Representing Race Responsibly: A case study of the social responsibility paradigm in Colorado museums

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Angela Rueda
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Advisor: Dr. Christina Kreps
ABSTRACT

Although museums have moved towards more reflexive practice, misrepresentation continues to be a concern. How then can museums successfully represent racial and ethnic groups that have historically been marginalized or misrepresented? In this thesis I argue that with greater integration of the social responsibility paradigm—which argues that museums can be agents of social change—museums may be able to improve representation. During the summer of 2013, I conducted field research that explored how the social responsibility paradigm was or was not being enacted at The History Colorado Center and Museo de las Americas. This thesis offers a critical analysis of these institutions’ philosophies, exhibitions, and related programs. Analysis reveals that the social responsibility paradigm is being adapted into museum work, but often to varying degrees. Moving past surface portrayals of racial and ethnic heritage through a greater acknowledgement and incorporation of the social responsibility paradigm may help to transform museums into more collaborative spaces.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Museums and galleries of all kinds have both the potential to contribute towards the combating of social inequality and a responsibility to do so (Sandell 2002:3).

In March 2010 the Colorado History Museum in Denver closed its doors and began the process of moving, renovating, and reinventing itself. Entrusted with the task of cultivating a new institution, museum staff viewed the opening of the History Colorado Center (History Colorado) as an opportunity to transform what some considered a static, forgotten history museum into something fresh and dynamic (Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013). With the hope of breathing new life into the past, History Colorado sought to present Colorado heritage in an innovative, collaborative, and relevant way. Using extensive audience research, museum staff translated this institutional vision into narrative-based exhibitions that reflected Colorado’s culturally diverse stories and communities (History Colorado 2011).

In the months preceding its April 2012 opening, the museum invited community stakeholders to review their exhibitions and to garner opinions on the museum’s interpretations and portrayals of historic events. At the time, the museum featured two exhibitions: Destination Colorado, which tells the story of a homesteading community in southern Colorado; and Colorado Stories, which features narratives from eight racially
and ethnically diverse communities from across the state. Among those invited to evaluate content were representatives from Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes, who were asked to assess the museum’s depiction of the Sand Creek Massacre—a tragic event during the Indian Wars in which Colorado Territory militia attacked and killed a peaceful encampment of Cheyenne and Arapaho peoples.

During consultations the tribe expressed their disappointment with the representation of this emotional event, drawing attention to historical errors, omissions, and inaccurate language. Although the museum chose to include this narrative as a crucial aspect of Colorado history, tribal representatives felt that the museum’s interpretation distorted their heritage (Calhoun 2013; David Halaas, interview with the author, Denver, CO, September 30, 2013).

The Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho were not the only groups to criticize the museum’s portrayals of community stories. Similarly, after helping to develop a section of *Colorado Stories* on life in the Amache Japanese internment camp, Japanese-American consultants voiced concern that the museum’s representation made light of internee experiences. Even though History Colorado collaborated with communities, conducted audience research, and created exhibits with the goal of reflecting and celebrating cultural diversity, the institution was still criticized for presenting history that was inaccurate and misrepresentative.

History Colorado, however, is not the first museum to be confronted for misrepresenting racial and ethnic groups. In fact, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, the history of museums is marked, and in part defined, by debates over representation,
authority, and power. Furthermore, the controversies at History Colorado reflect a reality that many modern museums have—and continue—to face; as museums struggle to present relevant material for visitors with diverse backgrounds, they must simultaneously work to create representative and ethical content. But finding a balance between what museums interpret as relevant and reflective can often be difficult, especially as museums contend with limited time, funding, and staff. In the case of History Colorado, Bill Convery, Colorado’s State Historian and History Colorado’s Director of Exhibits & Interpretation, felt that the museum was not able to meet all of collaborators’ expectations because of the museum’s limited time for consultation and the inherent difficulty of balancing perceived audience interest with content stakeholders’ concerns (Interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013).

How then can museum professionals work to improve representation in exhibitions and programs, as they continue to face the realities of reduced funding and decreasing visitation? Moreover, how can museums more successfully represent racial and ethnic groups that have been historically marginalized or misrepresented in these institutions? Though no simple answers can be provided for these questions, this thesis explores one avenue through which museums may become more inclusive and reflective: the integration of new museum ethics into the core of museum practice. Museum scholar Janet Marstine reflects on the importance of this topic, arguing, “new museum ethics is among the most pivotal concerns of museum professionals in the twenty-first century” (2011:5). In this thesis I argue that with greater understanding and integration of ethics
into all aspects of museum work, museums may be able to improve representation of racial and ethnic heritage.

Museum ethics, however, encompasses a number of issues, ranging from institutional guidelines for the ethical obtainment of collections to federal law outlining processes for the repatriation of sacred objects to indigenous communities. To narrow my scope, I decided to focus on a single ethical perspective: what I refer to as the social responsibility or social justice paradigm. Largely developed and applied in the United Kingdom, the social responsibility paradigm argues that museums “can contribute to the combating of the causes and the amelioration of symptoms of social inequality and disadvantage” (Sandell 2002:4). The social responsibility paradigm also advocates active and socially conscious museum practice and policy, which can manifest in forum-like programs, exhibitions that confront stereotypes, and community collaboration. Because the social responsibility movement seeks to engender change by addressing social inequalities, integrating this paradigm into museum work can help to make museums more inclusive by bringing together varied groups, legitimizing this diversity, and engaging with the idea of a more equitable society (Sandell 2002). Additionally, through the facilitation of dialogue and debate, and the integration of community perspective, the social responsibility paradigm can help to decrease misrepresentation.

In this thesis I am specifically concerned with how the paradigm applies to racial and ethnic heritage within two particular areas of museum work—exhibitions and programming. My decision to focus on these areas of study is largely the result of my experience with the American Anthropological Association’s (AAA) project Race: Are
We So Different?, which I first encountered in the summer of 2011 at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) in Washington, D.C. In my opinion, Race: Are We So Different? is a paragon of the social responsibility movement. This project, which includes a traveling exhibit, local programs, and printed and online resources, critically engages with the concept of race, its construction, and its real-world implications. In doing so, the project sparks debate and discussion with the goal of challenging and changing common misconceptions about race. I was so intrigued by the exhibition and its role in engendering change that I analyzed the project as part of an undergraduate independent study.

Having experienced and studied the travelling exhibit, I was curious to see if the principles of the AAA’s project, which align so closely with the social responsibility paradigm, could be integrated into the foundation of museum work to have similar effects of sparking consideration, dialogue, and ultimately change. During the summer of 2013 I conducted field research that explored how the social responsibility paradigm was or was not being enacted in two Denver museums—History Colorado and Museo de las Americas\(^1\) (Museo). This thesis offers a critical analysis of these institutions’ philosophies, exhibitions, and related programs, all of which consider or represent racial and ethnic heritage. It is important to note, however, that unlike the Race: Are We So Different? project, History Colorado and Museo do not explicitly cite social change at the

\(^1\) Although “Museo de las Americas” is Spanish, I chose not to italicize the title because it is a museum name. Furthermore, while it is grammatical to write “Americas” with an accented “i,” I do not do so in this thesis, because the museum itself does not utilize the accented letter. with an accented “i,” I do not do so in this thesis, because the museum itself does not utilize the accented letter.
forefront of their mission. While it may seem counterintuitive to explore the social responsibility movement in museums not intentionally guided by it, I did so to assess whether or not the principles of the movement were currently being unintentionally utilized to ascertain if the principles could be applied to a broader range of museums.

Analysis of institutional philosophy, exhibitions, and programs at History Colorado and Museo reveals that the social responsibility paradigm is being adapted and integrated to a certain degree into museum work, even without explicit recognition and reference to it. But I also found the museums’ use of the paradigm often varied in extent, a critique that may be a factor in issues of misrepresentation. Thus, a greater acknowledgement and incorporation of the social responsibility paradigm may help to transform these museums into more collaborative spaces. The opening label of *Colorado Stories* notes that Coloradoans “triumphed and at times … failed” (Denver, CO: History Colorado, n.d.). I think this statement is true for both History Colorado and Museo, as well as for many museums embarking on representing more diverse populations.

In the following chapters I further outline my findings. In Chapter 2, I present a historical background, detailing the deeply connected relationship between anthropology, race, museums, and representation. In outlining this relationship, I show how integral anthropology was in the construction and study of race, how important museums were in the dissemination of this research and associated ideology, and finally how this history established a precedent for the representation of race and ethnicity in museums.

In Chapter 3, I review relevant literature on my topic, discussing how the changing roles and perceptions of museums, heritage, and race impacted the relationships
between museums and society. Specifically, I explore how the movement towards more socially conscious museum practice sparked debates on the true purpose of museums, their place in representing heritage, and how changing views on race can impact these debates. Next I outline my methods and theoretical framework, exploring how exhibition and program analysis can reveal meaning-making processes occurring in museums.

In Chapter 5, I present my findings and analysis of data. In doing so, I conduct a critical analysis of three exhibitions—focusing on narrative, space, and visual culture—and programmatic efforts at History Colorado and Museo. Finally, Chapter 6 provides my conclusions, noting recent changes in both museums and how the social responsibility movement can provide answers for more representative museum work and implications for future research.
CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

*cAnthropology and the Construction of Race*

In her work detailing the construction of an African American racial category, Lee D. Baker (1998) argues that anthropology was fundamental to the formation of racial categories, so much so that as anthropology changed and emerged as a discipline, race did so in a similar process. She remarks:

The relationship between anthropological discourse on race and the prevailing racial construct has been close and often reciprocal. Since its inception in the eighteenth century, American anthropology has been the science that takes the explanation of race and culture as its central charge. Anthropological explanation of race and culture have changed in step with larger social transformations [Baker 1998:3]

As Baker notes, anthropology’s contributions to the construction of race began early in the discipline. In the nineteenth century, anthropologists like Lewis Henry Morgan—who argued that societies evolved through three distinct stages of development—used prominent scientific theories, namely Darwin’s theory of evolution, to develop ideas of “classical cultural evolutionism” (Erickson and Murphy 2003). This school of thought placed ‘primitive’ non-western cultures in the lower half of a chain of evolution, enforcing social ideas that non-European groups were inferior to western populations. In doing so, anthropology helped to link race more deeply to ideas of polygenesis, or the belief that humankind evolved from separate species. “Classical
cultural evolutionism” was mirrored in the subfield of physical anthropology, which developed out of the desire to categorize and study race (Gould 1996). Formative craniometric studies from Samuel Morton, Josiah Nott, and Louis Agassiz, helped to solidify racial categories by providing biological explanations for differences between populations (Gould 1996; Baker 1998; Smedley 2007). The use of anthropological work in such a manner is an example of scientific racism, or the use of science to support and justify racist beliefs and practice.

As anthropology entered the twentieth century, physical anthropologists were at the forefront of perpetuating scientific racism. Continued concern with race stemmed in part from increased immigration to the United States, which intensified exposure to diverse groups and threatened social hierarchies (Blakey 1987). During this time, two anthropologists emerged as leaders in the subfield, both of whom represented oppositional views on race. On one end of the spectrum was Ales Hrdlička, who in following the tradition of Morgan and Morton used craniometric work to support the idea of separate, biological races (Blakey 1987; Gould 1996; Smedley 2007). Importantly, Hrdlička served as the first curator of physical anthropology at the United States National Museum in Washington, D.C., now the NMNH. His time at the museum, which is discussed later in this chapter, provided a means for Hrdlička to disperse his work and helped strengthen the connection between anthropology, race, and museums.

Antithetically, Franz Boas worked to combat scientific racism and associated inequalities. Similarly to Hrdlička, Boas continued craniometric work, but did so to support ideas of plasticity, or the adaptability of the human body (Boas 1912; Baker
Boas also established his views within museums, serving as both assistant curator and curator at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) in New York City. But unlike Hrdlička, who used this platform to publicly support racial hierarchies, Boas spoke out against the display of artifacts on an evolutionary scale, arguing that this system of classification was founded on bias rather than fact (Baker 1998; Bouquet 2012).

These ways of thinking—from Morgan to Boas—influenced the anthropologists who helped to define anthropology as an academic discipline. As anthropology became a studied field in universities, it gained scientific grounding and a more rigorous means of analysis (Baker 1998). This establishment helped to legitimize the discipline, furthering its authority in public views on race. Therefore, when anthropologists took to museums to disperse their research, they had the powerful backing of scientific thought.

*Anthropology, Race, and Museums*

World’s Fair

Some of the first public places that anthropologists used to promulgate academic discourse were World’s fairs. Although the United States did not host its first World’s fair until 1876 in Philadelphia, the tradition was developed abroad years prior. World’s fairs exhibits helped construct and perpetuate colonial ideologies through the display of colonized groups as primitive and inferior to colonial powers (Hodeir 2002). World’s fairs in the States served a similar purpose of maintaining power dynamics. As Robert Rydell describes it, “World’s fairs performed a hegemonic function precisely because they propagated the ideas and values of the country’s political, financial, corporate, and intellectual leaders and offered these ideas as the proper interpretation of social and
political reality” (1984:3). With regards to race, World’s fairs exhibited anthropological work to support theories of social and racial evolution, and to perpetuate scientific racism (Rydell 1984).

The first appearance of anthropological content at a World’s fair in the U.S. came in 1893 in Chicago. The fair featured an anthropology building that housed both object-based and living exhibitions. Object-based exhibits, which were largely curated by physical anthropologists, featured hierarchical displays of human skulls meant to reflect the evolutionary progression of mankind. Similarly, living ethnological exhibits displayed people from varying non-western cultures “in an obvious evolutionary hierarchy that resonated with many White Americans’ seemingly intuitive understanding of racial inferiority” (Baker 1998:57). In specific, living exhibitions, which were displayed in a re-created city, placed darker races further from the “White City,” simulating a road to evolution (Baker 1998). Because these exhibitions were housed in the anthropology building, they reinforced dominant social ideologies with authority and prestige.

Similar depictions of racial hierarchy were used in the anthropological exhibitions at The Louisiana Purchase Exposition of 1904. For this fair, “directors wanted to develop ‘a comprehensive anthropological exhibition’ to depict the barbarous and semi-barbarous peoples of the world, as nearly as possible in their ordinary and native environments” (Baker 1998:64). To do so, anthropologists gathered new ‘savages’ to include in living exhibitions. The culminating exhibit was advertised as having permanent ‘wildmen,’ the races that had been forgotten in the evolutionary process. Among the ‘savages’ that were
collected for the exhibit were Native America leader Geronimo and African pygmy Ota Benga.

Though World’s fair exhibitions were popular, there was still backlash against how these displays represented racial and ethnic groups. Following the 1893 fair, African Americans fought for the opportunity to help create exhibition content. While the World’s Fair committee did appoint African American representatives, they held no real power, showing that “exposition managers evidently wanted the Negro American to be represented only by the ‘barbaric rites’ of Africans ‘brought there to act the monkey’” (Baker 1998:61). The concerns of African Americans received greater consideration in 1906 after Ota Benga was dehumanized and actually put on display with primates. At the end of the 1904 fair, Benga was taken to the AMNH, and later moved to the Bronx Zoo where he was caged with an ape. Benga was ultimately freed after the zoo received public criticism for placing him among its exhibits (Bradford and Blume 1992). After these backlashes, subsequent World’s Fairs did not include these “human zoos” as part of their displays.

Exhibitions

Museum exhibits, however, continued to function as platforms for scientific racism. The use of museums for this purpose occurred largely because prominent anthropologists served as curators at large, national museums. As previously noted, physical anthropologist Ales Hrdlička served as the curator for the now NMNH. During his time in this position, he mounted several exhibitions that enforced scientific racism. In addition to his work at NMNH, Hrdlička also created a hall of man in San Diego in
1915, which became the core of the Museum of Man. In doing so, Hrdlička “explicitly stated his desire not only to teach the public about race but also to highlight the progress of racial science in the process” (Redman 2009:517). Similar curatorial intent was used to create the 1933 exhibit *Hall of the Races of Mankind* at the Field Museum in Chicago. This exhibit featured busts and facemasks of 155 ‘races.’ In presenting this exhibit, curators “claimed their scientific authority from their location in a science museum and from the anthropologist who sanctioned them as authentic representation of individual humans and general museum types” (Teslow 1998:46). The exhibit fell out of favor within the anthropological community, but it was not dismantled until 1968 (Redman 2009; Teslow 1998).

*The Impact of Civil Rights*

From the mid to late twentieth century, however, subjugated and marginalized groups began to challenge and break the glass boxes museums had placed them in. During this time, indigenous, minority, and colonized groups started movements and revolutions across the globe. These groups fought to garner greater representation and inclusion in political, legal, and social arenas. Within the United States, this period of change fostered the Civil Rights, Chicano, and Indigenous Rights movements in the 1950s and 1960s (Simpson 2001). Although many groups fought largely for political rights, minority groups also fought for better representation in American museums. Mainly, civil rights groups criticized museums for misrepresentation, lack of representation, and a failure to consult with the racial and ethnic groups they displayed (Simpson 2001).
Critiques made by civil rights groups were an important factor in the reevaluation of museum practice and policy (Simpson 2001). In part, calling attention to issues of representation helped to turn museums’ gazes upon themselves. This self-awareness contributed to the development of the new museology in the 1970s and 1980s, which is defined by reflexive and inclusive museum practice (Vergo 1989; Ross 2004). This new approach to museum work coupled with shifting social ideologies fostered a desire to use museums to combat the same hierarchies that these institutions once helped to create and support (Simpson 2001; Davis 2011). Similarly, at this time anthropology began to reevaluate its role in contributing to misrepresentation, turning a critical eye on the discipline (Clifford 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1999; Erickson and Murphy 2003). Scholars like James Clifford (1986) urged anthropologists to reconsider the objectivity of ethnographic work, and in turn, anthropological representations of culture. Over a decade later in 1998 AAA took a definitive stance on race and representation in the “American Anthropological Association Statement on ‘Race,’” asserting that race is a socially constructed concept that has no biological basis (1998).

The creation of museum ethical codes coincided with these new approaches to museum work and anthropological research. Two major codes of ethics guide museum practice in the U.S.—the “American Alliance of Museum (AAM) Code of Ethics for Museums” and the “International Council of Museums (ICOM) Code of Ethics for Museums.” Passed in 1991 and 1986 and amended in 2000 and 2001 respectively, both codes provide principles for ethical practice in museums, which include ethical collecting, display, and representation (AAM 2011; ICOM 2013). The inclusion of
ethical representation in these codes is an acknowledgement of its influence and importance in the museum world. As noted in the “ICOM Code of Ethics,” “Museums should ensure that the information they present in displays and exhibitions is well-founded, accurate and gives appropriate consideration to represented groups or beliefs” (ICOM 2013:8). Importantly, however, in her work on the new ethics of museum anthropology, Christina Kreps (2011) notes that these ethical codes are simply guidelines for museums, and not law. And in actuality, often require higher standards than law. Furthermore, as is reflected by the recent amendments to these documents, Kreps notes that ethical guidelines are “living documents,” and are therefore ever changing and adapting to time and place (Kreps 2011:80).

Racially and Ethnically Specific Museums

The call for more accurate and greater representation of minorities in museums also contributed to the creation of racially and ethnically specific museums. As is indicated by their name, racially and ethnically specific museums are defined by a focus on a particular, and often singular, racial or ethnic group (Kurin 1997). These museums are considered important, because they serve as stewards for heritages that are often overlooked and underrepresented in mainstream institutions. Racially and ethnically specific museums can also serve important functions in supporting identity work for minority groups. For example, Herlinda Zamora (2007) argues that having museums devoted to Latino/a heritage is important for the self-determination and definition of this group. Specifically, these museums are “first-voice institution[s]: that is, [they] communicate the primacy of Latino/a self-definition and interpretation” (2007:326).
Furthermore, George MacDonald and Stephen Alsford (2007) argue that racially and ethnically specific museums legitimize diversity, and reflect a democratization of interpretation of cultural identity. The importance of these institutions is further reflected by the continued work of museum professionals and community members to obtain racially and ethnically specific museums on the national mall, which is now home to the National Museum of the American Indian and the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

*The Persistence and Challenge of Misrepresentation*

Even though strides were made both within anthropology and the museum world, misrepresentation and exclusion still persisted into the twenty-first century. As anthropologists and museums attempted to gain footing amidst shifting ideology and practice, they often mis-stepped and misrepresented. A prime example of these circumstances is the *Out of Africa* exhibition that was mounted at the Royal Ontario Museum in 1989. The exhibit, which displayed a collection from Canadian missionaries who worked in Africa, was intended to present African culture in a new way and to draw attention to power dynamics inherent in colonization. But the exhibit’s design, text, and tone had the opposite effect, with a majority of visitors missing the meaning behind the exhibition. In her ethnography of the controversy Shelley Ruth Butler (1999) shows the lasting impact of *Out of Africa*; rather than highlighting and challenging power inequalities within Africa’s colonial history, the exhibit merely perpetuated dominant ideologies and deepened feelings of minority alienation within the surrounding community.
Karen Coody-Cooper also explores the effect of misrepresentation in her book *Spirited Encounters: American Indians Protest Museum Policies and Practices* (2008). In this work, Coody-Cooper discusses two exhibits: *Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First People* and *First Encounters*. *Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First People* was exhibited at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary in 1988. Staff developed the exhibit to reflect the importance of First Nations in Canadian history, but First Nations people were critical of the exhibition and the limited consultation that went into it. Mainly, these groups were upset that the museum accepted funding from Shell Oil Company, which was in a drilling dispute with the Lubicon Lake Band at the time (Coody Cooper 2008). Native American groups in the U.S. had a similar reaction to the *First Encounters* exhibit, which began its tour at the Florida Museum of Natural History in 1989. Native American representatives argued that the exhibit was unbalanced, largely presented European perspectives. By doing so, the exhibit was thought to celebrate Columbus and a singular exchange of ideas, rather than a two-way permeation of culture (Coody Cooper 2008:111).

Coody-Cooper, however, contends that these controversies actually represent important movements against misrepresentation in museums. In both cases, Native Americans took initiative in speaking out against these exhibitions, showing that they, and other underrepresented groups, can be “active and forceful leaders of change within the museum world” (2008:xi). For MacDonald and Ashford (2007) these controversies were also important because they had a positive impact on museum practice, particularly in Canada where they reassessed consultation, collaboration, and repatriation.
But not all museums that attempted to challenge past representations of race and ethnicity mis-stepped. In 1993, the Maryland Historical Society invited artist and activist Fred Wilson to create a collaborative installation. Having free reign within the institution, Wilson explored and selected pieces from the museum’s collection to create *Mining the Museum*. In this exhibit Wilson juxtaposed his selections in innovative ways to reflect the difficult but important history of Native and African Americans in Maryland. In turn, he raised questions on who owns history and who has the right to display it (Marstine 2011). The exhibit was well received and sparked discussion.

Likewise, as was discussed in Chapter 1, in 2009 the American Anthropological Association took a stance on representation and race, turning to exhibits to combat racial stereotypes. Their exhibit, *Race: Are We So Different?*, was created with the hope of changing perceptions and understandings of race in larger society. The exhibit marked a turning point in the long history between race, representation, museums, and anthropology, and came as an attempt to right the many years that anthropology contributed to the misconception and perpetuation of racism in museums.

“The New Western History Movement”

Like museums, Western history has been responsible for the misrepresentation of racial and ethnic groups. In constructing and presenting western heritage and history, the West is often romanticized, whitewashed, and ripe with themes of perseverance, and courage that overlook power dynamics (White 1986; Limerick 1990; Malone 1990). This version of western history reflects a tendency for national narratives to remove minority groups from the formation of America (Michael Blakey, Lecture, from the College of
William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA, March 2014). In reality, with expansion of
territory and migration of peoples, Colorado has been home to a number of diverse
populations, including Indigenous peoples, African Americans, Hispanics, Japanese
Americans, and European Americans (Wyckoff 1999). The convergence of these groups
was crucial in forming the West’s identity, and yet, was largely unacknowledged until the
late 1980s with the onset of the “new western history” movement (Limerick 1990;
Limerick 2009).

Led by Patricia Nelson Limerick, Richard White, William Cronon, and Donald
Worster, the “new western history” movement recast western history by giving voice to
groups that were often ignored, including women and minorities. Mainly, the movement
challenged the frontier theory, which gives a narrow scope, both in time and place, of the
frontier and argues that American democracy was established through westward
expansion. Scholars that developed the “new western history movement” rejected
outright the idea of the frontier, which they argued, “’is nationalistic and often racist (in
essence, the area where white people get scarce)’” (Limerick 1990:62). Instead, the
movement advocates a more complex understanding of western history.

Although some Western historians acknowledged the importance of varied
perspectives in history, the public’s perception has not shifted so easily. Limerick (2009)
reflects on how difficult it can be to disseminate “new western history,” particularly
within a museum setting. Through her outreach efforts, Limerick discovered that the
public often still favors the exclusionary, romanticized ‘old’ western history (2009). This
divide between the academic and the public makes the presentation of western history
within museums more difficult to negotiate, which is important for understanding Colorado museums.

**Colorado Museums: A Case Study**

History Colorado, however, has attempted to combat these romanticized understandings of western history through their reinvented institution. As was briefly discussed in Chapter 1, the decision to move the Colorado History Museum, which had been in operation for over thirty years since its opening in 1978, came after the museum acknowledged decreasing visitor attendance and interest. As a result, History Colorado was created with a desire to increase membership and attendance, as staff “[wanted] to turn what you expect from a history museum on its head” (Rinaldi 2012). One way the museum attempted to present history in a new and relevant way is through the inclusion of racial and ethnic heritage, making the museum a “place where people experience the past from entirely new perspectives” (Colorado Stories, Denver, CO: History Colorado, n.d).

The movement of the Colorado History Museum and the creation of the History Colorado Center coincided with the overhaul of the state’s historical society, which oversees the museum as well as other local institutions and historic sites. Working to preserve Colorado heritage and material culture, the state historical society amassed collections that include archival materials, ranging from photographs to newspapers; decorative and fine arts; and material culture. Some of this collection is displayed at the History Colorado Center. As a large institution, the museum has its own exhibition and
interpretation department, which worked to create the two core exhibits displayed when the museum opened.

Much like History Colorado, racially and ethnically specific museums in the state can also work to challenge romanticized perceptions of Colorado heritage. Explicitly, racially and ethnically specific museums attempt to give voice to minority groups that have been historically underrepresented or ignored in western history. This desire to correctly represent marginalized groups is reflected by the formation of Museo de las Americas. The museum was incorporated in 1991, but did not gain an exhibition space until 1994 (Museo de las Americas n.d.). The museum was created both to spread an understanding of Latino/a culture to non-Latinos/as, as well as to inspire pride in Latinos/as about their own heritage. As listed on their website, the museum has been a recipient of a number of institutional grants and awards, a point of pride likely because the museum is a small, nonprofit organization.

In spite of its modest size, Museo is home to the second largest collection of Mesoamerican objects in Colorado containing over 4,000 objects that detail Latino/a heritage from Pre-Columbian to contemporary iterations (Museo de las Americas n.d.). These items often serve as the basis of the museum’s exhibitions. The museum currently features two exhibition spaces. The first space houses a permanent collection from a prominent donor that displays arts and crafts from Latin America. The second gallery space, which consists of several small, open rooms, features regularly changing exhibitions. As a smaller museum, Museo has seven staff in total that each heads a
separate department, four of whom are full time (Maruquita Salazar, interview with the author, Museo de las Americas, October 30, 2013).

In representing racial and ethnic heritage in Colorado, both History Colorado and Museo are contributing to the relationship and history of representation in museums. In the opening lines of *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums*, Michael Ames (1992) argues, “Museums are about cannibals and glass boxes” because they “are cannibalistic in appropriating other peoples’ material for their own study and interpretation, and they confine their representations to glass box display cases. There is a glass box for everyone” (Ames 1992:3). Ames’s characterization of museums references the enduring history of power inequality that has defined many museums for much of their existence. Through the construction, representation, and consumption of race, museums and academic disciplines that served them have often supported Ames’s classification of these institutions; by disseminating and reinforcing scientific racism to the public, museums and anthropology often cannibalized non-western groups’ heritages, using them to support social and disciplinary perceptions of race and essentializing them to fit into glass exhibition cases.

The 1960s, however, marked a turning point: across the nation, civil rights movements fought to gain greater political, economic, and social equality for minority groups. In doing so, these movements also called for better and greater representation in museums. In part, civil rights movements led to more democratic and inclusive museum practice, and the emergence of racially and ethnically specific museums. However,
museum controversies throughout the twenty-first century reflect the persisting power imbalance in museums, with these institutions continuing to misrepresent racial groups.

It is in this shift that my research begins with the exploration of the social responsibility movement. In the next chapter I explore the literature surrounding changes in museums, ethics, and their relationship with the public, as well as other pertinent theoretical frames. Using the historical background established in this chapter, I further explore how the history between museums, anthropology, and racial representation have contributed to modern issues and understandings of the ethics of racial representation.
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Changing Roles of Museums

Anthropologist Richard Handler (1993) asserts that museums are inherently social—although museums are often defined by their collections, the objects exhibited in them are shaped by and understood in terms of social relations. Handler goes so far as to define a museum as “an institution in which social relationships are oriented in terms of a collection of objects which are made meaningful through those relationships” (1993:33). As social institutions, museums are constantly altering their purposes, practices, and ideologies to better serve the societies and communities they are situated in (Ames 1992; Conn 2010). Many of the changes museums have undergone have influenced their social functions and their ethical stance on racial representation. As was discussed in the preceding chapter, starting in the 1960s many museums moved towards more socially conscious practice and philosophy. In turn, these shifts in the field raised questions on the true purpose of museums, expanding conversations on how civically engaged, socially responsible, and community-oriented museums should be (Gurian 2010; Silverman 2009).

Multi-Purpose Museums

In reflecting on a career that spans over three decades, museum professional and writer Elaine Heumann Gurian (2006) comments that much of her time in the field has been characterized by an ongoing debate on the definition of museums. This debate stems
largely from the varying functions these institutions encompass. In an attempt to clarify the many roles museums adopt, Gurian outlines five distinct museum types: object-based museums, which focus largely on their collections; narrative museums, whose content is largely story-based; client-centered museums, which focus on a particular audience rather than content; community-centered museums, which have an emphasis on the well-being of their communities; and lastly national museums, which are institutions created by nations to celebrate their accomplishments (2006).

In proposing these categories, however, Gurian argues that definitional boundaries are expanding and blurring. Thus, most museums will have overlapping elements from a number of museum types (Gurian 2006; Gurian 2010). Ultimately, Gurian views this blending of functions positively, noting that it can help to make museums more relevant to society, as they can accommodate a larger visitor base (2006:177). Although Gurian is a proponent of blurring museum boundaries, she does note that no museum can incorporate all functions into their overall purpose (2006:49).

Franz Boas (1907) asserted a similar point in his work on museum administration. He argued that museums could serve three major functions—entertainment, education, and research (1907:921). With these functions in mind, most museums orient exhibitions and collections toward a particular purpose. Yet, in doing so, museums can often pull resources from one function to another (1907:922). In a sense, varying functions within the same institution can be at odds with one another, as museums must prioritize functions.
This competition between functions is often exhibited between the three purposes Boas proposed in his work. Most museums in the United States were created mainly as education or research institutions. As Steven Conn (2010) argues, early American museums reflected both the desire to increase public access to collections and to rationalize and organize the world. Although most museums were founded to be didactic, entertainment has been an equally important function in these institutions. Boas even urged administrators to not underestimate a museum’s place as a recreational institution (1907:921). But for many museums, the incorporation of entertainment is the result of financial constraints; in order to increase visitation, and in turn revenue, providing entertainment for audiences presents a promising fiscal option for museums (Saumarez-Smith 2006; Graburn 2007).

In “Disneyland and the Future of Museum Anthropology,” John Terrell (1991) provides an example of how this conflict between education, entertainment, and research can impact museum work. He argues that the need for museums to serve as sources of entertainment can influence the institutional importance of research, and in turn its place in museum content. Specifically, Terrell discusses his experiences at the Chicago Field Museum. In the 1960s the museum created exhibition and education departments to more readily accommodate entertainment value into their exhibitions. But the formation of these departments widely removed curators from the exhibition development process. Terrell felt that with this loss of academic perspective came a loss of academic honesty and curatorial authority (1991:151).
Reinvented Museums

The question of how well museums can incorporate multiple purposes is complicated by the debate on how socially responsible or civically engaged these institutions should be. Noted in Chapter 2, the call for equality in the 1950s and 1960s contributed to the reassessment of museum practice and the development of more socially conscious museum philosophies. In discussing these more recent alterations, Gail Anderson argues that for many museums at the heart of change “is the desire by museum professionals to position the museum to be relevant and to provide the most good in society” (2004:1). This quote exemplifies that at the root of many of the transformations museums have undergone is a more critical understanding of the relationship between museums and society.

A prime example of these shifts is new museology. As was briefly discussed, new museology is a theoretical and practical approach to museums that seeks to create inclusive, reflective, people-centered institutions through reflexive practice and collaborative work (Vergo 1989; Ames 1992; Davis 2011; Ross 2004). Furthermore, new museology acknowledges underlying assumptions and value systems that can reinforce unequal power dynamics (Marstine 2006). Although new museology is people-centered, it also developed out of necessity. As museums moved from their elitist past, they had to diversify content and practice to accommodate new audiences, and to continue to grow in the face of decreasing financial support (Gurian 2006; Ross 2004).

As is reflected by new museology, establishing relationships with communities is one way that museums are working to remove authoritative power relations (Witcomb
MacDonald and Alsford write, “the forging of constructively cooperative relationships between museums and communities is seen as a way to reverse the alienation of cultural minorities from mainstream museums” (2007:286). In particular, with a community-centered approach it is possible for museums to overcome hegemony by facilitating the voices of marginalized groups (Witcomb 2007). This reversal of power and alienation is being fostered specifically in museums because they are increasingly important institutions for cultural meeting. In a sense, museums are attempting to serve as common places for diverse community members to come together in safe public gatherings spaces in order to build healthy communities (Appleton 2007; Weil 2007).

Duncan Cameron was among the first to explore the use of museums as a space for gathering, debate, and discussion. In 1972 Cameron contended that museums were experiencing an identity crisis. In his well-known piece, “The Museum, a Temple or the Forum,” Cameron notes a distinct change in the contemporary museums of the 1970s, which he states held little resemblance to the traditional, object-based idea of a museum. For Cameron, contemporary museums were mainly distinguished by a shift in an understanding of the purpose of their collections. He argues that when museums shifted from being private to public they gave visitors a degree of power over their collections. In essence, museums became stewards of the public’s collections and curated objects for this audience. With this shift, the museum as a forum was more focused on democratization through discussion and debate. “Forum is where the battles are fought, the temple is where the victors rest” (Cameron 1972:199).
Cameron’s discussion of museums as either temples or forums aligns with the argument made by several authors that museums can function as arenas for power (Pratt 1991; Karp et al. 1992; Boast 2011). In particular, Clifford suggests that museums are “contact zones,” which Mary Louise Pratt originally defined as areas where “cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of power” (1991:34). As such, museums can work to address power dynamics, because from conflict can come dialogue, collaboration, resolution, and change (Boast 2011:60). In a similar vein, Viv Golding introduces the idea of museum frontiers, which she argues are “museums acting in partnership” that can counter othering of groups “by providing a vital reflexive space; where dialogical exchange can replace stereotypical and prejudiced views with greater intercultural understanding” (2007:315). By becoming places of forum, contact, and reflection, museums can work to not only build relations with the community, but they can also work to impart change outside of their institutions.

Because the transformations museums experienced in the past few decades are so marked, several scholars have made a distinction between museums guided by the principles of new museology and institutions that perpetuate institutional superiority (Hooper-Greenhill 2000; Anderson 2004; Smith 2006; Lindauer 2007). In studying shifting paradigms within the museum world, Anderson (2004) names museums that integrate new museology into policy and practice “reinvented museums.” For Anderson, the reinvented museum is distinguished by changes in its values, governance, and priorities. Specifically, reinvented museums value their social responsibility in furthering
public good, have enlightened governance through an understanding and responsible board, and prioritize public good and the visitor.

Similarly, Eileen Hooper-Greenhill (2007) terms museums with a reflexive ideology “post-museums.” In discussing Hooper-Greenhill’s work, Margaret Lindauer (2007) notes that the post-museum is characterized by discursive, democratic, inclusive, and progressive ideologies that contrast modernist museums, which are marked by elitist, exclusive and conservative ideologies. Because there is a great degree of overlap between Anderson’s reinvented museum and Hooper-Greenhill’s post-museum, I use both terms interchangeably throughout this thesis. It should be noted, however, that not all contemporary museums can be categorized as reinvented museums. Though many institutions may recognize the importance of being more reflexive and visitor-centered, not all museums meet these standards in practice. Additionally, even museums that can be classified as post-museums are often faced with practical concerns that may hinder the enactment of new museology.

Social Responsibility

With the addition of community-centered purposes, new museums must often reassess their priorities and the emphasis they place on differing functions. Continuing her engagement in the debate on the definition of museums, Gurian revisited her five museum types in 2010. Subsequently, she argues that museums should give greater attention to the missions and goals of community-centered museums. She goes so far as to propose that museums function as a social service for their audiences, providing benefits like free food or English as Second Language classes for community members
(Gurian 2010). Although Gurian’s proposal may seem radical, her assertion is actually part of a larger movement on civic engagement and social responsibility (Silverman 2009).

In 2002 AAM addressed communities and engagement in their report *Mastering Civic Engagement: A Challenge to Museums*. In the introduction to this report, Ellen Hirzy defines civic engagement:

Civic engagement occurs when museum and community intersect in subtle and overt ways, over time, and as an accepted and natural way of doing business. The museum becomes a center where people gather to meet and converse, a place that celebrates the richness of individual and collective experience, and a participant in collaborative problem solving. It is an active, visible player in civic life, a safe haven, and a trusted incubator of change [2002:9]

Because civic engagement can establish meaningful connections within communities, Carol Scott (2002) argues that this type of community engagement can result in long-term social benefits. She notes that museums engaged with their community can engender dialogue and debate, help to build personal identity, and can provide reverential and commemorative experiences.

A revitalized focus on community engagement is closely linked to museum ethics, as the movement towards more socially conscious work is partially entrenched in a history of unethical museum practice. For Marstine (2006), this relationship makes museum ethics contingent, being conditional and relational to time and place. She argues that today museum ethics are contingent upon the “diverse and ever-shifting communities” museums find themselves in (2011:9). Thus, as museums reassess their
relationships with community, they simultaneously reassess their ethical roles. This reevaluation is reflected in the social responsibility or social justice movement.

Pushing new museology beyond merely institutional transformation, theories on museums as agents of social change assert that museums can be advocates and active proponents of social advancement (Sandell 2002; Janes and Conaty 2005; Marstine 2011). Essentially, a museum’s primary role should be to create a more just society, and to contribute to society’s well being as a whole (Marstine 2011). Socially responsible museums are motivated by engagement with ethical issues and are defined by “democratic pluralism, shared authority and social justice” (Marstine 2011:10).

According to Sandell, the social responsibility movement “can be linked to new approaches to social history curation that gained momentum in the early 1980s and that sought to present the histories of previous marginalized groups” (2002:20). By doing so, socially responsible museums are moving from “instilling a sense of morality and good behaviour to fostering an acceptance of cultural diversity” (Cameron 2007:337). Importantly, Lindauer (2007) contends that most museums cannot single-handedly bring about change, but rather can only do so with help from other museums and institutions. Therefore, change requires complete commitment throughout the field and a radical reassessment of museums’ purpose in society.

One museum that institutionalized the ideas of the social responsibility movement is the Tenement Museum in New York City. According to Maggie Russell-Ciardi, the museum’s former director of education, the museum’s mission “is to promote tolerance and historical perspective through the presentation and interpretation of the variety of
immigrant and migrant experiences on Manhattan’s Lower East Side” in an “effort to break down stereotypes about immigrants and to draw attention to the connections between immigrant experiences past and present” (2008:40). This institutional mission shows a strong desire to change social perceptions, and reflects the social responsibility movement in that the museum views itself as a space that is capable of being active in bringing about this change. A main way the museum works to change views on immigration is through their programming. For example, the museum’s *Kitchen Conversations* program, which follows tours of the tenement apartments, allows visitors to engage in an ongoing public dialogue on immigration. The museum initiated the program with the hopes of addressing ignorance on the topic through a forum, and feels it has been successful in doing so (Abram 2007).

**How Much Change Can Museums Bring About?**

Even though the Tenement Museum provides an example of a socially responsible museum, Shelia Watson (2007) reminds that “the relationship museums have with their communities must be based on the recognition that this is an unequal one, with the balance of power heavily tipped in favour of the institution” (Watson 2007:9). While museums may attempt to move away from being viewed as an authority, they often still command great respect and trust with the public, and this position can make it difficult for museum professionals to foster true collaboration with communities and relinquish their ‘expert’ stance. Ultimately, the museum often remains the final authority on exhibition themes and interpretation, mediums and design, and execution of tasks (Watson 2007:11). As a result, many museums tend to use consultation with community
members as support, rather than as actual collaboration or co-curation (Peers and Brown 2003). This reluctance to disperse power can present an important challenge for museums as they try to change dynamics with the communities they serve, so much so that Stephen Weil argues, “the change in this relationship must be understood as a revolution in the most fundamental sense of that term” (2007:32)

Weil’s assertion is important to consider because a museum’s refusal to relinquish authority can be a main hindrance in developing socially responsible practice. This difficulty is reflected in Bernadette Lynch’s (2011) case studies. She argues that museums often cannot reach a level of contact because of a fear of conflict, as true contact zones can be places of high emotion and at times anger. In response to the intensity of these interactions, museum professionals often close rank in an attempt to maintain control and professionalism. Additionally, because of the practical pressures of museum work, collaboration can be rushed and superficial. For these reasons, museums tend to stay in a ‘comfort zone.’ In order to understand these limitations, Lynch urges museum workers to consider privilege and to recognize their positions in relation to community collaborators.

Lynch and Samuel J.M.M. Alberti (2010) provide an example of these complex issues in their case study of Revealing Histories: Myths about Race, which was an exhibition featured at the Manchester Museum in Manchester, England commemorating the bicentenary of the abolition of the Slave Trade Act. Though the museum set out to make a collaborative exhibition, consulting with a number of diaspora communities, collaboration turned out to be more difficult than anticipated; there was little agreement
among groups as to how to present the exhibit, and as the curator of the exhibit noted, the staff “underestimated the emotional complexity of the issues for all involved” (Lynch and Alberti 2010:28). Because the museum wanted to avoid conflicting views, they ultimately were unable to engage with these varying perspectives. Lynch and Alberti argue that with increased collaboration there is a need for “radical trust,” which asserts a shared authority with collaborators.

Because it can be challenging to move beyond a comfort zone, several scholars question the efficacy of the social responsibility paradigm, inquiring how much change museums can truly impart (Silverman 2009). Robert Janes (2007) notes that even with strides in individual museums, visitor profiles on the whole have not changed greatly, implying that museums are not reaching a wide audience or becoming more inclusive. He argues that a “traditional visitor profile” is still marked by high income and education (2007:138).

Similarly, some authors argue that it is idealistic to assume that museums can have a great impact on a societal level (Hooper Greenhill 2000; Sandell 2002). Even with a more inclusive visitor base, “It is, of course, naïve to imagine that purposefully inclusive museum displays can guide visitors, without resistance or question, towards preordained opinions and engender within them specific values” (Sandell 2002:15). Because visitors enter an exhibit with previous knowledge and prejudices, it is fair to argue that a single visit will not overturn engrained ideas. It can, however, lead visitors to challenge, question, and perhaps modify their views. In this sense, “social responsibility
requires an acknowledgement of the meaning-making potential of the museum and imperative to utilize that to positive social ends” (Sandell 2002:19).

David Fleming (2002) raises similar points in “Positioning the Museum for Social Inclusion.” He asserts that museums are not often positioned to contribute to social inclusion because of several structural impediments. First, museums often struggle to impart change because of their leadership. Traditionally, museum jobs are held by individuals with higher education, which often translates into wealthier, European-Americans. Thus, staff composition is often not diverse, and may not reflect the variation found in museum communities. Second, social responsibility can be hindered by what museums contain. Fleming argues that collections limit museums from assembling items that are fully representative of the people, place and/or time they come from. Hopper-Greenhill furthers this point by saying that “the ways in which objects are selected, put together, and written or spoken about have political effects”; museums use of the object and their interpretive framework “can open up or close down historical, social and cultural possibilities” (2000:8).

Lastly, Fleming argues that museums are impacted by how and for whom they are run. In this point, Fleming argues that dominant stakeholders can impede museums’ abilities to act as agent of social change, as stakeholder agendas may not align with the goals of the movement. The points raised against the social responsibility paradigm present many of the pragmatic aspects of museum work that can influence the implementation of the movement’s principles.
Understanding and Studying Heritage

The structural impediments Fleming discusses can also influence the construction and presentation of heritage. Like the museums that exhibit it, heritage is complex, multivocal, and dynamic; as an active process, heritage is constantly being constructed and negotiated, and varies based on time, place, and perspective (Smith 2006). These differences in viewpoints can influence relationships between museums and the communities they exhibit. Furthermore, the dynamic and relational nature of heritage makes it difficult to define. As Rodney Harrison (2013) outlines, definitions of heritage can often be ambiguous and overly broad. Heritage was historically defined in terms of lineage, conveying inheritance, descent, and legacy within families (Boda 2012). This definition of heritage, however, was expanded and applied to larger social scales in which the idea of personal lineage aligned with public heritage so that collectively it became “an elite crusade to save and celebrate the past” (Butler 2006:467). It is important to highlight that in this definition and application, heritage was limited to upper class, western citizens.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the definition of heritage continued to expand with the onset of nationalism. In Europe heritage was used to establish invented traditions to help solidify rising and changing nation-states. This form of heritage created a meta-narrative that bound groups and legitimized claims to territories (Smith 2006). With this use, the state became important in the creation and control of heritage. But as nation-states solidified, and European states began to decolonize,
heritage became more democratic. In part, the more people who engaged with the idea of heritage, the less esoteric it becomes (Lowenthal 1996).

In recent years heritage has also received a great deal of scholarly attention, which contributed to more standardized definitions of the concept. Modern incarnations of heritage are often divided into two main definitions and uses: its practical and its theoretical definitions (Harrison 2013). Though these definitions overlap in many ways, they have different implications and applications. In its practical application, heritage is objectified, applied to an item or concept that can be obtained, possessed, and maintained. This definition is utilized in heritage management, helping to determine what objects, places, or cultural components have value and should be protected.

The concept of heritage as a ‘thing’ has grown to include anything from the solid to the ethereal (Harrison 2013) a shift that shows that the interpretation and meaning of heritage is open to change (Lowenthal 1996; Smith 2006). This new perspective was outlined in the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. In this Convention, heritage that was eligible for UNESCO protection consisted solely of cultural heritage, including monuments, groups of buildings, sites, and natural heritage, including natural features, geological and physiographical formations, and natural sites (UNESCO 2013).

But as Harrison (2013) argues, heritage is ubiquitous, meaning it cannot be confined to physical things. As a result, the definition of heritage was expanded to include intangible heritage, which refers to cultural traditions, practices, and experiences passed down between generations that are not physically bounded. After several meetings
and discussions, UNESCO held the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Smith and Akagawa 2008). During the Convention, a committee on the topic argued that tangible heritage was historically favored over intangible heritage. This favoritism worked to ascribe meaning and value to objects and sites, and reflected western approaches to the overall preservation of heritage (Munjeri 2004). Upon hearing these arguments, UNESCO approved and adopted the convention’s ratifications, which now consider the protection and importance of intangible heritage. Although a distinction is often made between tangible and intangible heritage, Laurajane Smith (2006) argues that all heritage is intangible, as even tangible heritage is embedded with tradition, experience, and meaning. She asserts that what makes tangible heritage valuable is the meaning and importance it is given in modern times.

Complementary to the applied definition of heritage is its scholarly definition. In this iteration, heritage is not considered a ‘thing,’ but rather is viewed “as a cultural and social process, which engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage in the present” (Smith 2006:2). For the purpose of this study I use Brian Graham and Peter Howards’ definition, conceptualizing heritage as “the ways in which very selective past material artefacts, natural landscapes, mythologies, memories and traditions become cultural, political and economic resources in the present” (2008:2). This definition encompasses both forms of heritage, but also reflects how heritage is an “act of communication and meaning-making” that is culturally constructed and historically situated (Smith 2006:2; Graburn 2007). Rather than being an essentialist paradigm, which presents heritage as static, this definition characterizes heritage as
dialogical, meaning it can be renegotiated and reconstructed through interaction (Boda 2012).

Additionally, Graham and Howard’s definition presents heritage as a plural construction, having both multiple users and producers. Because “one of the primary functions of a museum is to preserve and display the heritage of the specific social groups which form its clientele” (Graburn 2007:129), museums can be considered cultural tools that facilitate the processes of heritage construction, use, and meaning making (Smith 2006:4). In particular, museums determine what aspects of the past should be valued, remembered, and preserved, and therefore, are principal agents for defining culture (MacDonald and Alsford 2007: 276). In this thesis I argue that exhibitions are presenting, and in some ways constructing heritage. As such, exhibits can be analyzed as a form of heritage in conversation with other constructions of heritage, such as oral history or community narrative.

This dialogue between heritages is reflected in the concepts of official and unofficial heritage. As Sara McDowell (2008) argues, official heritage is often controlled and legitimized by the state or nation, making unofficial heritage oppositional. Official heritage can be defined by law and linked to state-led procedures, as “a set of professional practices that are authorised by the state and motivated by some form of legislation and written charter” (Harrison 2013:14). Additionally, official heritage generally extols dominant virtues and ideologies related to nationalism, such as patriotism and valor (Lindauer 2007; Hanna 2008). This form of heritage, however, can be an important means of representation, as inclusion in a museum can serve to legitimize
groups and their histories. “At one level, heritage is about the promotion of a consensus version of history, by state-sanctioned cultural institutions and elites to regulate cultural and social tensions in the present” (Smith 2006:4). Therefore, the inclusion of minority groups in official heritage can reflect an important acknowledgement in their contribution to larger narratives.

Official heritage, however, is not all encompassing, meaning there is always space for opposition or counter-hegemony that can exist in both formal and informal forms (Robertson 2012). Unofficial heritage can be a “broad range of practices that are represented using the language of heritage, but are not recognized by official forms of legislation” (Harrison 2013:15). But as McDowell notes, local groups who construct unofficial heritage consider it to be just as valid as official heritage. This idea is reflected in the concept of “heritage from below,” which argues that there is a need to uncover and maintain the history and heritage of overlooked groups (Robertson 2012:146). This dichotomy of official and unofficial heritage is important for comparing state museums, which often depict official heritage, to community museums, which often depict unofficial heritage in an attempt to legitimize it.

Some of these practical issues surrounding the representation of official and unofficial heritages are raised by Viv Szekers (2002) in her work on creating the Migration Museum in Adelaide, Australia. The museum was originally developed to represent and tell the stories of the many immigrant populations that were foundational to the development of Australia, but have often been overlooked in national narratives. In
attempting to represent so many racial and ethnic groups, a major consideration for Szekers was what to include in the museum. She notes:

> In representing people’s real experiences, histories and identities the museum not only had problems between what is public and what is private, but also between competing versions of history amongst communities, particularly if they had been enemies centuries before [Szekers 2002:237]

Because of this multivocality, Szekers took an ideological stance from the beginning that the museum would be sympathetic to immigrant populations, choosing this identity as a singular voice to focus on.

**New Perspectives on Race**

The distinction between official and unofficial heritage often splinters across racial and ethnic lines. Because official heritage aligns with dominant ideology and narratives, it also often aligns with dominant racial or ethnic groups. Conversely, unofficial heritages tend to belong to marginalized racial and ethnic groups. As such, race and ethnicity are important to consider in heritage construction. But these concepts and associated racial ideology have undergone significant changes since their earliest representations in museums.

As was noted, the AAA asserted that race is a social construct, rather than a biological concept (1998). Even so, the perception of race as biologically based persists in the public, and with it the belief that racial categories are legitimate. Although these categories are still prominent, the expression, understanding, and implications of race have changed over time. Mainly, following the end of the Jim Crow era there was a slow shift from “old-fashioned” racism to “new racism.” In general, old-fashioned racism is
marked by overt, *de jure* forms of discrimination, whereas new racism refers to more recent, subtle forms of racial inequality (Bonilla-Silva 2001).

Martin Barker (1981) originally used the term ‘new racism,’ applying it in his analysis of immigration policy in Britain during the 1980s. In this work, Barker argues that racism is concealed in seemingly innocent language that works to bind groups through a shared feeling of sameness and the acknowledgement of difference in other groups. This feeling of homogeneity can lead to the desire to become a part of a particular group and to maintain boundaries from other groups. Though Barker first used the term new racism, his ideas fit more closely with what is now considered old-fashioned racism. Therefore, for my application of the term, I turn to more modern scholars on the topic.

I employ the concept of new racism as discussed by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. Bonilla-Silva argues that after the Civil-Rights era, the United States was ushered into a period of new racism. Because of Civil Rights efforts, which removed *de jure* segregation, overt and institutionalized forms of old-fashioned racism were no longer socially acceptable. But rather than merely disappearing, racism simply became subtler. For example, before the Civil Rights movement housing segregation occurred with advertised exclusion of groups and legal separation of African Americans. With new racism, however, physical segregation can occur when certain racial groups are quoted higher rent rates in order to steer them away from or into particular neighborhoods (Bonilla-Silva 2006). As expressed by this example, the concept of new racism argues that racism is increasingly covert, avoids racial terminology, and has seemingly invisible
mechanisms that reproduce it (Bonilla-Silva 2003:272; Bonilla-Silva 2006). Further, new racism can result in a pervasive color-blind racism, which comes from the denial of race and racism in the U.S. (Bonilla-Silva 2003).

As such, new racism is also closely related to discourse, because language is slippery, contradictory, and subtle (Bonilla-Silva 2001). In his research Bonilla-Silva found that students he interviewed used a rhetorical move he termed “Anything but Race” in which interviewees dismissed the roles of race and racism in everyday life with phrases like “is not a prejudice thing” or “race never came into play” (2006:62-63). In doing so, respondents subtly hid the role of race in their interactions and showed internal contradictions with their perceptions of race and racism. A main discourse surrounding new racism, however, explores the concepts of tradition and “American” values. In particular, this discourse attempts to root itself in American heritage by connecting European-Americans with positive, traditional, American values like a nuclear family and places minority groups in opposition to these values.

Although new racism presents a compelling understanding of race, it is not without critique. A main critique of this concept is that there is not a distinctive difference between old-fashioned racism and new racism. In this critique authors argue that old-fashioned racism was never as overt as theorists claim, and that modern forms of racism are not as subtle either (Leach 2005). Another main critique of new racism is that it is not dichotomous to old-fashioned racism (Virtanen and Huddy 1998). While this may be the case, authors on the topic, including Bonilla-Silva, do not deny overlap between these concepts.
As this chapter reveals, changes in social ideologies are important and potentially influential in the museum world. As social institutions, museums are responsive to both community and societal needs. This reactivity is best reflected in changing understandings of museums purpose. Largely, museums are impacted by their relationships with community, and an increasing importance of this relationship contributed to the movement toward more socially conscious philosophy and practice. As such, these institutions continue to consider their role in the construction in social perceptions, such as understandings of heritage and race. Informed by the literature discussed in this chapter, in the following chapter I present the methods I utilized in my research.
CHAPTER 4: METHODS AND THEORY

Museums as Field Sites

In *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums*, Ames (1992) urges anthropologists to turn their observational gaze upon themselves. In line with the disciplinary shifts discussed in Chapter 2, Ames acknowledges the role that both anthropology and museums had in legitimizing ‘The Other’ through study and display (1992:14). He argues, however, that by shifting research focuses to critically analyze museums, anthropologists can better situate these institutions in social, economic, and political contexts (1992:5). In turn, researchers can begin to understand “how the display of objects transforms them into cultural valuables, illuminating the social and political processes taking place behind the scenes” (Bouquet 2012:3).

What Ames outlines in his work is museum ethnography. This form of research utilizes anthropological methods within museum settings to garner an in-depth understanding of cultural phenomena, paying “particular attention to the visual and material qualities of objects and their effects in specific contexts of practice” (Bouquet 2012:4). Mary Bouquet (2012) argues that anthropology is particularly well suited for the study of museums because it has largely visual methods. Through varying degrees of observation and participation, interviews, and oral histories, anthropologists can work to uncover cultural assumptions encoded in museums (Karp and Lavine 1991; Lidchi 1997). With
this approach, museums become “artefacts of society, as exhibits in their own right, to see what can be learned about them and, through them, about ourselves” (Ames1992:14).

Because of their academic basis, and often object-centered nature and organization, museums are an essential source of ethnographic understanding (Nanda 2012:72).

In keeping with and contributing to this continually developing field that uses museums as research sites, this thesis similarly employs anthropological methods to explore two Colorado museums. Using the History Colorado Center and Museo de las Americas as field sites, I conducted interviews and observations to assess how the social responsibility paradigm is or is not being adapted into everyday museum work—as a reminder, the social responsibility paradigm asserts that museums can be active agents of change, using their positions to fight injustice and inequity. In this chapter I outline the questions that guided my research, methods that dictated data collection, and theoretical work that informs my analysis.

Research Design

My project is a comparative case study that analyzes two Colorado museums within a greater U.S. context. As a case study, my research focuses on a particular unit of investigation, in this instance a museum, and provides an in-depth exploration of this site. As a comparative study, my research further explores patterns and similarities between sites (LeCompte and Schensul 2010). This comparative analysis is meant to assess how different types of museums and their associated focus, purpose, and work influence the representation of race and ethnicity and the expression of museum ethics. It should be noted, however, that my use of a comparative approach is not meant to imply hierarchy,
but rather distinguishes museums based on their size, staff, funding, use of collections, and purpose.

In conducting my research, I was guided by the question: How do museums and museum professionals understand and enact the social responsibility paradigm in representing racial and ethnic heritages? Sub-questions I explored included:

a. Do museum professionals consider the ethics of representation? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?

b. In what ways is the social responsibility paradigm being used, recognized, or adapted? More specifically, does it translate into exhibitions and programs?

c. Who makes the decisions when representing racial and ethnic heritage? How do these decision-makers select what and how to represent these heritages?

d. What is the museum “saying” about racial and ethnic heritage through their exhibitions?

With these questions in mind, the first museum I chose to include in my study was History Colorado. I chose this museum, because it reflects a more traditional institution in terms of its larger size, greater funding, and professional staff composition (Ambrose and Cripsin 2012). This mainstream organization is in part the result of its affiliation with the state’s historical society. The museum also features a number of racial and ethnic stories that were integral to the opening of the new museum space. Because History Colorado focuses largely on intangible heritage, such as memory, story, and tradition, I
define the museum as a narrative museum (Gurian 2006). The secondary importance of collections is reflected in the museum’s limited object displays and greater reliance on videos, audio, and interactive exhibits.

The second institution I selected for my comparison was Museo de las Americas, which is a non-profit, ethnically specific, art museum. As was discussed in Chapter 2, ethnically or racially specific museums display a distinct group history or culture, and are often run by people who ascribe to that group identity. Additionally, these institutions often lack the same amount of funding, professional staff, and connections of larger museums (Kurin 1997; Pieterse 2005). This pattern is true for Museo, which has seven staff in total that each heads a separate department. Using Gurian’s (2006) typology, I would further classify Museo as an object-based museum because its exhibitions, though conceptually narrative-driven, focus on objects and generally offer little interpretation or narrative around collections. I selected Museo because I thought it would provide an interesting contrast to History Colorado, as it is smaller, has a different purpose and function, and is a different type of museum. To understand the practical applications of the social responsibility paradigm at History Colorado and Museo, I analyzed two main features of museum work: exhibitions and programming.

Interviews

I conducted my research during the summer of 2013, with preliminary research occurring in the winter and spring of the same year. I began my research by interviewing several staff members at both History Colorado and Museo. From July to November 2013 I conducted seven semi-structured interviews in which I prepared questions for each
interview, but allowed a degree of flexibility and flow during the actual interview process. Interview questions were tailored to each individual, but I also had several questions that I posed to all interviewees. I made initial contact for each interview through email, using institutional websites to gain access to museum-related email accounts.

As a larger institution, History Colorado has a separate exhibition department, which is where I focused my interviewee selection process. Specifically, I contacted staff involved in creating the thematic and interpretive aspects of exhibitions. From this population I interviewed William (Bill) Convery, the State Historian and Director of Exhibits & Interpretation, Shannon Voirol, Senior Exhibition Developer, and Kathryn Hill, Chief Operating Officer. Although I conducted three interviews at the museum, I mainly cite Convery and Hill, who worked more closely on the exhibitions I analyze.

At Museo, I also conducted a total of three interviews. Because of the smaller staff size, each staff member I contacted was the head of her department. I chose to contact individuals directly related to exhibition and program development. I conducted two in-person interviews, and one email interview. I interviewed Maruca Salazar, the museum’s Director and Chief Curator, and Maruquita Salazar, who is the Education Coordinator and Maruca’s daughter\(^2\), in person. Additionally, I conducted an email interview with Tricia Schmuki, the Development Manager.

I also conducted one phone interview with David Halaas, who is the former Research Director, Curator, and State Historian at Colorado History, the museum that

\(^2\) For clarity, from this point on I refer to both women by either their first or full names.
preceded History Colorado. A faculty member put me in touch with Halaas, and as with other interviewees I emailed him to make initial contact. Halaas now works as a consultant for the Northern Cheyenne-Arapahoe tribe, who are currently consulting with History Colorado to redesign the Sand Creek Massacre story in the *Colorado Stories* exhibit. Even though Halaas is not affiliated with either of the institutions I researched, he does provide both an insider and outsider perspective on the work being done at History Colorado, and also on the general topic of the representation of racial and ethnic heritage.

Exhibitions

After conducting interviews, I analyzed three exhibitions again from July to November 2013. At History Colorado, I selected two out of three core exhibitions for analysis: *Colorado Stories* and *Destination Colorado*. I chose these exhibits because they feature racial and ethnic stories, and they were core exhibits when the museum opened. *Destination Colorado* is located on the first floor of the museum, and is a re-creation of Keota, a homesteading community in southern Colorado that was active in the early twentieth century. *Colorado Stories* appears on the second floor of the museum, and consists of eight stories that span time, place, and topic. The final exhibition included in my analysis is *La Cocina*, which was the featured exhibit at Museo when I conducted my field research in the fall of 2013. *La Cocina* discusses food, cooking, and the kitchen, and their places in Mexican heritage. I only analyzed one exhibition at Museo because it was the only exhibit installed when I completed my research, as its running time was extended beyond its initial schedule.
Additional Sources

Final sources of data included institutional websites and museum documents. I used these sources to analyze each museum’s mission statement, as well as their programming efforts. Both History Colorado and Museo have public websites, which provide information on their histories, missions, collections, and exhibits and programs. Websites can be an important source of information, as they present a public expression of the museum’s work, purpose, and goals. Bouquet notes museums often use websites to project themselves for potential audiences, and in turn, make themselves highly visible and part of cultural arenas (2012:4).

Finally, I had access to several institutional documents that I received from individuals I interviewed. These documents mainly provided information on institutional philosophies and informed my analysis of this topic. From History Colorado I received their front-end evaluation summary for the Colorado Stories exhibit, as well as the exhibition department’s value statement. From Museo I had access to program brochures.

Methods for Data Analysis

Institutional Philosophy

To assess my guiding question—which asks how museums and museum professionals understand and enact the social responsibility paradigm in representing racial and ethnic heritages—I began my data analysis by exploring institutional philosophy with regards to social responsibility. According to museum consultant and writer Cecilia Garibay (2007), institutional philosophy—or “internal culture” as she terms it—refers to a museum’s core values and purpose. To assess this internal culture, I
analyzed mission statements, as posted on museum websites, and staff perspectives, as garnered from interviews.

My analysis of these two aspects of institutional philosophy was guided by Robert Janes’s (2007) tenets for socially responsible museums. Janes argues that to be a socially responsible museum, an institution must have four main principles present in their work: idealism, intimacy, depth, and interconnectedness. Janes defines idealism as a constant awareness and concern with how things could be and acting on these beliefs, rather than merely accepting how things are. Intimacy refers to communication and the quality of contact both within and outside of the museum. Depth is achieved by being thorough and complete, which comes from thinking, questioning, and reflecting. Finally, interconnectedness shows a growing societal awareness of the deep connections within society and using these relationships for well-being. Janes also argues that there should be shared purposes, active experimentation and risk taking that confronts the traditional belief that museums are the authority. All of these tenets can be achieved from reaching out to the community, and having openness and transparency in the institution.

Exhibitions

Using this institutional philosophy as a frame, I continued my research by analyzing exhibitions, which are the foci of this thesis. As was discussed in Chapter 2, historically, exhibits served as an important means of conveying racial ideology. In part, this use of exhibits was possible because they can serve as a means of cultural communication and meaning making. According to Stuart Hall, exhibitions can function as “systems of representation,” which are the processes through which meaning and
language are connected to culture (1997:15-17). For Henrietta Lidchi (1997), this process occurs through encoding and decoding of meanings; in order for museums to facilitate visitors’ understandings of objects—or their ability to decode exhibition text—museums must first encode objects with their interpretation or meaning, choosing to emphasize or exclude particular topics or points (166). By doing so, exhibitions become reflective of a particular time, place, and culture.

What Hall and Lidchi express in their understandings of representation and exhibitions is a constructionist approach, which asserts that language users create representations, rather than reflecting or imposing meaning (Hall 1997:25; Lidchi 1997). Bouquet expands on this concept, noting, “constructionist approaches focus on the internal creation of meaning through design and display methods, which naturalize and legitimate selected meanings” (2012:121). As such, exhibits resemble text and can be read as a system of representation that is governed by relationships of knowledge and power (Hall 1997; Bouquet 2012:121).

In analyzing exhibits, my research is informed by the theories of Pierre Bourdieu. Specifically, I use his concepts regarding the relationship between language, power, and the construction of culture. In “Structures, Habitus, Practices” Bourdieu (1980) famously expands on the concept of habitus, which he defines as the structures and dispositions that generate and organize individual and group practices. Because habitus structures the world, it shapes how an individual understands and interacts with his or her world. For Bourdieu, habitus is encoded in the physical body and mind of the individuals that it helps to organize, and is importantly a product of history. Bourdieu stresses the impact of
social and historical context, which is important when considering racial representation and social responsibility in museums, both of which are influenced by historical precedent. Lastly, Bourdieu argues that embodiment can make subconscious or forgotten histories cognizant. For my research, I consider museum text as a means of encoding habitus.

**Narrative Analysis**

The first aspect of exhibitions I analyzed was narrative construction. Specifically, I employed narrative analysis, which explores the ways in which stories are told in a particular way to particular recipients. With this analysis, narratives are viewed as interactional and contextual (Gee 2010; Partridge 2012). In considering museum text as narrative, I analyze different sections of the exhibition as different parts of a story. For example, the abstract, which I equated with introductory panels, foretells the story and what messages readers should garner from it, whereas the coda signals the end of a narrative and a return to the conversational present (Partridge 2012). From this analysis I wanted to gain an understanding of the major themes and take-away messages presented in each exhibit. In other words, this analysis attempts to answer my sub-question of what museums are “saying” through their exhibitions.

As part of my narrative analysis, I incorporate discourse analysis, which is “the study of language at use in the world, not just to say things, but to do things” (Gee 2010:ix). Like narrative analysis, discourse analysis stresses the significance of context, which is particularly important for my research, as the museum context can establish specific power dynamics between readers and writers (Lidchi 1997). In his work on
discourse analysis methods, James Paul Gee (2010) notes that it is important to ask what speakers are trying to do with what they are saying. Gee also notes that language can be used to build and reproduce specific worlds, such as the academic world of anthropology. In this respect, museums can be seen as places that convert very specific worlds into what Gee has termed the “life world” or the everyday world.

My narrative analysis centers largely on overarching themes constructed in exhibitions. Therefore, I chose to only analyze labels that contribute to overall narrative or major themes within each exhibit. For example in studying the Bent’s Fort section of Colorado Stories, I decided not to include a label that discussed the archaeology at the site. While this particular label provides context and history for the Fort, it does not contribute to the overall narrative of diversity at this site and does not offer much thematic content.

For each label included in my analysis, I interpreted it based on the following parameters discussed by Gee: context, in which I explored where the label fell in relations to others, both in terms of physical and narrative location; subject, in which I analyzed the focus of the label; and topic and themes, in which I explored the main thematic movements of a label. The bulk of my analysis, however, came from using Gee’s building tools, which are language tools we utilize to construct our world and our perceptions of it. These tools helped me to determine what each label and the overall narrative was doing, and how text may or may not reflect the social responsibility paradigm at work. In total Gee outlines seven tools:
1. Significance: how language is used to build importance of certain things and not others

2. Activities: how language is used to build, enact, or recognize activities or practices, and who supports these activities

3. Identities: how language is used to recognize, enact, or have the listener “take up” specific identities

4. Relationships: how language is used to create, change, or maintain relationships with the speaker, other people, groups, cultures, or institutions

5. Politics (the distribution of social goods): how language is used to build views on how social goods are or should be distributed

6. Connections: how language is used to create connections or disconnections between things

7. Sign Systems and knowledge: how language is used to privilege or exclude certain ways of knowing [2010:32-36]

In conjunction with these tools, I analyzed narrative at History Colorado using Thomas Schlereth’s (2004) six history fallacies. In his work Schlereth argues that museums often present history as 1) progress; 2) patriotism; 3) nostalgia; 4) consensus; 5) simplicity; and/or 6) about money. I chose to analyze narrative using these fallacies, because the presentation of history along these lines can work to perpetuate stereotypes and overshadow the complexity of the past, as was the case with the romanticization of western history discussed in Chapter 2.
Lastly, I explore museum narrative in terms of “new racism.” Specifically, I look for the presence of new racism discourse, which as discussed in the previous chapter are subtle forms of language that often deny the existence of race and its impact. Looking for the presence of new racism discourse is important because the perpetuation of stereotypes through representation can lead to discrimination, and conversely the combating of stereotypes can lead to social change. As described by Teun A. van Dijk:

In the system of racism, thus, racist stereotypes, prejudices and ideologies explain why and how people engage in discriminatory practices in the first place, for instance because they think that the Others are inferior (less intelligent, less competent, less modern, and so on), have fewer rights, or that ‘We’ have priority for a house or a job. These beliefs or social representations many members of the dominant (white) ingroup have about immigrants and minorities are largely derived from discourse [2000:36]

Spatial Analysis

A second parameter I used to analyze exhibitions is space. With this parameter, I focus on how the use of re-creations and embodiment further the meaning of an exhibition. I wanted to include considerations of physical space, because it is an important design element in the three exhibitions studied, as each uses re-creations, sound, and significant layout. In studying space in exhibitions, I sought to answer three questions: How are racial and ethnic narratives presented through the physical elements of the exhibition? How do interactive and sensory features contribute to physical and ideological landscapes? And in turn, how might visitors embody these landscapes? Again these questions attempt to answer my question of what each exhibit is “saying.”

My spatial analysis was informed by Keith Basso’s work *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (1996). In his ethnography Basso
explores the concept of place-making, in which people retrospectively build worlds through remembrance and language (1996:5). Through this process, people are able to construct a particular history, and through a consensual acceptance, legitimize it. As such, place-making can also be a means of reviving histories, and associated identities. Basso notes, “we are, in a sense, the place-worlds we imagine” (1996:7). In representing heritage, and re-creating spaces or histories, museums can take part in this place-making, using memory to build particular worlds and to construct meaning around space.

With place-making in process, I viewed each exhibit as an encoded, embodied landscape. As a landscape, an exhibit can be understood as “a historic document that tells a story—actually multiple stories—about the people who created the landscape and the cultural context in which that landscape was embedded” (Lewis 2003:86). Because spatial layout, design, or built environment can contribute to the story of an exhibit, exhibitions can be understood as encoded spaces. In this sense, the “physical, spatial and temporal organization” of these spaces “encode information, which is to say, they communicate” (Pellow 2003:160). Furthermore, because the three exhibits I explored utilize re-creations and soundscapes, I viewed each exhibit as an embodied space. As Lisa Law (2005) notes, “…senses are far from innocent; they are a situated practice that can shed light on the way bodies experience different spaces of culture” (2005:225). Bourdieu also notes the importance of embodiment in solidifying histories in people, and as such embodiment can be important for social responsibility, as museums can use these means to further the connection between visitors and content.
Conceptualizing exhibitions as encoded, embodied landscapes; I analyzed exhibits across several perspectives, or readers. First, to contextualize the exhibit, I assessed it through the perspective of the people who constructed it. This perspective was obtained through interviews with staff. With this context, I conducted my own reading of the exhibit through sensory and spatial observations within the exhibition. During these observations I focused on the built environment, mainly the re-creation of place, and sensory elements, mainly soundscapes. Conducting sensory observations was meant to garner a holistic understanding of the exhibition, as experience within the space “involves constant shifts in sensory figures and grounds, constant potentials for multisensory or cross-sensory interactions or correspondences” (Feld, 2005:180).

Visual Representation Analysis

The final parameter I include in my exhibition analysis is visual. Using theory and methods from visual anthropology, which is concerned with the study of visual culture, I assess the ways in which visual representations convey meaning and contribute to narrative. I analyze two means of visual representation: photographs and film. I chose to include this analysis, because visual representation can be a powerful means through which racial ideology can be conveyed, and in a museum context, can be an important means of conveying information and eliciting emotion. For example, in her work on the controversy surrounding Into the Heart of Africa, Shelly Ruth Butler (1999) discusses how the inclusion of photographs taken by missionaries and colonizers were meant to convey the power behind colonial gaze and the lack of agency among the colonized. But
the presentation of these visual representations, which lacked context for the images, did not help to bring attention to these power dynamics (1999:45).

The result of both the images themselves and their use in Into the Heart of Africa reflect the understanding of visual representation as expressed by Elizabeth Edwards, who informed my visual analysis of photographs. Specifically, Edwards explores the use of photography in anthropological museums and its contribution to power dynamics. In her work Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology, and Museums Edwards states, “I want to consider particular roles of photographs in inscribing, constituting and suggesting pasts…My basic question is: what kind of past is inscribed in photographs? What is the affective tone through which they project the past into the present?” (2001:5). She defines photographs specifically as “raw histories” in that they can show the world in an unprocessed and even painful way.

In analyzing photographs and film I also drew upon work from Marcus Banks. In discussing the work of Elizabeth Chaplin, Banks notes that visual representations have three important properties: their form is often not dictated by what is represented, but rather is often determined by conventions; they are embedded, reflecting social contexts; and they have an intentional force that often elicits an intended response from viewers (Banks 2007:15-16). Importantly, these priorities work to expose power relations, the impact of context, and the relationship between those represented, creators, and consumers. I assessed visual representations along these parameters. Further, to expand on the importance of context, I included an analysis of content. As Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (2004) describe, image content is the simplest and most intuitive way we
think about visual representations, and as such is a defining quality. Pulling these understandings of visual representations together, I analyzed exhibition images, including still photographs, films, and mixed-media creations, in terms of their relationships, content, context, and potential meaning.

Program Analysis

The last aspect of museum work I explore is programming. As noted, the data collection for this analysis came largely from websites and interviews. Because program analysis is a smaller focus of my research, and because each museum has a wide range of programming, I did not intentionally or systematically attend programs while conducting my field research. While conducting other observations, however, I did observe several in-exhibit programs at History Colorado, and the topic came up several times during interviews. I used institutional websites to gain a better understanding of the programs offered at each institution, to whom they were marketed, and how they could potentially be used as platforms for engendering social change. For Museo, which has a primarily educational mission, I got a more in-depth perspective on programs from my interview with the Education Coordinator. My goal in analyzing this aspect of museum work is to understand how these institutions may actually be enacting social change, and if their programs are aligned with the ideas of social responsibility.

Limitations

The main limitation of my project is its scope. First, I am limited by my sample size and location. Even though my project was designed as a case study, limiting my research to two institutions in a particular place does make it more difficult to generalize
my findings. While geographic scope may be limiting, I still believe that the two museums studied can be representative for a large portion of museums in the United States that are similarly facing the issues I present in the following chapter. I am also limited in the scope of perspectives I provide. While I had hoped to garner visitor data in order to determine how the messages outlined in the exhibits studied were received and interpreted, I was unable to do so because of timing. Further, when I conducted my research History Colorado only had preliminary visitor studies that were in the process of completion.

Additionally, I originally planned to conduct a greater number of interviews, but research limitations at both institutions prevented me from gaining a larger sample of museum professionals. But because museum work in these institutions is largely team based, I believe gaining the perspective of the top staff gave a pretty comprehensive understanding of the goals and approaches of the exhibitions, and was more than sufficient to contextualize the exhibits. Finally, as will be reflected in the following chapter, comparison between museums often proved difficult, as History Colorado’s exhibitions contain a greater amount of content than Museo. Furthermore, I was only able to analyze one exhibit at Museo, because La Cocina’s run was extended into the spring of 2014. But I believe this is a reflection of the limitations of small, non-profit museums with limited staff and gallery space.
CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS

Institutional Philosophy

According to Garibay (2007), the path to true civic engagement begins with intensive self-reflection. She argues, “…looking first at internal core values and commitments—who the institution is and what it aspires toward—is a key aspect of developing inclusive, civically engaged institutions” (2007:1). With an understanding of this “internal culture” or institutional philosophy, museums can better integrate diversity into the basis of their institution, and in turn can work towards more successful engagement with a variety of cultural groups (2007:1). To understand social responsibility at History Colorado and Museo, I begin this chapter with an exploration of each museum’s internal culture, working to assess their core values and their interpretation of social responsibility principles. By doing so, I hope to employ a similar means of reflection as discussed by Garibay.

Mission Statements

To assess History Colorado’s and Museo’s internal cultures, I consider one of the most public and concise descriptions of institutional purpose and goals: museum mission statements. According to the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), mission statements are the “heart of a museum,” articulating museum purpose, responsibilities, and even values (2012:1). As such, these statements can be considered important for their role in
guiding museum work, and helping to provide a foundation that future work can be built upon (AAM 2012). Both History Colorado and Museo have their mission statements posted online, allowing public review and comprehension of institutional focus and purpose. Like most mission statements, however, History Colorado’s and Museo’s statements are brief, and consequently very general and vague. Therefore, to further assess each museum’s place as reinvented or socially responsible institutions, I supplement mission statements with documents that speak to the purpose and goal of each institution. It should be noted, however, that while mission statements function as guiding philosophies in many museums, they do not assure that museum work always aligns with institutional intentions.

To narrow my assessment of internal culture, I focus on each museum’s status as reinvented and/or socially responsible museums. As defined in Chapter 3, post-museums are characterized by democratic and inclusive ideology that prioritizes public good (Anderson 2004; Lindauer 2007). Similarly, socially responsible museums acknowledge their role in meaning-making and use their positionality to improve social inequalities and injustices (Sandell 2002). In working towards social improvement, socially responsible museums integrate the principles of idealism, intimacy, depth, and interconnectedness into their practice and policy (Janes 2007). While the concepts of post-museums and socially responsible museums overlap and are even complementary, it should be noted that in my application of these two ideas, socially responsible museums place change and public good at the forefront of their mission, and are active in their attempts to address and mitigate inequity.
The History Colorado Center

As part of the state historical society, History Colorado shares a mission statement with the umbrella organization. Found under an “About Us” link that redirects visitors to the state historical society website, History Colorado’s mission statement asserts that the museum seeks to “[Inspire] generations to find wonder and meaning in our past and to engage in creating a better Colorado” (History Colorado, n.d.). Based on this statement, I argue that History Colorado can be defined as a reinvented museum. First, the museum’s mission statement reflects an institutional desire for inclusivity. By defining Colorado’s past as “ours,” the museum delineates the state’s heritage as a shared entity that transcends generational lines, and acknowledges the past as belonging to a number of individuals who likely span different ways of life. Furthermore, History Colorado’s mission statement reflects a concern for public good, as it expresses the hope that the museum and its visitors can make Colorado “better.” The second clause of their statement also connects to the idea of inclusion in that all Coloradans must work together to reach this goal. A focus on the collective power of community implies that all Coloradans are equally important in the state’s future. In line with the definition of a post-museum, History Colorado is working to be inclusive through a shared ownership of history and is concerned with the public good, hoping to improve the state through community efforts. Accordingly, as a reinvented museum, the ideas of new museology should guide museum practice, and should be present in the museum’s exhibitions and programming work.

Even though History Colorado can be defined as a post-museum, discerning their place as a socially responsible institution is more complicated. To reiterate, my definition
of a socially responsible museum is based on the tenets outlined by Janes (2007). He argues that socially responsible museums show idealism, or a constant awareness of how things can be improved; intimacy, which is meaningful communication and contact; depth, which is thorough and complete content and practice; and interconnectedness, which is defined by an awareness of social interconnectedness and relationship (2007).

Using Janes’s guidelines to assess History Colorado’s mission statement, it can be argued that the museum’s institutional philosophy does align with social responsibility tenets, but to varying degrees. The first clause of the museum’s statement reflects both intimacy and depth. Intimacy is present in that the museum hopes to generate a sense of wonder, inspiration, and ultimately meaning in visitors. When successful, this impact can result in a significant interaction between museums and visitors. Additionally, the goal of inspiring audiences for generations to come speaks to a desire to forge lasting connections with visitors, which is another avenue for creating intimacy. The desire to create a sense of wonder and meaning also aligns with the principle of depth, as inspiring these states can often result from quality content that questions, challenges, or stimulates thought.

The second clause of History Colorado’s mission statement reflects the ideas of idealism and connectedness. By acknowledging that Colorado can be constantly improved and that the museum hopes to contribute to these efforts, History Colorado’s mission statement reflects idealism. Furthermore, this section of the statement works to create interconnectedness through the establishment of community. In implying that Coloradoans can work together to create a better future, the mission statement works to
create a community with a shared historical past (Watson 2007). In turn, the creation of this community can further a feeling of connectedness for visitors who engage with the museum’s content.

While their mission statement indicates History Colorado’s place as both a reinvented and socially responsible museum, it does not provide any detail as to how and why the museum hopes to achieve the goals outlined in their statement. Because social responsibility is defined by action, it is important to understand the ways museums intend to and do enact their goals. Consequently, I supplement History Colorado’s mission statement with the museum’s exhibition values statement, which was revised in October 2012. The exhibition statement outlines six values that should guide the work of the exhibition department:

1. Audience first
2. Collaboration
3. Best practices
4. Authenticity
4. Civic engagement
6. Fun! (History Colorado 2012)

These values echo History Colorado’s position as a post-museum, but their rankings complicate the museum’s place as a socially responsible institution. This relationship between institutional values is salient when considering the department’s prioritization of museum audiences. Ranking visitors as a top value aligns with the principles of post-museums, because reinvented museums consider the public and public
good top priorities. Moreover, post-museums must be conscious of their visitor-bases in order to build more inclusive institutions. Like History Colorado’s institutional mission, the exhibition statement notes that the department is working to “inspire curiosity and interest, and promote lifelong learning” (History Colorado 2012:1). Again, this goal reflects the museum’s desire to build meaningful, enduring relationships with their visitors, which in turn can foster a sense of community and connectedness.

In order to facilitate these relationships, the exhibition department intends to research and present audience interests—especially those of their target audiences—by paying close attention to “accessibility, learning styles, and content” (History Colorado 2012:1). While the museum’s concern with their visitors may help to classify them as a post-museum, their focus on catering to a particular audience may actually impact their inclusivity. Like many museums in the U.S., History Colorado’s audience is largely European American, exemplifying what Janes refers to as a “traditional visitor profile” (2007:138).

All three History Colorado interviewees acknowledged this visitor profile. For example, Shannon Voirol candidly noted, “Our audience tends to be more Caucasian than we’d like and we’ve tried to include more stories of non-Caucasians to expand that interest” (Shannon Voirol, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 17, 2013). Similarly, in discussing the vision of the museum, Kathryn Hill stated, “We were definitely hoping we were going to attract more diverse audiences, because if you walk in and there are stories that speak to you, then chances are you’ll feel more welcome and more at home here” (Kathryn Hill, interview with the author, The History Colorado
Center, August 20, 2013). Hill attributes the museum’s lack of audience diversity to practical barriers, including the museum’s hours of operation and their admission fee.

But, in targeting their current audience and placing this audience’s interests at the forefront of exhibitions, History Colorado may simultaneously be perpetuating exclusivity, as they are catering to European American visitors. In turn, placing the museum’s audience first may present an additional barrier to bringing about change, which is the central focus of socially responsible museums. But in recognizing these obstacles to diversity, Hill also noted that the museum was working to attract a more varied visitor-base by engaging with and representing wide-ranging issues, participating in Colorado museum free days, and through programming.

The exhibition department’s placement of collaboration also complicates History Colorado’s status as a socially responsible museum. In discussing collaboration, the team seeks to collaborate among themselves, with advisors, and volunteers to create museum content. As is evident from those considered collaborators, however, collaboration for the department seems to place greater emphasis on partnerships within the museum and between professionals, than with content experts or community stakeholders. The use of outside collaborators, however, does appear in subsequent values, being mentioned under the authenticity value. This priority notes that the exhibition team should seek information from subject experts and community advisors (History Colorado 2012:1).

By establishing community collaboration as a means of garnering authenticity and by placing it after institutional collaboration, the museum may be utilizing content stakeholders as consultants rather than collaborators. In doing so, the museum would
ultimately retain power and authority over content. This power dynamic corresponds with Bernadette Lynch’s (2011) distinction between comfort and contact zones; by not fully engaging with content experts and in turn not relinquishing authority, museums can remain in a place of comfort that can sustain traditional power dynamics. Although the exhibition department values statement offers greater insight into whether or not History Colorado can be defined as a reinvented and/or socially responsible museum, it also presents several potential conflicts with the core characteristics of socially responsible museums.

Museo de las Americas

Like History Colorado, Museo similarly places their mission statement on their institutional website. In fact, the museum’s mission statement is the first thing visitors encounter when using Museo’s website. As listed, “Museo de las Americas is dedicated to educating our community through collecting, preserving, interpreting and exhibiting the diverse arts and cultures of the Americas from ancient to contemporary, through innovative exhibitions and programs” (Museo n.d.). From this statement alone, it is difficult to discern whether or not Museo can be classified as a reinvented museum. It is equally difficult to determine if they qualify as socially responsible. With regards to being a post-museum, Museo’s focus on education can be interpreted as a prioritization of public good, as the museum hopes to provide a particular service to improve social and cultural understanding. The museum’s focus on education can also be linked to Janes’s tenet of depth, as a main goal is to present quality content that the public can learn from and engage with. Additionally, the mission statement’s focus on “our community” can
convey a purpose related to intimacy and interconnectedness; by seeking to forge
connections with the community they serve, Museo can simultaneously seek to create a
sense of familiarity with museum audiences and to bind people through a shared
educational experience.

Although Museo’s mission statement does not provide great insight into their
institutional philosophy, elsewhere on website Museo offers more detailed information
on their mission and purpose. In their “About Us” section Museo notes:

Museo de las Americas educates our community about the diversity of
Latino Americano art and culture from ancient to contemporary through
innovative exhibitions and programs. With the Latino population growing
exponentially in Denver and wider communities, Museo plays an
important role in building pride in the Latino community’s heritage and
promoting understanding among cultures. Other history and art museums
in Denver cannot focus on one segment of the community in a sustained or
comprehensive manner. Museo was created to fill this important niche in
the cultural milieu [Museo n.d.]

In conjunction with their mission statement, Museo’s “About Us” description
supports the museum’s position as both a reinvented and socially responsible museum.
Furthermore, this statement presents a strong connection to the principles of the social
responsibility paradigm. In terms of being a post-museum Museo appears to be operating
with an inclusive ideology that prioritizes public good. Mainly, Museo is working to
establish Latinos/as as an important population in Denver’s diverse cultural landscape. In
doing so, the museum may be trying to make Denver more inclusive by building pride
and understanding for and among Latinos/as across the Denver area. With this goal, the
museum also establishes the community it serves as an inclusive one, encompassing both
Latinos/as and non-Latinos/as. The consideration of non-Latino/a groups as part of the
museum’s audience is especially important, because as an ethnically specific museum, Museo can be at risk of excluding non-Latino/a groups (Kurin 1997).

The desire to improve Latino/a’s place in society also establishes idealism as a core institutional value. With their “About Us” statement, the museum recognizes a social inequality and outlines a means of improving it. The mission of building pride among Latinos/as implies that there is currently a lack of self-respect among this group, which is likely the result of racial relations and modern stereotypes, a sentiment expressed during interviews with both Maruca Salazar and Maruquita Salazar. As discussed by Maruquita:

I really value empowering students of all races and I definitely feel also here our focus is to educate people of the unknowns. If you’re not of Latino origin, you know, if you’re getting accurate information of the Latino culture then it makes you less intimidated or less feared. And then vice versa for students who are Latino who sometimes get a really skewed version of their history to get accurate information and to empower them. You’re people did great things. We’re not always told what our ancestors did, but we did great things. And that’s a part of you [Maruquita Salazar, interview with the author, Museo de las Americas, October 30, 2013]

The museum’s desire to foster understanding about this culture shows institutional idealism in that the museum hopes to improve the current state of Latino/a representation, and in turn possibly combat racial stereotypes. Further, because the museum considers it important to foster this understanding among both Latinos/as and non-Latinos/as, their internal culture also aligns with the principles of interconnectedness and intimacy. By establishing both groups as core audiences, the museum can work to build positive racial relations. Lastly, depth is reflected in Museo’s “About Us” statement through their desire to create representative content that will help to create cultural
understanding. Together, the incorporation of these principles helps to establish social responsibility as a major aspect of Museo’s institutional philosophy.

Staff Perspectives

Although institutional and departmental mission statements help to guide museum work, staff perspectives are also influential on the expression of museums ethics. Moreover, staff perspectives are important to consider, because as Karp and Lavine (1991) remind, no exhibition is free of the beliefs and perspectives of the people that create it. Therefore, to further assess institutional philosophy, I analyze staff opinion on the social responsibility of museums. To allow for comparison, I asked each interviewee the same question on what they believed museums’ responsibility was when representing racial and ethnic heritage. The question was open enough that interviewees could comment on both the responsibility of museums in general, as well as for their specific institution.

Staff members interviewed at History Colorado felt that museums’ social responsibility was to provide perspective and represent diversity. In recognizing that all history is biased, Convery felt that museums needed to present a number of perspectives to allow visitors to engage with and reflect upon the complexities of the past. Therefore, History Colorado needs “to acknowledge there are differences of opinions. [The museum] must acknowledge that this is one opinion among many perhaps and that there are others that might or might not have their merits” (Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013). Further, he felt, “If we don’t give audiences something to bite on, something to react to, whether they agree or disagree,
then there’s no grounds for conversation.” (Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013). This position emphasizes museums’ role in providing depth and intimacy, two principles of the social responsibility paradigm.

Essentially, Convery believes museums have a responsibility to provide visitors with diverse and multivocal content, which can in turn facilitate personal contemplation.

Likewise, Hill felt museums should reflect a number of viewpoints, rather than preach a singular outlook. In her opinion, History Colorado can contextualize historical events, but because “right” and “wrong” are ambiguous, she did not believe that the museum could or should morally simplify the past. Instead, she wants History Colorado to tell stories that speak to the richness and interconnectedness of Colorado’s community. In turn, she hopes that the museum provides a human context for the past. In discussing the museum’s content she clarified:

At the same time, I don’t think that there’s a legitimate case to be made for the atrocious slaughter that happened at Sand Creek. That’s indefensible. And there is no good defense for the incarceration of American citizens. That’s indefensible. What we can do is provide a context. This isn’t about good versus evil. It is not that simple. These were times of conflict, these were times of confusion, they were times of great fear. But I think the lesson is we will face that same fear and that same kind of conflict and in the face of that what are we going to choose to do [Kathryn Hill, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, August 20, 2013]

When conveying this vision, Hill also noted that in an ideal world the museum would not have to contemplate issues of race in creating museum content, as it should be assumed that because so many groups contributed to the construction of Colorado heritage, they would all be included in the re-telling of its stories. The desire to present a diverse view of the past does align with the social responsibility paradigm, but a focus on
depth and interconnectedness may come at the cost of idealism, which can be considered the guiding principle of the movement. Hill does express the hope that History Colorado can reach a point of inclusivity in the museum’s narrative, but presenting so many views can lead to contestation. In the case of the Sand Creek Massacre exhibit, tribal representatives considered the inclusion of so many viewpoints to be an affront to the tragedy of the event, and felt the multivocality misconstrued the event as a battle rather than a massacre. According to Convery:

> What we tried to do in our initial version of [Sand Creek] is to try to tell the story of people who we don’t agree with like John Chivington…not to say that maybe they had a point, but to say we need to understand the points of view of the people with whom we violently disagree in order to have better conversations…[Tribes were concerned that] by presenting their story we are somehow presenting their point of view. We’d never endorse the point of view of a guy like John Chivington’s. Un endorsable. But I want people to try to understand who he was and where he was coming from so they really understand what they’re disagreeing with. It’s a challenge…because if we can’t tell that part of the story, I feel as a professional that we’re not telling a well-rounded story…we have an obligation to consider stories from all angles, and not just one, and it can be tricky with advisory groups about that very issue [Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 201]

These objections to the exhibit also raise the question of who “owns” a story, and in turn who has the right to represent and tell these narratives. Conversely, the presentation of a singular past can be equally exclusive, a result that the museum hopes to avoid with diverse content. This struggle over representation exemplifies the difficulty of balancing varying roles, functions, and public interests, all of which can influence the expression of museum ethics.

Staff members at Museo present a different perspective on the social responsibility of museums. Primarily, interviewed staff felt that Museo’s responsibility is
to accurately portray the groups they represent. Maruca Salazar, the museum’s Director and Chief Curator, said the museum’s responsibility was to cast groups in an honest light. By doing so, she hoped to share Latino/a culture in order to create a base for dialogue.

Maruca feels this as a deep, personal responsibility, because as a Latina who struggled to gain recognition as a serious artist, she is sensitive to the stereotypes Latinos/as face. In our interview she noted that it is a myth that the U.S. is in a post-racism era, and she believes Latinos/as “need to be reminded every single day that who we are is acceptable, that who we are it is a contributor to the betterment and for the greater good” (Maruca Salazar, interview with the author, Museo de las Americas, November 15, 2013). Her use of “we” signifies her close connection to Latino/a heritage.

Maruquita Salazar, the Education Coordinator, similarly felt that museums’ responsibility was to accurately and respectfully portray the cultures they represent, and further, to support other institutions that cannot provide this perspective. In discussing *Lac Cocina* she stated:

> I really like the exhibit because it gives accurate information from people who experience it on a day-to-day. And that’s also what we really want, we really want to give an accurate account of Latino culture. Because it’s easy to, you, know it’s easy to manipulate it into something else. But if you’re able to provide people with accurate information on their culture or on a culture of interest to them, then I just feel that it’s so much better to give the accurate information versus you know something of somewhat. So that’s what we really strive for [Maruquita Salazar, interviewed by the author, Museo de las Americas, October 30, 2013]

The responses of Museo staff reflect their awareness of the impact representation can have on perceptions of racial and ethnic groups, and show a strong sense of idealism and depth. As Maruca notes, the museum must contend with a number of stereotypes in
presenting Latino/a heritage. So in working at an ethnically specific museum with a mission to instill pride for and understanding of Latino/a heritage, staff consider challenging stereotypes and presenting a more truthful image of Latinos/as as an important component of their job. As such, it appears as though Museo’s institutional philosophy aligns more so with the principle of idealism in that the museum hopes to act as an agent of social change to improve Latino/a’s place in the community. Additionally, the desire to provide perspective through accurate representation shows a concern for depth, or quality content. Unlike History Colorado, Museo did not express a concern for presenting multiple perspectives. While this singular focus may make sense for the institution as an ethnically specific museum, it also has the potential to alienate groups that do not ascribe to the heritage represented in the museum.

Active Citizens: Another Form of Social Responsibility

From the varying perspectives at History Colorado and Museo, it is clear that personal background and museum content impact the interpretation of social responsibility. Even with this variation, however, both institutions have philosophies that align with post-museum and social responsibility principles. The placement of History Colorado and Museo as such is further supported when considering another form of social responsibility: active citizenship. In their article “Museums and the Active Citizen: Tackling the Problems of Social Exclusion” Andrew Newman, Fiona Mclean, and Gordon Urquhart (2005) explore whether or not museums can combat social exclusion by helping to create “active citizens,” who in part are defined based on their level of community involvement and investment. While the authors conclude that the museums
studied were able to foster active citizenship by providing platforms for community engagement, they also note that each museum struggled against common barriers to accessibility.

When analyzing History Colorado and Museo in terms of active citizenship, both museums are attempting to engender change by fostering well-rounded, socially conscious citizens (Newman et al. 2005). Therefore, it appears as though both museums have goals of cultivating active citizens, and may encounter the additional principles and potential problems of social responsibility. For example, the exhibition development mission statement at History Colorado specifically reflects a desire to create active citizens through civic engagement:

We believe that History Colorado’s charge is to cultivate the most engaged, well-informed citizens in the nation who understand our present in the context of our shared past and who work together to create a better Colorado. HC exhibits should serve this charge by inviting, inspiring, and challenging museum users to see themselves as part of a larger whole, and encourage them to build a better community and stronger state [History Colorado 2012:2]

This section of the department’s statement, which falls under their “Civic Engagement” value, presents several ideas that align with Newman et al.’s definition of active citizenship. First, the museum wants to develop socially conscious citizens that are well informed on both past and present issues. Additionally, by providing content that allows visitors to connect to a larger statewide identity, the museum believes it can help to create a sense of ownership and investment in Colorado’s communities. Through this investment, visitors may be more willing to work together towards the improvement of Colorado. With this concern for active citizenship, the museum reestablishes its
audience-centered focus; rather than working towards being an institution that models and partakes in social activism efforts, the museum is working to foster these characteristics in their visitors.

A focus on civic engagement was also expressed in staff perspectives. Convery was clear to note that “all of these stories are our stories as Coloradoans… whether we’re telling the story about Ute Indian people or the internees at Amache or miners in Silverton, that these are our collective stories” (Bill Convery, interview with author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013). Because of this shared history, he felt it was the museum’s responsibility to represent the state’s diversity, concluding that anything less would be inauthentic. In this statement, Convery supports the museum’s goal of connecting Coloradoans to a shared past and identity that can be used to build engaged and invested citizens. This desire to help shape citizenship was also reflected in my interview with Hill. When asked about the vision for the museum, Hill said the museum determined goals by questioning what History Colorado could offer society that no other institution could provide. In their discussion, museum staff concluded:

No other organization could help Coloradans understand the present in the context of the past in order to provide perspectives for the future the way that we could. No other organization could serve as a forum for civic, civil conversation about today’s issues in an historical context the way that we could. And no other organization had the obligation to preserve the stories and the places and the material culture of Colorado the way that we did. So our big audacious goal became to cultivate the most well informed, engaged citizenry in the nation who understand the present in the context of the past and who work together to build a better Colorado for the future and that really remains our big audacious goal [Kathryn Hill, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, August 20, 2013]
Hill further stated that she wanted the museum to be a forum, a place of engaging discussion. Though the museum’s attempts at creating this environment have not always been successful, she found that the instances in which the museum achieved its goal had the greatest community impact.

Museo’s mission statement similarly places a focus on cultivating active citizens, but is less explicit with this goal. Furthermore, because of the museum’s focus on Latin American culture, the museum’s desire to create active citizens is shaped in terms of engagement with a particular heritage. Even though Museo does not cite the concept of citizenship directly, its desire to foster tolerance and understanding between both their Latino/a and non-Latino/a visitor-bases can be interpreted as a desire to create informed and open citizens. For example, in my email interview with Tricia Schmuki, she notes that through Museo’s educational programming, they are able to “foster [Latino/a student’s] self-esteem and [give] them tools to connect with mainstream society” (Tricia Schmuki, interview with the author, Denver, November 30, 2013). By instilling personal pride in Latino/a students and helping them associate with larger communities, Museo can help to bridge groups and create greater community investment.

**Exhibition Analysis**

While institutional philosophy is intended to guide museum practice, as was noted, museum work does not always adhere to these ideal standards. Therefore, a truer expression of museum ethics can be found in the ways that institutions enact these ideologies, including in their exhibitions and programs. And because museums present a place where cultural beliefs can be explored, confirmed, or challenged (Boda 2012), the
enactment of museum ethics—and the social responsibility paradigm in particular—also presents a means to either further or hinder cultural understanding, and in turn inclusion and exclusion within museums. With this in mind, the following analysis explores the enactment of museum ethics and heritage construction in three exhibitions across three parameters: narrative, space, and visual representation. As was noted in the previous chapter, I chose these parameters because I feel they provide a comprehensive overview of the stories constructed within the exhibitions I researched. I also utilize interview data to contextualize exhibits, assessing the intention and decision-making processes behind their creation.

The History Colorado Center

Institutional Narrative Tone

The consideration and enactment of museum ethics at History Colorado is apparent when considering overall narrative tone. As noted in Chapter 2, in recognizing power dynamics between museums, the groups they represent, and their visitors, museums have made great efforts to reshape their place as authoritative figures. One way museums attempt to do so is through their image. It is interesting to note that a major part of History Colorado’s transformation was the decision to change the museum’s name. Most notably, in changing their moniker, the institution removed “museum” from their title. This decision perhaps represents an attempt to make History Colorado more accessible to individuals that do not feel comfortable in museum settings. Furthermore, by labeling the museum a “center”—which can conjure images of meetings places and community organization—History Colorado may be moving towards a more civically
engaged image. Finally, the reversal of Colorado History to History Colorado seems to make the institution more dynamic; rather than having the association of being a potentially stagnant history museum, The History Colorado Center is first and foremost about history, which is ongoing and continual.

Museums can also attempt to relinquish authority by making exhibition tone less expertly and impersonal (Weil 2007:42). The idea of reducing authoritative tone is closely connected to issues of ethical representation in that it acknowledges the role museums have in legitimizing heritage. In interviews History Colorado staff seemed to be aware of the dynamic between official heritage and authoritative tone. All three staff members interviewed noted that they did not want to take an authoritative voice in their exhibitions. Voirol said:

I think that we try to avoid an authoritative voice, so we want things to be more of a relationship more of a dialogue, more a process of civic engagement. I think we are very mindful that we are just one source…I think we want to be more of ‘a someone who is with them’ than saying this is what anyone is [Shannon Voirol, interviewed by the author, The History Colorado Center, July 17, 2013]

Hill went so far as to call curatorial authority “baloney” (Kathryn Hill, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, August 20, 2013). Similarly, Convery noted that the exhibition team took time to address issues of representation, because a majority of the museum’s visitor base considers what is represented at History Colorado to be an official story:

Especially in a state History museum, because there is this implicit feel that whatever story we place on our exhibit floor is somehow the official story of Colorado….that’s unfortunate, we can’t say what stories are official and what aren’t. But there’s sort of a symbolic value of having your story in the state history museum, you know there’s a sense of
validation [Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013]

Staff responses show an internal recognition of the affect tone can have on representation, which is mirrored in the tone applied in exhibitions.

Particularly, History Colorado uses inclusive language in their exhibitions, such as the pronoun “we.” For example, in the introductory panel to *Colorado Stories*, in reference to Colorado’s past the exhibition labels says, “We’ve triumphed, and at times we’ve failed. We’ve overcome adversity and built lasting communities in every part of the state” (*Colorado Stories*. Denver, CO: History Colorado, n.d.). According to Voirol, “The goals of each exhibit are different. Like in A to Z we talked about our goal was to be more humorous…we used the word “we,” we as Denverites... I think collectively we’ve been getting a lot of positive feedback. People feel much more at home here than they do at our old museum.” (Shannon Voirol, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 17, 2013). It can be argued, however, that what is considered inviting and inclusive language, is actually hegemonic language, as the museum is speaking for all Coloradoans and creating a collective heritage for them. In his sense, the museum may still maintain their authority over visitors. Conversely, the use of first person may also work to create an inclusive, non-authoritative tone, but can also be a means of incorporating visitors into the narrative, helping the museum to connect with visitors and to connect visitors to the narrative.
Destination Colorado

Narrative

The first narrative most museum visitors encounter at History Colorado is Destination Colorado, which tells the story of Keota, a homesteading community in southern Colorado that was founded in the early twentieth century. Of the three main themes that History Colorado exhibitions are developed within—community, dreams, and landscape—Destination Colorado was created under the theme of community (Bill Convery, interviewed by the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013). As such, the exhibit constructs narratives that discuss the creation of community through hard work, the pursuit of dreams, perseverance over difficult times, and the legacy of our past.

When woven together, these themes construct an overall narrative that is a paragon story of the pursuit of the American dream. To begin, the abstract, or the introductory label, outlines the entirety of Keota’s story. At the start, homesteaders arrived at a harsh, barren land. But where others may have seen desolation, Keotans saw potential, prosperity, and a future. Through hard work, residents created a home, and more importantly, an inclusive community. Ultimately, however, their efforts were not enough to overcome the land and to sustain the homestead. Although Keota no longer exists, the story of its residents established a legacy among descendants who still feel the importance of the town. To conclude, “Prairie life was never easy. Everybody worked hard, lived modestly, and made sacrifices” (Good Years on the Prairie. Denver, CO: History Colorado Center, n.d.).
This initial overview is expanded upon throughout the exhibit; discussions of the school, farm work, home life, and even the general store reiterate ideals of the American dream and perseverance through hard work. For example, in the interpretive label on the school in Keota the first person text reads, “We built this school ourselves. Most days, we send our kids here instead of putting them to work on the farm—a hard choice when you’re trying to make ends meet. But our children are Keota’s future, and education is the path to prosperity” (Public Schools. Denver, CO: History Colorado Center, n.d.). This quote reflects several aspects of the American dream, including the value of self-made institutions and the belief that education ensures success. Finally, the exhibit’s coda connects these themes to the present, showing how Keota’s legacy may have instilled the American dream in its descendants: “Many of the people who moved away stayed connected to Keota because of what it represents—the hard work, courage, and determination of ordinary people with big dreams,” a spirit that has shaped all of Colorado history (Keota Never Left Them. Denver, CO: History Colorado Center, n.d.).

With regard to Gee’s (2010) tools of significance, the narrative constructed in Destination Colorado uses language to recognize and give importance of a quintessentially American story. As discussed in Chapter 4, Gee outlines seven tools for discourse analysis: significance explores how language is used to build importance; activities looks at the ways in which language is used to build, enact, or recognize activities or practices; identities refers to the use of language to recognize, enacts, or have the listener “take up” specific identities; relationships explores how language is used to create, change, or maintain relationships with the speaker, other people, groups, cultures,
or institutions; politics looks at the ways in which language is used to build views on how social good are or should be distributed; connections refers to how language is used to create connections or disconnections between things; and finally, sign systems and knowledge is a tool that sees how language is used to privilege or exclude certain ways of knowing (2010:32-36).

Within this frame, the exhibition text gives significance to American ideals and characteristics, such as tenacity and perseverance, and places value on building community and legacy. By doing so, the narrative appears to support the American identity of hard working immigrants who are focused on creating a better future for their children and community. With this focus on community, *Destination Colorado’s* narrative supports the relationships built in Keota, presenting them as a point of celebration. The continuing celebration of this story helps to connect the past to the present, bringing the ideals of the American dream into the modern era. In turn, the exhibition can perpetuate the association of the American dream as a foundational narrative in European American heritage.

With the construction of this narrative, *Destination Colorado* succumbs to Schlereth’s proposed historical fallacies (2004). The presence of these fallacies contributes to the narrative of resilience, perseverance, and a glorification of the “ordinary man,” but can make the history and heritage presented seem superficial. And while this particular narrative is certainly part of Colorado’s history, the constant presentation of these themes can detract from the real emotional experiences of the past, and the historical narrative presented does not seem to truly engage with difficult issues
discussed. This selectivity of historical events, however, is part of heritage construction in general.

Mainly, *Destination Colorado* exhibits two of Schelreth’s fallacies: history is progressive and history is nostalgia. In defining the fallacy of history as progress, Schlereth argues that history museums often present the past as a singular progression that favors major wins and ignores losses (2004:336). Museums that present this fallacy will shy away from exhibiting failures, and prize ideas of progress, such as development of technology and democratic thinking. At first glance, History Colorado seems to contradict this fallacy. In their exhibit on Keota, the museum presents an image of a failed settlement, as Keota steadily became a ghost town because of drought and resulting farm failures. By simply exhibiting a failure, the museum critiques the idea that history is merely about progress. But beneath all of these “failures” is the recurring theme of resilience; in other words, underlying the narrative is the idea of progress in spite of failure. For example, as previously noted, the exhibit discusses how the creation of a school allowed children to stop working on family farms in favor of gaining an education. The inclusion of this historical event reflects a major progression as Keota was moving from a town of the past ruled by hard labor into a town of the future that placed value on the prized American institution of education.

*Destination Colorado* also shows progress in spite of obstacles in the narrative they build around the Keota descendent community. The end of the exhibit features a section on descendants of Keota residents, who still meet and celebrate their connection to the homestead. In doing so, this community is ultimately keeping the heritage and
legacy of Keota alive. The inclusion of descendants shows that even though the town failed in its original purpose, they were successful in building a lasting community, and ultimately the town was not a complete failure, but rather thrives in spite of past obstacles.

*Destination Colorado* also reflects the fallacy of history as nostalgia, which Schlereth argues presents the past as a bygone golden era (2004:337); as is expressed in the exhibit’s introductory label, even though times may have been difficult, life was ultimately good and uncomplicated. This sentiment is represented throughout the exhibit’s narrative. In one example of this fallacy, visitors can go on a drive with residents in a life-size re-creation of an early car. This drive conjures images of a simpler time in which people could take a scenic drive down a dirt road. The dialogue spoken during the ride furthers this idea, as the drivers are teasing each other, and speaking fondly of life during the 1930s. Language used in surrounding labels similarly articulates this fallacy, mainly by creating a fond reflection of the past through endearments such as “folks” and “old-timer.” The selection of these terms can make it feel as if the narrative is discussing relatives, or old friends.

While the appearance of these fallacies in *Destination Colorado’s* narrative and the construction of heritage in the exhibit are not necessarily negative, in drawing on a romanticized version of history the museum seems to present an affected version of the past. It can be argued, however, that all history is affected in one way or another. But when placed in as public of a setting as a museum, the potential impact should be considered more deeply. This influence is clear when considering how the narrative
constructed in *Destination Colorado* can be understood in terms of new racism. One of the main discourses used in new racism is the level playing field, which asserts that civil rights legislation equalized all opportunities. Therefore, every American has equal access to success. In establishing this level playing field, when minorities are unable to succeed, their character is to blame, rather than institutions, systems, or structures. In turn, this discourse perpetuates racial stereotypes, such as the belief that minorities are lazy. This myth of the level-playing field can be reinforced by the American dream, which asserts that with hard work, anyone can overcome their social position.

By presenting such a glorified version of the American dream, *Destination Colorado* has the potential to perpetuate this subtle discourse, and support the tendency for official heritages to valorize and extol virtues (Hanna 2008). The impact of representing a romanticized version of the American dream discourse is especially important when considering that this exhibit does not include non-European groups. Although homesteading has a rich racial history, which includes African American homesteaders and Native Americans who have inhabited the land for time immemorial, these stories are not included in this exhibition. Convery himself stated, “Keota [*Destination Colorado*] is lily-White. It’s a story about Norwegian immigrants and Russian immigrants” (Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013). The absence of diverse groups in the exhibit also contradicts the “new western history” movement in that it does not acknowledge the complex history of the west. In turn this lack of representation can exclude non-European American groups from a connection to the American dream.
It is possible that addressing the diversity and complexity of homesteading can help expand *Destination Colorado* from a surface presentation of westward expansion to a more complex narrative on the creation of Colorado’s communities. In my interview with Convery, he also noted that the museum cannot tell every story, and inevitably some groups will be excluded. Convery does make a valid point, and also presents a practical consideration that can limit representation: with limited funding, space, and time, museums are unable to exhibit every story or groups’ heritage. Additionally, as Limerick (2009) notes, it can be difficult to present alternative versions of western history to the public, who may not be receptive to these more inclusive narratives. These limitations and issues, however, make it that much more important to consider the impact of museum representation or a lack thereof, and the ways in which museum narratives can perpetuate racial and ethnic stereotypes.

**Space**

Exhibitions and the narratives they set forth can be furthered by spatial layout, which can contribute to the embodiment and potential internalization of content. As argued by Bourdieu (1980), cultural understandings and practices are integrated into our physical and mental beings, and as such become embodied. In the case of museums, embodiment within exhibitions space can help to reinforce *habitus*, including understandings of race and ethnicity. The importance of an embodied experience was also a main consideration for History Colorado’s exhibits. Front-end research conducted by the museum concluded, “even if the physical objects are not authentic, people
understand that the feeling of being there can be simulated through immersion” (History Colorado 2013).

The significance of space and embodiment is particularly salient for Destination Colorado, as the exhibition is an almost entirely sensory experience. The exhibit begins with an introductory section that familiarizes visitors with homesteading, Keota, and its residents. Part of this section includes a small theater area where visitors can “meet” the residents of Keota, who are played by actors that appear in an introductory film and accompany visitors through a series of projections in the exhibit. As visitors venture past this introductory section, they can explore several features of Keota, including recreations of its one-room school, general store, a home, and a barn. After visitors wander through the town, the exhibit ends with a look at the descendants of Keota, who work to keep the legacy of the now ghost town alive. In this section, visitors can sit at a picnic table and watch a video on the descendant community. Each section also includes soundscapes, such as the driving audio previously mentioned; interactive activities like pretending to pull water from a well; and even smell components. For example, when in the barn re-creation visitors can retrieve eggs from a chicken coop, milk a fake cow, and guess different smells common to farms. All of these activities are accompanied by a projection of one of the town residents telling visitors about her life in Keota.

With the incorporation of all the senses, the exhibition creates a truly embodied experience for visitors. Not only can visitors experience the sights and sounds of Keota, but they can also experience the physical activities and scents of the homestead. Doing so can connect them more strongly to the narrative that the exhibit constructs, which in turn
can help audiences connect to the ideas and themes expressed in the museum’s interpretation. As outlined by Bourdieu (1980), embodiment is both a product of history and a means of perpetuating and solidifying history. Thus, the embodiment of a narrative can be a means of perpetuating and solidifying a particular worldview. In the case of the American dream narrative, which is a common meta-narrative, embodiment through “labor,” scents, and the re-creation of friendly neighbors can solidify the nostalgic past presented in the exhibit. Embodiment of narrative is potentially problematic when considering that many visitors view the museum’s representation as an official heritage.

The spatial layout of the exhibit also contributes to the overall narrative, and its embodiment. Mainly, the layout of the exhibit creates a sense of interconnectedness, allowing visitors to shop in the general store, gather eggs at a farm, or sit down at the dinner table to gossip. In doing so, the layout supports the idea of community, and in particular, a somewhat quintessential American community of the past where neighbors helped each other and pushed through hard times together. The exhibit design allows visitors to experience the “simple” life of small-town America, and furthers the romanticization outlined in the exhibit’s narrative.

It is also important to remind that Destination Colorado is located on the first floor of the museum, giving the exhibit and its narrative a degree of importance and centrality. Additionally, rather than beginning with the more difficult and diverse topics presented in Colorado Stories, the museum begins with a narrative that reaffirms popular understandings and representations of western history, mainly those of a European American past. This initial encounter in the museum may influence how visitors
experience and understand *Colorado Stories*, which in many ways is meant to challenge popular understandings of history.

Visual Representation

Visual representation is a final component that contributes to the overall narrative of *Destination Colorado*. The exhibit features two main types of visual imagery: videos and photography. Of the videos used in the exhibit, a majority are of actors portraying historical Keotan residents. These videos appear in the introduction to the exhibit and then throughout each section, with different residents speaking to visitors about different topics. The exhibit also includes a final video that tells the story of the descendant community. Photographs used in the exhibit—all of which are black and white—are largely historical, with a majority depicting landscapes or objects, rather than people. The final photographs, however, are of the real Keota residents that are used as the basis for the actors featured in the videos in the exhibit.

The visual representations employed in the exhibit contribute to embodiment and can help to make the narrative more salient for visitors. For example, the videos in the exhibit give the residents of Keota a physical presence and literal voice in the exhibit. When viewed together, the use of mixed media—which juxtaposes past and present representations, still and moving images, and real and re-created—may help visitors connect to the exhibit's content in an embodied way. As is the case with re-creations in the exhibit, the use of actors that are representative of real Keotans and are juxtaposed alongside photos of the town may help in bringing the town and its residents to life. Through this enactment, the exhibit furthers the embodiment of the exhibit, and more
importantly of the people represented, by allowing a feeling of interaction with the residents. The videos of the actors that are projected throughout the exhibit address visitors directly, and in doing so, help to bring visitors into the narrative constructed around the town. In a similar way to the re-creation, this may help visitors to embody the narrative expressed in *Destination Colorado*.

**Colorado Stories**

**Narrative**

*Like Destination Colorado, Colorado Stories* was developed under the theme of community. Appropriately, the narratives constructed in this second exhibit present similar themes as *Destination Colorado*. But unlike the museum’s other exhibit, *Destination Colorado* depicts a less romantic and homogenous version of the past, telling both positive and negative stories of diverse racial and ethnic groups. Moreover, *Colorado Stories* depicts examples of communities that have succeeded and failed, encouraging visitors to “find [their] place” among stories that depict Colorado at its “best–and worst” (*Colorado Stories*. Denver, CO: History Colorado Center, n.d.).

According to Convery:

> What we want audiences to take away is that Colorado is an amazingly diverse state…We wanted to contrast that diversity with the idea of community, with the fact that in Colorado in order to succeed people need to be interdependent. They have to rely on each other… every one of our stories in the exhibit is about that diversity, but also the interdependence that communities are essential in order for people in Colorado to succeed  

[Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013]

In the opening text panel, the museum outlines the main goals of this exhibit: to present diverse stories that “cover a range of experience,” in which “we’ve triumphed
and at times we’ve failed” (Colorado Stories. Denver, CO: History Colorado Center, n.d.). Stories in the exhibit are meant to reflect a shared sense of courage, strength, pride, and interdependence—reflecting challenges we’ve faced and may some day face again. The introductory panel serves several important functions that influence the themes presented in subsequent labels. First, it builds a shared heritage, and encourages visitors to become a part of it. In doing so the introduction reflects the inclusive goal of the exhibit. Next, the abstract confirms themes of community, which helps to further the connection of racial and ethnic groups not only to Colorado history, but also to each other.

With the inclusion of diverse narratives, *Colorado Stories* focuses largely on racial and ethnic relations. In discussing positive ethnic relations, the narrative emphasizes how diverse communities can work successfully. For example, the narrative constructed around Bent’s Fort explores the importance of the trading post as a multicultural community, examining topics such as family, kinship, and miscegenation. By doing so, the narrative in this section shows how personal relations can develop a successful, interdependent community. The importance of individuals is also reflected in text panels that describe specific historical figures, noting their place in the community as well as their racial or ethnic identity.

In contrast, when presenting negative ethnic relations, narratives focus on themes of tenacity. Specifically, stories depicting the breakdown of community highlight the perseverance of spirit, rather than making ethical judgments on past failures. While several stories do reflect the negative conditions experienced by those living through
these events, including the description of the Amache bunkers as having “prison-like conditions,” the overall narratives center on how people overcame these conditions. As a result, *Colorado Stories* similarly exhibits the myth of history as progress. Like *Destination Colorado*, this exhibit shows Colorado’s failures in terms of integration and accommodation of populations. For example, the story of Japanese internees is presented through a video, a re-creation of an internment bunker, and additional artifacts. Within this portion of the exhibit, text panels draw attention to the progress of internees within the camp, noting that they were able to form an internal leadership system and school system, all of which helped to keep their spirits up. Calling attention to these features of internee life presents the idea that Japanese internees were still progressing in the face of tragedy. While this may be an attempt at showing the power and perseverance of people, the effect can also detract from the true emotional struggles of internees by glossing over underlying issues and ignoring a failure of the U.S. government, ultimately presenting the idea that internees were still living a seemingly normal life. Additionally, by not including voices of the descendant community in this narrative, it can be argued that the museum is not really expressing the resilience of Japanese-American people and culture within Colorado, as was expressed in *Destination Colorado*.

However, the inclusion of racial and ethnic stories, and those that depict negative race relations in particular show a great deal of headway in representation. This accomplishment was reiterated in my interview with Convery, who felt that Colorado History—History Colorado’s predecessor—reflected the “neutrality of unspoken whiteness.” He argued:
That was the default point of view...[The museum] used a lot of passive voice and made sure there wasn’t any real agents for the past and it watered down controversial issues and it made sure it went out of its way not to ruffle feathers and nobody came [Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013]

Progress in representation is also apparent when considering new racism discourse. As discussed in Chapter 3, new racism denies racism by not acknowledging racial and ethnic categories or their roles in everyday life. The narrative constructed in *Colorado Stories*, however, does the opposite. Each story highlights racial and ethnic identity, and explores how race was a pivotal factor in many historical events. Bent’s Fort provides a clear example of this narrative. This exhibit features biographical labels on historical figures, each with a diverse racial and ethnic identity that is highlighted by exhibit text. By emphasizing race and ethnicity, the exhibit shows its place in the past and reflects the importance of Bent’s Fort as a multicultural community.

Although History Colorado is certainly reflecting diversity in their museum, they have been criticized for not pushing far enough, and perhaps like *Destination Colorado*, only present a surface examination of the issues represented. As was discussed in the introduction, Northern Cheyenne and Arapahoe tribal representatives and Amache consultants have both argued that the museum is misrepresenting their heritage. As noted, Northern Cheyenne and Arapahoe representatives found a number of mistakes in the exhibit, and argued that the inclusion of multiple perspectives detracted from the atrocity of the event (Calhoun 2013). Similarly, Amache descendants and consultants felt that the portrayal of internment made light of their imprisonment. During consultations descendants expressed a desire to develop an exhibit that debated the unethicalness of internment, but History Colorado felt this was not a story visitors could connect with, a
critique I discuss further in the following chapter (Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013).

Space

With so many narratives at work in *Colorado Stories*, the use of embodied features works to both distinguish and unite exhibition sections. The exhibit is broken down into eight stories. The first story encountered in the exhibit is “Borderlands, 1700-Today,” (Borderlands) which is a multi-player game that tells the story of changing borders and migration in Colorado. Also situated near the main entrance of the exhibit is “Convergence: Bent’s Fort, 1833-1849” (Bent’s Fort), which depicts life at Bent’s Fort through an interactive game and the re-creation of a section of the Bent’s Fort trading post. As visitors venture further into the exhibition, they encounter “Top of the World: A Silverton Mine, around 1880” (Silverton), which re-creates a mineshaft to portray the life and work of miners in the state. Juxtaposed next to Silverton is “Confined Citizens: The Amache-Granada Relocation Center, 1942-1945” (Amache). This two-part exhibition features a theater re-creation with a series of videos and a re-creation of an interment bunker.

Near the back of the exhibition is “Mountain Haven: Lincoln Hills, 1925-1965” (Lincoln Hills). This space, which consists of a video playing inside of a barn porch façade, tells the story of the African-American mountain getaway. Directly next to Lincoln Hills is “Jumping for Joy: Steamboat Springs, 1915” (Steamboat Springs), which uses traditional exhibitions and an interactive ski jump to narrate life in the Colorado ski town. In the center of the exhibit is “Resilience: The Ute Indian Tribes, Time
Immemorial to Today” (Resilience), which consists of an open, circular exhibit on the Ute. Finally, “Collision: The Sand Creek Massacre, 1860s-Today” (Sand Creek) depicted the tragedy of Sand Creek Massacre using projection, lighting, and soundscapes. During my analysis, Sand Creek was closed while the museum began consultations with tribal representatives to improve the faults they found with this section of Colorado Stories.

Within this layout, the most salient feature of Colorado Stories is the distinctiveness of each story, which is bound by a physical barrier and/or individual soundscape. Unlike Destination Colorado, where visitors can flow fluidly between parts of the interconnected town, in Colorado Stories visitors enter each story as a separate space, and in doing so experience different forms of embodiment (Law 2005). The separation of each story can be interpreted two ways. First it can be seen as disconnecting; limited flow and connection between stories can make each story feel distinct and unrelated to the next. Alternatively, the distinction of each story can be viewed as a means of giving each section an individual and important placement. In this interpretation, separation helps to enhance visitor experience within each story; by separating each story, visitors can experience each one as a distinct, embodied experience unencumbered by the other stories.

Although the separation of each story can help to root visitors in a particular space and narrative, the soundscapes within the exhibit are not separate enough to fully support the second argument. Specifically, the individual soundscapes used to distinguish each area permeate physical boundaries, disrupting the experience of individual spaces. For example, when conducting sensory observations in Amache, I was able to hear the
soundscapes from three other spaces, as well as an educational program within the exhibit. Even as the soundscape of Amache began, I was still able to distinguish the external soundscapes.

In this instance, rather than providing continuity in the exhibition, the pervasiveness of sound can detract from the experience within the individual spaces by preventing visitors from being “in-synchrony.” As described by Feld, “To be ‘in-synchrony’ means that the overall feeling is one of togetherness of consistently cohesive part coordination in sonic motion and participatory experience” (Feld 2005:188). Having overlapping soundscapes, prevents this cohesion of sound and participation. The permutation of sound also challenges the idea that the separation and distinctiveness of these spaces is merely a tool used to enhance the experience of individual stories.

This separation within the exhibit, however, does help to illustrate some of the issues of past racial ideology, mainly that of segregation and racism. In terms of landscape, in quoting J.B. Jackson, Lewis remarks “landscape is history made visible,” and in this exhibition, the segregation of spaces helps to make visible historical issues (2003:107), which is the case for both Amache and Lincoln Hills. In reading the landscape, the two elements of the Amache feel disconnected, having enough distance between them to lack an immediate connection. This separation, however, helps to enforce the racial ideology of the time and the physical separation of Japanese Americans. As a re-creation, the theater area creates the sense of watching these films in Colorado during this political climate. Specifically, it re-creates the sense of separation between free Americans and interned Japanese-Americans. Essentially, as visitors are in
the theater area, they are watching the war and internment unfold as an outsider, separated from the realities of internment. In closing the distance between the theater and the bunker, visitors transition from an outside observer to an insider. When visitors enter the space, they are meant to gain a glimpse into life as an internee, which was disconnected and isolated from the outside world. So by physically separating these two sections, the exhibit mirrors the racial ideologies of this time period.

Similarly, spatial layout in Lincoln Hills helps to illustrate the ideology of racism and segregation during the 1920s. As described in the film featured in this section, African Americans staying at the camp were escaping the dangers and reality of a segregated Colorado. The exhibition is set up to reflect this movement. The glass cases outside of the barn façade feature artifacts reflective of the intimidation African Americans faced, including objects such as robes and texts from the Ku Klux Klan. As visitors move into the theater, however, exhibitions shift to display objects of recreation, such as swimsuits worn by campers and advertisements for the lodge at Lincoln Hills. In passing the threshold of the barn, visitors move from segregation to safety, which mirrors the experience of African Americans going to Lincoln Hills. Like Amache, this movement reflects a shift in insider/outsider perspective. The placement of the Steamboat Springs right next to Lincoln Hills furthers this movement and contrast, as skiing was a historically European American leisure activity. In establishing these separations within the physical landscape, *Colorado Stories* makes past ideology more tangible.

The displays in Amache and Lincoln Hills, however, present the racial issues exhibited to be experienced as an observer, rather than as a participant. This presentation
can result in different embodiment between different stories. This contrast can be apparent when considering Silverton, which re-creates the *experience* of being in a mine. After an introductory section, visitors can close themselves into an elevator that rattles them down into the mineshaft. After exiting this elevator, visitors are greeted by a miner, who is an actor looped on a video that plays on an inlaid television. This same character appears throughout the exhibit. Visitors then travel through the candlelit, rock walled, pathways with a soundscape of digging, coughing, and explosives. The exhibit also features a mule pulling coal (accompanied by mule sounds), an interactive game in which visitors “lay” dynamite, and a shovel of ore visitors can attempt to lift. This design and interactive elements not only help to re-create the experience of the mine, but they also embody it. Like *Destination Colorado*, in lifting a shovel of coal or experiencing the constant digging of a mine, visitors may feel more connected to this place and the people who inhabited it, because to a degree, they have shared the physical experience of this place.

As noted, however, *Colorado Stories* can embody stories in different ways. This is true when comparing embodiment in Silverton and Amache. As discussed, embodiment in Silverton helps to re-create the experience of being in a mine and of being a miner. In contrast, embodiment in Amache seems to be about witnessing and observing this history, rather than experiencing it. This difference stems in large part from the romanticizing of the space, which was voiced at the 2013 “Day of Remembrance.”

In 2013 History Colorado hosted the Mile High Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) while it conducted its “Day of Remembrance” program, which marks the
signing of Executive Order 9066 that authorized the creation of Japanese internment camps. After urging attendees to view the exhibit on internment, several JACL members noted that they were disappointed with the bunker, arguing that it is too large, too clean, and contains too many objects. Additionally, the soundscape further romanticizes the space, by playing three narratives that deal with themes of patriotism, acculturation, and perseverance. The decision to include this soundscape is an important difference with Silverton, because “sound is central to making sense, to knowing, to experiential truth” (Feld 2005:183). Without the re-creation of the sounds of the bunker, there is a lack of truth to the experience of this place. The choice to overlay narrative makes this less of an embodied experience, and more of an observational experience.

This decision, however, may have been made in part because of what visitors wanted, as front-end analysis shows that visitors wanted to hear first-hand accounts from internees (History Colorado 2013). Alternatively, differences in embodied experience may also be a result of the more serious content of Amache compared to the content of Silverton. Regardless, contrasts in embodiment can contribute to differential understandings of narrative. For example, by presenting a cleaner version of the Amache bunker, the exhibition may not truly engage with the issues of Japanese internment, and can detract from the racial issues at play. This difference in embodiment may keep visitors, who are largely European American, separate from this history. Even though Colorado Stories presents an inclusive landscape, making visible populations that are often overlooked, a closer assessment of this landscape reveals some potential problems. The embodiment of conflict in this exhibit also presents another consideration for how
embodiment can contribute to shaping visitor perceptions. Specifically, the embodied nature of these darker historical events can help to create engaged and informed citizens.

In creating the *Colorado Stories* exhibit, Convery notes that the museum wanted to represent these particular stories in an attempt to keep the memory of them alive and to impact future actions.

The connection to memory can be a powerful tool in conveying ideas, especially with regards to representation. In a sense, displaying these stories in an embodied way allows visitors to live in the shoes of the people the museum represents, to empathize with their stories, and perhaps to internalize this heritage. By doing so, it can open dialogue, and civic engagement, which can lead to cultivating active citizens and greater understandings of groups that challenge stereotypes. This means of embodiment, however, can be problematic when considering one of the museum’s core target audiences are families. A majority of the stories in the exhibit feature elements that cater to younger children, including a number of interactive games and content. With this focus on children, the embodied elements and overall tone of the exhibit can downplay the severity of many of the narratives, making it challenging to fully engage with the difficult and complex issues underlying many of the stories.

Visual Representation

Visual representations in the exhibit can also detract from engagement with the complexities of the racial and ethnic heritages displayed in the exhibit. The images presented in *Colorado Stories* are a mix of photographs, videos, and mixed media representations. Each story employs a different set of these visual representations, which
helps to reinforce narrative and embodiment. For example, Bent’s Fort features large, cutout, cartoon images of historical figures. These visual representations also serve as the characters visitors can play in the interactive game featured in the exhibit. Similarly, Borderlands features a mixed-media version of the representations from Bent’s Fort, using both photographs and cartoon drawings to represent major figures in historical border issues. The remaining exhibits feature photographic or video representations.

Because each section of the exhibit utilizes different representations, the use of visual culture in each lends itself to comparison. A major difference in the visual representations between each section is the use of real versus created, and past versus present representations. This is clear in a comparison between Bent’s Fort, Borderlands, and the Ute where differential use of media can result in potentially different interpretations. As noted, Bent’s Fort features cartoon representations of historical figures, which can be viewed both positively and negatively. In one way, the use of these images helps to connect children to the stories and the history of the fort. By using media children are familiar with, these representations may be more familiar and interesting to younger children, and may help them to better connect with and understand the narrative of this section. Conversely, the cartoons also seem to trivialize the characters and their importance. In my interview with David Halaas, he critiqued the museum’s decision to include such representations, noting that they previously had a collection of historic documents containing drawings of individuals from Bent’s Fort (David Halaas, interview with the author, Denver, September 30, 2013). In this sense, the use of cartoon representations can make the racial diversity and integration of this town seem
unimportant. A similar representation occurs in Borderlands, in which historical figures are represented by mixed media images with photographic heads and cartoon bodies. By using this visual representation, the figures and more difficult events depicted may be more easily interpreted. But they may also make light of the historical events depicted in the section.

These representations are especially important to consider, because they are the first stories visitors encounter when entering Colorado Stories. With this placement, the use of created visual representations can set a whimsical or “fun” tone for the exhibition, rather than a contemplative and reflective one that memorializes the events depicted. As visitors encounter subsequent stories, which may require a greater level of contemplation, they may not experience them in such a manner. For example, as discussed, a critique of the Amache bunker is that it is essentially too nice. With this criticism in mind, having been primed by more whimsical representations earlier in the exhibit, entering the Amache story may reinforce this representation that makes light of internee living experiences. The use of real images in the Ute section, however, seems to empower and challenge stereotypes. This section features only photographs, and importantly, features many modern images. By using modern images, rather than solely relying on historic photos, this section of the exhibit challenges the idea of the “Museum Indian” by showing the dynamism and continuity of Native Americans in Colorado (Hill 2010).
Museo de las Americas

Institutional Narrative Tone

Like History Colorado, Museo is working to challenge museums’ traditional social roles by minimizing authoritative tone. Although staff interviews did not reveal as strong of an awareness of the dynamic between museum staff and museumgoers, the tone taken in the one featured exhibition label reflects an understanding of curatorial tone. The introductory panel featured in La Cocina was written by and is clearly credited to curator Maruca Salazar. While a label written by a curator may seemingly support authoritative tone, the panel features Maruca’s personal memories. She states:

The smell of fresh baked pan de muerto, the taste of a tortilla hot from the comal, the colorful pitalla melting in my mouth…this connection to my past and the vision of my grandmother sitting next to the stove like a great alchemist, mixing all the ingredients for La comida del medio día… [La Cocina: Denver, CO: Museo de las Americas, n.d.]

This anecdote helps to remove Maruca’s curatorial authority by drawing on personal experiences that visitors can relate to, and in turn connect to exhibit content through. Further, the use of personal language may help visitors feel more comfortable in the museum, and may help them connect to content on an emotional level.

Narrative

Analysis for labels at Museo was less extensive, as the museum featured only one introductory panel and then a number of tombstone labels. The label in the exhibit, which is also featured on the museum’s website under their “Current Exhibition” tab reads:

The smell of fresh baked pan de muerto, the taste of a tortilla hot from the comal, the colorful pitalla melting in my mouth…this connection to my past and the vision of my grandmother sitting next to the stove like a great alchemist, mixing all the ingredients for La comida del medio día…
The art of cooking is universal but the tradition of the Mexican Cocina is a world of its own. The colors, aromas, essential ingredients, exotic condiments, roots, wild flavors and organic vegetables, awaken our senses to the power of a simple home cooked meal and the gastronomical phenomenon of flavors authentically Mexican.

*barriga llena... corazón contento.*

Maruca Salazar Chief Curator [La Cocina: Denver, CO: Museo de las Americas, n.d.).]

Similar to History Colorado’s narratives, the narrative constructed in this label presents themes of community and hints at a shared heritage. But unlike History Colorado, Museo attempts to construct this narrative by establishing distinct difference between groups. Specifically, the narrative from this label expresses an attempt to connect non-Latinos/as to Latino/a culture. First, the label opens with a personal memory, which in a similar way to tone, helps to establish a friendly and inclusive rapport. Further, it presents the shared experience of remembering our past. Next, the label asserts, “cooking is universal,” helping to appeal to a shared, cross-cultural experience that often has strong memories, experiences, and actions associated with it. These two features help to establish intimacy and interconnectedness between visitors and museum content.

The label then contextualizes these shared experiences within a particular cultural context. In doing so it draws distinctions between racial and ethnic groups. As the label notes, though cooking may be universal, the Mexican cocina is a unique tradition all its own. By making this distinction, the label asserts the importance of Mexican culture as expressed in their traditions surrounding food. This main point of the narrative La Cocina constructs aligns with museum staff’s goals to show the importance of Latino/a culture.
But through the progression of the label, the narrative constructed helps to connect visitors, regardless of ethnic background, to a shared heritage, and in doing so, may help to forge connections to Latino/a culture.

The intermixing of Spanish and English on the label, however, may also work to alienate certain groups. In assessing this label in terms of Gee’s tools, it prizes bilingualism as a sign-system in which only visitors that speak both Spanish and English can fully comprehend the label without assistance. Additional bilingual labels also appear throughout the exhibit, with tombstone labels appearing in both English and Spanish. The use of bilingual labels elsewhere, however, may work to counteract any alienation, and may also reflects Museo’s visitor base and their concern with Latino/a culture.

**Space**

Although *La Cocina* is encompassed in a singular gallery space, there seemed to be two distinct areas that were distinguished by display methods. The first section is a recreation of a kitchen and dining area. Ceramic plates, bowls, and various cooking utensils are displayed on open shelves that mimic those that would be found in a kitchen. The central focus of the area is a large wood oven and food preparation table that features fake food, displayed ceramics, and food processing tools. Directly next to this display is a kitchen table and bureau, both of which are staged for a full meal. For example, at the time of research, this area contained paraphernalia related to *Día de los Muertos*, and was decorated with related items, such as sugar skulls. The second section of the exhibition has a more traditional display, with pedestals containing food-related ceramics, and artwork mounted on the wall.
The use of space was an intentional design feature that is meant to convey two separate areas. As described by Maruquita Salazar, the first area of the exhibit is seen as a multicultural room, meant to convey a universal connection to the kitchen (Maruquita Salazar, interviewed by author, Museo de las Americas, October 30, 2013). Similarly, Maruca remarked that the kitchen is “extremely powerful, because it triggers memories, it connects” (Maruca Salazar, interviewed by author, Museo de las Americas, November 15, 2013). In this area Museo wanted visitors to make connections to their own experiences, and to feel comfortable in the space. Maruquita equated this area with stepping into a home. The re-creation in this area may help in the process by allowing visitors to feel as though they have done just that, stepped into someone’s home that is both familiar and new. In embodying this emotion, the museum may help visitors strengthen their connections to the content and Latino/a heritage in general.

In the second section of the exhibit, Maruquita notes that this area is meant to provide nutrition through content. When discussing both rooms, she notes:

> It was a way to have people become comfortable, in my mind, it was like “oh, yeah, I know this!” But then going into the other room, and the people who actually come from this community, I don’t know I feel like it was kind of a two-step process. You know inviting you into a home, making you feel homey, and then taking you into another room and providing you with nutritious information [Maruquita Salazar, interviewed by author, Museo de las Americas, October 30, 2013]

In presenting a more formal museum environment, visitors may fall into their common understanding of museum behavior, drawing on a *habitus* that dictates appropriate behavior. This behavior can include social interactions around objects, and the consideration of pieces that are related to the home for their value.
as artistic works. In Maruquita’s explanation, the second space provides the educational aspect of the museum exhibit. Further, it provides visitors with a more traditional art exhibition experience in which they can appreciate pieces for their aesthetic value.

In creating two separate embodied spaces, Museo is able to build on the experiences of visitors both within and outside of the museum’s spaces. Through the embodiment of the kitchen, a space with strong emotional memories, the exhibit creates an area in which visitors can connect to Latino/a heritage using their own experiences. By giving this connection a physical basis, the exhibit may help to integrate this cultural understanding into *habitus*, connecting an individual’s history to their experience within the exhibition. With the more traditional section of the exhibit, *La Cocina* may also help to legitimize Latino/a culture, and as Maruquita notes, show the achievements of Latinos/as. In my interviews with Maruca and Maruquita, and as previously quoted in this chapter, both women noted that Latinos/as often lack pride in their achievements, being unaware of their cultural heritage and influenced by stereotypes of these groups. By showing artwork on this topic in a more traditional setting, the exhibit may work to legitimize these pieces as artwork and as achievements. Drawing upon understandings of museum experiences and behavior, the second section of the exhibit may help to embody these views in visitors.

**Visual Representation**

In contrast to History Colorado, Museo features only artistic visual representations in their exhibit. Mainly, the exhibit features ceramic items and mixed
media artworks. These representations serve a similar function to the designation of two spaces in the exhibit; they show the achievements and importance of Latino/a art and culture.

The use of artistic representations is clear in a series of paintings featured in the second section of the exhibit. This installation depicts important crops that originated and were cultivated in Mexico. Each piece has a visual representation of the crop, and is bordered by the name of the plant in a number of languages. In my interpretation of the pieces, the artist shows that Mexico was important in contributing these food items as staples across the globe, and reflects the cross-cultural appreciation of these items. As Maruquita Salazar remarked, in working on the exhibition she was surprised to find the contributions Mexico made in the cultivation of important crops, mainly the tomato (Maruquita Salazar, interviewed by author, Museo de las Amerias, October 30, 2013).

The representation of food in these pieces may have a similar result in visitors, not only showing artistic skill, but global contributions Latinos/as have made. In doing so this visual representation helps to add Latinos/as to a larger narrative.

Programs

Another area that museums enact museum ethics, and the social responsibility paradigm in particular, is in their programming. There are two main ways that museums can do so: first by bringing together diverse groups to interact and engage with one another, and second by creating a forum through which issues of race, ethnicity, and resulting inequality can be discussed and debated with the hope or intention of change. For example, the AAA’s exhibition Race: Are We So Different? implemented a number
of programs that allowed participants to engage with their own racial identity and the stereotypes they faced in their day to day life (AAA 2011). These programs were often considered successful because they obtained a large, diverse, population and allowed people to engage with the concepts expressed. In analyzing programs a main consideration was whether or not museum programs provided a platform for the two major ways museums can use programs to elicit change. Because I only observed a few programs directly, my analysis is largely based on staff perspectives and available data from museum websites.

The History Colorado Center

As listed on their website and at the time of this research, History Colorado advertised two programs, a one time event and a recurring program. The singular event was entitled “Life of a Buffalo Soldier,” and discussed the “first peacetime all African American units” (History Colorado n.d.). The program had a re-enactor playing Sergeant Jack Hackett, and allowed visitors to ask questions “about the life of a soldier in the late 1800s” (History Colorado n.d.). While the program was listed as free, it occurs in Colorado Stories exhibition space, which means visitors must pay admission to the museum in order to partake in the program. The second program was entitled “Story Time,” and this programs allows visitors to bring their 2-5 year-old to “learn about farms, cowboys, and animals” during the reading of a story followed by playtime in Destination Colorado before the museum opens. Although children have free admission for the program, adults must pay $10.
Although “Story Time,” may attract diverse families, it is unlikely to present a forum for debate, because as a children’s program, it is unlikely to engage deeply with issues of race, ethnicity, and stereotypes. “Life of a Buffalo Soldier,” however, may present a greater opportunity to attract a diverse group, as well as serve as a forum for discussion on topics surrounding race. A major concern with these programs, however, is the barrier created by having to charge admission. Because minorities tend to be of a lower socio-economic background, admissions can be a barrier to bringing this group into the museum. As discussed, Hill acknowledged the obstacle of museum admissions in her interview, commenting on its impact on inclusivity across museums. The issue of admission in relation to programs may prevent History Colorado from being an area of contact, and rather may maintain it as an area of comfort.

Additionally, while “Life of a Buffalo Soldier” may deal with racial and ethnic heritage, as was the case with History Colorado’s exhibitions, the program may not fully address issues of race and racial stereotypes. Though the program on Buffalo Soldiers acknowledges African American’s contribution in service, it does not seem to address deeper issues including the negative opinion of African American soldiers and the role of Buffalo soldiers in fighting Native Americans during westward expansion (Leckie and Leckie 2012). This lack of engagement may be the result of the museum’s focus on family audiences, who may not want to engage with these topics. By focusing on the interests of their target audience, the museum is seemingly striving to be a comfort zone.

The museum, however, is also simultaneously striving be a contact zone. In my interview with Hill, she discussed a 10-week series on the 1960s that attracted a more
diverse audience than the museum was accustomed to. In one of the series, the museum discussed the 16th Street Baptist Church Bombing in Birmingham, Alabama. During the discussions, attendants shared their confrontations with violence, and connections were drawn to other forms of bigotry faced in both the past and present (Kathryn Hill, interview with author, The History Colorado Center, August 20, 2013). For Hill, this was a prime example what she hopes the museum can be: a place where people can come together and debate issues, discuss solutions, and use the past to frame the future.

Museo de las Americas

As an educational museum, programming is a large concern for Museo. Much of their programming focuses on community outreach, and the desire to create a more direct connection with Hispanic heritage. As a part of the Latino/a community, Museo has educational programs that include hosting art classes for children within the museum, a Spanish language happy hour, and working with teachers in the public school system. This focus on outreach helps to create a dialectical relationship between the museum and the community, which may help to make the narrative they presented in their exhibitions more complete.

An important aspect of the programs at Museo is whom they serve: underprivileged kids and people in the surrounding community. Both Maruca Salazar and Tricia Schmuki emphasized the fact that a majority of their programs serve underfunded schools with large Latino/a populations. In targeting these groups the museum hopes to spread art education to those that would otherwise not have access to it. Further, the museum works to create “culturally responsive” learning that addresses the ethnic
dynamics of student populations. This type of education frames lessons in terms of cultural awareness in order to facilitate more effective learning for Latino/a and multi-cultural students. In addition to utilizing this approach in their own programs Museo also offers workshops for educators to teach them how to implement this teaching philosophy in their classrooms. The use of these education programs reflects a means of social responsibility in that Museo is working to change racial and ethnic perceptions by teaching others how to be culturally sensitive, and to recognize the value of a multicultural perspective. As discussed by Maruca:

You are talking to a director who is working in a community setting, who is the helm of a Latino [museum], which is by design and by focus and by mission, completely and totally serving an unserved population. If you have that in mind and you’re very clear about what that means, then you realize that you’re doing, that you’re providing a very important service to the community by allowing them for excellence and quality programming and also to align accessibility [Maruca Salazar, interview with the author, Museo de las Americas, November 15, 2013]
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

In the two years since History Colorado opened its doors, the museum has continued to expand its content, opening new core exhibits that span their three main themes and hosting a number of traveling exhibits. But in the midst of this growth, the Sand Creek exhibit stays stagnant, remaining closed while the museum continues to collaborate with tribal representatives. The exhibit, though in the process of resolution, serves as a physical reminder of the lasting impact misrepresentation can have on museums. With an awareness of this impact, I began my research hoping to gain a better understanding of the ethics of racial representation, and the potential for museums to act as agents of social change through these representations. In conducting my research I discovered the complexities and intricacies of museum ethics and their enactment.

In outlining these discoveries, I want to return to my guiding research questions. Starting research in the broader topic of museum ethics, an initial question I posed was whether or not museum professionals considered the ethics of representation. If so, in what ways did staff consider these issues? If not, why not? While these questions may appear to have seemingly simple answers, as was discussed in the previous chapter, ideal considerations of museum ethics do not always mirror the realities of museum work. Therefore, in assessing the social responsibility paradigm at History Colorado and Museo, I believe it was important to understand the ways in which the ethics of representation factor into decision-making. Furthermore, potential successes, conflicts,
and contradictions present interesting insights into the ways that theoretical and practical aspects of museum work intersect and interact.

In general, staff at both History Colorado and Museo expressed a concern and consideration for the ethics of representation. At History Colorado, this consideration occurred largely when staff was deciding what stories to include in core exhibitions, and how to tell these stories. As both Convery and Hill noted, the museum wanted to reflect the diversity of the state, and therefore, what narratives to include and what groups to represent became very important exhibition development decision. For example, as was discussed, Convery noted that the display of certain stories could be viewed as a means of legitimizing groups and their heritage, and initial backlash against the museum often consisted of accusations that a particular group was not being represented, and in turn was not included as part of Colorado’s heritage. He noted, “We have had a fair amount of pushback from all over the spectrum from people saying ‘you’re not telling my story’ or ‘you’re not telling my story correctly’…or ‘how dare you tell my story’ (Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013).

While the museum considered the ethics of representation and heritage construction in decision-making, practicalities of museum work did hinder and complicate the expression of these opinions. This influence was clear in talking to Convery about the difficulties of keeping a museum running in the face of decreased financial support. In our interview, Convery noted that the museum needed to seriously consider their core visitor base in constructing exhibitions, as they provided some of the greatest support for the museum. He stated:
We’ve learned that we still have to be true to our audiences no matter what the perspective of our stakeholders are. We’re doing this for the people who pay for a ticket and come in through the door. Who might be as passionate about the story as we are, or our stakeholders are, or they might not. And our job is to figure out how to get them more interested in the story [Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013]

Voirol echoed this statement in saying:

Our general audience is our priority. I think it has to be for us to exist…when you’re trying to seduce newcomers into an exhibit story, which is I think what museums often are doing, you’re not going to please the person who is the content specialist always…to me I think it’s more important to teach somebody who has no idea what Amache is what Amache is [Shannon Voirol, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 17, 2013]

Like Voirol, Convery further noted that it was the museum’s job to tell stories that their visitors could understand and connect with, rather than to tell the exact, emotional, and very personal stories community stakeholders wanted to be told (Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013). This concern for audience influenced the decision-making process surrounding the Amache exhibit featured in Colorado Stories. In consulting with the Japanese-American community, Convery noted that descendants wanted to focus on the injustice and unconstitutionality of internment. The museum, however, was concerned with this story, as they believed most visitors would not have a baseline understanding of internment, and therefore would be unable to engage with such complex topics. This sentiment was expressed by Convery in discussing a disagreement between stakeholders and staff on the title of Amache:

Our initial title for the Amache gallery was “A Test of Loyalty”…we really felt that captured what was going on, not that the Japanese were in any question of their loyalty, but their loyalty was tested by the fact that their government turned their back on them…our advisors really had objections to that title, because they felt that somehow it cast doubt on the
loyalty of the Japanese… The alternative they recommended was “A Test of Constitutionality,” which had its own challenges, because for one thing this exhibit isn’t really about whether or not internment was constitutional. Our position is it wasn’t and that’s been established and we didn’t really feel that we had to make that argument. But also it took it into a stratosphere that was sort of a deeper level of engagement than most of our visitors had with this story. We knew from our own visitor studies that we had to start at a very basic level that a lot of our visitors were really unaware of the idea of internment at all or really what caused it or a lot of our visitors when we did front end testing told us they didn’t realize there was one of these camps in Colorado. So we wanted to start at that very basic level and we felt that starting at the level of constitutionality was sort of an advanced level that that wasn’t going to connect with our visitors in any way [Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013]

Similarly, the issue of visitor reception was present when deciding how to represent the barracks in the same gallery:

There was an early moment where [our advisors] felt in the Amache exhibit the best way to represent a reconstructed barracks was to have it completely empty, to have no furnishings, no signage in it. Because that’s how they first encountered the Amache barracks. And what one of them actually told me was “I want people to feel the same sense of social and economic dislocation that we felt when we first arrive here.” And what we pushed back with is that we can’t do that. That’s not within our ability as exhibit developers, because this is a museum that’s in downtown Denver. It’s not an internment camp out in southeastern Colorado. We’re not demanding that our visitors take a week to pack up their worldly goods and figure out what fits in two suitcases and get on a train and go to an unknown destination for an indeterminate amount of time. So we can’t make people feel that dislocation. And for visitors that are coming here, what they will read when they see an empty room is an incomplete gallery. An unfinished gallery. And they’ll move on. It won’t have the impact because they don’t and can never really have the full context of that story. But what we can do is provide some of that context and help create some empathy with that story [Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013]

Because the museum’s institutional philosophy places their audience as a top priority, when Japanese American consultants voiced their concerns, the museum
ultimately chose to go with a representation that they thought was more easily understood by audiences, and that did not delve into the legality or deep emotional aspects of Japanese internment. Ultimately, however, Convery feels that the museum was able to successfully compromise on the story. But in this instance, the museum’s focus on audience came at the potential cost of collaboration with stakeholders, as well as the potential for misrepresentation. Additionally, in this instance, the museum also maintained their authority over museum content, even though they deny having curatorial authority.

For staff at Museo, it appears as though they consider the ethics of representation more acutely; not only does the museum consider the impact of representation in their immediate community, but they also consider representation more widely with regards to social stereotypes against Latinos/as. As was discussed in Chapter 5, the museum and its staff view it as their responsibility to accurately portray Latino/a culture, as these representations can influence how both Latinos/as and non-Latinos/as perceive this heritage. Their concern for representation spans department, even appearing as a main consideration in the education department. Their consideration of these ethics is likely because they are a racially and ethnically specific museum, and many of their staff ascribe to this cultural identity. According to director Marcua Salazar:

The Latino aesthetic it is aesthetic that [you cannot understand] unless you understand what it is to be a conquered nation, and understand the powerful influence of an historical weight, that drags our souls through this identity piece and the discovery of who we are [Marcua Salazar, interview with the author, Museo de las Americas, November 15, 2013]
As will be discussed later, however, this insider perspective can also diminish collaboration with community stakeholders.

Having established that both History Colorado and Museo considered museum ethics in their work, the main question I explored was how museums and museum professionals understand and enact the social responsibility paradigm when representing racial and ethnic heritages. I wanted to explore this question, because institutional and staff understandings of the paradigm can provide insight into its current state and potential future in the field. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 1, the museums I researched do not place social change at the forefront of their missions’, and therefore, their understandings of social responsibility can provide insight into the adaptability and applicability of the movement. As can be understood from an ability to generalize each institution’s view of social responsibility in Chapter 5, I discovered that there appears to be an institutional consensus with regards to the paradigm, and that staff perspectives align with museum missions and goals.

After analyzing institutional philosophy, I found that understandings of the social responsibility paradigm are influenced—and potentially constricted by—museum mission, target audiences, and attempts at museums to be multi-purpose institutions. At History Colorado, the placement of museum audiences as a top priority seems to greatly influence understandings and expressions of social responsibility. As previously discussed, the museum wants to tell stories that visitors can understand and connect with, and one way the museum believes it is able to do so is by providing multiple perspectives in their exhibitions. However, as noted, this perspective can come at a cost of community
stakeholders and non-target audience, as was the case with both Sand Creek and Amache. Additionally, their use and expression of the paradigm largely centers on fostering active citizens, which reflects a potentially greater concern for engendering activism in audiences rather than within the institution itself.

The influence of museum mission and target audiences is reflected in History Colorado’s concern with family audiences. As was ascertained from the museum’s mission—which notes a desire to inspire generations to come—and interviews with staff, History Colorado’s target audience is families with children. Thus, exhibitions and programs often cater to this particular group, which is reflected in the design elements of the museum’s exhibitions. As discussed in Chapter 5, History Colorado’s exhibits feature a number of interactive, kid-friendly museum content. While these exhibition elements can help to accommodate families with children, they can also detract from the tone of the exhibits, making light of serious issues and creating the potential for misrepresentation. In this instance, a focus on family and children may be compromising the museum’s ability to enact the social responsibility paradigm.

At Museo, social responsibility is about authentic representation. As a racially and ethnically specific museum, Museo wants to ensure that it helps to break down stereotypes and negative perceptions of Latinos/as. Yet staff, funding, and space can limit this representation. As noted, the museum has a limited number of full time staff and only one rotating gallery space, two factors that can limit their ability to impart change. Additionally, funding is a great concern, not only for exhibitions and upkeep, but also for staff; in my interview with Maruca Salazar, she noted that the museum’s ability to pay
staff salaries can be a concern, which is not uncommon for small, nonprofit museums: “If I don’t have money to meet my payroll, I don’t pay myself. I pay my staff first…You have to truly believe in what you do, because then any sacrifice it doesn’t matter” (Maruca Salazar, interviewed by author, Museo de las Americas, November 15, 2013).

Further, in focusing on a single heritage with the hope of attracting two visitor groups—Latinos/as and non-Latinos/as—the museum has a difficult task of creating a space that accommodates both groups. And in this instance, their responsibility towards one audience may come at the cost of the other. While staff may note that Museo is an inclusive institution, as is the case at History Colorado, with limited funding museums must make difficult decision as to who to prioritize within their institutions.

From these varying perspectives, it is clear that interpretations of social responsibility differ in degree from one institution to the next. This variation reflects the adaptability and potential applicability of the paradigm across institutions. Understanding the varying applications of the social responsibility paradigm at both History Colorado and Museo also helped to answer my third major question, which asked in what ways the paradigm was being used, recognized, and potentially adapted. As has been discussed, I found that the paradigm did translate for both History Colorado and Museo, and was adapted to fit institutional mission and goals. Because the social responsibility paradigm as defined in this thesis has multiple tenets, it lends itself to adaptability.

As was the case with the ethics of representation, the paradigm was recognized by all staff interviewed, but not explicitly in name. So while the paradigm may be present in considerations of museum ethics, both institutions do not ascribe to social justice
principles, and in turn may be able to adapt it more easily. History Colorado uses the paradigm to develop their exhibits and programs, but as noted, its application can be hindered by practical considerations. The museum also adapts the paradigm to fit their focus on visitors. This adaptation is reflected in their connection with active citizens, and a focus on depth and interconnectedness, which are audience-centered principles. In adapting the paradigm, however, idealism is lessened, and museum content may not be pushed far enough to truly engage with difficult topics and ideas of social change. In turn it can be argued that History Colorado perpetuates certain meta-narratives, like that of the American dream.

Almost conversely, Museo seemed to adapt the paradigm to focus largely on the principle of idealism. As has been noted extensively, the idealism principle fits very closely with the museum’s concern for Latino/a representation and their mission of change. Their use of this particular principle, however, can come at the costs of the other tenets of the movement. Mainly, the museum does not always exhibit intimacy and depth. With a focus on a singular worldview, the museum may not always consider additional perspectives, which may influence their ability to be inclusive.

The question of perspective is important to consider when researching the ethics of representation, because who makes decisions regarding representation can reflect underlying power dynamics. Therefore, the final questions I considered in my thesis were who contributed to the decision-making process, and what did the museum “say” with their exhibitions. As discussed in previous chapters, although many museums are attempting to be more collaborative, most museums still hold power and authority
regarding representation. This is what Lynch (2011) notes to be a critical distinction between museums that are comfort zones and museums that are contact zones. Interestingly, however, it appears as though both History Colorado and Museo are attempting to be both comfort and contact zones. But as Gurian (2006) discusses, museums that attempt to take on a number of purposes often struggle, which seems to be the case at both History Colorado and Museo.

As noted in Chapter 5, although History Colorado collaborated with a number of community stakeholders, they ultimately retained final authority over museum content, and thus largely remained a comfort zone. Convery noted that limited collaboration was often the result of the museum’s limited time and funding. For example, in meeting with community stakeholders for Colorado Stories, Convery admitted that consultations could often be rushed. But in conducting my research, I found that History Colorado’s perception of content stakeholders and what their role should be in creating museum content also likely contributed to the museum’s relationships with these groups. In my interviews, staff noted that they felt content stakeholders may be too close to the stories to tell them in the best way for lay audiences. Convery stated:

> What we present and the way we present it is understandable and accessible to lay audiences who are not as deeply engaged or immersed in these stories as either we are as historians and museum professionals or as our stakeholders are, because this is a story which they hold very close to them [Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013]

For Convery, it was most important to make sure stories were accessible to those that had quite a bit of distance from them. In general, he was “making sure [stakeholders’] passion
doesn’t overwhelm understandability” (Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013).

Hill expressed a similar sentiment when discussing her previous work at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. She noted that it was important to have an “emotional connection, but also the distance” and a “sensitivity to audience” (Kathryn Hill, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, August 20, 2013). Because as was the case with Amache, exhibition developers could not re-create certain experiences that content stakeholders may have wanted re-created. Finally, Voirol commented that it was the museum’s job and goal to “tell other people’s stories…but in a way interesting to audiences. Audience for a story is not just the content stakeholders. If we were only talking to that one group, whatever it was…then we’re not building a lifelong learning engagement with our audiences” (Shannon Voirol, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 17, 2013). In all of these perspectives, there is an expressed concern that content stakeholders, may be too emotionally connected to the stories exhibited to contribute to museum content outside of authenticity.

Interestingly, I also found myself questioning the level of collaboration at Museo. When asked about collaboration with outside groups or the community, both Maruca Salazar and Maruquita Salazar discussed collaboration with other museums and artists, but not with community members or other content stakeholders. With these responses, it appears as through collaboration is considered only across professional lines. It is possible that because many of the staff are themselves content stakeholders, they feel they can retain a sense of authority over museum content. As Maruquita Salazar noted,
“Some people are from Mexico, we have volunteers that are from different parts of Latin America that help us to maintain accuracy of the information we’re providing out” (Maruquita Salazar, interview with the author, Museo de las Americas, October 30, 2013). In a sense, because they are part of the community they represent, their representations are collaborative in and of themselves. While this may be the case, it is also possible that with greater community collaboration, the museum can appeal to a wider audience more deeply.

The final question I wanted to explore was what each museum was “saying” about racial and ethnic heritage through their exhibitions. I found that both museums were addressing issues of race and ethnicity, and were pushing to make change in some ways, but not quite fully engaging with the topics. Both History Colorado and Museo construct narratives dealing with community, and in doing so seem to be attempting to construct a narrative of inclusion that represents a more racially diverse understanding of Colorado. But each museum works towards this narrative in different ways, and has varying strengths and weaknesses. Through their historical focus, History Colorado presents a nostalgic view of the history that prides perseverance and tenacity in our past. In doing so, the museum seems to engage with the difficulties of forming racially diverse communities to varying degrees of success. Museo constructs a diverse narrative by calling attention to the distinctiveness of Latinos/as, which is in line with their mission. In doing so, Museo helps to show the importance of this culture, but may also alienate other that do not identify with this heritage.
Through greater integration of the social responsibility paradigm, however, both museums may be able to improve representation, and in turn inclusion. Because the social responsibility paradigm argues for the active participation of museums, it pushes institutions to engage with social issues, and in doing so, urges museums to move beyond their comfort zones. Therefore, by incorporating the principles into the core of museum work, issues of collaboration, authority, and representation can be considered from the outset of exhibition and program development, and incorporated into every stage of the development process. Furthermore, in having to assess these issues in subsequent developmental stages, museums will be able to revisit and reassess the ethics of the representations they are constructing. As Convery noted, History Colorado was often limited in their collaborative efforts because of time and funding. But if the museum prioritized collaboration on the principles of depth and intimacy, and revisited these issues over the course of development, they may have considered having a greater degree of collaboration with community stakeholders, which could have prevented misrepresentations.

Since the time this research was conducted, however, there have been several occurrences at History Colorado in particular that hint at change in the museum. One such occurrence that was referenced throughout this thesis is the ongoing discussion with Northern Cheyenne and Arapahoe tribes regarding the Sand Creek Massacre section of *Colorado Stories*. Although the museum is accused of limited consultation on the exhibit, their decision to close the Sand Creek section and to work with tribes on the issue
represents an attempt to rectify the situation and move forward with a more positive relationship.

Additionally, as noted, History Colorado has expanded its content and has mounted several traveling exhibits. One of these exhibits is *Race: Are We So Different?*, which will be at the museum from September 20, 2014 through January 4, 2015. Furthermore, the exhibit will feature a number of programs, and teacher and visitor learning tools. The exhibit, which was discussed in the introduction and Chapter 2, deals with the idea of race and its social implications, and is what I believe to be a paragon of the social responsibility movement. The decision to bring the exhibit to the museum reflects a clear desire to engage more deeply with issues of race and ethnicity.

The decision to bring *Race: Are We So Different?* to History Colorado may also hint at another means of improving the representation of racial and ethnic heritage: ownership and reconciliation. In most of my interviews, museum professionals touched on the emotional aspect of representing racial and ethnic groups. At History Colorado, staff commented on encountering emotional feedback from European Americans who found it painful to face the past. Convery and Hill both discussed their worries over alienating European American visitors who may feel ashamed about their heritage. Hill noted, “If you just walk in and you feel like you’re the bad guy, you can’t hear it. And if you walk in and you feel like that was just wrong and stupid, well then there’s no abiding lesson there, or perspective you can get your mind around” (Kathryn Hill, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, August 20, 2013).
Convery discussed similar instances of people saying, “I’m kind of ashamed of who I am because of how you’re telling the story, and I’m not comfortable with that” (Bill Convery, interview with the author, The History Colorado Center, July 3, 2013). This sentiment was even expressed by a board member who was upset with how the Sand Creek gallery portrayed European Americans. For History Colorado staff who cater to a largely European American audience these feelings can be difficult to contend with when creating museum content.

But as was discussed, catering to one particular group and providing multivocal content in an attempt to alleviate negative feelings can often come at the risk of misrepresenting another group. Furthermore, choosing not to discuss or face issues of race can align with the components of new racism. With this in mind, it may be beneficial for museums like History Colorado to embrace and openly discuss race and racism, creating spaces for reconciliation and forgiveness. By acknowledging these issues, the museum may be able to move past them.

This method of embracing the past is proving effective for the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (Sites of Conscience), which is an organization dedicated to creating safe spaces to remember often painful pasts with the hope of promoting civic action in the present. Similar to the social responsibility movement, Sites of Conscience hopes to engender change, but seeks to do so through a larger platform that includes heritage sites and memory.

The organization’s website notes that the desire to remember often competes with the pressure to forget the tragedies of the past (International Coalition of Sites of Conscience).
Conscience 2014). However, creating spaces that keep alive the memories that others may try to overlook can both preserve the voices of those that experienced injustice, and also allow the past to become something more meaningful and potentially powerful. Rather than erasing or glossing over the pain of the past, Sites of Conscience advocates remembering and embracing so that future generations can learn from history. Kathryn Hill expressed a similar sentiment when discussing her hope that the museum could create active citizens who are informed enough about the past to make better decisions in the future.

With this in mind, my research raises additional considerations that can be explored through future research. First, my research presents interesting considerations on the topic of curatorial authority in new museology museums. As discussed, many museum professionals denied having curatorial authority, treating it as something to be avoided and denounced. Although these professionals attempted to absolve themselves of this power, it is clear that they are still the final authority on exhibition content. This contradiction between philosophy and practice presents an interesting area of study, and raises the question of what might happen if museum professionals acknowledged and embraced their authority. Like the anthropologists discussed in Chapter 2 who recognized how their positionality influenced their ethnographic research, would accepting museums’ authority over content improve collaboration?

Additionally, in understanding that the social responsibility paradigm can be adapted to fit institutional mission and purpose, my research raises the question of how the contingent nature of museum ethics can be better integrated into a number of
museums. In exploring this question, it may be possible to garner further explanations on the intersection between social responsibility and comfort/contact zones, and ways to move towards full collaboration. As museums move from their comfort zones, they may be able to engage with more diverse visitor bases, and in turn becoming more inclusive institutions.
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Smith, Laurajane and Natsuko Akagawa

Szekers, Viv

Terrell, John

Teslow, T. L.

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural, Organization.

V ergo, Peter

Virtanen, Simo V. and Leonie Huddy

Watson, Sheila E. R.

Weil, Stephen

White, Richard

Witcomb, Andrea

Wyckoff, William

Zamora, Herlinda