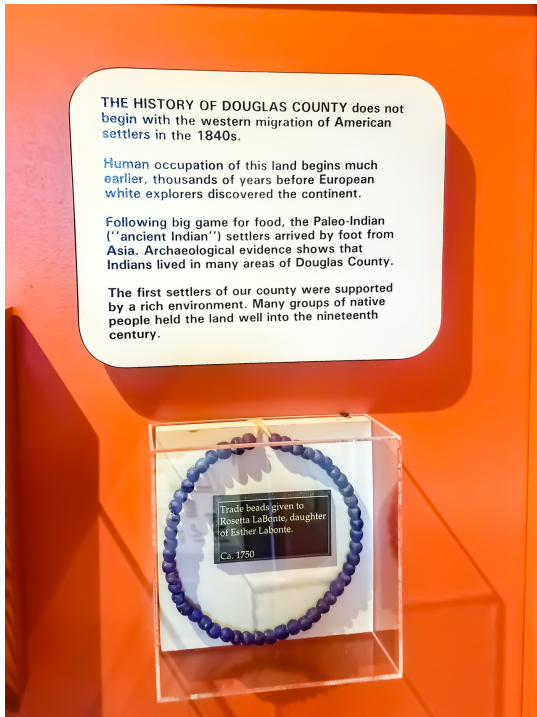


Figure 5 A label from the Douglas County Museum discussing human occupation before settlers arrived in Oregon.

One of the first exhibits that the visitor comes across in the museum discusses Pre-Contact, or the time before the pioneers came to the area. This is similar to the way most of the museums in this study approached the topic of Native Americans, as a sort of timeline. The museum did discuss the Indian Wars and the many struggles on both sides (Native Americans and Pioneers) and did discuss how the Native Americans were justly retaliating for what the “newcomers” were doing to their land, their food sources and their way of life. There were also several

displays of Native American artifacts and several stories about specific people who had lived in the area. The museum also had several displays about Chinese and Japanese immigrants to the area, and how they came here for work, but instead encountered hard labor and poor wages and living. For many of the personal stories that they shared, the museum printed out life-sized images of the historical figure. While not always specifically talking about difficult histories at times, I found this effective, as it got the visitor to really look at them as human, and not as a name or small 2-D image.



Figure 6 These two images are examples of the life-sized images of historical figures at the Douglas County Museum

High Desert Museum

Bend, OR

The High Desert Museum in Bend, Oregon is the largest history museum included in this research. The Museum has 135 acres and over 100,000 square feet dedicated to exhibit and program space. The museum opened in 1982 after Portland native Donald M. Kerr realized that the Bend area needed a place to learn more about the “preciousness of the High Desert landscape and its abundant life and fragility”(“About Us - High Desert Museum,” 2017). The mission of the High Desert Museum is:

To explore the High Desert's unique landscape, cultures, wildlife, history and arts, connecting our visitors to the past and helping them discover their role in the present and responsibility to the future.

Within their exhibits are stories about the first peoples of the area and their encounter with the pioneers, all the way up to the present day. They focus heavily, if not exclusively, on local history and living history with live animals in their natural history exhibits. They also have an outdoor area with old buildings where actors dressed up in period garb are there to answer questions to help explain history.

The High Desert Museum has a permanent exhibit titled *By Hand Through Memory*, which takes

the visitor through the Journey of the Plateau Indian Nations from before the settlers came to Central Oregon, through removal to Reservations and into the 21st Century. This exhibit highlights the Nez Perce, Umatilla, Warm Springs, Yakama, Spokane and Colville people. This exhibit "portrays American Indians as people who preserved their history and adapted to and shaped contemporary society. Plateau Indians are not a primitive people living in a craft-making past but are active decision makers who cultivate cultural identities built on tradition and innovation" ("By Hand Through Memory - High Desert Museum," 2017). What was particularly special about this permanent exhibit was that Vivian Adams, Yakama Indian, co-



Figure 7 A display at the High Desert Museum discussing several Native American stereotypes and portrayals.

curated the exhibit, providing a unique and personal perspective and background to the stories and displays.

History Museum of Hood County

Hood River, OR

The History Museum of Hood County, though small in square feet (roughly 2,000 square feet) houses quite a few permanent and temporary exhibits within its space. Like the majority of the museums in this research, the museum started out as the Pioneer Historical Society from Hood River, that started in 1907. Through collecting artifacts and stories on the area, the Society wanted a museum to preserve and display these artifacts, so they opened the History Museum of Hood County in 1978. Their mission states:

We are dedicated to documenting and celebrating Hood River County's unique history and diverse cultural heritage. Collecting and preserving artifacts of historic significance, we use these objects to craft meaningful displays and programs illuminating the area's fascinating past ("About | The History Museum of Hood River County," 2017).

The museum focuses on local history, with the inclusion of events happening in the greater United States to bring comparison and show influence on the history of Hood River. Their exhibits start with several panels detailing the timeline of the area, starting with the first peoples, to the first encounter with the pioneers, to the events of World War II and the mass

deportation of Japanese immigrants to concentration camps (Figure 8), all the way up to the present with current events of the area.

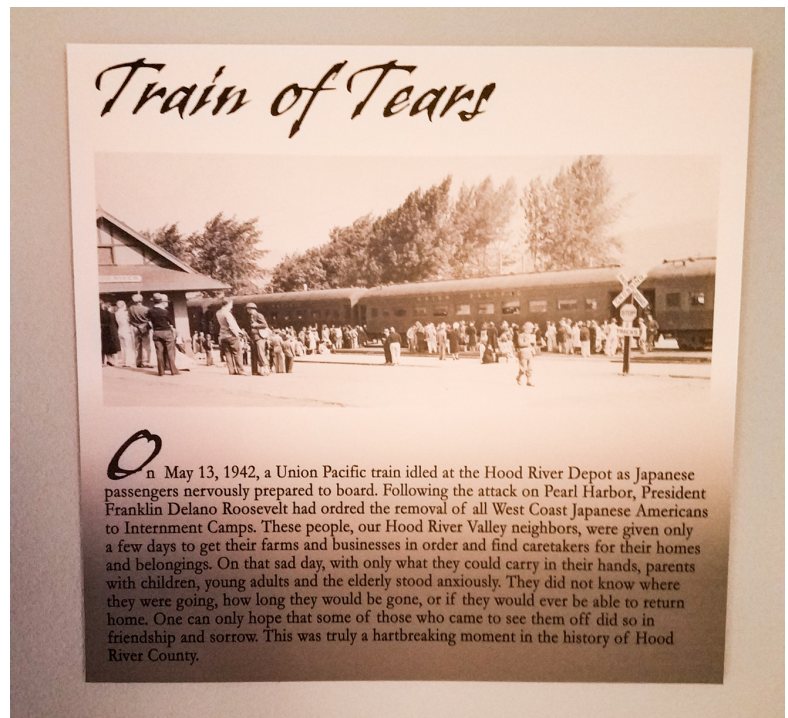
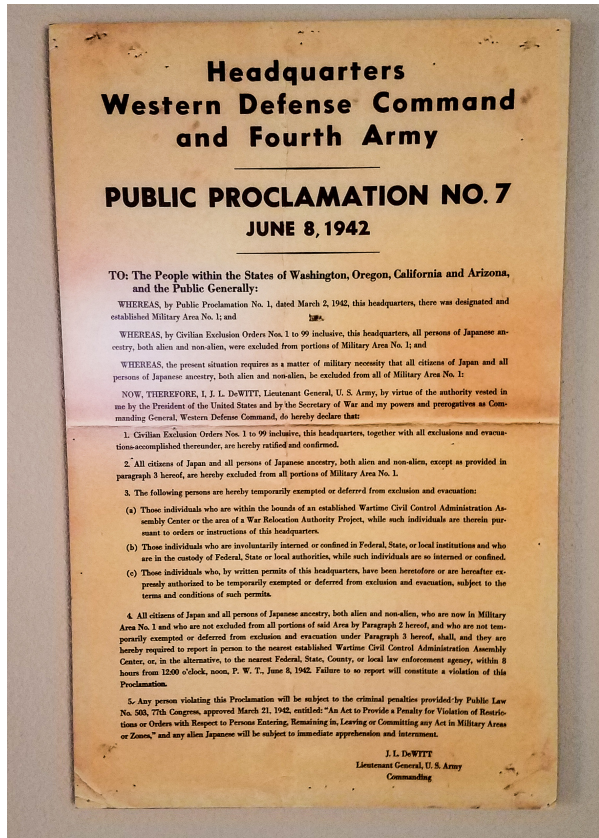


Figure 8 The image on the right is a reprint of a Public Proclamation that what posted in 1942 about the deportation of Japanese immigrants to camps during World War II. The image above includes a photo Japanese Issei and Nissei waiting to board the train to an internment camp.

Klamath County Museum

Klamath Falls, OR

The Klamath County Museum, owned and operated by the County since 1993, is “dedicated to providing funding for the acquisition, preservation and public display of artifacts relative to the local history and economy” (“Klamath County Museum Foundation - GuideStar Profile,” 2018). The Museum displays the local history of Klamath County, discussing geology and prehistoric artifacts, Native Americans, the early pioneers, and area specific activities like logging.

Lane County Historical Museum

Eugene, OR

The Lane County Historical Museum is a small museum in an old, open concept building on the fairgrounds in Eugene. The museum opened in 1990 and is home to several authentic wagons and cars that take up the majority of the small space. The rest of the museum displays exhibits about the early pioneers of Lane County, and the local history regarding logging and the early town. The mission of the museum is “to encourage the preservation of, stimulate interest in and disseminate information about the history of lane county through the operation of the lane county historical museum, society publications and various other programs” (“Our Mission - Lane County History Museum,” 2018).

Springfield History Museum

Springfield, OR

The Springfield History Museum was recently taken over by the city of Springfield after the board determined the Museum should be underneath the city of Springfield. The Museum is housed in the old brick building that originally house the Oregon Power Company transformer station. Their mission is:

The Springfield Museum is an educational institution authorized by the City of Springfield, Oregon to acquire, preserve, and interpret materials that illustrate the history and development of the City of Springfield and surrounding rural areas of east Lane County.

The Springfield museum focuses on the local history, specifically to the town of Springfield, as well as the surrounding Lane County area, including history along the McKenzie River. Their exhibits include displays about the first peoples, the Native Americans, early settlers and local infrastructure.

Willamette Heritage Center

Salem, OR

The Willamette Heritage Center is the second largest museum in this research, with around 5 acres dedicated to historical buildings and exhibit space. The Heritage Center, open since 1964, is unique in that it is more of a community center, as it houses little shops, art galleries and artist spaces in addition to the exhibits and historic buildings. There are also dedicated spaces for conferences or weddings that are not used for museum purposes. The mission of the Heritage Center, "Connecting generations by preserving and interpreting the history of the mid-Willamette Valley" is short and succinct ("About - Willamette Heritage Center," 2015). The main focus of the museum is to preserve the many buildings on the property, and the exhibits within them help tell the story of the buildings. The museum focuses on the mill and the work involved, but there are a couple displays discussing the early peoples, the Kalapuya. In the old Mission building that the museum has on site, they have displays that discuss the history of the building and of the early church in Salem area. Unfortunately, part of that history is the Mission's role in the Indian Boarding Schools, which were schools that were off reservation, where Native American children were forced to go in an effort to "assimilate" them. They were not allowed to speak their native language, see their

families, or participate in their native religions. The museum used this space to talk at length about this boarding schools and the traumatic effect it had on the Kalapuya and other tribes. I greatly appreciated that they provided quotes and stories from real figures that went through these boarding schools, showing the mission and the Native American side, giving it a much more emotional and impactful effect on me, and I assume most visitors that go through that space.

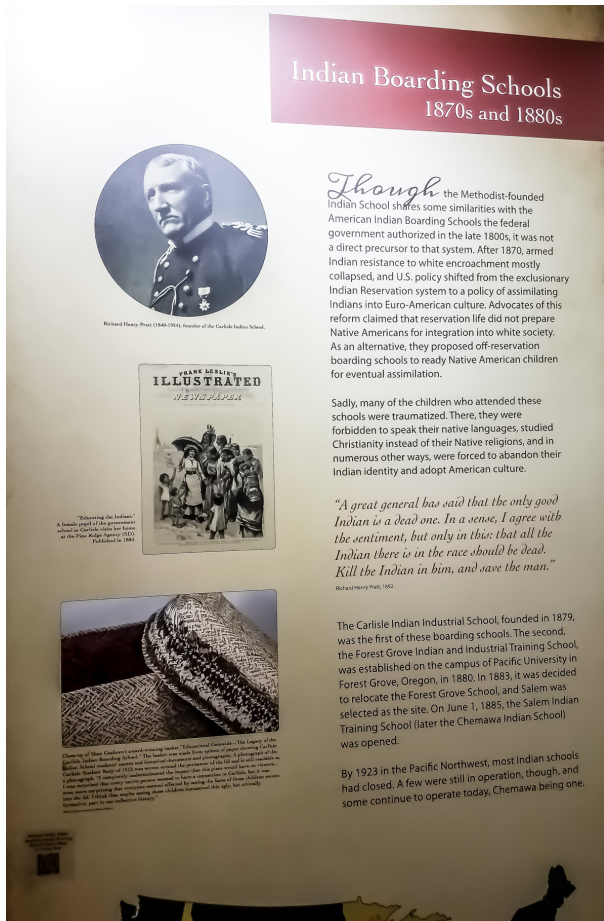


Figure 9 An image of a panel describing the Indian Boarding Schools. Inclusion of photos and personal stories are great examples of the Face, one of the three

5.

Findings and Analysis

Results from the Study

The major part of this research involved observations over a three-month period of Oregon community museums. By analyzing their exhibits using a rubric adapted from Julia Rose's "Three Building Blocks for Developing Ethical Representations of Difficult Histories" (Rose, 2016, p. 102), I was able to rate their exhibits to establish the overall "score" of Oregon community museums. This score should not be seen as a negative rating, but as a signal for improvement and a call to action. The highest score possible was a 12, and the lowest possible score a 3. Figure 10 below gives a quick snapshot of the museum scores. On average, of the museums included in this research, the score was 8 out of 12 in terms of ethical displays of difficult histories. Two museums did get a score of 12, which was really exciting to experience! To be honest, my expectations were set fairly low based on my previous experience with Oregon museums, so I was pleasantly surprised and very excited when several museums, namely the Coos History Museum in Coos Bay and the High Desert

Museum in Bend, had great and sobering displays of difficult histories. In this chapter, I outline several common issues that came up throughout this process. This chapter is meant to synthesize my findings and not at all to denigrate a specific museum. Difficult histories are difficult to display and to deal with, hence the reason we call them difficult histories. This process is only meant for museums to do an internal look at their process and their exhibits, to see how Oregon can keep up with the rising interest and need to understand the world and to confront and discuss the struggles of the past.

| Museum | The Face: Recognition of the "Other" as human | The Real: The Selection of Relevant Historical Artifacts/Documents | The Narrative: How the story is told: labels, text panels, docent tours, interactive display | Total Score Out of 12 |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---|--------------------------|
| Albany Regional Museum | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Clatsop County Heritage Museum | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| Coos History Museum | 4 | 4 | 4 | 12 |
| Deschutes Historical Museum | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Douglas County Museum | 3 | 2 | 3 | 8 |
| High Desert Museum | 4 | 4 | 4 | 12 |
| History Museum of Hood County | 4 | 4 | 3 | 11 |
| Klamath County Museum | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| Lane County Historical Museum | 2 | 3 | 3 | 8 |
| Springfield History Museum | 3 | 2 | 2 | 7 |
| Willamette Heritage Center | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| Average rating | | | | 8 |

Figure 10 A snapshot of the individual scores of each museum as it pertains to the Three Building Blocks of building an ethical representation of difficult history. Only two museums scored full marks. The average rating was an 8 out of 12.

The Face

As the first building block of ethical representations, the “Face” or the “face-to-face encounter” is the response to know and understand someone as human (Rose, 2016, p. 102).

In terms of displays of difficult history, this would be multidimensional representations of the Other. This would include multiple stories of real figures about their lives, their relationships to families and communities. The purpose is to realize the Other as fully human, and to be able to make connections in their life that match or reflect the visitor's experiences.

Generalized representations force the visitor to see the Other as one large group and reduce their humaneness to the aggregate anonymous. Simple representations make it difficult if not impossible for the visitor to make connections and imagine the life of the Other.

For this first building block, I looked for personal stories and photos of historical figures within the displays at each museum. To receive a four (4) on the rubric, I was looking for displays that gave a name, photo (if possible) and biography of people involved with the event or period the exhibit discussed. As a visitor, I wanted to be able to connect and understand that historical figure and the trials they went through. If an exhibit discussed a group of people, for example Native Americans, but gave no names or personal stories, they would not receive full points. The museum that demonstrated the most impactful representations of the Face would have to be the Coos History Museum in Coos Bay.

Every display in the Coos History Museum (CHM) included at least one photo of people, while many had 4-5 photos of specifically people. All of the photos included labels with names of each person, and sometimes even a quote or excerpt from a letter showing the concerns of the individual. The CHM was able to go beyond one-dimensional representations of the historical Other and include spouse names, relationships, jobs held and a look into their personal life. One example of this can be found in their exhibit about the forced removal

of Native Americans to Reservation camps, an event that occurred throughout the State of Oregon, and in other states as well.

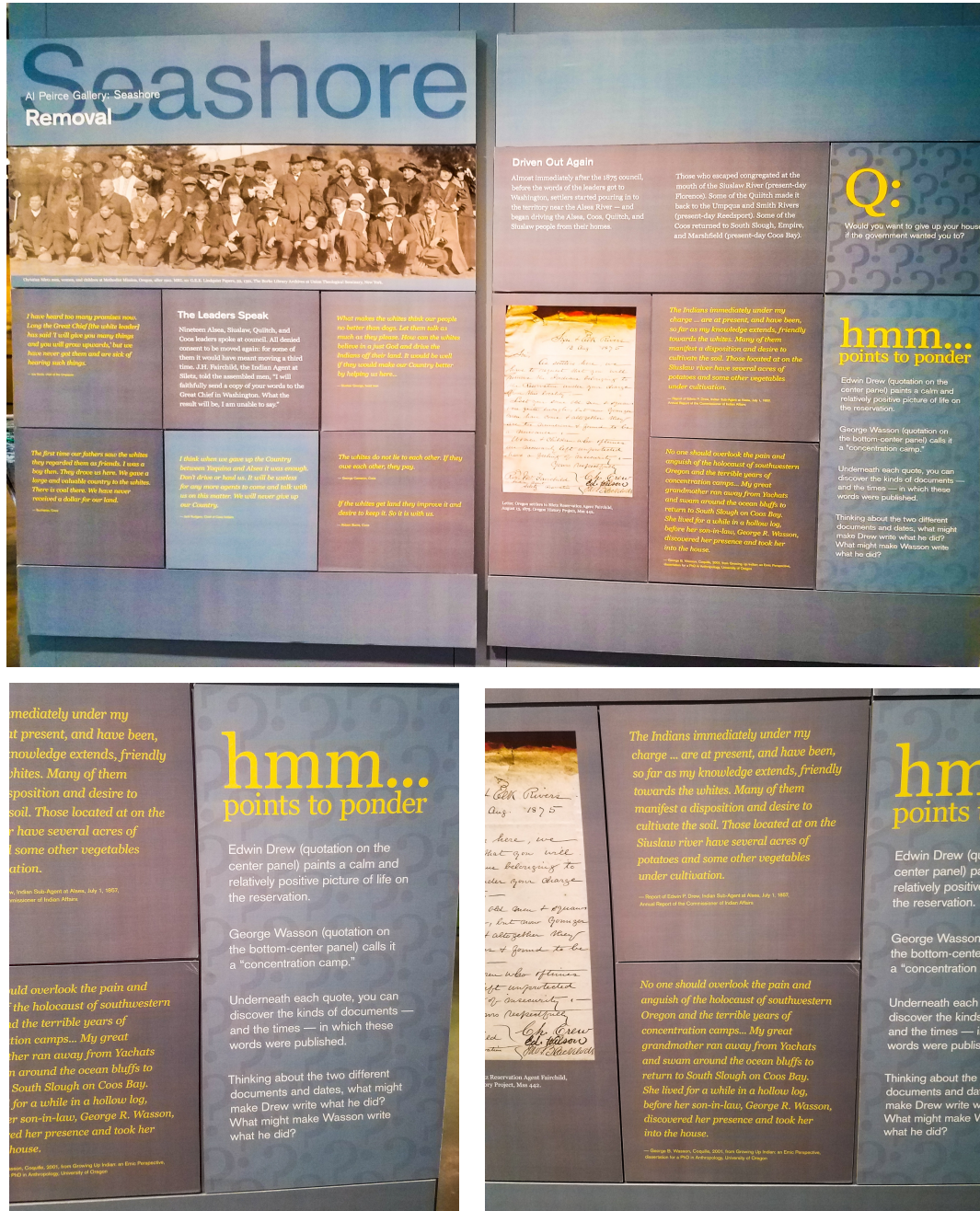


Figure 11 Several images of an exhibit titled “Removal” at the Coos History Museum. The upper image shows one large section of the exhibit. The photo is of a group of Siletz men, women and children at the Methodist Mission. The lower left photo demonstrates how the museum offers “points to ponder” to get visitors in the historical context of the exhibit. The lower right image shows the quotes mentioned in the “points to ponder”.

To help the visitor get into the mind of the historical Other, the museum included several quotes from Native Americans as well as some from an “Indian Sub-Agent”. One of the quotes that especially moved me was from a man named Siuslaw George, head man:

What makes the whites think our people are no better than dogs. Let them talk as much as they please. How can the whites believe in a just God and drive the Indians off their land[?] It would be well if they would make our country better by helping us here...

The Real

The second building block involved with displays of difficult history has to do with the responsibility of the museum and its staff to select appropriate and important pieces of history to display. Julia Rose calls this the “Real”, which includes artifacts, images, documents, numbers, dates and any other types of evidence to build the Narratives (Rose, 2016, p. 108). The responsibility of displaying difficult histories is perhaps one of the most important but, appropriately, difficult jobs of museum workers. They have been given the authority to interpret history and must use the best pieces of evidence to do so. Without the Real, the Face and the Narrative cannot be fully described and understood. Something important for museum workers to constantly remember and understand, is that the displays and interpretation will never be fully completed. We are limited by space, time, and resources. Even if a museum was given all the funding and resources it needed, they could never fully explain and display the spectrum of human suffering. It simply is not possible. In order to provide an authentic and real experience, the museum must acknowledge and let their

visitors realize that their interpretations are only partial, and that this process of displaying and understanding difficult histories is a constant cycle. This is one major reason that museums should really consider updating and modifying their permanent exhibits to reflect new knowledge and pieces of the Real.

For this second building block, I looked for the ways that museums shared their information and evidence for these exhibits. To receive a four (4) on the rubric, I was looking for a combination of photographs, numbers, artifacts/objects, personal stories and quotes and other pieces of data. It was preferable if the collection of this evidence was brought together by the origin community, or if the museum had a co-curator from the community the exhibit represented. Museums are often limited to what they have in their collection and what is donated, so I looked into how they used what they had to support the Narrative and the Face, rather than the sheer quantity of artifacts. Several museums did well with the display of the Real. The History Museum of Hood County did especially well, even though they were one of the smaller museums on the list. In a conversation with the director, Lynn Orr, I learned that she was especially invested in the display of the Real, and how she could use what the museum had to display Hood Rivers difficult histories.

In a phone interview with Dr. Lynn Orr (March 22nd, 2018), I asked Lynn several questions regarding her background, the museum's methods and practices and her opinion on the displays of difficult histories (Appendix D). Dr. Orr shared that for a recent exhibit titled *Talking History/Speaking Spanish: The Latino Experience in Hood River County*, the museum had a Latino advisory board that worked with the museum for 18 months on the exhibit. They

lent objects, help create the bilingual labels and helped ensure that the story was not from the museums vantage point, but from theirs.

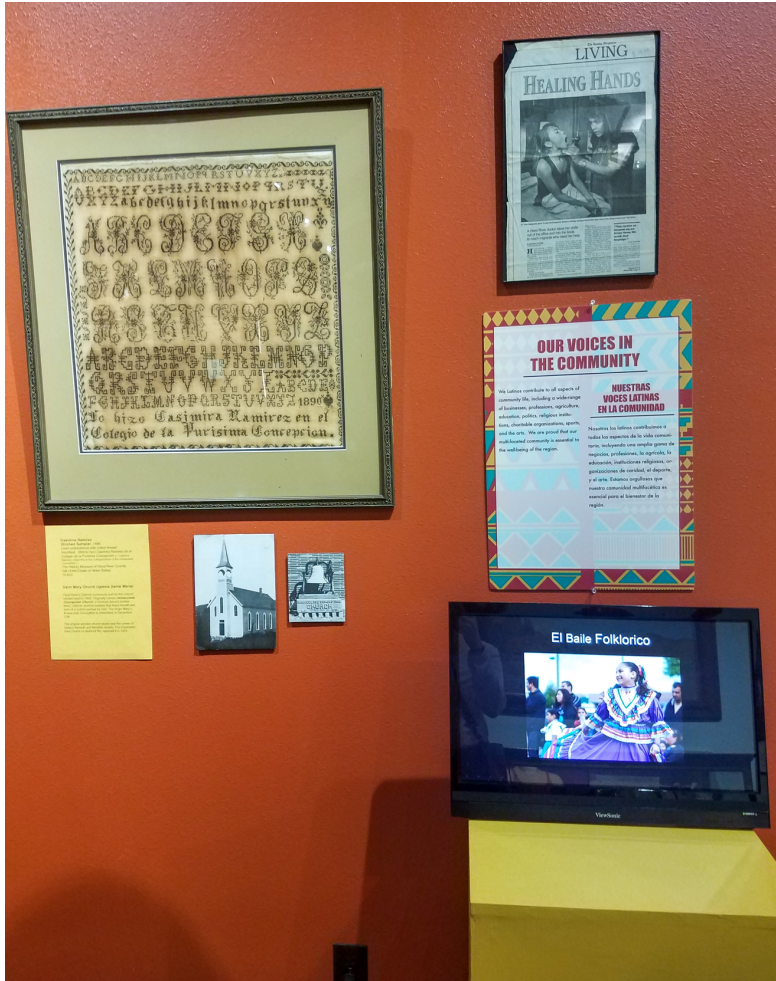


Figure 12 A photo taken at the History Museum of Hood County. The advisory committee shared stories which were taped and played at the museum.

The Narrative

This is the third and last building block developed by Julia Rose, and it ties the Face and the Real together. The Narrative is the way museums answer “What happened to the People?”. The Narrative is built by the entire museum staff, not just the curators. This spans from the item labels, large panels, docent tours and educational activities and programs. A

visitor enters an exhibit, presumably knowing nothing or not a lot. The labels help identify and explain the objects that belonged to or contribute to the stories on the panels, complete with photographs and data about that historical figure. The docents help explain the stories and share what is perhaps not printed, and the activities let the visitors take everything they have learned and reflect and respond to the tragedies of the past.

In looking at the Narrative for this research, I was looking for the following key components, as laid out by Julia Rose:

1. Stories about subjects and Others
2. Recognition of the partiality and biases of representations (tricky!)
3. Purposeful interpretation that demonstrates the relevance and significance of how history matters
4. Opportunities for learners to converse, contemplate and express ideas (Rose, 2016, p. 117)

Something that is especially important for displays of difficult histories is the inclusion for a space for visitors to reflect, react and share their thoughts. Visitors are much more likely to remember everything they learned if they are able to reflect upon it, and often times with the depressing material that come with difficult histories, visitors need to think about what they have just seen and let out that emotion to full come to terms and understand the exhibit. The High Desert Museum in Bend and the Coos History Museum both executed this very well. The High Desert Museum had several stations that offered questions asking visitors to put themselves in the shoes of the historical Other, and to have empathy for them. The Coos

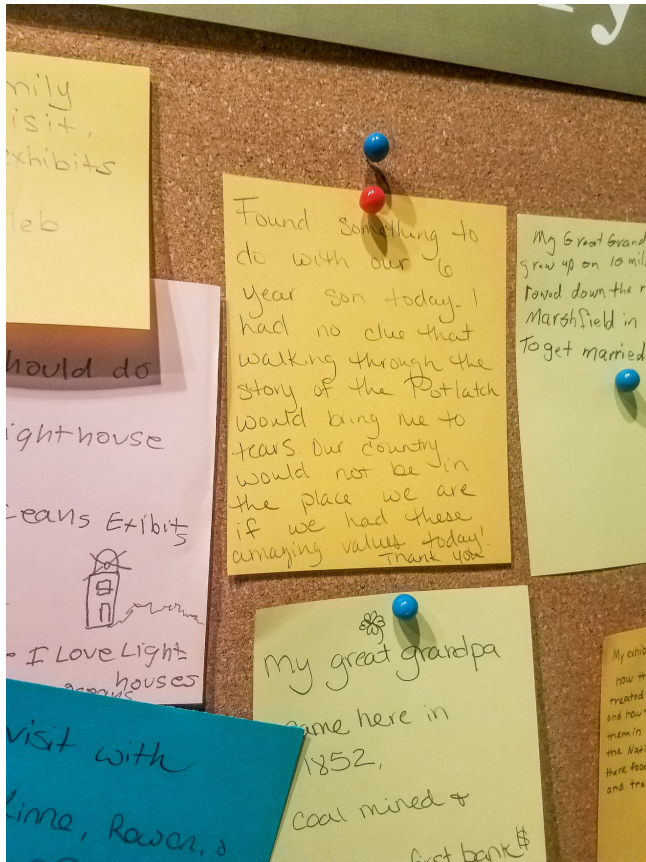


Figure 13 An image taken at the Coos History Museum of a reflection board set up by the museum. The Post-It in the middle says "Found something to do with our 6 year [old] son today. I had no clue that walking through the story of the Potlatch would bring me to tears. Our country would not be in the place we are if we had these amazing values today! Thank you."

History museum also had a station where visitors could write down comments on post it notes, for the museum to use as evaluation tools, and also so other visitors can see how their peers are similarly, or perhaps not, being affected by the exhibits.

6.

Conclusions

A Step Towards a Comprehensive Pedagogy

As new museology has evolved since Vergo's book in 1989, museums and museum workers have increasingly recognized their social responsibilities as educational institutions and as a result are placing a larger emphasis on social issues (Rose, 2016, p. 7). "Fueled by both financial and ethical necessity, museum workers internationally are boldly proclaiming a critical role for museums in facilitating social inclusion, and their power as agents of change" (Silverman, 2002, p. 69). Social justice is based on the ideas of equality and distribution of wealth, opportunities and privileges within society. Many history museums have started using their collections and buildings to focus on difficult histories to shift their institutions focus towards social change.

Museum workers have the incredible responsibility to tell our nation and the world's history. Part of this history includes events that are traumatic and uncomfortable, but yet are some of the most important events that we as global citizens need to know and learn from. It

is the duty of museum professionals to display ethical representations of difficult history, which is done by using the “Faces of historical Others, Real content from history, and sensitive Narratives” (Rose, 2016, p. 131). The purpose for ethical displays of difficult histories is to remind adults and teach children that people are capable of committing violence, oppression and trauma to other humans. Being able to have empathy for the Faces involved with these difficult histories educates viewers on how to be better contributors to society.

As several museums in Oregon have demonstrated, it is entirely possible and extremely effective to display ethical representations of difficult histories. The Hood River museum, though it did not receive a “perfect” score (I would argue no museum is perfect, even if they did get full points for their displays) is a small museum who did very well in displaying the difficult histories of their area. Lynn Orr, the executive director of the museum, said that one of the first things she wanted to implement when she was hired over two years ago was to involve the community in the museum in creating exhibits around these difficult stories. My hope for this research is that it will get the conversation started for museum professionals in Oregon and that many will consider what they can do to update their permanent exhibits and give them ideas for future exhibits.

Implications for the Field

My hope for this study is that it ignites a conversation at the museums that were involved in this study, as well as any other museum, to really look at their exhibits and their process and to consider how to include more difficult histories (if they were not previously displaying any) and how to improve them. This would benefit the museum, in that they would

remain current with museum trends and global trends of social action and inclusion within their exhibits. It would also make their museum more relatable to a larger audience, rather than focusing on the history of European settlers.

This research also benefits the community members around these museums because it will teach them more about the history of their area, and also to understand and confront the traumatic and oppressive parts of their past to be able to move forward and work to improve society. While it may at first be very uncomfortable for many and may raise tensions, anger, denial and depression are all stages of grief, and we as a society have to go through those stages to be able to get to acceptance and understanding, and then, and only then, will the community be able to move on and grow.

An Evaluation Tool for Oregon Museums

Through this study, it has become apparent that Oregon community museums are in need of tools and resources to help them have ethical displays of difficult histories. One way that this research can help is by synthesizing the information and data into an evaluation tool for museums to use to analyze and evaluate their exhibits. One tool for museums that currently have exhibits in place is to do their own analysis using Julia Rose's *Three Building Blocks for Developing Ethical Representations* (Rose, 2013, 2016). The rubric (Figure 14) that I created for this study could be a useful tool for museums to do some self-evaluation of permanent exhibits or temporary exhibits already installed. This form could also be used to help think and plan future exhibits with difficult histories.

| Three Building Blocks | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <p>The Face:</p> <p>Recognition of the "Other" as human</p> | <p>The exhibit expresses the humanness of the subject through photographs or painted portraits, first person stories etc., their name (if known). The use of Active voice. The visitor is able to make connections to the "Other" through similar life occurrences (i.e. Relationships, life experiences). Express Aggregate of the Anonymous</p> | <p>The exhibit expresses the humanness of the subject through some photographs, stories, etc. Some use of Active voice. There are no clear ways the visitor can connect to the historical person. Attempt at aggregating the anonymous.</p> | <p>The exhibit displays only personal stories or objects of the historical subject. There are no connections to humanness through photographs, life experiences, etc. Sweeping descriptions of the mass anonymous.</p> | <p>The exhibit does not display any aspect of The Face, or any story of the "Other".</p> |
| <p>The Real:</p> <p>The Selection of Relevant Historical Artifacts/ Documents</p> | <p>The exhibit includes articles, images, documents, numbers etc. that construct The Face and build The Narrative. Information is about/from descendants, victims, perpetrators and the living community (This could include involvement of the community in the exhibit).</p> | <p>The exhibit includes articles, images, documents, numbers etc. that construct The Face and build The Narrative. There is few or little input/information from the origin community, victims, descendants etc.</p> | <p>The exhibit displays only articles, documents, numbers etc. There is no connection or involvement of the origin community, victims, descendants etc.</p> | <p>The exhibit does not display any aspect of The Real, or any story of the "Other".</p> |
| <p>The Narrative:</p> <p>How the Story is Told: Labels, Text Panels, Docent Tours, Documentation</p> | <p>The exhibit provides multiple ways for the visitor to interact in engaging ways (entering in spaces, handling objects, participating in dialogues/space to respond). Sets a tone to explain why history matters. Encourages the visitor to respond with active empathy.</p> | <p>The exhibit provides one or two ways for the visitor to interact with the Narrative (entering spaces, handling objects, participating in dialogue/space to respond).</p> | <p>The exhibit does not provide a way for the visitor to engage or respond to the exhibit.</p> | <p>The exhibit does not display any aspect of The Narrative, or any story of the "Other".</p> |

Figure 14 The rubric used for this study can also be used by museums to analyze their own exhibits as an evaluation tool.

Suggestions for Further Research

My goal for this research was to be able to get a better understanding of the current landscape of Oregon museums and to see if there were any common issues that could be fixed with further research. By compiling notes and analyzing the exhibits, this research will

hopefully help future researchers start to develop a pedagogy for displaying difficult histories in Oregon museums.

In suggestions for future research, I suggest a continuation of this study to include all history museums in Oregon, to get a full scope of the representations of difficult histories in Oregon. By evaluating the rest of the museums in Oregon, more data will be gathered on difficult histories that are not being displayed that should be, so museums can better fulfill their mission statements to tell the stories of their community and the region. Another suggestion for future research is a case study of an exhibit about a difficult history from the planning phase to end and the summative evaluation using the Commemorative Museum Pedagogy as presented by Julia Rose. I suggest that it be at a history museum in Oregon that does not have a strong representation of difficult histories, for example the Deschutes Historical Museum in Bend, or the Albany Regional Museum in Albany.

Table of Figures

Figure 1 A photo of a large case that included newspaper article clippings, books and photos of men like Stephen W.H. Yih, the founder and CEO of the Wah Chang Corporation, based in Albany, a major Tungsten mining and trading company.....38

Figure 2 A picture taken from the Native American exhibit in the Clatsop County Heritage Museum. The dark room, old font and past tense verbiage gave the illusion that the Native American’s were no more and had died off. Here, Tsin-is-tum, is labeled as the “last of the Clatsop Indians”.....39

Figure 3 All three of these photos demonstrate the different themes the Coos History Museum divided their exhibit space into. You can see in some of these photos that the museum also offered “points to ponder” for visitors to reflect on the exhibit.42

Figure 4 A panel from the Deschutes Historical Museum. This panel mentions the location of arrowheads at a “primitive campsite”44

Figure 5 A label from the Douglas County Museum discussing human occupation before settlers arrived in Oregon.45

Figure 6 These two images are examples of the life-sized images of historical figures at the Douglas County Museum46

Figure 7 A display at the High Desert Museum discussing several Native American stereotypes and portrayals.47

Figure 8 The image on the right is a reprint of a Public Proclamation that what posted in 1942 about the deportation of Japanese immigrants to camps during World War II. The image above includes a photo Japanese Issei and Nissei waiting to board the train to an internment camp.49

Figure 9 An image of a panel describing the Indian Boarding Schools. Inclusion of photos and personal stories are great examples of the Face, one of the three Building Blocks.52

Figure 10 A snapshot of the individual scores of each museum as it pertains to the Three Building Blocks of building an ethical representation of difficult history. Only two museums scored full marks. The average rating was an 8 out of 12.54

Figure 11 Several images of an exhibit titled “Removal” at the Coos History Museum. The upper image shoes one large section of the exhibit. The photo is of a group of Siletz men, women and children at the Methodist Mission. The lower left photo demonstrates how the museum offers “points to ponder” to get visitors in the historical context of the exhibit. The lower right image shows the quotes mentioned in the “points to ponder”.56

Figure 12 A photo taken at the History Museum of Hood County. The advisory committee shared stories which were taped and played at the museum.59

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Figure 14 The rubric used for this study can also be used by museums to analyze their own exhibits as an evaluation tool.....65

Note: All photographs taken by principle researcher

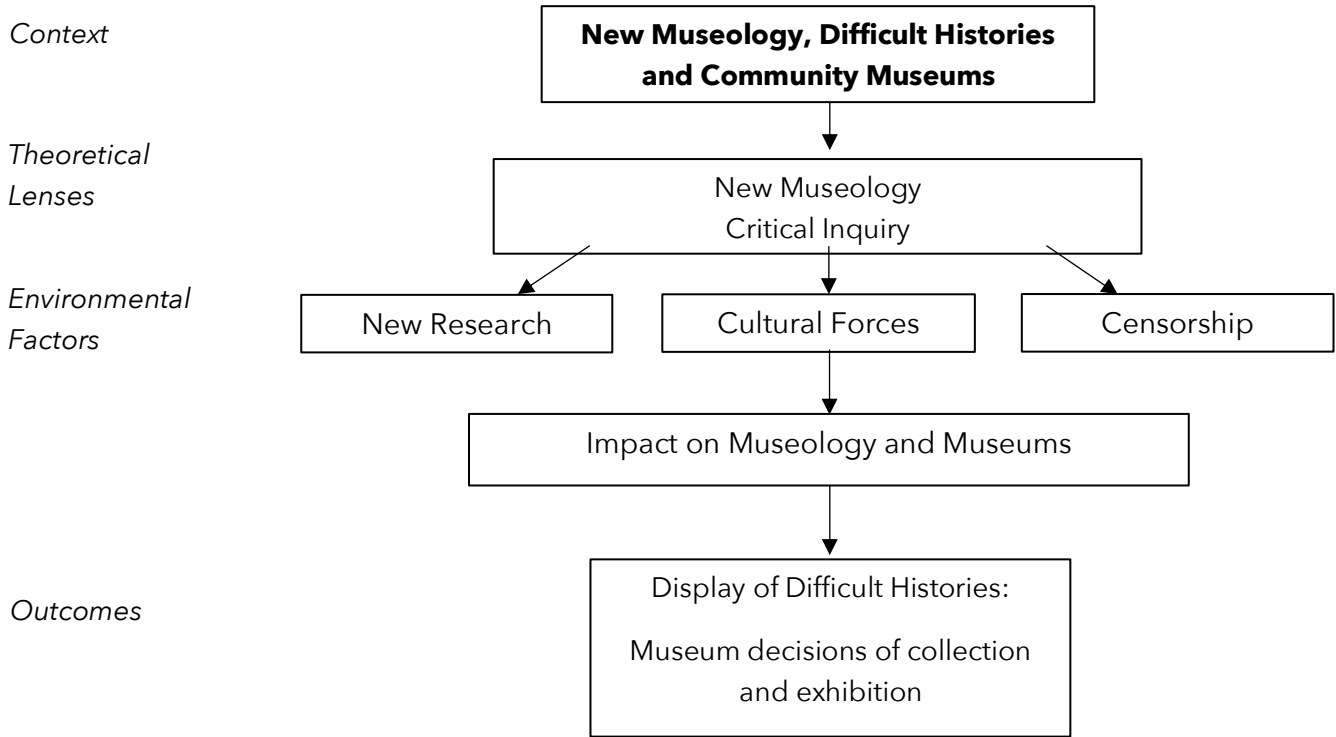
Appendices

Appendix A
Site Rubric

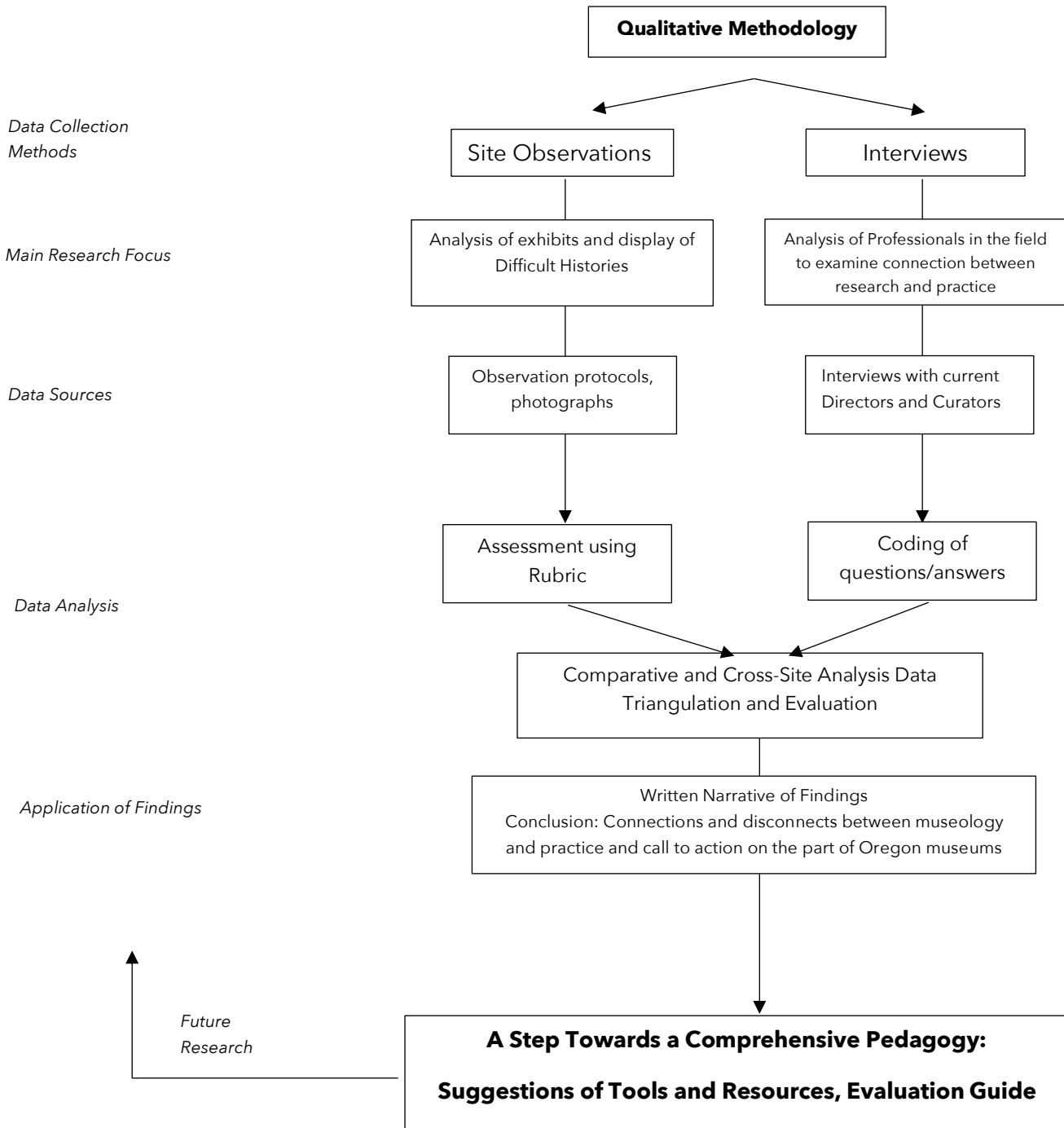
| Three Building Blocks | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| <p>The Face:</p> <p>Recognition of the "Other" as human</p> | <p>The Museum expresses the humanness of the subject through photographs or painted portraits, first person stories etc., their name (if known). The use of Active voice. The visitor is able to make connections to the "Other" through similar life occurrences (i.e. Relationships, life experiences). Express Aggregate of the Anonymous</p> | <p>The Museum expresses the humanness of the subject through some photographs, stories, etc. Some use of Active voice. There are no clear ways the visitor can connect to the historical person. Attempt at aggregating the anonymous.</p> | <p>The Museum displays only personal stories or objects of the historical subject. There are no connections to humanness through photographs, life experiences, etc. Sweeping descriptions of the mass anonymous.</p> | <p>The Museum does not display any aspect of The Face, or any story of the "Other".</p> |
| <p>The Real:</p> <p>The Selection of Relevant Historical Artifacts/Documents</p> | <p>The museum includes articles, images, documents, numbers etc. that construct The Face and build The Narrative. Information is about/from descendants, victims, perpetrators and the living community (This could include involvement of the community in the exhibit).</p> | <p>The Museum includes articles, images, documents, numbers etc. that construct The Face and build The Narrative. There is few or little input/information from the origin community, victims, descendants etc.</p> | <p>The Museum displays only articles, documents, numbers etc. There is no connection or involvement of the origin community, victims, descendants etc.</p> | <p>The Museum does not display any aspect of The Real, or any story of the "Other".</p> |
| <p>The Narrative:</p> <p>How the Story is Told: Labels, Text Panels, Docent Tours, Documentation</p> | <p>The Museum provides multiple ways for the visitor to interact in engaging ways (entering in spaces, handling objects, participating in dialogues/space to respond). Sets a tone to explain why history matters. Encourages the visitor to respond with active empathy.</p> | <p>The Museum provides one or two ways for the visitor to interact with the Narrative (entering spaces, handling objects, participating in dialogue/space to respond).</p> | <p>The Museum does not provide a way for the visitor to engage or respond to the exhibit.</p> | <p>The Museum does not display any aspect of The Narrative, or any story of the "Other".</p> |

This rubric uses the Three Building Blocks as adapted from:
Rose, J. (2013). Three Building Blocks for Developing Ethical Representations of Difficult Histories. *American Association for State and Local History*, 68(4), 1-8.

Appendix B
Conceptual framework schematic



Appendix C
Data collection schematic



Appendix D

Semi-Structured Interview Questions:

1. How do you/does the Museum decide on upcoming exhibits?
2. How often do you have new exhibits?
3. Are permanent collections/exhibits ever edited, rotated, changed?
4. How often do you look into/research new museology?
5. Have you ever heard the term Difficult Histories or Difficult knowledge? Do you have another word/phrase for it?
6. Do you believe, in your professional opinion, that it's the responsibility of history museums to display Difficult Histories/Knowledge?
7. Does your Museum display Difficult Histories?
8. How do you work through an exhibit that may be controversial or sensitive in nature?
9. Do you include communities through dialogue/participation/information for exhibits pertaining to them? (i.e. Native Americans, Japanese Americans, African Americans)

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