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Connecting Their Stories: Black Educators' Experiences Within Cultural Heritage Institutions That Document the Long Arc of the Civil Rights Movement

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CONNECTING THEIR STORIES: BLACK EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES
WITHIN CULTURAL HERITAGE INSTITUTIONS THAT DOCUMENT THE
LONG ARC OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my most beloved mother, Pastor Margaret Lynn Holt Caddell. Your unwavering love, support, encouragement, guidance, and commitment truly shaped me into the woman of God I am today. I love you so much.

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All glory and honor belong to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ as all that I am is because of Him.

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Abstract

This study aims to examine Black educators' experiences within cultural heritage institutions that are documenting topics that include the long arc of the American Civil Rights Movement. Black educators are powerful conduits of the African American story because they align with African American cultural heritage institution's goals to foster equality, identity, pride, and honor in the community. These shared goals lead to Black educators using teaching methods that liberate, advocate, and empower students. This allows them to share new knowledge, strategies, techniques, and concepts on diverse topics. Considering their fundamental mission, it is essential to gain an awareness of the educators' lived experiences, as these experiences will influence their teaching promulgation. Specifically, this research seeks to discover how the lived experiences of Black educators inform their previous, initial, and post reactions to these cultural heritage sites.

The theoretical frameworks used were Reader Response and Experiential Learning. This narrative inquiry used observations and interviews to understand the lived experiences of the participants of this study. Following the data collection, the researcher analyzed the data using values coding to glean themes of family, community, and rejection of the dominant narrative in the participants' values, attitudes, and beliefs.

Findings from this study reveal that the influence of the exhibits spanned beyond the walls of the site. There was a transformative effect on the participants' personal and professional understandings of racial issues, the value of community, and their perceived obligations to educate society. The findings from this study could inform professionals in the fields of education, library and information science, and museum studies on the effectiveness or limitations of museum exhibitions towards the education of students and teachers. It could also influence future policies. Therefore, leaders of these fields can use this newfound knowledge to modify exhibitions to promote a more authentic design that informs the diverse visitor experience.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Historical Background

The first museums emerged as a tangible location to preserve and display the histories of society. The overall tasks of traditional museums include collecting, preserving, displaying, interpreting, and educating the public, which makes them the only institution to do so (Schwarzer, 2006). The printing press's creation during the mid-15th century ushered in a new era of collecting and describing the aspects of the artifacts. During their early origins, museums were elitist institutions reserved for the upper echelon of society. The earliest known collection was that of Amsterdam physician Samuel Quickelberg in 1565 (Hagen, 1876). This voracious desire to obtain the most elite collection led to various royals and other noble individuals developing extensive collections to include German Emperor Rudolf II, the Princes of Gottorf, botanist John Tradescant, and the Jesuits in the Collegium Romanium (Hagen, 1876). During the early life of the museum, visitors viewed unique and rare objects as a marvel to further their enlightenment and awareness, often traveling long distances to view these collections.

Because the aristocrats of society formed these early institutions, they were not open to the public like today's museums. Those elitist museums of the past that were typically exclusive to the collector's race and class have been primarily banished (Schwarzer, 2006). Early museums were primarily for students and other privileged individuals. This exclusivity led to limited descriptions and narratives of the exhibitions and artifacts. Turner (2015) states that artifacts collected from 1875 through 1920 had descriptions created in approaches that were not connected with the culture itself. More recently, museums incorporate new display methods to highlight current knowledge and new narratives to reflect our current society (Levin and Adair, 2017).

In America, the establishment of traditional museums began in the late 19th century. Museums were facilities for the privileged of society to guide working-class Americans to a cultured and civic mind (Schwarzer, 2006). The coming decades will see the institution making transformations to reflect the changing society. While their early beginnings in the 19th century were optimistic in presenting information, the 20th century would see some sites becoming part of movements for societal change. Schwarzer (2006) stated that during the 1980s and 1990s, institutions faced challenges from various cultures for their interpretation and assumptions of artifacts. For example, naturalist George Gibbs disregarded the Indigenous people he was studying with his descriptions revealing his prejudice by describing the mindset of the Indigenous people as inferior to that of the white man (Turner, 2015). Museums are amongst the diverse institutions included in explaining cultural heritage sites as places for

cultures to voice their hopes and aspirations (Carr, 2000). Specifically, the

primary goal of cultural heritage sites is to serve society and the public through

the acquisition, conservation, and presentation of objects to inform, educate, and

entertain the visitors through the material evidence of people and their

environment (Szczepanowska, 2013). These cultural heritage sites are diverse;

however, they share a common goal to connect the site's cultural information with

the public. To achieve this goal of connecting the site's materials with the public,

museums acquire and conserve objects to serve various purposes, with

education included as the primary goal (Szczepanowska, 2013). Additionally,

these types of institutions play several roles for their community and patrons,

such as the preservation of diverse history, dissemination of that history into the

future, a source of materials and services to enhance education, support of

economic development, and a location for community through events (de la Pena

McCook and Jones, 2002).

However, traditional museums have focused mainly on the histories of

whites and western civilization, resulting in a disconnection of African Americans

with the misrepresented stories shared in these spaces. Many of these museums

face criticism for their lack of diversity and exclusion of various cultures'

contributions. For example, some museums on plantation sites strive to combat

the controversial nostalgic presentation of history that benefitted white visitors by

acknowledging or interpreting African diasporic histories and cultures in these

spaces (Halifax, 2018). Other institutions such as House of the Seven Gables in

Salem, MA include references to the Underground Railroad, and the Louisiana

Old State Capitol now features the diverse cultures of the state with the inclusion of African Americans contributions. (Levin and Adair, 2017).

Because African Americans were often eradicated or limited from the narrative in the early traditional museum, African Americans had no connection to the stories shared in these sites. During a 1969 conference at the Bedford Lincoln Neighborhood Museum in Brooklyn, African Americans expressed their anger and dissatisfaction with the traditional museums. June Jordan, a poet, stated that there was no self-representation within these sites, with African Americans occasionally exhibited in a token "nigger room" (Burns, 2013). This dissatisfaction resulted in institutions within the African American community developing their own museums to preserve their history. These sites included churches, historically black colleges and universities, and community centers. African Americans hoped to preserve their cultural memory through these sites. The first Black museums presented the unique African identity, consciousness, and pride; thus, helping the African American community overcome the lack of attention towards their culture from conventional cultural sites (Shamohammadi, 2015). The presence of these spaces not only informed the more prominent public audience about a people's significance to the shaping of national and international history, but it also invoked a sense of dignity and esteem within this marginalized population as they experienced the stories and artifacts of those spaces. Burns (2013) further expounded that these cultural heritage institutions increased self-respect and pride in the community, promoting a sense of belonging.

African American museums often emerged as a response to social movements. While the early establishments of African American museums trace back to the nineteenth century, the field experienced significant growth in the 1960s due to societal changes. Hayward and Larouche (2018) state that this record growth of the 1970s was due to the pivotal movements of the 1960s, which included the Civil Rights, Black Power, and Black Arts Movements.

Before there was an increase in the number of Black museums, the education field saw an increase in the teaching of African American history. Some key pioneers and institutions began the early work to acquire and disseminate the history of African Americans. Davis (2008) noted that these pioneer collectors valued their ancestors' history and chose to collect them in a society that did not place as much value on their history through media or education. Individuals such as Carter G. Woodson developed his publishing house, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, in 1915 to share an accurate narrative while empowering the African American community (Ruffins, 2018). Following the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements from 1965 to 1969, Blacks sought ways to have their history told. Black students demanded courses offered on the Black experience, Black representation in the faculty and staff of schools, and Black Studies programs (Fleming, 2018). The teaching of these Black stories paved the way for the establishment of African American museums. These museums began to emerge in the 1960s despite the low number of Black museum professionals in the field, as well as sufficient resources. They aspired to share heritage by collecting, preserving, and

educating the public (Fleming, 2018). The field would begin to see a significant growth of Black museums. The founders of these museums began to note this growth. They knew it was imperative to develop a formal structure for their institutions, and they established the African American Museums Association in 1978 to support national and international African American-focused museums (Fleming, 2018).

Other individuals would further empower the Black museum movement. For example, Charles H. Wright established the International Afro-American Museum in Detroit in 1965 and Elma Lewis established the National Center of Afro-American Artists in Boston, MA in 1968. In addition, Marcus Garvey established the United Negro Improvement Association in 1916 (Fleming, 2018). The development of these Black museums development occurred during difficult moments in American history to foster hope for an oppressed people. The twentieth century's white intellectuals promoted a false narrative that Blacks in America were inferior intellectually and had no rich history (Ruffins, 2018). The prevalent, widespread promotion of this misinformation contributed to feelings of defeat and mediocrity in the Black community. Black scholars and community leaders fought these tactics by developing and accumulating cultural repositories within the community.

Nevertheless, there would still be a reluctance to share the African American narratives because a significant part of that story is rooted in America's controversial history (Cargle, 2011). For example, the struggle to develop the permanent African American Museum of Philadelphia met much controversy and

criticism by the white community, with political leaders seeking to pacify African Americans with temporary exhibits. John M. Elliot, the city commissioner, stated that to give in to the desire of an African American museum would be political pandering to the Black activists (Burns, 2013,). Additionally, there can be difficulties in gaining this unique perspective of African Americans within these institutions since some Blacks find the story too difficult to encounter. For example, the difficulty to gain African American insight of an exhibit occurred at the lynching memorial at the Legacy Museum in which a patron intentionally avoided the opportunity to view the depiction of the executions (Associated Press, 2018). Despite the fact that some Blacks may be reluctant to face the tragedies of the past, these sites are now receiving increased attention, growing visitation, and new establishments to include the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration. Even with the recent growth, the number of Black museums nationally is relatively low, with 200 documented (Mack and Welch, 2018). With this promising awakening of Black cultural sites, it is vital to understand how today's Black educators are experiencing these sites.

Black educators have long held the responsibility of being the gateway of education to the Black community. Prior to the landmark *Brown V. Board of Education* case of 1954, Black educators advocated for quality education for their Black students. Black educators had to manage the complex task of working within the White-dominated educational system, collaborating with Black organizations, and depending on parents as allies to promote their goals of

teaching. In the years of 1921-1954, Black educators had active roles in the fight against injustice of the segregation system; in which they were the first to seek help from state leaders about educational problems, were instrumental in the establishment of Rosenwald schools across the South for the education of African American students and formed discreet collaborations with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to gain equality for Black schools (Siddle Walker, 2013). Black educators were a vital part of the African American community during the Jim Crow era because they made the education of the community a priority. Despite working in unjust, discriminatory, and bleak environments, these African American teachers did not become a product of their environment and were role models for their students and their support system as they were in control of the education of Black students (Siddle Walker, 2001; 2019; Tillman, 2004).

The impact of desegregation led to harsh consequences against these pillars in the community. There were massive firings of Black teachers and principals. Today, Black teachers account for less than 7 percent of the American teaching population (Ladson-Billings and Anderson, 2021). The pattern of navigating in a White-dominated educational system is still a challenge for African American teachers. Yet, those rooted motivations for Black teachers and the advocacy of Black children are ongoing. Foster and Peele (1999) emphasized that the Black community must fight against negative identities and instead foster positive identities in students with pride in their heritage to achieve their educational endeavors. Black teachers have empowered, protected,

engaged, and inspired Black students in the current educational environment because of their understanding of their life experiences (de Royston, Madkins, Givens, and Nasir, 2021; Milner, 2006). Therefore, Black educators are powerful conduits of the African American story as they share goals with African American cultural sites to foster equality, identity, pride, and honor in the community.

Problem Statement

In the United States, the primary goal of traditional museums is to commemorate the stories of the white majority to the public, with the contributions of African Americans primarily limited or eliminated (Burns, 2013). In contrast, museums that highlight the stories of the long arc of the Civil Rights Movement seek to promote awareness of Black culture and representation for the Black community (Johnson & Pettiway, 2017). Furthermore, the mission of many African American museums is to control the narrative of the Black community, increase self-respect within Black people, strengthen ties to the Black community, promote the contributions of the Black community, while instilling pride within African Americans (Burns, 2013; Ruffins, 2018).

Unfortunately, museums often fail to accomplish these goals because they often still gear exhibits and the museum experience to white museum visitors as the dominant audience. Even when Black stories are highlighted within traditional museums, and even when the Black experience is the primary subject of African American museums, the portrayal of these stories to museum visitors does not necessarily resonate with Black museum visitors, especially when white people are centered as the ideal or simply the standard museum visitor (Burns, 2013). A

key reason for this disconnection is that museums do not fully understand the experiences of Black museum visitors.

Instead of depending on dominant white narratives, beliefs, and opinions, this study seeks to document the experiences of Black visitors in the educational field to determine if Black museums are meeting their needs. The reasoning for examining Black educators is they have long served as gatekeepers in education by expanding their responsibilities beyond the required job duties to teaching in a method that liberates, advocates, and empowers students (Dilliard, 2000; Siddle Walker, 2013; 2015; 2019). Thus, through their teaching they have combated the negative depictions of Blacks and instilled positive depictions in their students—a shared goal of cultural sites. There is currently a dearth of research about this role of Black educators in the field of Library and Information Science. Without this knowledge of Black educators' museum visitor experience, African Americans may not actually receive potential benefits of visiting museums even when Black stories are featured. It is imperative to capture the influence of their lived experiences on their museum experience to increase the effectiveness of the exhibits. Therefore, findings from this study will offer guidance for future decision-making among professionals in the museum, LIS, and museum studies field to ensure that Black visitors benefit from these exhibits and museums as intended. In addition, the implications from this study could lead to pedagogical changes in the K-12 curriudulum. Finally, this study has the potential to influence policy makers to make decisions that could affect the visitation to these cultural heritage institutions.

Purpose & Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry study is to examine the museum experiences of Black educators during and after their visit to African American cultural heritage institutions. For the intention of this study, race is recognized as a social construct rather than an inherent biological construct. As Omi and Winant (1986) stated, race is a social classification that has a social order and subsequent ramifications. The creation of racial designations has led to bias. Findings from this study will help the Black community, educational system, and cultural heritage professionals develop an understanding of how Black educators are experiencing exhibits that provide narratives of the long arc of the American Civil Rights Movement. The goal of this study is to foster an in-depth understanding about the experiences of Black museum visitors in education as they strive to connect and identify with stories of their history. Throughout its five decades of existence, African American cultural heritage institutions have sought to be a haven of empathy, comfort, enlightenment, and strength. Leaders such as Charles H. Wright—founder of the International Afro-American Museum in Detroit—stated that the goal is to erase 350 years of mental brutality Blacks faced from white supremacy through Black history museums (Moore, 2018, p. 75). This study will inform the success of these goals because through Narrative inquiry, Black educators—the gatekeepers of this history—will provide their unique perspective of their museum experience to further provide a fresh awareness to the museum field of the effectiveness of their exhibitions with topics regarding the long arc of the Civil Rights Movement.

Further, these sites could then improve their exhibits for the K-12 students taught by these educators, thus enhancing the students' learning experiences in cultural heritage institutions.

The overarching research question for this study is: *How are visitors of African ancestry in the educational field experiencing artifacts at cultural heritage institutions that document the long arc of the Civil Rights Movement?* The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do African American educators describe their experiences as they explore exhibits at Black museums?
2. What are the connections that Black visitors in education make between the museum narratives and their lived experiences as African Americans?
3. What do their narratives reveal about the role of race in their current museum experience?

The guiding theories of experiential learning and reader-response theory with the narrative inquiry methodology will enable the researcher to understand these exhibits' role in the visitors' experience. Data was obtained from observations and interviews. Narrative inquiry is an approach that is unique from other qualitative methodologies such as phenomenology or case study because through it; the narrative inquirer can study the individual's experience in the world. This experience is told because of the individual's living the telling of that story, which allows for examination through listening, observing, living alongside one another, writing, and interpreting texts (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Clandinin (2013) states:

…narrative inquiry is a way of understanding and inquiring into experience. It is nothing more and nothing less. Narrative inquiry is situated in relationships and in community, and it attends to notions of expertise and knowing in relational and participatory ways. (p. 13).

The goals of this study include:

1. Describe visitors of African descent within the educational field's incentives for seeking African American exhibits.
2. Describe visitors of African descent within the educational field's experiences encountered during their connection with cultural objects at museums documenting the long arc of the Civil Rights Movement.
3. Describe how the lived experiences of visitors of African descent within the educational field connect with the museum experiences.
4. Build a new awareness of visitors of African descent in education at institutions documenting the long arc of the Civil Rights Movement to inform professionals of the presentation and influence of cultural objects in museum exhibitions.
5. Offer original insight into visitors of African descent in education experience at institutions documenting the long arc of the Civil Rights Movement to present professionals with an opportunity to provide optimal and authentic visitor experience to their visitors.

Definition of Terms (see Appendix A)

Experience

      Experience occurs when an encounter with an event or action forms meaning. However, it is a complex term that can encompass a multiplicity of meanings. Narrative inquiry builds on Dewey's writings of experience. Dewey (1938) stated that experience is not limited to what is happening internally within an individual to inform their attitudes, desires, or purposes; instead, a genuine experience is active and transforms in some form to the conditions in which the experiences have occurred. With consideration of Dewey's criteria of experience—interaction and experiential continuum—as the basis, the narrative inquiry approach frames experience within the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which an individual's experiences are formed, articulated, and portrayed (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Thus, experiences are formed from internal and external influences.

African Diaspora

      The concept of the African Diaspora began in the 19th century with the acclaimed Liberian educator, Dr. Edward W. Blyden, in which he delivered an address in 1880 in America and made comparison of the dispersion of Africans to that of Jews (Ranger, 1968). The term is believed to have originated at the international conference on African history which was held in 1965 at the University of Dar es Salaam (Harris, 1982; Ranger, 1968). The term describes the mass migration of people from Africa throughout the world. Specifically, the African Diaspora encompasses the five significant movements: (1) the great shift that began 100,000 years ago within and outside of Africa, (2) the 3000 B.C.E.

movement of the Bantu-speaking people from modern-day Nigeria and Cameroon to other parts of Africa and the Indian Ocean (3) the fifth century B.C.E. movement of traders, merchants, slaves, and soldiers to parts of Europe, the Middle East, and Asia (4) the 15th century Atlantic trade of Africans to European societies and the Americas and (5) the movement from the 19th century to the present with people of African descent resettling in various communities (Palmer, 2018). This study will focus exclusively on museums that primarily document subjects of the fourth stream of the African Diaspora because that is the chief movement of most African Americans in the United States.

African Americans

Omi and Winant (1986) emphasized that race is not a biological fact or an illusion. Instead, race is a social construct through which society created designations that have been manipulated.

Of the five significant movements of Africans in history, those who belong to the fourth and fifth stream in the African Diaspora typically make up the African American population (Palmer, 2018). The term *African American* has a relatively young life, and it is still evolving. In the 1980s, as the term *African American* began to be used by scholars, the Reverend Jesse Jackson worked to adopt the word as the widely accepted description for Blacks in America (Wilkerson, 1989). This initiative led to the adoption of the term in schools, Census, and publications. However, the widespread adoption of this term did not cancel out the term *Blacks.* Throughout this paper, the terms *African Americans* and *Blacks* will be used to describe individuals of African descent in America.

Cultural Heritage Sites

Cultural institutions convey the voices of cultures and places that are available to learners with a primary goal to serve society and the public through its acquisition, conservation, and presentation of objects to inform, educate, and entertain the visitors through the material evidence of people and their environment (Carr, 2000; Szczepanowska, 2013). This study focuses on the cultural institution of museums. Terms describing these institutions will include *organizations, sites, environments,* and *repositories.*

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Assumptions

Bryant (2004) states that assumptions are the beliefs that researchers bring to the study and accept as valid. Firstly, there is the assumption that the information documented in these cultural sites are trustworthy accounts of specific subjects of the fourth stream of the long arc of the Civil Rights Movement. With this assumption, there is a reliance that the display is comprehensible to visitors. Secondly, my epistemological assumption is that I view the experiences shared as relational, continuous, and social. Therefore, the chosen research method of narrative inquiry that describes experiences as a continuum will allow me to capture what I regard as legitimate knowledge (Bryant, 2004). Finally, as researcher, I trust that the participants provide responses that accurately portray their reality. Narrative inquiry is not an investigation of the truth but an acknowledgment of the participants' understanding of their social realities (Clandinin, 2013).

Delimitations

These findings do not apply to all African Americans of cultural heritage institutions or all Black cultural sites. This study focuses on physical exhibits in the Southeast region of the United States; yet the data gained will be insightful to professionals of the LIS and Education fields because they share similar characteristics and goals with these cultural heritage sites. Also, children will be excluded from this study even though they significantly contribute to the museum population. Minor participation requires consent from guardians. Additionally, different strategies for data collection of children will need to be applied.

Limitations

Trustworthiness will be a concern amongst the audience of this study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that qualitative research implement the four criterions of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to generate confidence. Thus, as the researcher, I will implemented the recommended techniques to meet this criterion. Credibility was achieved through triangulation and extended data analysis. Transferability was accomplished through detailed description of the study's methodology, participants, and site to allow for replication. Dependability was gained by providing an in-depth description of the research methods. Confirmability was gained by (1) acknowledging the researcher's feelings and biases in the field notes and (2) following the direction of the interview with participants offering clarification when necessary.

Because my study was limited to a certain amount of time, a limitation was the actions of society during that point in time. Narrative inquiry emphasizes that

experiences, just like society, are evolving and constant. This continuum of experience is termed *temporality* in which the narrative inquirer is concerned with the present and ongoing experience because daily experiences inform the larger narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Therefore, the experiences captured using this research method may be different if captured in a different time period.

Finally, another limitation I am not a member of the K-12 educational field, whereas the participants of this study are in this field.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant to the fields LIS, education, and museums because it will offer increased insight into how Black educators are experiencing the narratives in cultural heritage institutions that are preserving and documenting topics of the African American experience. Currently, there is a gap in the literature of the Black museum experience. Increasing literature reflects the study of the visitor experience at traditional museums (Cheng and Wan, 2012; Coghlan, 2018; Goulding, 2000; Griswold, Mangione, & McDonnell; 2013; Latham, 2012; 2013). With the growth of museums of African Americans' history, there has been little research into the visitors of these sites. Examples of these limited studies into the Black museum experience include the Museum of African American History in Nantucket's creation of heritage experiences for its visitors; the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute's critical examination of the exhibition design; and the Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center's acquisition of takeaways from visitor evaluations (Bulger, 2011; Fleming, 1994; Zonderman, 2004). Because the literature

primarily focused on the visitor experience and not the influence of their lived experiences to the interpretation, there is still a significant gap in the literature that delves deeply into how the lived experiences of Blacks connect with the experiences formed within African American museums.

Thus, this study will contribute to the existing literature by providing new insight into this Black experience. The lack of understanding of this unique visitor experience has led to adverse experiences for Blacks within these spaces (Associated Press, 2018; Burns, 2013;). Secondly, an accurate and transparent representation of the Black experience would provide the larger audience with trustworthy narratives. Museum professionals in Black museums struggle to connect with the African American community while simultaneously appealing to a broader audience. Burns (2013) stated that as African American museums changed their missions to appeal to larger audiences for their survival, the Black community criticized the institutions. However, it was the Black community that was their original source of inspiration for creating these sites.

Therefore, this study will benefit professionals in the museum field. From it, leaders will learn how Black visitors in the educational field are engaging and navigating within these spaces. Not only will this study benefit the educators, but it will also prove useful to their students as the pedagogy from these sites will transfer into the classroom. This awareness could improve exhibitions, increase connection with the African American community, and enlighten audiences. Findings from this study of capturing the experiences of Black visitors in education can inform professionals of the museum, LIS, and education field

about the culture and who they are, increase understanding of the community and its importance, and diminish stereotypes and misconceptions. John Kinard, director of a branch of an African American museum, suggested that instead of avoiding Blacks' opinions due to fear, it should instead embrace the views of the African American community as this awareness could lead to a thorough examination of these larger institutions in the museum field (Burns, 2013).

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Visitor studies within cultural institutions such as libraries, archives, and museums have provided professionals with insight into the actions of visitors as they are using the spaces of these repositories. The professionals of these sites have used this knowledge to direct future recommendations for the organizations. However, there is limited research into the visitor experience of Black cultural institutions. To delve further into the visitor experience and potential visitor experience of these sites, a review of the existing literature into the visitor experience and Black educator's experience will occur in this chapter. To center the understanding of the museum experience, the scope of this literature will highlight the external aspects (position, museum space, exhibition, object) and internal aspects (lived experiences, beliefs, memories) of traditional and Black museums that influence the visitor experience. The justification for this attention to the contributing factors is the focus of external and internal influences in the guiding theories as individuals navigate within learning spaces.

First, this literature review will provide concise descriptions of the guiding theories for this study. Secondly, it will provide context into experiences corresponding to the Narrative inquiry methodology. Thirdly, the exploration of visitor experience within traditional museum spaces will be described. Fourthly, the exploration of visitor experience within Black museums will be described. Fifthly, emphasis of the experiences of Black educators within the educational system will be detailed. Finally, the theories and theoretical frameworks that guide this study are incorporated throughout the chapter.

Guiding Theories

A conceptual framework (see Figure 1) was developed to display the use of the guiding theories of Reader Response and Experiential Learning that will help to inform the understanding of how visitors are experience objects at cultural heritage institutions documenting the long arc of the Civil Rights Movement in the
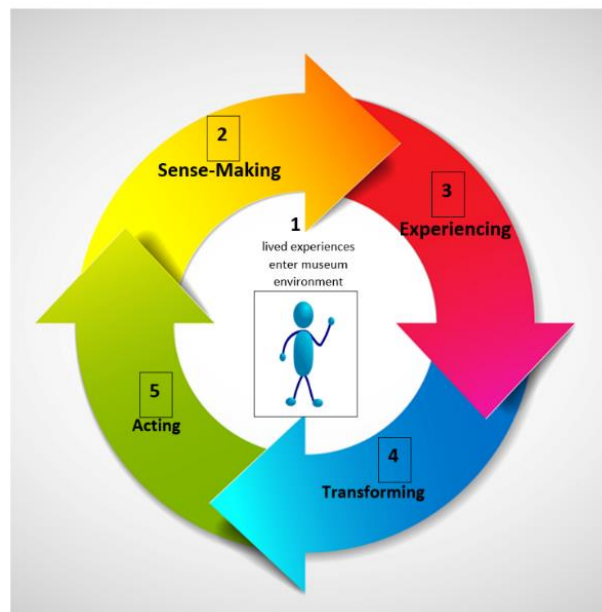
Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework of Reader
Response Theory & Experiential Learning Theory

Black experience of the American South. The theories work collaboratively as one theory on its own did not fully address how exhibitions can be experienced.

First, upon entering the cultural site, the individual is already accompanied by their lived experiences. An integral part of the lived experiences of the individual includes their heritage, existing knowledge, beliefs, and memories.

Second, the individual has contact with the exhibit and it is a mutual transaction as discussed by Rosenblatt's Reader Response in which sense-making, interpretation, and analysis occurs (Rosenblatt, 1995). Sense-making is the external and internal behaviors that allows individuals to construct sense of their world and in the process, they construct their information needs and information uses (Dervin, 1983). Implementation of this theory toward cultural institutions has revealed the actions of the reader during the process of reading, the relation between the reader and text, and what occurs during the sense-making of the text (Ross, 2005). Rosenblatt (1995) described the experience of a reader's engagement with text as purpose-driven in which the reader comes to the text with expectations or hypotheses that are based on their past experiences. While Rosenblatt's theory focused on the text; it has been extended towards the diverse objects, narratives, texts, and formats that are used in museums to convey a story (Latham, 2012; 2013; 2014).

Third, the individual begins to further experience, reflect, think, and act from this transaction with the exhibit as noted by Kolb's Learning Cycle. David Kolb's Experiential Learning theory was developed in 1984 in which Kolb focused on the internal cognitive experience of the learner (McLeod, 2017). Specifically,

the theory addresses the unique learning process of individuals which is based on the learner's diverse view of the world from previous experience. Each newcomer is bringing their existing knowledge and understanding into the environment. This theory can be applied towards this research because the museum is a learning environment in which patrons are enlightened through the displays. The theory builds upon John Dewey's work in constructivism because all learning styles are a process based on the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984).

It is the experience that guides and directs the interpretation of the learning shared in instructional environments. Experiences are gained through a variety of events in life. The skills and knowledge acquired through experiential learning occur through many life experiences such as work, study, or education and are not limited to professional certification (Evans, 1994). Kolb's Learning Cycle is a continuous process because no individual can truly state that they have mastered learning. The four modes of Kolb's learning cycle include:

(1) experiencing

(2) reflecting

(3) thinking

(4) acting.

The process begins with *concrete experience* followed by *reflective observation* which employs *abstract thinking* and a decision to participate in *active participation* (Peterson and Kolb, 2018).

Fourth, the transformation of knowledge connects with the mode of *thinking* and leads to the object no longer being a sedentary item because it has been transformed by the conjunction of lived experiences with the new experience. Finally, *acting* is enacted after exiting the site in which the learner reflects on their observations and actively participates in the world with this knowledge. Because learning is constant, the process begins anew when entering a cultural site.

As Black educators enter Black-centered cultural heritage sites, these guiding theories will provide an explanation and interpretation of the influences that inform their museum experience in this phenomenon.

Experience within Traditional Museums

As humans form experiences within the world, there are contributing external and internal factors influencing that experience. The conceptual frameworks of Reader Response theory and the Experiential Learning theory detailed the internal experiences and the external experience that occur within learning environments. Because of this focus on the internal and external influences, this literature review will center the museum experiences on these aspects. This section of the literature review will address prominent external aspects within a museum that contribute to the visitor experience to include:

(1) location

(2) position and museum space

(3) exhibition

(4) objects.

Next, contributing internal factors of the visitor experience will be examined to include:

(1) lived experiences

(2) beliefs

(3) memories of the visitor.

Influencing External Factors at Museums
Location

First, the impact of museum goes beyond the site's physical location. It also includes the design and reputation of the repository. It has been found that the physical attractiveness of museums can contribute to visitors' willingness to visit the site and pay for services of the site because they find the destination appealing (Codignola & Mariani, 2020). For example, the Met gala of New York has gained widespread attention and popularity with an attendance of over 60 million in 2016 (Christiansen, 2018). High levels of visitation and attention have led to an acclaimed reputation in the museum field, contributing to a popular tourist attraction. Yet, institutions such as the Met, the Louvre, and British Museum are exceptions because of their status. However, not all museums are in prime areas and struggle to attract the attention of visitors from their exterior and reputation alone. Currently, museums are in crisis with low attendance and financial instability (Christiansen, 2018).

Autry (2019) further emphasized the physical site's influence by stating that vast museum buildings can overwhelm visitors by demoting the visitors to feeling inconsequential and minor. In consideration of the various influencing

factors of the visitor experience at museums, the location of the repository is one of the foremost factors that will inform the experience.

Position and Museum space

Secondly, the museum's interior space will have an impact on the visitor's navigation of the environment. Research at two art museums analyzing the role of objects revealed that while the narrative associated with an object and the visual aspects of the object did contribute to the user experience, it discovered that the position of the repository had a significant role on the experience (Griswold, Mangione, & McDonnell; 2013). Position and location have vital roles in forming the meaning-making of the visitor and informing the behaviors of visitors. For example, during their examination of the position and location of the Portland Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, it was observed that visitors were affected by the external arrangement and positioning within the space (Griswold et al., 2013). Visitor behaviors such as discomfort, claustrophobia, and anxiety are observable during their interpretative experiences.

Positions address the location of objects and exhibitions within the museum and space encompasses other interior factors which can include the staffing and interior design. Shahmohammadi (2015) underlined that the museum space is more than the collection of artifacts on display. Findings have emerged regarding the physical space's role in contributing to the object (Goulding, 2000; Griswold et al., 2013; Palau-Saumell, Forgas-Coll & Sánchez-Garciá, J., 2016;). Visitor perceptions and emotions develop in the physical environment. Interactions occur with staff. Operational activities affect the comfort of visitors.

These are all examples of contributions in the space to either ignite or extinguish

emotional reactions. Goulding (2000) stated that while visitors have diverse

motivations and purposes when experiencing museums, we must acknowledge

that all visitor behavior occurs within a space.

Exhibition

Thirdly, embedded within the space of the institution is the physical

presence of the exhibition, which will have a critical role in the visitor experience.

Exhibitions can establish connections with others, foster conversations within and

outside the museum environment, and promote positive museum experience

perceptions (Coghlan, 2018). Connections to exhibits can occur organically or

intentionally; however, interpretation of the exhibition is dependent upon the

visitor. Pringle (2009) created a framework based on Kolb's experiential learning

theory and applied it towards a gallery in an art museum. The findings revealed

that while creators of objects have their own goal of conveying information, the

audience may come to different conclusions based on their sense-making and

experiences. Professionals and creators of exhibit spaces have designed exhibits

to elicit feelings from the visitor. For example, at the Museum of Contemporary

Art in San Diego, the *Green Light Corridor* was intentionally created to cause

discomfort and claustrophobia for a bodily experience (Griswold et al., 2013).

Just as visitors experience these physical reactions while within the position and

space of musems, there is a parallel of physical reactions when viewing exhibits.

Visitors often seek specific exhibits to awaken personal experiences. The

pleasure from the knowledge featured in museum exhibits has led to feelings of

joy and escapism (Cameron & Gatewood, 2003). Just as visitors experience

excitement, anticipation, or seriousness at the prospect of visiting museum

locations; they are also experiencing a range of emotions while within the space.

Object

Fourthly, the object that is central to an exhibit has a role in forming

experiences within visitors. Objects are materials and artifacts used within an

exhibit. Additional study into the object's role in the visitors' experience revealed

that when visitors interact with an object, the physical component of the

document's meaning leads to an emotional experience (Latham, 2013). As

visitors interact with objects that share an intentional story, a personal connection

can occur. Michael Buckland, a leader in the field of library and information

science (LIS), focused on how information is obtained from documents and

described the *information as* something that does not limit the information to an

object, but rather a document that represents knowledge (Buckland, 1991).

Buckland describes the information as:

(1) information as a process

(2) information as knowledge

(3) information as a thing.

Cultural heritage institutions are informing their visitors about diverse

topics through their exhibits; thus, this act of informing is also transforming their

visitors because what they know is changed. This is known as *information as*

process. As this information is communicated towards the visitor, an intangible

intelligence occurs within the visitor with this knowledge. This is *information as*

knowledge. Ultimately, cultural heritage sites are holdings for various artifacts,

objects, documents, and materials that make up the overall exhibition. This coincides with *information as a thing.*

Understanding the document's importance is vital because it provides insight into the patrons' relationship with objects (Latham, 2012). The object's role in these institutions is to help guide and disseminate the narrative that museums strive to present to their audience. Latham (2012) drew from Louise Rosenblatt's theory to discuss the user transaction with documents—or museum objects—as it is transformed from a material thing into an experience when visitors engage in the text and their mindset. The importance and significant role of the object has been evident in visitor studies at these museum sites. Often visitors form connections with the objects for authenticity and tangible depictions of the narratives within the museum space.

Influencing Internal Factors at Museums
Lived Experiences
As visitors experience the museum's space, they are bringing along their unique lived experiences that will have a role in the overall experience within that space. First, everyone has their unique lived experiences. Latham (2014), during her study of museums, stated that lived experiences are the immediate and direct experience of the world as it is lived by a person, which forms the lifeworld of individuals. As users experience the various objects in their world, meaning forms by drawing from these lived experiences. Cultural institutions connect with visitors through the dissemination of information on different topics.

While some visitors are affected by the exhibitions due to a connection with the narrative, other visitors may not experience an internal response

because of a lack of lived experience that relates to the narrative. Consequently,

museums frequently share narratives of trauma and oppression, which can lead

to visitors triggered by the content, reliving a traumatic circumstance, or

becoming overwhelmed by the depth of the horrific event (Zalut, 2018). The

Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site aims to connect the lived experience of

individuals related to the narrative with the visitors that have no connections to

the narrative to create more profound meaning. Therefore, the site allows

formerly incarcerated people to provide tours to the majority of white visitors

hoping to provide new interpretations and perspectives to inspire social change,

empathy, and transformed mindsets (Robinson & Zalut, 2018).

Beliefs

Secondly, individuals have their respective belief systems that will inform

their interpretation of museum exhibitions. Usó-Doménech and Nescolarde-Selva

(2016) defined the scope of belief systems as stories individuals tell themselves

to define the personal sense of reality as we strive to "make sense" of the world.

Further, the authors outlined the many elements of belief systems to include:

(1) values

(2) substantive beliefs

(3) orientation

(4) language

(5) perspective

(5) ideological technology.

Every individual has a belief system. These belief systems work internally within

individuals as they make interpretations within cultural institutions. At the

Collections of Kazan University Ethnographic Museum, researchers explored the depth that religious beliefs permeate individuals. The researchers connected that these beliefs systems (i.e., religious beliefs, ancestral spirit hierarchy, animism, traditional beliefs) impacted the understanding and respect associated with materials at the institution (Titova, Gushchina, & Frolova, 2017). The Geffrye Museum of the Home in Hackney, London, acknowledged that their target audience has religious beliefs that represent the Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Sikh, and Hindu faiths. Thus, they are striving for inclusion with a permanent exhibit on the various experiences of religious beliefs. Today's museums are attempting to cater to their varied visitors with many belief systems. They are implementing strategies to include the voices of these diverse users within their museum space, exhibitions, and programming to provide improved practices and promote understanding (Molloy, 2010; Nightingale and Greene, 2010; Vo Thi Thuong, 2008).

Memories

Thirdly, memories of past events are another internal contributing factor to the museum experience. As memories unlock within visitors, further shaping the museum experience takes place. For example, the 9/11 Memorial Museum, whose primary goal is to share the story of the September 11 attacks and World Trade Center bombings, acknowledges that as visitors relive this memorable event that is both complex and emotional, they will need emotionally sensitive guidance and support (Raunch, 2018). There is a recognition that the memory of an individual's experience is necessary for museum exhibitions. Kidron (2010) stated the importance of lived memories with the House of Being Holocaust

institution in which there is a need to return to the experience that is formed by the sharing of stories by using personal stories of visitors associated with the narrative. Instead of depending solely on the objective history of subjects, museums are forming connections with the subjective memories of visitors with the narrative. These varied internal influences will impact the diverse users of these institutions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) states that historically humans have sought to understand the world (paradigms) and the idea of truth. Nevertheless, despite the changing form of paradigms over different periods, Lincoln and Guba stated:

> Multiple constructed realities can be studied only holistically; inquiry into these multiple realities will inevitably diverge (each inquiry raises more questions than it answers) so that prediction and control are unlikely outcomes although some level of understanding (*verstehen*) can be achieved (p. 37).

Therefore, delving into these multiple realities or various memories will ultimately foster more questions. Despite the emergence of additional inquiries and a lack of control over the outcomes of these realities, it does lead to an understanding that was otherwise unknown. The understanding that emerges could offer further implications for the organization's decision making and areas for future research.

Overall, these different internal factors contribute to how users experience objects within the museum space and apply that experience in their daily lives. For example, various cultural institutions have applied the Reader-Response

theory to explore the internal connection of users with the objects and have found that interaction with texts has promoted decision making, invoked emotions, and identified representation (Allen, J.R., Allen, S.F., Latrobe, K.H., Brand, M., Pfefferbaum, B., Elledge, B.,...Guffey, M. 2012; Reuter, 2007; Rothbauer; 2004). This theory applies to museums. Latham (2013) used this theory in a qualitative approach to gain insight into five American museums. The results from the research found the experience with museum objects merged with emotion, patron's experience affected their encounter with the object, and physical reactions occurred because of document experience. The observations from this research display the impactful role that exhibits have in eliciting emotional reactions from the contact with the materials of these sites. These reactions can occur internally with the feelings that may emerge and can be manifested outwardly with physical reactions.

Experience within Black Museums

Similar to traditional museums, external factors inform the visitor experience within Black museums. Additionally, visitors to these spaces bring their internal influences. The findings from exploration into Black museums have uncovered unique experiences and interpretations. Therefore, this section will highlight the limited research into the Black Museum experience by addressing the external factors of the following:

(1) position

(2) museum space

(3) exhibition

(4) object.

Next, addressing the roles of internal factors, which include:

(1) lived experiences,

(2) beliefs, and

(3) memories.

Much of the discourse surrounding Black museums contributed to the field's knowledge through studies of history, purpose, and goals. A common theme among this discourse was an insight into Black museums' development to contribute, preserve, and disseminate information to promote awareness, identity, and pride (Brooms, 2011; Fleming; 2018; Hayward and Larouche, 2018; Ruffins, 2018; Shahmohammadi, 2015). However, there is limited research into the Black visitor experience in these sites.

Influencing External Factors at Black Museums
Location

Aspects such as the physical building, location, and reputation will impact the visitor experience at Black museums. Most facilities of African American museums examined in a study revealed they were small with modest resources as determined by their staffing, annual budget, and physical space (Hayward & Larouche, 2018). Therefore, when determining the size of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, there was much consideration and deliberation from the Black community and its leaders. Blacks wanted to have a location that highlighted the significant and acclaimed contributions of their community. Clemetson (2006) stated that after the input from various academic, political, and cultural leaders, the museum's location at a prominent space on the

Mall, near the Washington monument, was chosen for its permanent home. This location was significant to the Black community because the visible location in the nation's capital notes African Americans' vital role in the country's history. Madison (2017) recounts his experience at the site by describing the location of the National Museum of African American History and Culture as a "stick in the eye of white America" because of its proud location and design. Many Black cultural sites are not located at renowned places, yet it does not diminish their importance in sharing the Black experience. Hayward and Larouche (2018) emphasized that at the root of African American museums is their desire to celebrate Blacks in American life and increase awareness of inequality in the Black community through their service to the communities with advocacy, social activities, education, and preservation.

Position and Museum space

Secondly, the museum space at these specific sites has resulted in unexpected experiences amongst visitors in Black museums. Most museums' spaces are modeled after traditional institutions created by groups of people not belonging to the Black community. This mimicking of design has led to a rejection of Black visitors within this space. During the early development of Black museums, various museum professionals and activists challenged the traditional design of museums. Harvey and Friedburg (1971) detailed the accounts of Edward Spriggs, the African American director for the Studio Museum in Harlem, who confronted the concept of modeling museum spaces after traditional museums at the Seminar for Neighborhood Museums by stating:

What right has any external cultural or colonial body, organization, or

council to impose its establishments values and mores upon different

people? Whatever is designed or developed in a specific area for a group

of people can no longer be merely for the elite, for the middle class, whose

appreciation for certain kinds of institutional fineries or arts is already

established. (p. 6)

Comments such as these are reflections of the challenges facing

traditional museums as they attempt to share the stories of diverse cultures and

communities. Visitors who share a connection with the narrative tend to examine

it with a more critical lens versus those visitors who do not have a shared

connection with the history. Thus, the outcomes can lead to members of those

groups rejecting the narrative because they were formed by outsiders who did

not fully grasp the voice of the culture.

Exhibition

Thirdly, Black museums have made strides to tailor their exhibition design

to convey an intentional story. Brooms (2011) asserted that Black-centered

museums have three exhibition goals to include the following: (1) educate the

audience of the African American experience, (2) inform visitors of the

contributions of African Americans to American society, and (3) provide historical

context for contemporary views of American racial discourse. Across the country,

African American museums cover diverse topics, yet they all have a connection

to these primary goals. For example, careful consideration of every detail went

into effect when designing the National Museum of African American History

since they intentionally wanted to depict the transition from enslavement to freedom. Visitors to the site have expressed the experience with the museum space, with one user stating:

> Cool thing about this museum is its layout. The outside scaffolding stuff is supposed to be like an African crown. It goes 5 stories down where all the history is and it starts off really narrow and closed in during slavery and as you ascend it opens up with more freedom. Then the next 5 levels up are all really cool artifacts and bits of culture. Favorite one is chuck berrys Cadillac. It is ginormous (u/Jos/Zo, 2019)

While this comment provides insight into the impact of the exhibition design, it also relates to the space of the museum. Museum space encompasses the interior setting of the site which can include, but is not limited to positioning of exhibits, interior designs beyond the exhibition, and operational activities.

Another visitor of the site challenged the lack of responsibility within the content of the exhibitions by stating:

> White people really won't stand for history placing blame where blame actually lies, so no fingers are pointed (u/Jos/Zo, 2019)

Just as Edward Spriggs, the director of the Studio Museum of Harlem, rejected the attempts of modeling traditional museum spaces to fit the white standard (Harvey & Friedburg, 1971), visitors of African American cultural sites are critically analyzing the content of exhibition narratives that omit the role of whites in history.

Object

Fourthly, artifacts in traditional cultural institutions have not always considered the diverse audience that would enter the museum space to experience these objects. From the proceedings of Seminar for Neighborhood Museums, the African American audience expressed their dissatisfaction and anger with the presentation of these artifacts in traditional sites by stating that there was a failure and lack of care to make these materials relevant to every member of the community (Harvey & Friedburg, 1971). Specifically, participants of the Seminar for Neighborhood Museums challenged the justification that white museums such as the Children's Museum of Boston have in holding Black cultural artifacts and stated that the ownership and interpretation of those artifacts belong to the Black community. Additionally, June Jordan criticized the meager attempts of white institutions to establish community exhibits of black artifacts that were set-up in poor neighborhoods and operating on money given on a conditional basis (Harvey & Friedburg, 1971). Since this conference, the field of Black museums has been growing and expanding. The highest growth rate occurred in the 1990s-2000s in which the materials of Black museums were presented within diverse topics of African art and history, slavery and abolition, and national history; these collections came in various forms such as photography, historic artifacts, books, printed materials, oral histories, film, and more (Hayward & Larouche, 2018). The African American institutions across the nation have depicted these materials to invoke reverence and foster education. Black institutions such as the African American Museum and Library in Oakland, The Museum of the African Diaspora, African American Civil War Museum,

Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, Tuskegee Airmen National Historic

Site, Hampton University Museum, the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, and

more are taking the charge to uncover, display, and honor the artifacts to

cultivate the history of the Black experience (Taylor, 2016).

Influencing Internal Factors at Black Museums
Lived experiences

As visitors enter African American museums, they enter with their own

lived experiences. Many Black visitors entering museum sites are often

accompanied by traumas. Evidence has shown that 90% of Black adults and

children have experienced discriminatory racial encounters (Spann, 2021). These

traumatic experiences have led to feelings of fear, anger, and dehumanization

(Comas-Díaz, Hall, & Neville, 2019). These lived experiences will influence their

explanation and analysis of the exhibitions. Some visitors do not connect with the

stories conveyed in the exhibits; however, Black visitors are interconnected with

the stories of racism and discrimination because it is their history. Autry (2019)

critically examined how exhibits at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African

American History intentionally seek to evoke an emotional response through

exhibits in which downcast exposed slaves transitioning to upright-clothed

Blacks. The deliberate display of these bodies seeks to transport the visitor from

a dormant observation of the exhibit to an active identification with the story by

drawing from their internal sentiments. While current research has focused on

the intentions of the exhibit and visitor behavior, there is a gap in the literature as

to how the diverse visitors of the site experienced these spaces. Specifically, the

literature did not utilize theories that could offer explanation into the lived

experiences of visitors and data collection methods to obtain the unique experience of the visitors were not implemented. Strategies could have been used to capture the emotion, feelings, and reactions that occurred within the museum space. Capturing the lived experiences could inform the creators of the exhibits into how the direct experiences of the world have formed the lifeworld of visitors, thus informing the interpretation of the exhibit.

Beliefs

Subsequently, different African American users have varied belief systems. However, the role of belief systems has proven to be a compelling aspect in various segments in the lives of African Americans. An example of the impact of religion within the Black community is the Black church's pivotal role during the Civil Rights Movement through the preaching of religious ideologies that emphasized social justice (McDaniel, Dwidar, & Calderon, 2018). However, the belief system of Blacks is complex. Different religious sects led to different emphases of the social gospel, prosperity gospel, and Black liberation gospel (McDaniel et al., 2018). Nevertheless, despite these differences, it has been found that religious beliefs do influence political beliefs. Thus, this belief system translates over into other aspects of the individuals' lives to inform their perceptions. There is a need to capture the visitor's belief system and its role in the museum experience as there is a gap in the literature of this topic. The literature did not utilize methods that would cause the emergence of beliefs and its effect to the museum environment.

Memories

  Finally, visitors to these sites have their memories to inform their museum experience further. Gruenewald (2021) highlighted the crucial role of memory with museum sites by stating they strive to incorporate visitor memory with the cultural memory; this method has been implemented at the Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration that has bridged the connection of past discrimination with the present inequities. This drawing on cultural memory has led to a justification of social change. Connecting visitors' current memories with the site's collective memories allows visitors to obtain informed interpretations and a desire to act upon this enlightenment.

  Conclusively, many interposing factors will impact the overall navigation of Black-centered museums. How these factors have influenced the visitor experience has not been examined in the field, signifying a need to capture this unique visitor experience within the space of Black museums. The literature into traditional white museums revealed that various external aspects inform the museum experience such as the physical attraction, location, arrangement of artifacts, and interactions with objects. However, the literature of Black museums is limited in revealing the role of these external influences because they failed to capture how the lived experiences of visitors informed their experiences with these external factors. Studies into white traditional museums also discovered the internal influences towards the museum experience such as how lived experiences inform the lifeworld view, the use of beliefs to inform interpretation, and memories that bring to light multiple realities. Currently, there is limited study into the various internal contributors that can inform the Black museum

experience because most studies of Black museums focused on the external and physical activities of visitors within the space with little consideration of the influence of the lived experiences, beliefs, and memories of visitors.

Experience of Black Educators

Black educators are a significant channel in the field as they connect instructional topics to their students. Dilliard (2000) emphasizes that spirituality in education is education that is driven by purpose, liberatory work, and emancipation which is deeply ingrained in Black educators and their various roles in education. Further, Black educators often form deeper connections with Black students as they serve as their protectors, advocates, supporters, and mentors (de Royston et al., 2021; Ladson-Billings & Anderson, 2021; Milner, 2006; Siddle Walker, 2013; 2015; 2019;). The experience of Black educators can significantly impact the experiences of their students.

Following the integration of schools from the 1960s to the 1970s, Black educators were faced with new obstacles and challenges in their educational environment. These influencing components to their experience were external and internal. Externally, Black educators now had to navigate in a white-dominated structure. Internally, their beliefs and lived experiences were vital influencers of their responsibility to their students. Dilliard (2000) displayed this sense of responsibility ingrained in Black educators as they work in these predominantly white spaces with a Black secondary school principal stating:

> These colleagues must recognize too that inherent in being one of the too few sisters who have successfully navigated a way through the maze of

higher education leadership, I have a higher moral responsibility that

transcends being widely published in the top journals, beyond being

"politically correct." In other words, women leaders of color and

consciousness…must also pay attention in our research, teaching, and

leadership to Alice Walker's call for "each one to pull one [or more].

Thus, this depiction highlights the perceived responsibilities that Black educators

hold toward society and their students. There is a belief in uplifting and

supporting community.

External Factors

While the original structure of segregation in the school system was

dismantled, the forces of racism that it was built upon prevailed and led to

negative consequences for African American teachers (Suh, Daugherity,

Maddamsetti, & Branyon, 2020). Institutional racism restricted the potential of

African American teachers. For example, they were assigned to stereotypical

roles such as coaches or remedial teachers (Foster, 1990). African American

educators faced isolation in their majority white environments by administrators

and parents. Additionally, the goals of Black educators for diverse curricula were

censored or limited. Foster (1990) highlighted a Black teacher coming from a

segregated school system experience in an integrated school with a White

parent:

I said, "Is there a problem?" "No, I just want her out of your room." I said

"Oh, It's a racial issue, is it?" And she said, "Yes." I said, "In that case,

lady" and she had her husband with her, "I think we ought to go to the

office." And we went to the office and I slammed that door. And I said, "Mr. Wooten, this lady wants her kid out of my room." And he said, "What's the problem?" And I said, "This, my color." (p. 129)

Black teachers found themselves demoted from a role of power and influence upon Black students. As a result, African American parents no longer had confidence in the school system to care about their children's social, emotional, and academic success in a White-dominated society (Tillman, 2004). Black educators represent a marginalized group and have been overwhelmed in their fight for racial justice in the system as they face isolation. Lisle-Johnson and Kohli (2020) reported the experience of a Black teacher in a school with only two Black teachers:

> The lack of representation also leads to me being identified as "the expert on all things Black." Some of my coworkers have problematic beliefs about students of color and their abilities … The result? I carry a burden that I must respond to those offenses and counter their negative beliefs … While the responsibility to respond belongs to the whole community, being one of two Black teachers, it is often placed on me to have these conversations. (p. 351).

This statement illustrates some of the problems Black educators face because of their marginalization.

Internal Factors

Black educators' experiences in these predominately white environments include the visibility/invisibility phenomenon, challenges to their authority, being pigeonholed into specific roles, and fatigue from racial microaggressions (Jay, 2009). The lived experiences of African American educators in the school environment have informed their overall experience as educators. Jay (2009) captured the lived experience of a Black Janes they often feel they are a token:

> I mean I feel black all day, you know (laughs). I don't forget it … You know, I spend a lot of time with superintendents, assistant superintendents, research people … people who make a lot of changes and lot of important decisions in school districts, and many times I may be the only African American there.

The personal beliefs of Black educators have largely guided their teaching goals to foster identity, provide inspiration, and care towards their students (Foster, 1990; Frederick and View; 2009; Milner, 2006; Siddle Walker, 2013). Because African Americans have faced oppression in various settings and times, the importance of having an education has been largely promoted in the Black community to rise above harsh circumstances. The belief that education is empowering has been shared by Black educators of the 19th and 20th century to inspire Black children to know they are capable of excellence (Frederick & View; 2009). Black educators represent a channel to connect students with diverse topics because of their belief in its importance.

Critical Gaps

Based on the review of the literature, recent studies of traditional museums have begun to capture the lived experiences of individuals within the space (Allen et al, 2012; Gushchina, & Frolova, 2017; Kidron, 2010; Latham, 2014; Molloy, 2010; Raunch, 2018; Reuter, 2007; Rothbauer, 2004;Titova, Nightingale and Greene, 2010; Usó-Doménech and Nescolarde-Selva, 2016; Vo Thi Thuong, 2008; Zalut, 2018). However, studies of Black museums tend to focus on the intentions of the exhibit but have not captured how the visitors of these sites lived experiences contribute to the experience within these spaces (Autry, 2019; Clemetson, 2006; Hayward & Larouche, 2018; Taylor, 2016). Considering Black educators are frequent visitors of these spaces and the gatekeepers of this information, the literature does not significantly explore their experiences and how it informs their knowledge as they prepare to take their experience from these sites into their learning environments. Therefore, it is important to understand these experiences since they could influence museum design, teaching practices, and policies.

There has not been extensive research into the inquiries that this study seeks to address. Specifically, RQ1 inquires *How do African American educators describe their experiences as they explore exhibits at Black museums?* While conferences, proceedings, and message boards have included the opinions of African Americans regarding African museums and exhibitions, there is a limit of studies capturing these unique visitors' experience. RQ2 asks *What are the connections that Black visitors make between the museum narratives and their*

lived experiences as African Americans? Just as there is a dearth of research

that captures the museum experience of African American visitors, there is a gap

of research that addresses the influence their lived experiences will have on their

museum experience. RQ3 considers *What do their narratives reveal about the*

role of race in their current museum experience? By addressing this question, it

will reveal the impact that visitors' race has in informing their interpretation of

exhibitions.

Chapter 3

Methodology

I am using qualitative methodology for this research because qualitative research has the distinction of its interpretative nature. This research approach allows for the interpretation of the meaning of individuals in specific situations. It notes that:

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representation, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. 10)

Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry informed the design of this study. It is a methodological approach. Narrative inquiry is a methodological approach within the qualitative research field that is useful towards capturing lived experiences. This approach was built from Dewey's explanation of experience; then, it expanded into a research methodology and phenomenon in education by Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2013; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Narrative approaches in the social science fields are common; however, this emerging methodology is unique because it encompasses distinct criteria and terms for this method. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) stated that narrative inquiry is the study of how humans experience the world with consideration toward the idea that humans have the nature of storytelling and lead storied lives. By telling stories, humans are creating meaning from their experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) defined the methodology by stating:

> Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still while living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people's lives, both individual and social (p. 20).

The four key terms of the narrative inquiry are beneficial to acquiring the phenomenon of experience. The terms of *living, telling, retelling,* and *reliving* each has a purpose and meaning in narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013, p. 34). First, people live out their stories. Second, people tell the stories of this living. Third, as researchers gather with participants and inquire about those lived and told stories; then, the process of retelling occurs. Finally, stories are changed and experienced anew as they are repeated, allowing for reliving the story.

Other qualitative methodologies use narratives as data; however, narrative inquiry is unique because it frames the view of experience within the individual,

social, cultural, and institutional narratives (Clandinin, 2013). The research questions that guide this study follow:

1. How do African American educators describe their experiences as they explore exhibits at Black museums?

2. What are the connections that Black visitors in education make between the museum narratives and their lived experiences as African Americans?

3. What do their narratives reveal about the role of race in their current museum experience?

Research question 1 (*How do African American educators describe their experiences as they explore exhibits in Black museums?)* seeks to capture the individual experience within the cultural site. Research question 2 (*What are the connections that Black visitors in education make between the museum narratives and their lived experiences as African Americans?)* strives to capture individual experience and connection with institutional experience. Research question 3 (*What do the narratives reveal about the role of race in their current museum experience?)* endeavors to capture the social construct of race in the cultural space. Thus, narrative inquiry is an effective method for framing the view of experience within the narratives the research questions seek to attain. Narratives will address the Narrative inquirers work within three dimensions of space derived from Dewey's criteria. Thus, Dewey (1938) stated that the criterion for experience requires continuity and interaction. The two factors of continuity and interaction work together: (1) continuity affirms that experiences from the past transport over into future experiences, (2) interaction maintains that the

consecutive experiences from the past and present will form a situation, and (3)

situation states that an object does not have a singular existence but is affected

by the experienced environment (Dewey, 1938). Clandinin (2006) developed this

to highlight the ontology of experience to include three dimensions of (1)

personal and social (interaction), (2) past, present, and future (continuity), and (3)

place (situation). Therefore, these three dimensions are applied toward inquiries

because by arguing that Dewey's experience is not transcendental but

transactional an expansion of Dewey's criteria occurred because individual's

representations is developed from experience and individuals must revisit that

experience for validity (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2017). These three dimensions guide

narrative inquirers into the interactive aspect of inquiry.

Narrative inquirers must live the narrative. This living occurs by

transitioning from field-to-field texts, from field texts to interim research texts, and

from interim research texts to research texts (Clandinin, 2006; 2013). The *field-

to-field texts* involve data collection from the sites (i.e., field notes from participant

observation, photographs, participant journals). *Field texts-to-Interim research

texts* are the beginning analysis and interpretations. *Interim research texts-to-

Research texts* share a small portion of the data with the reader. The inquirer

must briefly summarize each narrative to display the salient points within each

narrative and convey what kind of story the researcher thinks occurred.

Method Criteria

Clandinin (2013) stated that the researcher should approach this

methodology as a fluid inquiry because it does not adhere to linear steps or set

procedures; therefore, there is a need to approach it relationally, being open to

where the experiences direct the researcher. While working within the three dimensions of the narrative inquiry space, inquirers should engage with participants through telling stories or engage with participants as they live out their stories. Researchers are entering the lifeworld of the participants. Hence, the researcher needs to note the justifications for the research Clandinin (2013) recommends that inquirers become aware of their personal, practical, and social justifications because this attends to the "so what?" or "who cares?" inquiries of research. This method of narrative inquiry has its own ontological and epistemological view which researchers should grasp. Clandinin (2013) noted the ontological stance that narrative inquirers should utilize which requires a commitment to thinking narratively within the three commonplaces (temporality, sociality, place) about an individual's experience. The ongoing relations between the participant's stories and the researcher established the epistemological status (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Clandinin (2007) emphasizes the three commonplaces of this method. Commonplaces are the places that need to be explored when performing narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013). These include (1) temporality, (2) sociality, and (3) place. Each of these commonplaces works together concurrently. Narrative inquiry requires that as the researcher performs the study, inquiry of the commonplaces should occur simultaneously (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). *Temporality* affirms that events are in a progressive transition because events and people have a past, present, and future. *Sociality* acknowledges the personal (i.e., feelings, morals, desires) and social conditions (i.e., environment,

surrounding forces, people) that influence individuals. *Place* attends to the

physical boundaries or location of event and inquiry.

As researchers perform narrative inquiry, Clandinin (2013) recommends

seven design considerations throughout the inquiry which include:

(1) foregoing a definite research question with specific answer

(2) placing ourselves amid the lives of participants

(3) creating a relational space—field—for conversations

(4) creating interim research texts within the three dimensions of narrative

inquiry

(5) finalizing research texts within the three dimensions of narrative inquiry

(6) negotiating relationships

(7) rejection of common themes across participants.

Experience in the Context of Narrative inquiry
Clandinin (2013) emphasizes that narrative inquiry is not a fluid inquiry

composed of a set of procedures or linear steps; however, it is a relational

methodology that is open to the stories of the participants' experience and where

they lead the researcher. Despite the lack of fluid steps, this approach does have

criterion for the researcher to understand the participants' experience. First, the

narrative inquirers must work within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space

which includes the following: personal and social (interaction), past, present, and

future (continuity), and place (situation). Second, while working within the three

dimensions, begin inquiries by (1) engaging with participants through telling

stories or (2) engaging alongside with participants as they live out the stories.

Third, the researcher should state the personal, practical, and social justifications

because it justifies our research purposes in what we hope to find or understand differently (Clandinin, 2013). Fourth, understand the ontological and epistemological stance for the narrative view of the phenomenon under study. Fifth, recognize the simultaneous elements of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). Sixth, compose field text. Then, compose research texts.

Narrative inquiry grew from the work of Dewey and his definition of experience. This methodology explores human experience. Dewey (1938) stated that experience has the aspect of continuity because every experience will affect the interpretation of future experiences. Also, experience does not occur by itself internally. After all, those influencing factors of beliefs, desires, and purposes manifest in objective conditions of the physical world with tangible creations. Therefore, what occurs internally leads to external manifestations. These two principles of continuity and interaction from Dewey's theory of experience have provided the philosophical groundwork for narrative inquiry. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) emphasize that experiences grew from human beings living in the world. As humans share the stories of their lived experiences then everyone's world is shaped by that meaning. From the sharing of these stories, individuals can form interpretations and significances from their experiences.

This methodology has developed to include well-defined terminology and characteristics to contribute to the research field of narrative inquiry. Thus, Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) expounded on experiences to state:

the narrative inquiry focuses not only on individuals' experiences but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narrative within which individuals' experiences are constituted and shaped, expressed, and enacted. Narrative inquirers study the individual's experience in the world. This experience is storied both in living and telling and can be studied by listening, observing, living alongside another, writing, and interpreting texts. (pp. 42-43)

In the late 1980s to the early 1990s, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) highlighted narrative examinations to explore experience. However, Kim (2016) stated that F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandin would be the first in the field to use the term *narrative inquiry* in 1990. This approach provides a method for exploring the human experience in the world. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) stated that the justification for using this approach to capture experience is that humans by nature share stories that guide their lives. Narrative inquiry recognizes that people live their lives with stories and the telling of those stories; therefore, narrative inquirers seek to describe those lives by collecting the stories and writing narratives of those experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

In the early development of this methodology, the professional discourse described it as both a phenomenon and method; however, they would further develop narrative inquiry into a research methodology (Clandinin, 2013). They first approached narrative inquiry by viewing it as a phenomenon and inquiry. The phenomenon was the "story." The inquiry was the "narrative." Story and narrative relate to experience because as the individual is telling their story they

are engaged in aspects of the theories by first engaging in sensemaking, then experiencing it anew through the telling, thus transforming that experience, and finally acting from that experience through their actions (Rosenblatt, 1995; Dervin, 1983; Kolb, 1984). The methodology grew to include various approaches to guide researchers in examining human experience within the world. Narrative inquirers explore the experience of individuals in the world through diverse methods. Each of these techniques guides the researcher as they inquire and seek to understand the experience. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) specifically noted that it is worth bearing in mind that the concept of sharing human stories is not new and has been occurring since the beginning of humanity. Nevertheless, using narrative methodologies to capture this experience has led to novel ways that we think about the experience.

Sites

One of the commonplaces of narrative inquiry is *the place*, which acknowledges that all events and inquiry occur in a physical and tangible location (Clandinin, 2006; 2013; Clandinin et al., 2007). As participants relive their experience from the cultural heritage institution space, the inquirer should also recognize that *place* can expand to include other spaces as we delve deeper into the narrative's different stages (i.e., past, present, future).

This study seeks to capture the Black experience within physical cultural heritage institutions spaces that share a topic of the fourth stream of the African Diaspora. Specifically, each of these sites document topics of the long arc of the Civil Rights movement which included the Reconstruction era, the 1960s

movement, and the present-day movement. Currently, there are eight sites within South Carolina that met the criteria for this study. However, these sites were selected because they are among they are considered by many to be the most acclaimed museum sites within the state that cover these topics. Additionally, these museum sites experience consistent traffic, and they are within close proximity of each other. Participants of this study are educators from South Carolina. Therefore, the three sites selected for this study include the Cecil Williams South Carolina Civil Rights Museum in Orangeburg, South Carolina, the Modjeska Simkins House in Columbia, South Carolina, and Woodrow Wilson House in Columbia, South Carolina. Participants were observed in all three sites. Criteria for selecting these sites include: (1) primary narrative includes a subject of African American contributions, history, and/or people, (2) regular operating hours, and (3) open to the public. First, the Cecil Williams South Carolina Civil Rights Museum was designed and established by Civil Rights photographer, Cecil Williams, to commemorate the entirety of the Civil Rights movement in the state (Keating, 2020). Displays in the Cecil Williams South Carolina Civil Rights Museum are located next to each other, and they represent diverse topics such as the Black Power Movement, the case of *Briggs V. Elliott*, and the Orangeburg Massacre. It is a 3,500 square feet museum. Cecil Williams, himself, is present within the site to offer guided tours to visitors, resulting in increased visitor engagement. Another implication of Cecil Williams' presence at the site is that visitors feel that, due to his oversight, the exhibits are accurate. For example, in the video created by SC Momentum (2021) Dr. Bobby Donaldson noted the

influence of Cecil Williams' accurate portrayal of the long arc of the Civil Rights Movement when he stated:

> There is a significant and largely overlooked civil rights history in South Carolina. It would be very difficult for anybody to document the Civil Rights movement in this state without consulting Cecil Williams. He has enabled us to visualize the history of this state in ways we don't fully appreciate.

Second, the Modjeska Simkins House was the home of Civil Rights activist, Modjeska Simkins, who was vital to the movement through her work with Thurgood Marshall and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Historic Columbia, 2022). Displays within the one story, cottage style house of Modjeska Simkins are within close proximity of each other and include topics about Simkins' impressive Civil Rights activities. Visitors engage in self-guided interactive tours, but there is also an option for guided tours. The closeness of the exhibits in this smaller museum space has implications for visitors being able to experience more hands-on activities. Judge Matthew Perry stated:

> She probably will be remembered as a woman who challenged everyone. She challenged the white political leadership of the state to do what was fair and equitable among all people and she challenged black citizens to stand up and demand their rightful place in the state and the nation (National Park Service, 2020).

Third, the Woodrow Wilson House, the only presidential site in South Carolina and its museum chronicles the Reconstruction era (Historic Columbia, 2022). This structure was the childhood home of the 28th president of the United States and the exhibitions highlight Black leaders in government, church, and education during the period of Reconstruction. Displays are dispersed widely in the large Italian Villa style home. Tour guides provide an overview of the site and encourage visitors to engage with the various exhibits throughout the sizable house. The implication for the visitors is that due to the substantial size of the house this self-guided tour could overwhelm the guests and lead to a decrease in active visitor engagement.

Population

Qualitative research requires a description of the parameters of the population such as nation, state, city, county, institution (Brink, 2001). The population of this study draws from South Carolina, United States. The cities of this study include Orangeburg, South Carolina and Columbia, South Carolina. The population of Orangeburg is 84,223 with Blacks making up 62.1 percent of the population and the population of Columbia, South Carolina is 136,632 with Blacks making up 39.8 percent of the population (United States Census Bureau, 2022). The majority of South Carolina teachers in the 2018-2019 school year were White at 79 percent and 15 percent were Black/African American (Dickenson, Fan, Pan, Kunz, & Hodges, 2020).

This study explicitly selected Black adult men or women who are K-12 educators in South Carolina to capture their visitor experience. The criteria for the participants include:

1) identify as African American or Black

(2) employed as an educator in South Carolina's K-12 school system.

Participant	Location	Type
Jane	Lancaster, SC	K-12 Educator
John	Columbia, SC	K-12 Educator
Mary	Lake City, SC	K-12 Administrator

Table 3.1: Participants of Study

Sampling

This study employed purposive sampling to identify and select participants because the criteria forf this type of sampling includes: (1) individuals with an experience in the phenomenon of interest and (2) a willingness to participate in the study by effectively communicating their experience (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015). While there are various types of purposeful sampling, purposeful random sampling was applied because a random sample of students who are also educators were selected from University of South Carolina graduate-level Education classes and educators from the Florence School District 3 to describe their experiences with the museum exhibitions. First, Mars Hill University (MHU), Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) and the University of South Carolina (USC) have partnered to

create a Civil Rights Fellowship program for 18 educators across three states. Participants from this Professional Development partnership include preservice educators (from USC and beyond) as well as in-service educators. Second, the USC Center for Civil Rights History and Research partnered with Florence School District 3 of Lake City, SC for a 3-day Professional Development as participants explore topics of Civil Rights from Reconstruction to present day. Participants from this partnership include current educators from the Florence School District 3.

Go into more detail about recruitment and recruitment challenges. Recruitment occurred at the University of South Carolina in Columbia in graduate-level courses and through South Carolina's Florence School District. Access to participants occurred through a professor at the University of South Carolina who was aware of my research interests. I visited the Education graduate-level course on June 7, 2022. Additionally, I joined the class during their visits of cultural heritage sites on May 12, 2022 and June 8, 2022. Access was provided by another professor at the University of South Carolina hosting a professional development for educators. This professor was also aware of my research interests and allowed access to the participants. Therefore, I joined educators from Florence School District during their visits to cultural heritage sites in South Carolina from June 13-15, 2022. Connections and my research interests were made with potential participants during the visits. Recruitment occurred after visiting the sites with participants being contacted via email. The email provided a description of the research and request to consent to take part

in the research. The goal was to capture a sample size of 3-5 participants. The

sample size of narrative inquiry is flexible and can range from 1 to 12 (Clandinin,

2013; Kim, 2016). However, it should capture the life stories and their connection

with the museum experience.

Data Collection

Observation

Observations took place on May 12, 2022; June 8, 2022, and June 12-15, 2022.

Participant observation was utilized. Participants were observed in all three sites

of this study. With Narrative inquiry, the action concept of *living* occurs by

observing in the field or participant observation (Kim, 2016). Thus, this method of

data collection was chosen to fully employ the actions of the Narrative inquiry

approach. At the start of the research, participants explored the museum space

and subsequent exhibitions. As the researcher, I performed participant

observation and described the actions within the space (i.e., who, what, when,

where, and how). The activities and details within the space were described by

the researcher through field texts. With this approach, the researcher could study

the process, relationships among individuals and events, organization, patterns,

and sociocultural contexts (Jorgenson, 1989). This approach was also helpful for

critically examining the guiding theories—Reader Response Theory and

Experiential Learning Theory because these theories highlight the learning

process and experience within learning environments giving the researcher an

opportunity to observe activities such as acting or reflecting.

As a researcher examines a space, they are also a part of the setting and connect with the participants. Narrative inquiry acknowledges this immersion in the space as relational. Narrative inquiry is distinctive as a methodology because it acknowledges this relational aspect as a benefit of this methodology—not researcher contamination—because it offers a unique insight, richness, and depth to work (Craig & Huber, 2007). Thus, it is necessary to become a part of the social world to study it (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994). In some studies of participant observation, the researcher's direct experience can also be a valuable data source. (Jorgenson, 1989).

As this approach requires the researcher to become a participant in individuals' lives, there were different levels to the depth of involvement by the researcher. My role as the researcher was overt as the insiders will be aware of my involvement and knowledge of my research (Jorgenson, 1989). I will form, maintain, and sustain relationships to increase my gathering of reliable information as I become a part of the environment. Becoming a part of the environment involved visiting the classrooms and joining the educators on professional development trips allowed for the formation of relationships. Connections were maintained via email communication. They were sustained by follow-up with participants.

The methods for collecting the data from these observations will include (1) field notes to log the activities in the space and (2) photographs of actions within the space. The researcher took observational notes during the site visits using the Notes application of a smartphone. Within the Notes application, the

feature of capturing in-text photographs was utilized to depict the actions of the visitors within the space alongside the descriptions of their actions within the site. The researcher sought to capture the physical actions of visitors, the types of conversations within the space, and the levels of engagement with the exhibitions. Following the conclusion of the site visits, all Notes were transferred to the researcher's iCloud for further analysis and review. Unstructured field observations using the researcher's words to describe the actions of the space occurred discreetly within the sites. The field notes were taken electronically in the field during observations. Time at each site ranged from 20-35 minutes. The files were then transferred to a password-protected drive. Field notes were automatically transcribed once they were transferred. Photographs were taken simultaneously within the field notes. Photographs were used to capture the behaviors and interactions of the visitors within the space. A total of over 350 photographs were taken. Because narrative inquiry seeks to capture the lived experiences of individuals, photographs were also used to bring to remembrance participants' actions in the space and inquire about that museum experience. Upon exiting from the museum's space, a follow-up interview will proceed.

Interviews

Narrative inquirers are a part of the storytelling space. Interviews for this study were achieved through the *life story approach*, which is a methodological approach for gathering sensitive personal narratives of participants' lives (Clandinin, 2007). This approach was chosen because through this main genre of Narrative inquiry it will allow the researcher to understand the individual's life as a whole and how that life plays in various roles in society (Kim, 2016). The

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goal is to capture how the individual's lived experiences influenced their role in society as a museum visitor. Atkinson (1998) affirms that storytelling is used to bring meaning to our lives; moreover, the story directs the teller and listener into a powerful experience. The narratives can reveal the social realities of the participants beyond the story being communicated.

Atkinson (1998) provided basic interview guidelines that were used for this study and included (1) decide who will be interviewed, (2) explain the purpose of the interview, (3) prepare for the interview, (4) use photographs to relive events, (5) create a good setting, (6) get the story, and (7) use an open-ended interview. For this study, it has been decided that adult African American educators would be interviewed. The purpose of the interview—to capture the participants' museum experiences— was explained via the consent form and prior to the interview. Video recordings captured the interview. Video was used to capture mannerisms, movements, and activities that can further inform the narrative, which is not possible from audio. Interviews were performed virtually and recorded after visitation to the sites because the researcher wanted to capture the *acting* characteristic of theoretical framework which can only occur upon exiting the space. Practice sessions with the recorder were performed before the official interview. Photographs captured during the observation were brought to the interview and described for the recording. There are recommended questions with the life story approach such as the commonly used oral history interview that inquiries into the autobiographical to get the story; however, consideration of individual variation with stories is important (Clandinin, 2007). Because of this

consideration recommended for narrative inquiry, the interviews implemented

some recommended questions of autobiographical nature and tailored broad

questions to capture individual experience being sought through the research

questions (i.e., lived experiences, connections of lived experiences with museum

experiences, the role of race to inform experiences). To capture this unique

experience questions delved into their upbringings, traditions, racial identity,

perceived role as an African American educator, and more. Lastly, the interview

was open-ended to allow participants to share their life stories with limited

interruption. Questions were introduced when prompting is needed. An interview

protocol and interview questions were used for this study (see Appendix B).

All interviews were performed virtually from July 2022 to August 2022 and

then transcribed, coded, and analyzed. Interview 1 lasted for 34 minutes and 10

seconds, Interview 2 lasted for 30 minutes and 10 seconds, and Interview 3

lasted for 41 minutes and 52 seconds. Each interview was recorded with the

audio and video files being retained for transcription and analysis software. *Trint*

software was used for transcription. The initial transcription was performed by

Trint software; however, it was necessary for the researcher to refine and edit the

transcriptions for accuracy. All transcriptions and audio files were uploaded to

Dedoose for data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis of the field texts from participant observation and interviews

with participants were applied to this study. Each of the data sources from

interviews were coded using values coding techniques because they are

applicable to diverse forms of data collection. Open qualitative coding was

utilized because concepts coming from Values coding were labeled. The unit of

observation is Black museum visitors in education. The unit of analysis was

values, attitudes, and beliefs of Values coding. To ensure the trustworthiness of

the data, data triangulation occurred by interviewing multiple data sources that

were similarly related and asking similar questions in diverse ways. Having

multiple data sources ensured that new experiences are captured in addition to

parallels. Virtual interviews were recorded, then the audio and video files were

exported for data analysis by examining the mannerisms and actions of

participants for non-verbal cues. *Trint* software was used to perform the initial

transcriptions of each interview. The researcher then reviewed the initial

transcriptions and made the necessary edits. All transcriptions were exported

and uploaded to *Dedoose* software for data analysis. *Dedoose* software was

used for interview texts and audios. *Dedoose* is an application that is designed

for mixed methods research with text, photos, audios, and videos (Dedoose,

2022). Notably, the use of multiple data sources authenticates the coding and

increases the trustworthiness of the findings (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Values Coding

Values coding is appropriate when examining small sample sizes and

delving into the inner cognitive structure of participants (Saldaña, 2016). This

type of coding is applicable to most qualitative studies, particularly those

exploring cultural values and belief systems, identity, intrapersonal and

interpersonal participant experiences. With values coding, the application of

codes to the qualitative data reflects the individual's values, attitudes, and beliefs (Saldaña, 2016).

During analysis, simultaneous consideration of the three commonplaces (temporality, sociality, place) of narrative inquiry were applied towards the values coding. Values coding highlights the concepts: V (value), A (attitude), and B (belief) in which inferences are made. Additionally, as the researcher, I explored the origins of the participants' values, attitudes, and belief systems through the interview questions. This type of coding requires paradigm, perspective, and positionality. Specifically, the coding will derive from the participants' worldview—not the view of the inquirer. Thus, values are the participants' judgment of what is essential. Attitudes are the way the participant thinks or feels about something. Beliefs are the acceptance that something is true based on the participants' values, morals, opinions, personal experience, and attitudes.

The units of analysis for this study are the codes of values, attitudes, and beliefs. Initial coding was performed for each participant using Values coding to capture the values, attitudes, and beliefs of each participant. Following the initial coding, focused coding was used to identify patterns, multiple layers of meaning, and interconnections within the experience. After the units were coded, they were categorized to decipher their collective meaning. Through analysis, I captured the unique museum experience of each participant. Next, I searched for the origins of the values, attitudes, and beliefs using memos. Finally, I endeavored to make sense of the systems these views derive from. (See Appendix C for Coding Example)

Dedoose

The qualitative data analysis software of *Dedoose* was used in this study to examine field notes and interviews. This software allowed me to import, analyze, and manage the data collected which included the audio recordings and transcriptions. Within each unique narrative, I was able to use visualizations to identify data connections and threads of the story. Using the nodes feature allowed me to identify and connect the units of analysis (values, attitudes, beliefs) to understand each participant's emerging ideas and viewpoints. Additionally, the function of inputting memos allowed me to identify shared themes among participants even though narrative inquiry methodology rejects common themes amongst participants.

Positionality

A researcher should have an awareness of the researcher's position. An essential question for narrative inquirers is, "Who are you in this narrative inquiry?" (Clandinin, 2013). Every study undertaken by a narrative inquirer should address who we are regarding the specific study. Who am I in the narrative inquiry with Blacks at African American museums? Addressing my autobiographical stance at the outset of the project will help to orient me—as a researcher—and the reader to the research puzzle. Savin-Baden & Major (2013) provide three methods for researchers to discover their positionality: (1) locate themselves in the subject; (2) locate themselves about the participants; and (3) locate themselves about the research context.

First, my position regarding African American stories is that they are vital to global history. Second, I am an insider because I have a shared connection with the cultural sites' narratives because I am of African descent and belong to the African Diaspora's fourth stream. Additional insider traits I share with participants include gender and roles in the LIS field. These insider connections may lead to increased insight and familiarity with the participants of this study. My positionality shaped my data collection because I anticipated potential triggers within exhibitions and possible reactions to various narratives. This insider knowledge allowed me to uncover deeper meanings and justifications of visitor activity during my analysis, which shaped the writing of my findings as I analyzed their experiences within the spaces of the museums. However, I am also an outsider because I am not an educator in the K-12 field. Most importantly, my belief is that it is imperative that the stories and histories preserved for the African American community give a sense of identity, pride, and belonging. I connect with the stories because I am of African American descent with my own personal lived experiences in society and museum spaces. I should ensure that my interpretation is trustworthy and reliable with this awareness of my positionality. This will be achieved by providing answers to the interview questions in their original context and maintaining the records of the research.

Caine, Estefan, and Clandinin (2013) stated that we are negotiating our entry into the field and our ontological commitment allow for relational means of research to occur because we are figuring out what to do in the field, how to collaborate with participants, and making decisions as a team on our goals as the

inquiry unfolds. I adopt the ontological commitment of narrative inquirers, which understand that experiences are continuous in which they evolve from other experiences and lead to new experiences. My epistemological commitment is the acceptance that experience is the knowledge of living. Living leads to experiences. My onto-epistemological stance is that I view the experiences shared as relational, continuous, and social. As the experiences inform me, I relate to them by understanding within my human context. So, while I strive to ensure the participants' most accurate realities, the emphasis of the experience depends on my limited ability to relay that experience. Additionally, understandings of experiences are continuous and ever-changing because I am seeking clarification. Finally, social influences affect individuals differently. Therefore, I am seeking social realities.

Ethical Practice

Approaches to ensure the integrity of the research and findings are necessary for this study. Josselson (2007) called attention to narrative inquirers to adopt an *ethical attitude* which means thinking through the best methods to honor and protect the participants while maintaining responsible scholarship. By adopting this practice, I make efforts as a narrative inquirer to safeguard the participants from hurt or harm when sharing their authentic story. Further, the research proposal for this study was reviewed and approved on June 7, 2022, by the University of South Carolina's Institutional Review Board before researching to protect human participants' welfare. The researcher is certified by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) to conduct human research in

the social sciences. Additionally, the tools and resources available from the Office of Research Compliance were applied to this study to ensure the study meets the regulatory requirements for human subject protection.

All participants and non-participants were observed during their museum experience with some being aware of my position as a researcher. Non-participants who were observed did not provide consent to take part in the research; therefore, the researcher preserved anonymity. Participants were provided with an explanation of the study and who will have access to the findings. Consent was obtained from each participant. Confidentiality was also applied toward all participants, with each participant being assigned a pseudonym. All data were stored in a password protected drive to which only the researcher had access.

Possible risks to the participants included the remembrance of tragic events. This remembrance could lead to discomfort and suffering. Some of the materials consisted of accounts of lynching, rape, enslavement, and other crimes. If the participant was a victim or closely connected to one of these tragic events, recollection through the interviews or visit may be burdensome. Difficult topics can be triggers for visitors. Subjects may unexpectedly trigger a reaction during this museum experience. Therefore, participants could withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher strived to consider all potential risks to minimize harm, which could include anxiety, distress, and/or misrepresentation. The strategies used to minimize harm included obtaining consent from participants, encouraging participants to withdraw from the study at any time,

maintaining confidentiality, and avoiding any deceptive tactics when designing

the research model.

Chapter 4

Findings & Discussion

This chapter will begin with a narrative account of the field observations, a narrative account of each participant, analysis of the interviews, and connections to the theoretical framework. The chapter ends with a concise summary of the findings.

The educators who participated in this study are from various parts of the state of South Carolina. The school districts that they work in are Lancaster School District, Florence School District 3, and Richland County School District 1. These school districts are in Columbia, Lake City, and Lancaster. All participants have obtained advanced degrees in the field of education. All participants are of Black heritage. Additionally, all participants visited the three Black cultural sites of this study prior to the interview. Each participant agreed via a consent form to a semi-structured interview for a minimum of 30 minutes to capture their lived experiences and museum experiences.

Initially, five educators completed the consent forms to participate in this study. However, one participant missed the virtual interview date and did not respond to a follow-up rescheduling. The other participant was not eligible due to not visiting the three sites of this study. Therefore, there was a total of three remaining participants for this research. For the purposes of this study,

confidentiality will be implemented for the three participants, and they will be identified as Jane, John, and Mary. While each participant had unique experiences as they explored the Black cultural sites, the data revealed shared beliefs, attitudes, and values.

Narrative Account of Field Observations

I conducted field observations on May 12, 2022, June 8, 2022, and June 15, 2022, at the Cecil Williams Museum in Orangeburg, South Carolina. Field observations at the Modjeska Simkins House and the Woodrow Wilson House were performed on June 14, 2022, in Columbia, South Carolina. Through my observations, I hoped to grasp an understanding of the visitors' behavior as they experienced the museum space in cultural heritage sites documenting topics of the long arc of the Civil Rights Movement.

The museum experience at the Cecil Williams Museum offers a unique experience from traditional museums because Cecil Williams is an acclaimed figure of the Civil Rights Movement, and he was present at the site throughout the visits. Williams began the museum experience with a presentation of South Carolina's role in the movement before segueing into semi-guided tours of the museum space. He highlighted that despite South Carolina's influential role in the movement, their civil rights story is often repressed in the larger narrative of the movement. Several visitors had their pictures taken with Cecil Williams during their exploration of the space. Visitors within the space were actively engaged in the exhibitions. They flocked to the eye-catching artifacts within the space such as the Ku Klux Klan robe, Rev. J.A. Delaine's shotgun, the Briggs Family Bible, and the bullet shell casings from the Orangeburg Massacre. Most notably, the Ku

Klux Klan exhibit elicited strong reactions from the Black educators. One Black visitor jumped back when seeing the clothed clansmen. Then, a group of three Black educators begin to discuss their reaction to the exhibit and how it affected them. I noted that they did not include visitors from other races in the conversation.

During the second visit to the Cecil Williams Museum, I again noted that the Black visitors formed a circle of conversation when discussing the Orangeburg Massacre exhibit. One of the Black educators stated that her mother was present on the campus during the massacre, which greatly interested the other educators.

In the Modjeska Simkins House, the behaviors of the educators were easy to observe due to the small size of the building. I was able to view numerous actions within the space, and I noted that the visitors often communicated with other visitors when noticing unique aspects within the exhibit. The educators from the Modjeska Simkins house were all Black, which may have contributed to their being comfortable enough to express their feelings and thoughts with one another. The most popular exhibit in that space seemed to be the wall that depicted letters and donations Modjeska Simkins received for her work in the movement. The educators noted that a large number of the letters came from children.

Capturing the behaviors of the visitors within the space of the Woodrow Wilson House proved to be more difficult. It was considerably larger, and everyone dispersed to separate rooms to view the different exhibits. The only

time the group was together was during the viewing of the documentary in the first room. The group seemed interested in the documentary.

The field observation enabled me to note the actions of the Black educators within the space; however, I was unable to determine how they internalized their cognitive experiences within the space regarding the role that their lived experiences had towards their interpretations. The follow-up interviews proved to be effective in gaining this understanding.

See Appendix C for photographs of visitors within the spaces. Photographs were blurred to maintain the confidentiality of participants.

Jane

Narrative Account of Field Observations

The virtual meeting with Jane on August 1, 2022, occurred virtually near the end of the summer break, when Jane was preparing for the start of a new school year in a new school system. After about two years of consistently using virtual platforms for communication due to the pandemic, conversation flowed naturally between the participant and me in this medium. Our introductions were made possible by a colleague at the University of South Carolina.

This was my first interview for the study, and I did worry that Jane might be reserved with me considering we were just introduced to each other. I wondered if the participant would feel comfortable sharing her background, feelings, and motivations. However, when we initially logged into the virtual session before the recording started, we began to make small talk about the

upcoming school year and the past summer. This allowed a camaraderie to form between us. Our recorded session lasted for 34 minutes and 10 seconds.

Jane identified as a female of mixed heritage. Her career began as a K-12 teacher; however, she recently started a new position at her school in her school in Lancaster, South Carolina after obtaining her Master of Library Science. Because we shared the commonalities of being women of color and connections with the LIS field, we naturally connected. There appeared to be no tension or forced conversation throughout the interview. We often laughed and shared commonalities between our lives.

While we began the interview with understanding her heritage, background, and upbringing, we later segued into her museum experience and experience as a Black educator in society. From the interview, I came to see the importance of community, one's responsibility to that community, and the struggles of a Black educator. The most prevalent unit of analysis throughout her interview was A (Attitudes), as she was quite open with sharing her thoughts and feelings about different topics.

Analysis

During our conversation, I began to understand the importance of community to Jane. Because of her mixed heritage (African American/Cherokee father and Russian/Scottish/Irish mother), she was raised to appreciate and celebrate diverse cultures. Her parents raised her amongst a diverse community in Washington D.C. They often joined family and friends for various celebrations which included Jewish, Muslim, and Indian holidays. However, her family

celebrated Christian holidays with her mother implementing prayers and intentions within her life. Because of her early exposure to diverse religions and cultures, she had a strong sense of respect towards these traditions because it was implemented in her during her upbringing. During this segment of the interview, her B (Beliefs) were shared, and these beliefs were noted in their transition into her later life. She stated:

> …my parents very much expect that, you know, if we're going to join somebody or if we're going to go to their mosque, that, you know, you better cover your head. You know, you better make sure you have your long sleeves on all of that. So, the kind of that just that thread of just respect for other people in this kind of, you know, you just kind of asked my mother if we take our shoes off over here, okay, that's fine, you know. So, we had that…I can see like now that I'm an adult and have my own children, some of that stuff obviously was more ingrained in me because I do it myself with my own kids…

It was evident that these beliefs regarding the importance and value of community not only influenced her adult family life, but also her interpretations of the exhibitions in the museum. When she saw the Ku Klux Klan exhibit at the Cecil Williams Museums, she could not fathom how policemen, shopkeepers, and others who should have been protecting and uplifting the community were the same individuals inflicting hurt and harm towards Blacks. She then expressed how she felt it was important that she share the gravity of this history to her students because those past issues are still problems today with the uprise of

white supremacy groups. Those early ingrained beliefs transitioned into her interpretation of exhibitions, and her responsibility to her students.

During her expression of beliefs, her sense of V (Values) was also apparent throughout the interview. She expressed that it was important to respect, appreciate, and share diverse histories. She also found value in the stories due to her mixed heritage background and experiences. She felt a shared sense of experience with the exhibits, and she was inspired to share it with her family. For example, she revealed that she told her husband and aunt about the exhibits and how the resemblance related to her family. When she began her exploration of the Cecil Williams Museum, she articulated that she was coming to the site knowing that his work was iconic. She had previously used some of his photographs in her classrooms; however, the museum trip revealed stories of which she was previously unaware. She was amazed that he was present at the site. She was delighted to capture a picture of him. And she stated:

> I know that I've used some of his iconic work. So, like then you see him and he's like, "Oh, I'm no big deal. I'm just a guy with a camera." It's like, no, you, you are a huge deal! So of course, obviously, that was impactful.

By expressing her amazement, her A (attitude) was also evident. She also found the exhibitions on the Orangeburg Massacre to be quite striking. She revealed that she had a connection to that tragedy through her father-in-law who was present at South Carolina State University during that massacre in 1968. Another connection to this exhibit was her parents' involvement in the March on

Washington for Jobs and Freedoms. When she viewed the exhibitions she stated, "…it's a mirror…a reflection of you".

In addition, she expressed that although she was connected and familiar with the horrible histories of South Carolina towards Blacks, she learned new information about the role that South Carolina's *Briggs v. Elliott* case had towards the landmark case of *Brown vs. the Board of Education*. She immediately shared with her husband, aunts, and cousins the information she acquired during the visit. She stated that she also tweeted pictures from her museum visit. This desire to share the stories directly relates to her values of the importance of knowing Black history and sharing it with the community. She stated:

> But there's so many jewels already here, great museums that I would love to be able to take my friends and their families to, just so that I feel like it's important for young people to get to see those types of things as well.

These values—in addition to her attitudes—were also prevalent during her exploration of the other sites. For the Modjeska Simkins House, she stated, "You sometimes you're, like, amazed at their resilience. We went to the, um, the Simpkins house and just seen all that she did as a black woman in those times. "She specifically stated, "…it is an important piece of history". Regarding the Woodrow Wilson House, she stated the video featured in the exhibition was "…really well done".

It is apparent during her expression of these exhibitions from the three sites, her A (attitudes) was exposed throughout the conversation. Overall, she stated that when walking through the exhibitions she felt feelings of respect, pride, inspiration; but she also had feelings of anger, sadness, empathy, and

heartbreak. She frequently expressed that the accomplishments of Blacks were "important" and amazing, which is why she found it deplorable that Blacks were ridiculed and demoted throughout history. A part of the exhibition within the Woodrow Wilson site that resonated with her was the memorabilia from the showing of the film, *Birth of a Nation*. She expressed:

> …the Blackface, I mean, is just so offensive. And then the chicken eating thing in the state house and as we are, some of that is like in our standards to teach… Even though these people are doing great things and developing a public education system that we didn't have. But y'all want to pretend like all they did was go eat chicken. Like, come on.

When it came to her role as a Black educator in society, her attitude on the difficulties were expressed thoroughly. She expressed that while there were positive aspects of being a Black educator, there were also negative aspects that came along with the position. She always felt that she had to be twice as good in comparison to her white counterparts to be accepted. Often, she expressed a sense of responsibility towards the Black and Brown children and that it was important that they see themselves in their teachers. She stated, "So they had a lot of different challenges to overcome. So, I think it did make a difference to some of them to have a teacher that looked like them." Her previous school system was primarily students of color and she stated that she felt a sense of guilt as if she was abandoning her "kiddos" when she transferred to her new school that is predominantly white. This connects with her sense of responsibility towards her community and as an educator. She expressed that there was no

clear divide between being Black and being an educator. It was all

interconnected. Because of this constant interconnection, she was passionate

about educating and teaching in her various environments in the community. She

expressed:

> But I always try to think of…I think you can never—once you're an
>
> educator, if you've been called to be educator—you can't take that hat off.
>
> You can't take that educator piece out of your heart. You know, when I go
>
> to the ball field, I'm always with my son on his baseball team. I'm always
>
> thinking y'all should do a book study, y'all should read this book. You
>
> know, I'm always telling somebody, take your kid here, they'll learn this.
>
> They'll love it…I can never turn that off. This will pair so good with that unit. I
>
> can't like I can't turn that part of me off.

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual framework with the Reader Response Theory (Rosenblatt,

1995) and the Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984) developed for this study

will further explain the actions of Jane within the museum environments. First,

Latham (2014) stated that upon entering museum sites visitors are accompanied

by their lived experiences which are direct reflections of their experience in the

world. At the beginning of our conversation, I was able to gain an understanding

of Jane's lived experiences by capturing her heritage, beliefs, and memories.

She was of mixed heritage and identified as a Black woman. She was raised in a

Christian, two-parent home surrounded by a diverse community. This diverse

background fostered a love of community and acceptance of differences. She

also expressed her experience with the difficulties and struggles as a Black educator in society. These lived experiences accompanied her upon entering the cultural institutions of the Cecil Williams Museum, Modjeska Simkins House, and the Woodrow Wilson House.

Next, upon entering the cultural heritage sites she was in contact with the exhibitions within the spaces. It was during this transaction with the exhibit when she began to make sense of the stories and form her interpretations of the history. She often connected the exhibitions with her own beliefs in what community should be, the shared history of her family with the stories, and commonality of race. Rosenblatt (1995) stated that when readers connect with a document it is purpose driven in which they bring in their expectations and past experiences. These past experiences were evident in Jane when she formed her understanding of the exhibitions. For example, she stated:

> I feel like sometimes this is just an added layer when it's truly a reflection of you, not just a reflection of the time or this happened in a generic, you know, American or country. But truly, like these are our people, right?

Kolb (1984) stated that learners are transformed within sites as they are experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. These actions are the internal reasoning of the learner. As Jane was experiencing the exhibitions within the site, she began to reflect on her beliefs and think about her attitudes towards the exhibits. She not only saw herself in the exhibit, but she started to form connections with her family in the exhibits. She began to see her relatives in the

images and narratives. Following this reflecting and thinking, she stated how important it was for her to not only take this information back to the classroom but to also share it with her family and community. This desire to share and educate is acting aspect of Kolb's experiential learning theory.

Kolb (1984) also stated that the process begins anew when entering new learning environments, which was evident when Jane entered the other cultural heritage sites of this study. Her behavior continued to depict sense-making, experiencing, transforming, and acting.

John

Narrative Account

The meeting (August 8, 2022) with John occurred virtually prior to the start of a new academic year and near the end of the summer session. John identified as a Black male. He has years of experience as a K-12 educator teaching in Columbia, South Carolina.

John and I were previously enrolled in the same graduate-level course. We attended the same field trips to the cultural heritage sites, and we also worked collaboratively on projects. Therefore, coming into this conversation, I already had experienced these professional interactions with the educator. While I was grateful for the connection, I was entering this conversation in a new role as a researcher. Therefore, I was hoping that the participant would be able to communicate effectively with me in this new position as I sought to capture the data.

At this point, this was my third contact with a participant in this study. I hoped that the participant would feel comfortable sharing personal aspects of his life considering that many of the questions delved into background, feelings, and emotions. Previously, our interactions were in professional settings, and we had not shared conversations about these topics. However, we were connected in our mutual heritage of being African Americans. Prior to the official recording we caught up with each other and shared laughter; however, once the recording started the tone was serious with little to no laughter.

The interview began with gaining an understanding of the participant's background, heritage, and childhood. Next, we transitioned to his museum experience and experience as a Black educator in society. From this interview, the participant expressed his admiration for the sacrifices made by individuals of the movement and connected it with his desire to make an impact himself. The most prevalent units of analysis were A (Attitudes) and B (Beliefs) in which he shared his views of the dominant narrative and the importance of changing that narrative.

Analysis

From our conversation, I observed that John was proud of his Black heritage, and he was passionate about wanting to amplify the narrative of African Americans roles in society. John grew up in a two-parent home with both parents identifying as African American. He stated that while they grew up celebrating the typical holidays of Thanksgiving, Christmas, Labor Day, and more, he later recognized that those holidays do little to celebrate the cultural attributes of the Black community. It is here that his A (Attitudes) is being revealed in how he

feels about the celebration of these socially accepted holidays. While he recognized limitations of these holidays in contributing to Black culture, he stated that he was grateful for the holidays being a time that brought together his family because those were the only days that many could get off from work. Through this revelation, his V (Values) became evident in that he finds the communion of family important.

His outlook and views were further revealed in the interview, as we delved into his museum experiences at the three sites of this study. He found the Cecil Williams Museum to be an overwhelming, yet inspiring space. He stated, "To some degree overwhelming to see so much history in one place, much of which I was unaware of." He expressed that society often dictated what was the shared history, so he appreciated that this cultural site offered a large amount of information in numerous topics that were new to him. He found the Woodrow Wilson House to be a "moderate" experience, stating that most of the information he was familiar with due to his background in teaching history. Lastly, he stated that the Modjeska Simkins House seemed to be the perfect medium between the Cecil Williams Museum and the Woodrow Wilson House. He stated that the Simkins site was neither overwhelming nor lacking, because her story was not shared during his time in K-12 education. Therefore, he found that site to be "pretty inspiring". Throughout his explanation of the three sites, the most prevalent unit of analysis as A (attitudes) as he often talked about the way the thought of felt about the cultural heritage sites. Additionally, his V (Values) began to emerge when he discussed the importance of capturing photographs at every site. He stated:

I took pictures of people who were involved in different protests or
organizing efforts so that I could go back and do my own personal
research and continue to learn more about those events as well as those
people.

Not only did the values of John begin to emerge, but his A (Attitudes) were
widespread throughout his exploration of the museum spaces. He consistently
expressed that he experienced feelings of anger and disappointment when
viewing the sacrifices that many of the individuals of the movement made.
Specifically, when discussing the exhibition of the Orangeburg Massacre in the
Cecil Williams Museum, he stated that there was no atonement made for the
violent tragedy and that is what reignites his resentment. While the feelings of
anger were the most prominent, other attitudes were also evident throughout the
conversation which included a spiritual connection to the individuals, inspiration
emerging within the Modjeska Simkins House, troubling thoughts about the
suppression of the history, and surprise at new aspects of stories he thought he
was already familiar with. This visceral reaction to the exhibitions caused him to
imagine the role he would have had in the movement. This desire to not take the
work of those involved in the Civil Rights Movement for granted was stated as:

Typically, I ask myself, where would I have been if I was here during this
particular period? Who would I be associated with? What events would I
have participated in and how would I have been able to have served my
greater community? So yes, I did see myself in many of those faces and
tried to really understand better the spiritual connection in the sense of,

okay, so. What sphere am I carrying as it relates to those who came before me? Would it be more of a Malcolm X or Kwame Touré or Cleveland Sellers? So where would I land? And so, I'm really trying to see. Or Fannie Lou Hamer…

Stating the names of the key people of the movement exposes his values of what is important because they were cemented in his mind despite the museum visit occurring over a month ago. The word he used consistently to describe Civil Rights leaders in the movement was "sacrifice." This experience led to him transferring those values and attitudes into a resolution to continue the work in his life. As he talked about his post reactions upon exiting the spaces, he held to the view that those in the field of education should make purposeful efforts to teach this Black history. The viewing of these exhibitions steered him towards a desire for action on his part. He expressed, "Because as I learn more, I know that there is more that I have to share. There's more opportunities I have to create, to teach. And there are way more people that I have to connect with over the years and which I still have on this planet. It's a responsibility, not just a job."

As he expressed his views on being a Black educator in society, I observed his desire for action implemented in his life. Prior to discussing his role as a Black educator in society, he began to state that there are inequities in the educational system's learning conditions. Particularly, he expressed his displeasure that the state of South Carolina will not teach the history of these powerful Civil Rights figures. He then states that these inequities are due to structural racism, and they become apparent in other aspects of society to

include housing conditions and opportunities. His expression about the biased system reveals his B (Beliefs) which connects to his earlier beliefs of the mass promotion of traditional holidays and celebrations. Thus, his beliefs and values are revealed as he expressed that he has a large responsibility as an educator to share the stories, create opportunities, and connect with more individuals. He specifically noted that it is not a job, but a "responsibility." Additionally, he often used the term "intentional effort" when describing his need to continue to teach and promote these stories—even more so since he is connected by his race to these stories. Specifically, he stated:

> And I think that distinguishes me in my perspective of me being a Black educator versus someone else who may not be a part of my race and culture. I think that anyone who is associated or... let me let me stay away from that. Anyone who is tied to this race has a major responsibility, given where we started at, upon arriving on the soils of this continent and the work and intense labor force that our people had to experience and endure, we have to make certain that their history, their lives, their sacrifices are never taken for granted or never dismissed. And so, each generation has been able to push the envelope or push the needle forward. And so, I think now, given I'm in a space where I can live and experience much of what they could not, it is a duty that I ensure that those who have the same opportunity learn about their lives, their sacrifices…

Theoretical Framework

John's behavior within the cultural heritage sites was consistent with the conceptual framework theories of Rosenblatt (1995) and Kolb (1984). Upon entering the cultural sites of the Cecil Williams Museum, Modjeska Simkins House, and Woodrow Wilson House, he was accompanied by his lived experiences which included his heritage, knowledge, and beliefs. These lived experiences are a direct experience of the world because all events take place in this dimension (Latham, 2014). Early in the conversation he began by expressing that even though he was raised to celebrate the traditional holidays, he recognized that those celebrations did little to celebrate the Black race. His appreciation of the holidays was solely for bringing together his family members. His family was of Black heritage, and he was instilled with pride for his race.

His contact with the exhibitions exposed how he made sense of the narrative and interpreted the history. Rosenblatt (1995) stated that as readers interact with text the transaction is accompanied by expectations, is purpose-driven, and formed by the past experiences. John displayed these aspects with his transaction with the exhibitions. He felt connected because of the shared heritage he had with the individuals featured in the stories. He expressed that this interaction with the exhibitions deepened to a spiritual feeling. Thus, while he was grateful for their stance and sacrifice in the face of challenges, he also had strong feelings of anger at the systems put in place to destroy a group of people. The level of sense-making transitioned to the next phase of the conceptual framework.

While experiencing the exhibitions within the site, John was transformed. Kolb (1984) stated that the cognitive experience of individuals is internal and transformative. As John discovered new information about subjects, he felt he had a good knowledge of, he found anger emerging. This discovery led to displeasure in the system lacking to promote this history. To ensure that this information was not suppressed or censored, he became committed to sharing the narratives through his work. He even further expounded that all educators should accept this charge. This displays the characteristics of the experiential learning theory of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting (Kolb, 1984). His acting is illustrated in this statement:

> So, upon leaving, I know now that there has to be much more of an intentional effort by those who are committed to teaching the history and ensuring that the history is included in the narratives about the different periods that is relevant to you. So, for me, it becomes a focal point of my work, especially working with aspiring teachers…

Just as John experienced the cycle of the conceptual framework in the three cultural heritage sites within this study, this cycle will begin anew when entering another cultural heritage space. The cycle of sense-making, experiencing, transforming, and acting was evident in John's museum experience.

Mary

Narrative Account

This final interview with Mary took place on August 9, 2022, during the first week of the new school year in Lake City, South Carolina. I met the individual during a professional development session that took place in the summer of June 2022. Therefore, we were not complete strangers going into this interview. Before the official recording, we began by making small talk about the upcoming school year and how the first week of the academic year was hectic. This would be my first interview with an educator in a leadership role within the school district.

Mary identified as a female of African American heritage. She obtained an advanced degree and is currently an administrator in Lake City, South Carolina. She is a native of South Carolina. She grew up in a two-parent household with both parents being African American. We naturally related to one another because of our shared race and gender, growing up in large households, pursuit of higher education, and Southern roots. Therefore, the conversation flowed naturally and was interspersed with shared laughter.

The interview began in the same manner as the previous interviews with me asking questions to gain an understanding of her heritage, background, and upbringing. Following these initial inquiries, the interview segued into capturing the museum experience of the participant in the three sites of this study (Cecil Williams Museum, Modjeska Simkins House, and Woodrow Wilson House). The interview ended with the participant sharing her views of her role as a Black

educator in society. The most prominent unit of analysis to emerge during this interview were V (values) of Mary with her stating the importance of making a change in the lives of the students that the others had given up on and instilling within them a sense of community.

Analysis

Our interview began with me asking Mary to describe her heritage and background. From these initial inquiries, it was revealed that she grew up in a two-parent home with both parents identifying as African American. Both parents were from small towns in South Carolina that were within proximity of each other. While her family did value education, she expressed that her father was not educated due to the need to work. She came from a large family of ten and family unity was heavily instilled within her. All family meals were done with the entirety of the family at the table. Everyone in the household was required to attend church together. Religion was a major aspect of their lives. While her mother was raised Methodist and her father was raised Baptist, the family adopted the religion of her father. Therefore, her religious beliefs have roots of Christianity. Her father was even part of a Gospel quartet that initially consisted of his brothers; however, as his brothers passed away, her mother joined the group. Her early roots, which consisted of instilling the unity of family, adherence to church religion, and family religious activities, account for her powerful sense of values, which were evident throughout the interview. She described it as:

> We went to church every Sunday as a family. There was no the parents
> would go and the kids stay home. It was none of that. We actually went as

a family. My mother was a missionary. My dad was a deacon in the church when they were married.

Mary visited the three sites of this study and while her V (Values) emerged the most from the interview, I was able to also grasp an understanding of her A (Attitudes) and B (Beliefs) during her museum experience. She found her overall visitor experience within these cultural heritage sites to be enlightening. When viewing exhibits, she often formed connections with some of the features of the exhibit. For example, she found the family resemblance so strong in one picture that she immediately shared it with her sister who is the family genealogist. She also shared another exhibit that featured a last name that was distinct, because that is one of her family names and she has a strong feeling they may be related. She also shared that information with her family to add to their genealogical research. Specifically, she was enthralled by the exhibitions of the equalization schools from the Cecil Williams Museum. She stated that the characteristics and descriptions of the equalization schools were new information to her. However, she immediately connected those features to one of the schools within her district. The school is a predominantly Black school that is often labeled as problematic. Yet, she expressed her displeasure with the inequalities put forth towards those students in comparison to other students with more privileges and access to better schools in other districts of the state. This displeasure not only displays her attitudes, but it also shows her values of what is important when it comes to quality education—especially for those marginalized students. It is her desire to persist in providing a "quality" education to those students and to

change the perception others have ascribed to the school. Additionally, she

wants to share the narratives and histories from the cultural heritage sites with

her students. She stated:

> That's one thing I want to do with the school itself, because it's a school
>
> that we've had some challenges with just because of the location and the
>
> perception, just a negative perception of it. But it's also the school that we
>
> sometimes have quite a few discipline issues that tend to get out in the
>
> community. So, one of the things that I talked about with him [coordinator
>
> of professional development] was actually setting up something where I
>
> identify a group of students and actually have them go through the
>
> experiences we went through this summer so they can see.

As Mary was expressing her views on the schools within her district, her B

(Beliefs) were revealed in that she believes the system has not created

opportunities for students to thrive. She stated that the stories shared within the

spaces of the inequities faced by those from the Civil Rights Movement were still

the same inequities that are prevalent today. It is her desire to remove those

inequities and to close that learning gap. Just as her beliefs were strongly

instilled within her, it is her desire to instill beliefs within her students. She

expressed it as:

> …what I'm trying to do for the students of Florence 3—while I'm here—is
>
> provide as many learning opportunities as possible. Because I really think
>
> the learning gap is more so an opportunity gap. This created the learning

gap. So, if we can provide these opportunities. Then I think we're going to start to change the trajectory of everything. Just their beliefs.

Beyond her values and beliefs, the A (Attitudes) she expressed in the interview were feelings of enlightenment, captivation, amazement, hope, and love. She specifically stated that she had no feelings of anger. She entered the spaces with a sense of anticipation because she was excited about the information that would be featured in the exhibitions. Because she was able to see and hear the history, she found that it led to those feelings of enlightenment and excitement. Interestingly, she stated that even after exiting the spaces these exciting feelings did not leave her despite a month passing by since the museum visit. She stated that this sense of pleasure and excitement was still talked about amongst the other educators that were a part of the visits to the cultural heritage sites. When talking about the Rev. J. A. Delaine exhibit, she expressed a sense of admiration for the courage he had to face those wishing to harm his family with a shotgun. Because the original shotgun was featured in the exhibit, she found that to be profound. Overall, she found the artifacts within the Cecil Williams Museum to be "amazing". Specifically, she states that "I just thought the artifacts that were in the museum was just it was amazing. From the gun that he actually used when they passed his house and when they came back in, he shot at them."

When asked to share about her experience as a Black educator in society, she again reiterated her earlier sentiments on the inequities that Black children have in education in comparison to their counterparts. She found this disparity to be unfortunate, but she expressed her hope to make that change. Specifically,

she stated that her goal is to go beyond the state requirements for an "adequate" education and to instead provide them with a superior education. She then provided examples of how she was creating opportunities in her district towards her students, by providing a variety of summer camps and programs in which over eight hundred students participated. They removed the hurdles of access by providing transportation and connecting the students to leaders in the field. It was obvious that her work to uplift her students was continuous and she saw it as a role of the community because she often used the term "we" as she stated:

> So as an educator, my goal is to remove hurdles. Because I want them to just know that anything is possible. And there are so many possibilities out there… Because I really think the learning gap is more so an opportunity gap. This created the learning gap. So, if we can provide these opportunities. Then I think we're going to start to change the trajectory of everything. Just their beliefs. What they thought was impossible. The possible. Just those type things. And I do believe in order for that to take place we can't look at just being adequate.

Theoretical Framework

The lived experiences of Mary were detailed eloquently during inquiries about her heritage, upbringing, and childhood traditions. The lived experiences of the unity of family, commitment to community, and adherence to religious beliefs accompanied her as she entered each cultural heritage site. Latham (2014) expressed that all visitors of museums are accompanied by their lived experience which are their direct experiences of the world. Thus, the museum behavior of

Mary was consistent with the conceptual framework encompassing the Reader Response Theory and the Experiential Learning Theory (Rosenblatt, 1995; Kolb, 1984).

When in contact with the narratives within the exhibitions, Mary made sense of the stories shared by connecting them with the stories of those in her present life. She often connected the past narratives with the present narratives being experienced in her school district. Seeing those inequities and disparities deepened her desire to do more within her school district by instilling beliefs in her students that they can achieve anything. Rosenblatt (1995) stated that the *transaction* of the object with the reader is purpose driven as the readers come to the document with their expectations and previous experiences. Uniquely, the *transaction* is distinguished from *interaction* because the reader has a criterion of evaluation, analysis of validity, and questions stemming from differing cultures or people (Rosenblatt, 1985). This *transaction* was evident within Mary because she drew from her values and beliefs when transacting with the exhibits, and this led to a desire to remove all obstacles from the lives of her students.

Subsequently, while in the space Mary experienced transformation (Dewey, 1938). As she internalized the exhibitions, she was going through the process of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting (Kolb, 1984). After her museum experience and her reflection of the same struggles facing society, she consistently expressed her thoughts to her fellow educators and her plans to provide more learning opportunities to her students. When describing her plans

to re-enter the cultural heritage sites with her students she is adhering to the actions of Kolb's experiential learning theory:

> I want that for the kids, particularly at that school…I want that for those students. I want to identify a group who folks have written off and take that group and just watch their lives changed. Because I do believe with the right intentional experiences, it can change…and that's what I would love to see happen there.

She expressed her desire to return to each of these sites because she felt with the limited time, she did not have an opportunity to fully grasp all the narratives within the spaces. She also expressed her plans to provide access to these sites to more educators in her district and her students. Therefore, as she re-enters these spaces, the cycle of the conceptual framework will begin again.

Shared Themes

While each of the three educators of this study expressed unique lived experiences which informed their museum experiences and narrative inquiry rejects common themes across participants (Clandinin, 2013), it emerged that they shared similar experiences in their lives. Narrative inquiry is valuable to gain rich insight into the lived experiences of individuals. Yet, noting the shared experiences of these individuals will further inform those in the Education and LIS field about how Black educators are experiencing these sites. Clandinin (2013) stated that social justifications are important to narrative inquiry because it can inform social action and policies.

Socioeconomic Background

John and Mary shared that they came from poor backgrounds and experienced financial difficulties as children. Both participants expressed that they did not have the benefit of visiting museums as a child. It was not a customary practice. John's first museum experience was his last year of high school as a part of a school trip and Mary's first museum visit was as an adult at a family reunion. There is a parallel of a lower socioeconomic status to no visits to museums.

Family and Community

All participants in this study grew up in two-parent households with siblings. Mary stated that she grew up in a household with 8 siblings, John expressed that he had a brother and sister, and Mary noted that she was the baby of the family. The participants expressed their belief that community has an obligation to uplift, unify, and protect the lives of individuals. Jane expressed that, "…people are supposed to build their community." When experiencing the exhibits John questioned, "How would I have been able to serve my greater community?" Mary detailed the importance of community to her students by stating, "They should be able to have a sense of community just like these other folks. And they shouldn't have to leave their community to get what they need."

Dominant Narrative

All participants expressed dissatisfaction at the active suppression of Black history and promotion of a dominant narrative. Jane expressed that even with the large promotion of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), the only historical figure they highlight in STEM is Thomas

Eddison despite there being so many Black historical figures in STEM. Additionally, Jane stated that when it comes to sharing the truth of Black history, "…these new laws are saying, like, you can't teach it." When visiting the Cecil Williams Museum and the Modjeska Simkins House, John was displeased that much of the information within those sites was new to him despite him being a K-12 history teacher because society dictated which information was important or shared. He stated, "…to see so much history in one place, much of which I was unaware of…based on …what is considered to be important aspects of history…Inspiring, but overwhelming because there was so much information that I recognized that I was unaware of…" Mary expressed these same sentiments stating, "There were just things that were there that I was not even aware of." Overall, John summarized this shared desire to see Black history promoted by stating:

> And it really reflects the need to broaden the conversation about civil rights and who was involved because of the way that the narrative is currently promoted, written. It limits or minimizes the work of so many who have been involved.

Summary of Findings

Provided below are brief summaries of the findings, as they relate to each of the research questions. These findings will be elaborated more in Chapter 5.

RQ1: How do African American educators describe their experiences as they explore exhibits at Black museums? Findings revealed that Black educators were enlightened during their museum experience.

All participants in this research revealed they discovered new information of the Reconstruction era the Civil Rights Movement within each of the sites. While each educator had familiarity with some of the stories shared within the exhibit spaces, they all expressed enlightenment at the new histories and figures uncovered during their museum visits, which relates to the findings that all participants believed there to be an active suppression of African American history This lack of knowledge was expressed by each of the participants as an active suppression of Black history in society. Therefore, they all began the process of sharing these narratives with their friends, family, colleagues, and students.

RQ2: What are the connections that Black visitors in education make between the museum narratives and their lived experiences as African Americans? Findings from this study revealed that Black educators connected their lived experiences of beliefs, morals, heritage, and memory to their museum experiences.

The participants' lived experiences were disclosed early in the interviews. These lived experiences informed their internal interpretation of the exhibits. The participants often connected their own experiences, struggles, and limitations with those of the civil rights figures shared in the exhibits. Interestingly, the V

(values) and B (beliefs) that were instilled within the participants during their upbringing transitioned to their interactions with the exhibitions of the cultural heritage sites because it displayed the longevity and lasting effects of beliefs and morals. All participants noted the strength, resilience, and importance of community. Additionally, because they experienced limitations to Black history within their life, they all felt a sense of responsibility to share their museum experience with their students.

RQ3: What do their narratives reveal about the role of race in their current museum experience? Findings revealed that Black educators' race informed their interpretations of the museums.

All participants identified as being of Black heritage. Because of this shared race with the people featured in the narratives of the exhibit, they formed strong connections to the story. John took it further to imagine himself in the role of the key figures. Jane and Mary described a connection to the people pictured within the exhibits because of strong similarities to their own family members. They all understood the disparities and inequities facing the Black race in current society, so they perceived the accounts within this space as accepted truth. They all expressed a desire for this truth to be widely promoted beyond the walls of the cultural heritage sites.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Implications

This chapter will summarize the results of this qualitative, narrative inquiry study into Black educators' experiences in Black museums. It is important to study Black educators because they are powerful conduits of the African American story.

Purpose and Overarching Questions

The purpose of this research was to capture the museum experience of Black educators as they explored exhibitions in cultural heritage institutions that focus on documenting topics of the long arc of the Civil Rights Movement. The justification for this mode of research was to determine if Black museums were achieving their documented goals of fostering pride, creating empathy, forming connections, providing comfort, offering enlightenment, and instilling strength (Brooms, 2011; Fleming; 2018; Hayward and Larouche, 2018; Ruffins, 2018; Shahmohammadi, 2015). Since the early beginnings of these institutions, African American professionals in the museum field have expressed their desire for museums to offer a transformative experience. Yet, there has been a dearth of research that focuses on how Black visitors of these Black cultural heritage sites

and institutions were experiencing these spaces. Additionally, the subsequent

effects after visitor's exploration throughout these sites were not fully explored or

addressed. Specifically, the acquisition of the Black experience within these sites

will provide insight into the behaviors of the visitors, their internal interpretations,

and the outcomes of these visits.

The unit of description for this study was Black K-12 South Carolina

educators because these Black educators have long held a large responsibility

that went beyond their primary job duties and extended into their responsibilities

to their community and society. Explicitly, many Black educators have found they

are the gateway of access to this body of knowledge. Because of their

connections to the African American story, many Black educators feel an

obligation to promote the distribution of this narrative to their students,

colleagues, and their respective school districts. These connections to the story

lead to a deeper tie in which Black educators are often driven by purpose and

they are intentional as they teach (Dillard, 2000).

Thus, the overarching question for this study was:

How are visitors of African ancestry in the educational field experiencing

artifacts at cultural heritage institutions that document the long arc of the Civil

Rights Movement? I sought to understand the experiences of K-12 Black

educators in cultural heritage institutions. Overall, I found that X factors informed

their museum experience: explicitly identify. For example, the Black educators

described the physical traits of the buildings and the various exhibits. Jane

expressed that when visiting sites in Black museums, she often felt the exhibits

were displayed in a manner, with the muted lighting and cases, that fostered a sense of seriousness and respect. Mary expressed that the designs within the Cecil Williams Museum were "well done". Once the interview process went beyond outward traits of the spaces and into the narratives, the internal cognitive processes of the visitors were discovered. Participants made sense of the narratives by drawing on their cultural experiences, personal beliefs, their Black heritage, and the values instilled within them.

While the overarching research questions broadly addresses the process of Black educators within the Black cultural heritage sites, the additional research questions offered an increased understanding of various factors influencing the museum experience. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do African American educators describe their experiences as they explore exhibits at Black museums?

2. What are the connections that Black visitors in education make between the museum narratives and their lived experiences as African Americans?

3. What do their narratives reveal about the role of race in their current museum experience?

Discussion of Findings

RQ1: *How do African American educators describe their experience as they explore exhibits at Black museums?*

The goal of this research question was to gain as much knowledge of the entire process of the museum experience from the K-12 Black educators who visited them. In following the narrative inquiry process, many of the questions

from the interview were similar so they could elicit detailed and comprehensive answers of the overall museum experience. The goal was to understand their experiences from before they entered the space, to their time within the space, and finally to their time outside of the space. Because the museum experience was encapsulated through this process, the researcher was able to determine that this experience was transformative and the results of this transformative experience.

All participants of the study expressed that they were enlightened with new knowledge from their visits to the three sites of this study. Because they were all inundated with new knowledge this led to diverse feelings from each of the participants. John had feelings of wrath because he felt that there was an active suppression of Black history considering that much of the information of these sites was not a part of the curriculum in his years of teaching K-12 education. Jane's feelings were not in that vein of anger, but rather perplexity that this knowledge was not largely promoted. Whereas Mary revealed that she experienced feelings of joy and amazement at the new knowledge.

Despite these diverse feelings and reactions to the new knowledge acquired in this site, all the educators expressed a desire for action. They were eager to create opportunities to share this knowledge with their students. Also, they promoted and discussed the stories with their fellow colleagues. Their dissemination of this information even went beyond their professional settings to their community settings. For example, they shared pictures with family, planned

for future visits to these sites with others, and even shared the narratives while at community activities.

RQ2: *What are the connections that Black visitors in education make between the museum narratives and their lived experiences as African Americans?*

It was found that all participants drew heavily from their lived experiences when making sense of the exhibitions within the cultural heritage sites. By capturing the lived experiences of the participants, the data revealed that they all valued community. They all shared the belief that the Black race faces inequities in comparison to other races. Also, they all detailed the obstacles they experience as Black educators in society. Consequently, these lived experiences did begin to inform their understanding of the narratives shared within the exhibits.

Because they personally witnessed and experienced the inequalities of society, they accepted and connected with the stories of the injustice Blacks faced. They accepted these narratives as truth. Additionally, they expressed feelings of pride and gratefulness to the key figures who were willing to fight and sacrifice for a better future. This gratitude led to all of the educators stating that they have a responsibility to continue to serve and fight for their students and community. The lived experiences also emerged when the early values instilled within them helped them form connections with the exhibits. John expressed that he felt a spiritual connection to many of the figures whose stories were shared in the space. Dillard (2000) stated that spirituality is driven by purpose. Therefore, this spiritual connection that was formed from these exhibits did lead to a desire

to answer the call of their responsibility as not only educators, but uplifters of their race.

RQ3: *What do their narratives reveal about the role of race in their current museum experience?*

All participants identified as Black and had strong connections to the Black community. Often when discussing the Black race, they used inclusive terms such as "my people", "our struggle", and "my Black and Brown babies". Because they identified as Black, and because the museums' exhibits highlighted the Black race, all participants found themselves connecting to the stories and people featured in the stories The reason for this connection may be due to each site having direct connections to the key figures whose stories were displayed. For example, the Cecil Williams Museum was designed and created by civil rights figure Cecil Williams, the Modjeska Simkins house was their real-life home of Simkins, and the Woodrow Wilson House highlighted the African American workers that also resided in the space. Jane and Mary began to see themselves and their families in the faces of many of the individuals involved in the movement. Jane stated that in some way we—the Black race—"are all related", so she understood the resemblances. Mary felt such a strong connection that she sent images and information to her sister, so she could begin to perform genealogical research. John began to visualize which key figure he would have been during that time. All of these examples reveal the strong personal and professional connections that were a result of their race. Further, because they

all share and face similar struggles as members of the Black community, their goal is to continue the work that these individuals began.

Implications of Findings

These findings offer significant insight for professionals and leaders in the LIS, education, and museum fields. Historically, there has been limited data on the museum experience of Black visitors in Black museums. This information gap prevented professionals in the field from being able to achieve their goals of instilling pride and fostering identity when sharing these stories. Although they often wanted to offer identity and pride, there were cases of visitors leaving with feelings of displeasure and anger (Burns, 2013). While this study did reveal feelings of dissatisfaction and anger, it was due to the visitors feeling they were previously denied this information. Therefore, professionals in the field should consider options to expand their exhibits beyond the physical location of the museum to widen their audience and reach. This could be achieved through traveling exhibits, pop-up exhibits, attendance at community events, guest lectures, and other similar activities.

All participants felt tremendous gratitude for the brave work of the heroes of the Civil Rights Movement. While in the museum space and upon exiting, they connected the work of the movement with their own desire to work for their school, community, and race. They all expressed an increased desire to serve as changemakers who will fight against oppressive racial policies and regulations. The implications of sharing these stories to positively impact society could lead to rebuttal from politicians, lawmakers, and leaders of the current South Carolina

society that are against social justice efforts. All participants expressed that many

of the policies emerging in their current school districts deny full access and

quality education to their students. They noticed the disparities were higher

amongst the predominantly Black schools. Therefore, as more visitors

experience these sites and gain awareness of these narratives, this

enlightenment will increase the possibilities of individuals to foster change. Upon

exiting the sites, these cultural heritage institutions could offer information of

other organizations with shared goals and direction to additional resources to

their visitors to further inform their experiences. Additionally, they could offer

options for the visitors to support the work of the museum, whether it be in the

form of donations or sharing information about these sites on their social media

platforms. Further, forming collaborations such as programming, events, and

sharing social media posts with other cultural heritage sites that have shared

goals could ensure that the narratives will reach wider audiences. Finally,the

findings of this study could also inform future policies implemented by

lawmakers. These policies could affect the teaching practices and strategies of

K-12 educators. It could also lead to curriculum changes.

Limitations of this Research

This study has potential limitations. Additional data collection methods

could have been utilized to increase awareness of the lived experiences of the

participants. The research implemented field texts from observations and

interviews. However, some narrative inquiry researchers have also used interim

research texts in which the researcher and the participants write narrative

accounts of the experience (Clandinin, 2016). These shared interim research texts allow the researcher to delve deeper and discover multiple meanings of experience. Other data collection methods that could have further revealed the participants' experiences include journals and audio recordings while viewing the exhibitions.

An additional limitation of this research is my limited access to the data. Since I am not a K-12 educator, it proved difficult to gain access to members of the field. While access to participants was provided through the help of University of South Carolina faculty, I still remained an outsider without many shared connections with the K-12 educators, which may account for the low response rate when seeking for participants for this research.

In addition, the data was collected during a time that was not convenient for K-12 educators because it was conducted during August 2022, which was the first week of school.

Recommendations for Future Research

The data captured from this study illuminated and cultivated a desire to expand this study. First, this study could be magnified by going beyond the cultural heritage sites of museums. Cultural heritage sites and institutions encompass diverse institutions to include libraries, archives, government agencies, and parks (Carr, 1990; 2000; Stauffer, 2021). Hence, repeating this methodology in a different environment and to a different group of professionals will help to ensure these institutions into the effectiveness of their services to a larger audience.

Next, this study was performed in South Carolina, USA which is in the southeast region of the country and provided insight into Black educators visiting South Carolina's cultural heritage institutions and sites. Exploring other states and other countries will offer new knowledge on the behaviors and actions of visitors of the organizations in other regions. It could also offer a comparison of these organizations to form parallels of visitor behavior and note differences amongst their experiences. This expansion will allow for leaders of these different organizations to offer a unique and tailored experience to the visitors of their region.

Additionally, it is recommended that the sample size of this study be increased to a larger number of participants. The sample size of narrative inquiry is intentionally small since this methodology of capturing life stories requires extensive data analysis and interpretation (Kim, 2016). However, capturing additional participants' experiences will offer increased insight as we explore themes across the participants and triangulation of the data. That will lead to increased validity and a deeper understanding of the research inquiries.

Another recommendation is to capture diverse units of description. The unit of description for this study was Black educators. The research could be expanded to capture the visitor experiences of other BIPOC educators, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, children, clergy, legislators, school board members, and more. Each community has unique goals and aspirations; therefore, determining if the cultural heritage sites are meeting the needs of a

variety of visitors will further inform professionals on the effectiveness of their exhibitions.

The final recommendation is to offer a unit of analysis beyond Values Coding. Values coding is effective in qualitative studies that seek to delve into the cultural values and beliefs of participants. Saldaña (2016) stated that values coding is appropriate for capturing interpersonal and intrapersonal participant experiences. Other coding methods could be utilized in future studies include emotion coding and narrative coding.

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Appendix A.

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

Experience
Experience occurs when an encounter with an event or action forms meaning. However, it is a complex term that can encompass a multiplicity of meanings. Narrative inquiry builds on Dewey's writings of experience. Dewey (1938) stated that experience is not limited to what is happening internally within an individual to inform their attitudes, desires, or purposes; instead, a genuine experience is active and transforms in some form to the conditions in which the experiences have occurred. With consideration of Dewey's criteria of experience—interaction and experiential continuum—as the basis, the narrative inquiry approach frames experience within the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which an individual's experiences are formed, articulated, and portrayed (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007). Thus, experiences are formed from internal and external influences.

African Diaspora
The African Diaspora concept began in the 19th century with the acclaimed Liberian educator, Dr. Edward W. Blyden in which he delivered an address in 1880 in America and made comparison of the dispersion of Africans to that of Jews (Ranger, 1968). The term is believed to have originated at the international conference on African history which was held in 1965 at the University of Dar es Salaam (Ranger, 1968; Harris, 1982). The term describes the mass migration of people from African throughout the world. Specifically, the African Diaspora encompasses the five significant movements: (1) the great shift that began 100,000 years ago within and outside of African, (2) the 3000 B.C.E. movement of the Bantu-speaking people from modern-day Nigeria and Cameroon to other parts of African and the Indian Ocean (3) the fifth century B.C.E. movement of traders, merchants, slaves, and soldiers to parts of Europe, the Middle East, and Asia (4) the 15th century Atlantic trade of Africans to European societies and the Americas and (5) the movement from the 19th century to the present with people of African descent resettling in various communities (Palmer, 2018).

African Americans
Of the five significant movements of Africans in history, those who belong to the fourth and fifth stream in the African Diaspora typically make up the African American population (Palmer, 2018). The term *African American* has a relatively

young life, and it is still evolving. In the 1980s, as the term *African American* began to be used by scholars, the Reverend Jesse Jackson worked to adopt the word as the widely accepted description for Blacks in America (Wilkerson, 1989). This initiative led to the adoption of the term in schools, Census, and publications.

Cultural Heritage Institutions and Sites

Carr (1990, 2000) stated one of the early definitions of cultural heritage institutions in which he described these locations as various organizations that are rooted in the idea that culture requires a place that voices hopes and aspirations. These places can encompass art galleries, national and local ministries, government agencies, landscapes, zoos, parks, archives, libraries, and museums (Carr, 1990; Carr, 2000; Stauffer, 2021).Cultural institutions convey the voices of cultures and places that are available to learners with a primary goal to serve society and the public through its acquisition, conservation, and presentation of objects to inform, educate, and entertain the visitors through the material evidence of people and their environment (Carr, 2000; Szczepanowska, 2013).

Appendix B.

Interview Protocol

Interview identification code: _____

Interviewer: _____

Location: _____

        _____

Date: _____ Length: _____

Age: _____ Race: _____

Educational Level: _____

Explanation to participants:

The purpose of this research is to capture your lived experience and museum experience as you explored topics within the space of African American museums. The goal of this research is to inform professionals in the field of Library and Information Science and the Museum Field about the interpretations of Blacks in Black-centered museums.

Sample of Interview Questions:

1	What is the ethnic or cultural background of your parents?
2	What family or cultural celebrations, traditions, or rituals were important in your life?
3	What is your earliest memory of visiting a museum?
4	Can you describe your experience as you explored the exhibit at the museum(s)?
5	Did you capture any photographs within the site? Why?
6	Did you see yourself within the narratives shared in the exhibit? If so, how?

| 7	How can you explain your feelings, motivations, reactions, etc. as you experienced the museum environment?
8	Can you recall your initial reaction when entering the space?
9	Can you recall your post reaction when exiting the space?
10	Do you recall what was happening during this photograph? What were you feeling?
11	How would you describe your experience as an African American educator in society?

Table B.1: Sample of Interview Questions

Appendix C.
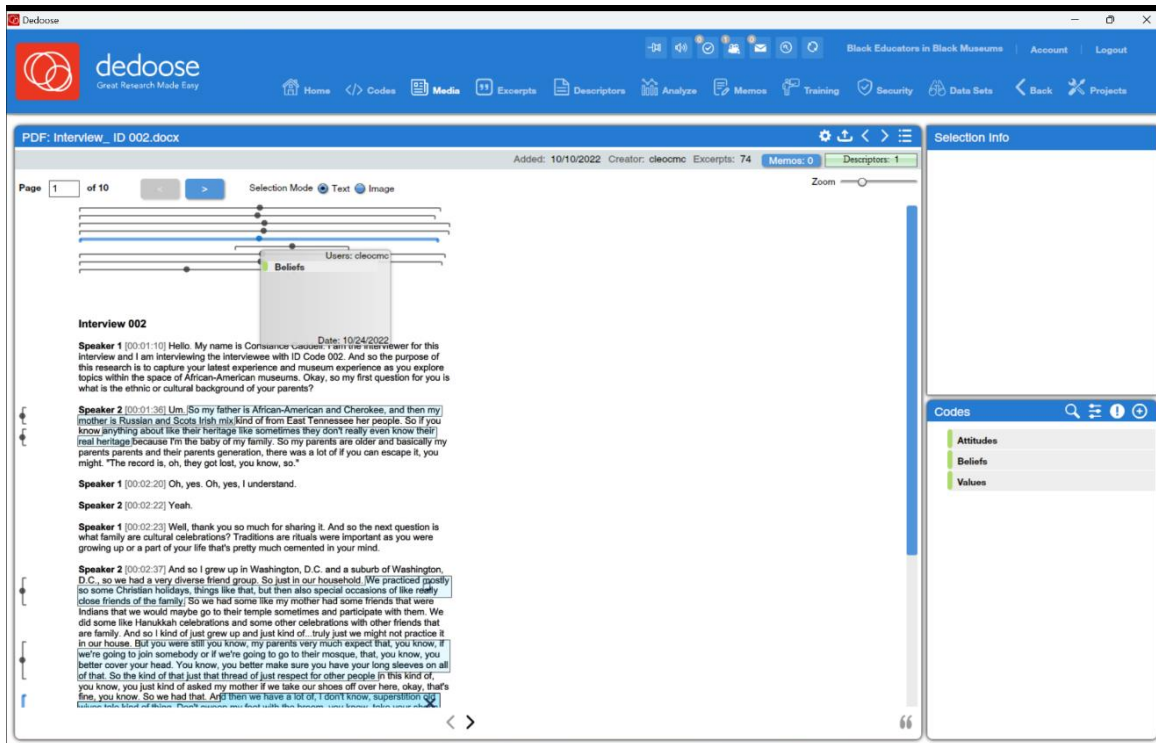
Figure C.1: Example One from Dedoose Software
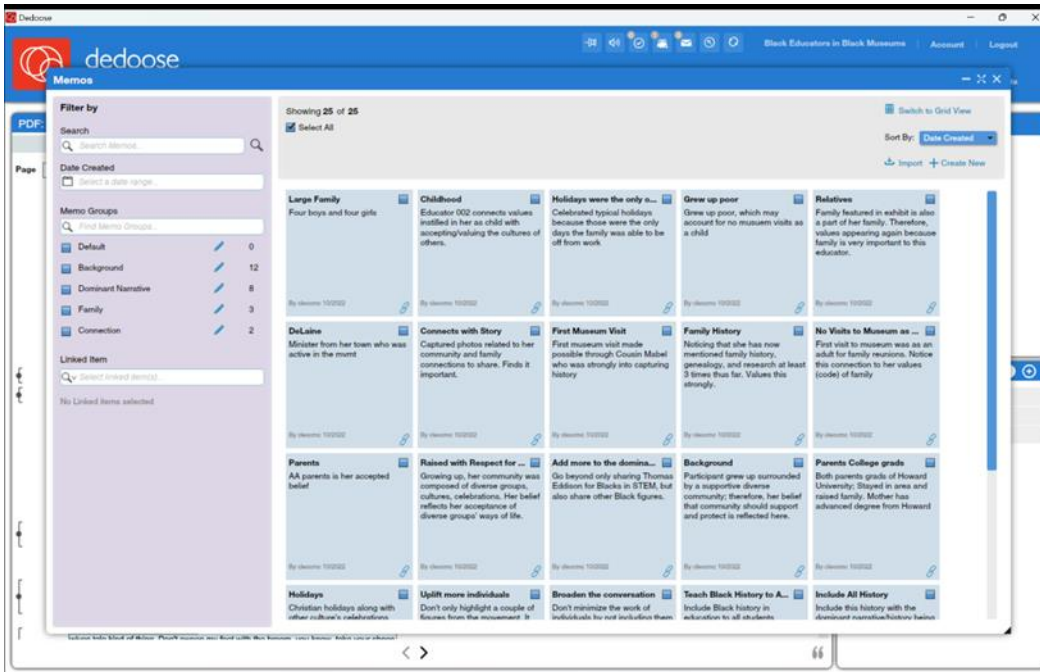
Figure C.2: Example Two from Dedoose Software
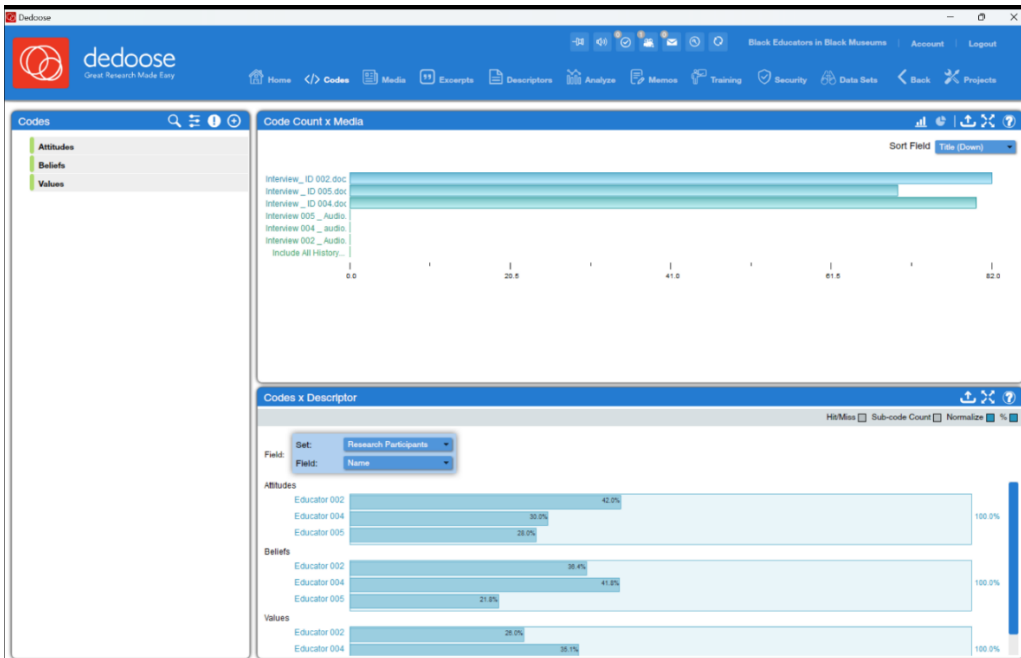
Figure C.3: Example Three from Dedoose Software

Appendix D.

Photographs of Black Educators in Museums Documenting Topics of the Long Arc of Civil Rights Movement

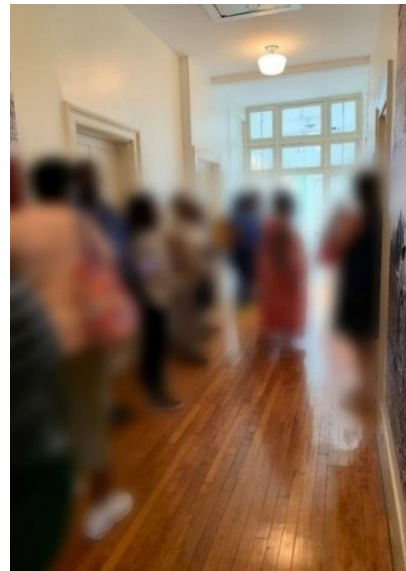

Figure D1: Entering the Woodrow Wilson House
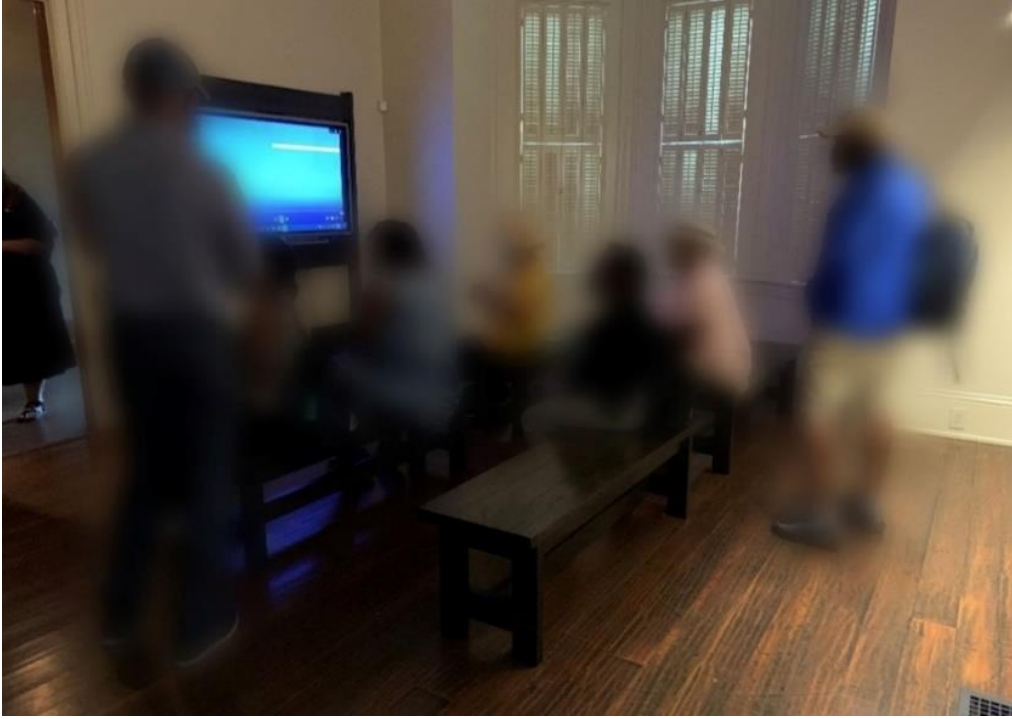

Figure D.2: Inside the Modjeska Simkins House

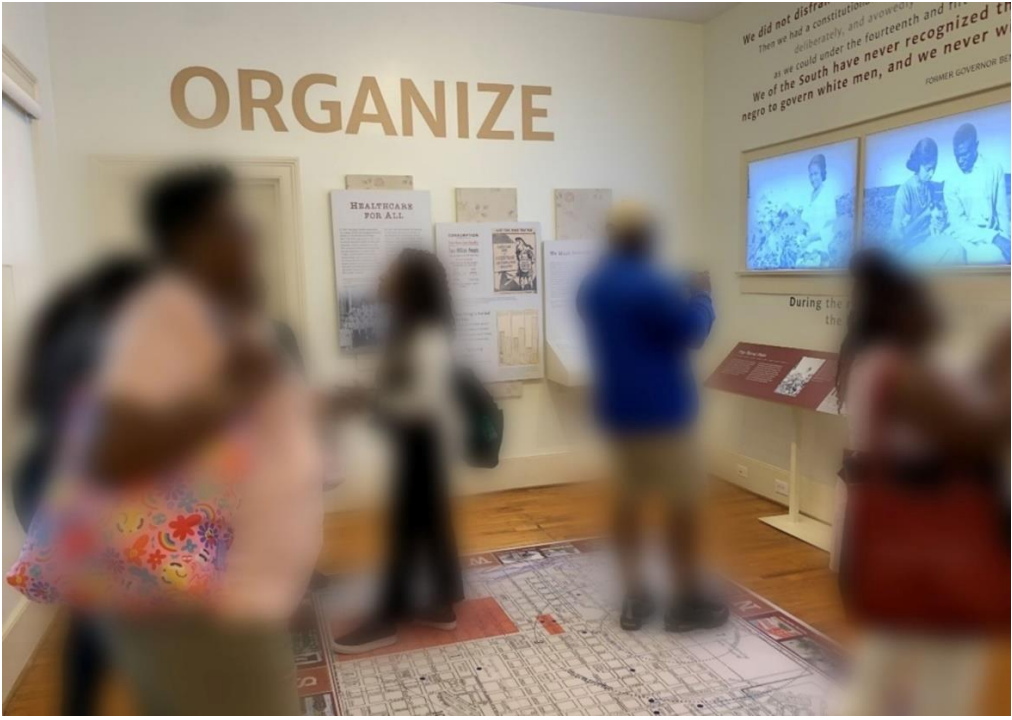*Figure D.3: Viewing documentary in the Woodrow Wilson House*

Figure D.4: Inside the Modjeska Simkins House

Figure D.5: Outside the Modjeska Simkins House

Figue D.6: Inside the Cecil Williams Museum providing tour

Figure D.7: Cecil Williams

Figure D.8: Group of Black Educators at Cecil Williams Museum