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Decolonize This Place: The Activist Potential of Anthropology Museums

Katharine Anne Nelson

Seton Hall University

Master's Project Primary Adviser: Gregory Stevens, M.A.T.

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Master of Arts in Museum Professions

Seton Hall University

South Orange, New Jersey 07079

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APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL PRESENTATION

Master's Candidate, Katharine Anne Nelson, has successfully presented and made the required modifications to the text of the master's project for the Master of Arts degree during this Spring 2021 semester.

ADVISER(S) COMMITTEE

Primary Adviser:

Gregory Stevens July 23, 2021

Name (printed) Signature Date

Adviser:

Renee Robinson July 25, 2021

Name (printed) Signature Date

Adviser:

McKenna Schray July 26, 2021

Name (printed) Signature Date

Adviser:

Ruth Tsuria July 29, 2021

Name (printed) Signature Date

The adviser and any other committee members who wish to review revisions will sign and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this form to your Academic Advisor, where it will be placed in the candidate's file and submit a copy with your final project to be bound as page number two.

Dedication

To all the professors I've had throughout my academic career, for generously sharing their knowledge and believing in me when I didn't always believe in myself. To all of my friends and family, for their endless support throughout this process and my whole life. To the Thesis Support Group, for listening to complaints and giving great advice. To my closest friends, Jessy and Lindsay, for their encouragement and always making me laugh when I needed it most. Most of all, to my dad, William Nelson, for being there every step of the way and never letting me give up even when this felt impossible. Your love and support made this thesis possible. I love you, Dad.

Abstract

Museums are under increasing pressure to become more activist. The literature revealed that museum activism can benefit society, though a gap appeared pertaining to anthropology museums. Historically, anthropology museums were tied to colonialism and even racism, and thus need to evolve to become more socially responsible. Through a qualitative case study of four anthropology museums in the United States – the Museum of Us, the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, the Penn Museum and the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology – this study examined how anthropology museums can change and engage with activism. A series of recommendations were created, emphasizing the importance of transparency, transformative leadership, enhanced policies, community engagement, and utilization of online resources to grow activism within anthropology museums.

Keywords: museum, anthropology museum, activism, decolonization, race, community engagement, accountability, transparency, case study, textual analysis, content analysis

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Chapter 1

Statement of the Problem

Introduction

Activism is now an omnipresent part of society. As defined by Vlachou (2019), *activism* involves efforts to promote and enact reform in areas such as politics, society, the economy, or the environment for the improvement of society as a whole. Climate activist Greta Thunberg launched the Fridays for Future movement, inspiring students across the globe to hold school strikes in order to raise awareness of climate change (Woodward, 2020). In what may have been the largest protests in U.S. history, an estimated tens of millions of Americans protested in the streets after the death of George Floyd to support Black Lives Matter and decry systemic racism and police brutality (Buchanan et al., 2020). According to Gregory (2020), “the days of keeping a social conscience off the field seem gone forever,” as famous athletes around the world continue to protest racism and advocate for issues such as voting rights and criminal justice reform. Companies are also taking notice, with a growing number publicly supporting a variety of causes, especially in the face of increasing internal employee pressure (Coulman, 2019; Maks-Solomon, n.d.).

Museums are not immune to the growing force of activism. After then-President Trump enacted a travel ban on citizens from majority-Muslim nations, the Museum of Modern Art in New York temporarily rehung their collection and exhibited artists from those nations explicitly in protest of the executive order (Bowley, 2017). In 2019, the Metropolitan Museum of Art covered paintings by artists such as Piet Mondrian and Mark Chagall to raise awareness for the contribution of refugees in collaboration with the International Rescue Committee (Bishara, 2019). Museum scholars Janes and Sandell (2019) and Marstine (2011) have argued that it is

unethical for museums to ignore their responsibilities to society and not engage more with activism. Further, some have warned that museums that do not take a stand on the issues affecting society risk becoming irrelevant (Bailey, 2019; Vlachou, 2019). According to Jennifer Williams, a former employee of the New Orleans Museum of Art who publicly complained about its treatment of Black employees, “America is changing, and museums need to change with it” (Randle, 2020).

Museums are under intensifying scrutiny from both the public and those within the museum profession who believe museums should be more responsive to the issues facing society. After the police killing of George Floyd, some museums were criticized by the public and activists for not providing meaningful responses or proposing concrete actions to combat inequity (Pogrebin & Jacobs, 2020). The director of the Association of Art Museum Directors, Chris Anagnos, released a statement in the wake of this scrutiny after Floyd’s death, acknowledging that art museums were not doing enough to address racism (Anagnos, 2020). This also comes as a variety of museums, such as the Guggenheim (Pogrebin, 2020) and the Akron Art Museum (Small, 2020), have faced public scandals involving internal accusations of racist and sexist practices. The museum field increasingly recognizes that institutions must do better on these issues, especially those addressing diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion (International Council of Museums, 2019; Plumley, 2020). Faden (2007) contended that museums must address such issues to preserve their privileged place in society.

However, the museum field remains divided over how best to respond to this increased scrutiny and the growth of activism. Some museum leaders do not believe it is the place for museums to take a stand on social issues (Bowley, 2017). Those same leaders want to preserve the idea of the museum as a neutral space, often out of fear of offending visitors or funders

(Janes & Sandell, 2019). Yet, the museum field is beginning to acknowledge that museums are not neutral. As Suay Aksoy, then-president of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), stated when acknowledging that museums have never been neutral institutions, "To accomplish their missions and serve to the betterment of societies, museums do not need to be neutral" (International Council of Museums, 2019). Aksoy further questioned the supposedly neutral position on the part of museums involving social issues and historic injustices, pointing out that neutrality on such issues is a stance, yet one that does not benefit society (International Council of Museums, 2019).

This debate is emblematic of a larger shift occurring within the museum field. An often-stark divide exists between those who believe the role of the museum should be focused on the research and preservation of collections, and those who believe that museums should instead be more involved with their communities and provide a service to society (Weil, 1999/2002). Though museums were initially expressions of power and often products of wealth and imperialism, they have since come to be viewed as a vital educational resource for society (Bennett, 1995; Silverman, 2010). Additionally, some museum professionals are calling for institutions to become more engaged with their communities and responsive to the social issues that directly affect their lives, which has been described as a post-critical museum (Fleming, 2011; Kletchka, 2018).

These divisions were apparent during the adoption of a new definition for museums proposed by a committee of ICOM in 2019. The proposed definition led to intense disagreement over the role of activism and the future of the museum field. The current definition of a museum was last approved by ICOM in 2007 and has seen little change in over 50 years (Noce, 2019). Some museum leaders and thinkers have argued that the definition is too rooted in the past

paradigms of what constitutes a museum, such as research, conservation and education, instead of looking to the needs of a future faced with innumerable societal challenges (Sandahl, 2019). ICOM proposed the following expanded definition for museums in 2019:

> Museums are democratizing, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people. Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing. (ICOM, n.d.)

This 2019 proposed definition from ICOM placed a greater emphasis on the social role of museums, a shift that has been developing in the last few decades (Brown & Mairesse, 2018). The inclusion of terms such as *social justice*, meaning equality in rights and opportunities across society, alluded to the growing role of activism in museums. Jette Sandahl, a Danish curator and the head of the ICOM committee that proposed the new definition, argued that the updated version was necessary to address the unique challenges museums face in the 21st century and the ongoing changes within the field (Sandahl, 2019). Some critical museum leaders charged that the new definition was too political and ideological, more a “statement of fashionable values” than a definition (Noce, 2019; Ünsal, 2019). After much debate and division amongst the different national branches, ICOM tabled the vote to ratify this definition at their 2019 Extraordinary

General Assembly and have instead restarted the process of finding an updated definition (ICOM, n.d.).

Such a debate regarding the social role of museums and the potential for activism is especially pertinent to anthropology museums. Anthropology is a discipline which historically has grappled with its own legacy of racism and colonialism (Mullings, 2005). Physical anthropology, especially, was utilized in the establishment of a racial hierarchy as proof to justify racist policies and beliefs (Blakey, 2021). The skeletal remains of Native Americans, other Indigenous peoples, and African Americans alike were unearthed, examined, measured and held as proof of the mental inferiority of non-whites (Menand, 2001-2002). Early cultural anthropology studied Indigenous groups from around the world as representatives of primitive cultures vanishing in the wake of the superiority of Western civilization (Lonetree, 2012). As World War II revealed the consequences of eugenics and institutionalized racism, anthropology began to embrace the work of anthropologists such as Franz Boas, who advocated for cultural relativism and antiracism (Anderson, 2019; Blakey, 2021; Teslow, 2014).

During that period, museums played a key role in the public awareness of anthropology, disseminating anthropological theory through their displays. Anthropologists embarked on fieldwork financed by museums and gathered artifacts for the benefit of an institution's collections (Lonetree, 2012). With these collections, museums would portray non-whites as primitive and inferior, reinforcing racial and ethnic stereotypes that were pervasive in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Teslow, 2014). During the shift in anthropology after World War II, many museums were left with outdated displays and forced to deal with rapid theoretical changes in anthropology with which museums could not keep up. Now, anthropology museums exist in a

world where increased accountability and even activism is demanded of all museums, especially those with past misdeeds and the resources to address the current social climate.

Purpose of the Study

Anthropology collections have historically been problematic due to their links with colonialism and early anthropological theories tied to racism. The nature of these collections means that anthropology museums have a particular responsibility to confront their pasts and advocate for equality and human rights. However, much of the call for museum activism has focused on art, history and science museums. Though anthropology museums have much potential for meaningful activism, little has been written on the subject. Due to this gap in the literature, the following research question was developed to guide this project:

> RQ: How can anthropology museums evolve to become more socially responsible and realize their activist potential in the face systemic racism and decolonization?

This research project sought to provide information for anthropology museums to become more engaged with activism that pertains to their unique collections. A qualitative, multi-site case study was conducted of four anthropology museums in the United States: the Museum of Us, the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography (Peabody Museum), the Penn Museum and the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology (Hearst Museum). For each museum, a textual and content analysis was undertaken to examine how these museums interacted with topics crucial to activism in anthropology museums, such as decolonization and racism. A comparative analysis then revealed themes present across the cases. Based on the findings of this research, a series of recommendations was produced to guide more effective and meaningful activism on the part of anthropology museums. The purpose of this research project

was to close the gap in scholarly museum literature and contribute a beneficial document to the field.

Summary

This chapter provided an introduction to the topic of museum activism and the role that it is playing in the larger shifts within the museum field. It also introduced the unique challenges that pertain to anthropology museums, especially in the face of activism. The next chapter features a review of the scholarly and professional literature, with the main themes of museum activism, race and Indigenous cultures in museums, anthropology, and museum history. In particular, the potential of museum activism to affect society and the entwined relationship between race, Indigenous cultures, anthropology and museums are explored. In Chapter 3, the methodology employed in this research project is detailed, as is the rationale behind its choice. The chapter also provides a description of the case studies chosen, in addition to an account of the content, textual, and comparative analyses that were conducted. Then, Chapter 4 outlines the findings of the research in the form of five themes that presented themselves across the cases. Chapter 5 concludes the project with a discussion of the findings, as well as a series of five recommendations for anthropology museums to engage in activism.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

To investigate the activist potential of anthropology museums, a review of scholarly and professional literature was undertaken to understand the evolution of the museum field, the emergence of anthropology museums, the contemporary movement for activism in museums, and the relationship between museums, race, and Indigenous cultures. Online library databases were accessed to retrieve academic journal articles, scholarly and academic texts, and professional literature from reputable museum studies and anthropology sources. The consulted literature explored the current societal purpose of museums, how museums participate in activist efforts, and the role of museums in both the discipline of anthropology and in matters of race and Indigenous culture.

First, the literature review addresses the increasing role of activism in the museum field. Next, this chapter provides a review of various issues involving the topic of race and Indigenous culture, with an emphasis on critical race theory, historical museum presentation, and decolonization. The literature review then introduces the discipline of anthropology and its relationship with museums over time. The chapter concludes with a comprehensive overview of the topic of museums by discussing the definition of museums and their responsibilities within society, a brief history of museums in the Western world, and the paradigm changes in the field over the last half-century.

Upon reviewing the literature, a gap became apparent in the scholarly research regarding the potential of activism within anthropology museums. Based on this gap, the following research question was developed:

RQ: How can anthropology museums evolve to become more socially responsible and realize their activist potential in the face of systemic racism and decolonization?

The following sections provide an overview of the scholarly literature on museums, anthropology, activism, race and Indigenous culture that guided the development of the above-stated research question.

Museums and Activism

Introduction to Museum Activism

Activism is defined as efforts to promote and enact reform in areas such as politics, society, the economy, or the environment for the improvement of society as a whole (Vlachou, 2019). Scholars and thought leaders within the museum field have long recognized the potential of museums to enact social change (Silverman, 2010; Weil, 1999/2002). Bennett (1995) referred to the first public museums as possessing the ability to educate the public on civic values. Silverman (2010) traced the museum's capacity for social change to the industrial period's settlement houses, where various social services were provided to poorer residents aimed at improving their lives. Some settlement houses operated their own museums, which they believed could improve the lives of residents by addressing social ills of the day and bringing disparate groups together (Silverman, 2010). More recently, Janes and Sandell (2019) have argued that museums possess an "inherent power as a force for good" (p. 1). Various scholars in the field have called on museums to utilize this power through exhibitions, collections and programming to confront the challenges of the 21st century, such as social injustice and climate change (Janes & Sandell, 2019; Sandell, 2002, 2007; Teslow, 2007, 2014; Ünsal 2019; Vlachou, 2019). According to Bailey (2019) and Vlachou (2019), institutions that fail to address these issues risk becoming irrelevant to both their communities and broader society. Additionally, Lynch (2019)

cautioned that some museums could engage in performative activism rather than actual activism. *Performative activism*, Lynch (2019) explained, is activism for the sake of publicity that does not involve enacting real changes.

Some museum scholars have contended that there is a moral and ethical imperative for institutions to become involved in activism (Janes & Sandell 2019; Marstine, 2011; Sandell, 2011). According to Marstine (2011), museums have long possessed a moral agency that they should utilize for the benefit of society. Marstine elaborated that this influence should be employed to address three key areas: “social inclusion, radical transparency, and the shared guardianship of heritage” (p. 5). Further, Janes and Sandell (2019) have explicitly argued that inaction on the part of museums is immoral.

According to Janes and Sandell (2019), activist museums have two ethical responsibilities. The first responsibility is for museums to engage in *public advocacy* in areas where they can assist public debate (Janes & Sandell, 2019). Due to the increasingly fractious nature of debate involving vital issues, it is necessary for museums to make a moral stand for social justice in order to aid society as a whole (Sandell, 2007). Museums also have the potential to provide the public with information and insight into different perspectives which can contribute to societal awareness of important issues (Janes & Sandell, 2019). The next responsibility is demanding accountability from the private sector and government, from whom museums accept funding and can therefore pressure to make more ethical decisions (Janes & Sandell, 2019). Overall, Sandell (2011) advocates for new ethical policies in museums that incorporate activism into practices for the benefit of society.

Neutrality

Janes and Sandell (2019) similarly advocate for the abandonment of the myth of the neutral museum in order of institutions to fulfill their beneficial potential. Museums have long been considered objective purveyors of knowledge that concentrated on collections research and care for the benefit of the public (Janes & Sandell, 2019). However, scholars within the field have increasingly called for recognition that museums are not and never have been *neutral* institutions lacking in political or ideological leanings (Janes & Sandell, 2019; Marstine, 2011; Sandell, 2007; Vlachou, 2019). Museums are inherently political in nature and products of interpretation, meaning they are incapable of true neutrality (Bailey, 2019). Bailey (2019) further warned that silence for the sake of neutrality regarding issues vital to society can be equated with *complicity*, meaning working with others against the general public's interest.

Historical narratives within museums are now scrutinized to decipher the meaning and bias behind them, as their previous objectivity has been questioned (Marstine, 2011). Bennett (1995) contended that early museum narratives conveyed governmental beliefs in order to supposedly civilize the populace. During the Western colonial period, museums transmitted narratives of subjugation and empire over those they considered to be inferior and primitive others (Besterman, 2011; Kreps, 1988, 2020). Various groups were further marginalized through their treatment and display in museums, thus negating claims of objectivity and neutrality (Sandell, 2007).

Within the museum community, the fear persists that a lack of neutrality and acceptance of activism will result in offending some audiences and loss of funding from risk-averse corporate or government sponsors (Janes & Sandell, 2019). Janes and Sandell (2019), however, have written that the anxiety of non-neutrality should be abandoned to fulfill the museum's potential to enact social change. According to Sandell (2002, 2007), museums have a public

responsibility to use their influence to combat the ills of society. Though museums may be uncomfortable with activism initially, institutions must embrace it to realize their potential to impact society and individuals for the better (Janes & Sandell, 2019).

Combating Prejudice

One of the possible ways museums can make an impact for the better through activism is by combating prejudice in society. In the past, museums were tools to marginalize certain racial and social groups through exhibitions and collections that lacked inclusion and reinforced harmful stereotypes, such as Indigenous groups being primitive (Coombes & Phillips, 2015; Lonetree, 2012; Sandell, 2007; Teslow, 2014). Professionals in the field have increasingly demanded that institutions work to enact change within society, tackling issues from inequality to multiculturalism (Janes & Sandell, 2019; Sandell, 2007; Teslow, 2007; Vlachou, 2019). The 20th century anthropologist Franz Boas recognized that museums have the potential to counter racial prejudice (Anderson, 2019). Various scholars have argued that museums can act as safe spaces in which to engage in the difficult yet necessary dialogues about such topics respectfully and freely (Coombes & Phillips, 2015; Dean, 2013; Vlachou, 2019). According to Marstine (2011), a museum's general public is not a monolithic group but full of diverse stakeholders with different experiences. Therefore, museums have the potential to promote cross-cultural understanding in order to fight prejudice and intolerance (Besterman, 2011; Bodo, 2012; Sandell, 2007). Museums also have the power to inform the narrative of politics and society, and it is thus imperative for them to utilize it (Janes & Sandell, 2019).

Incorporating Activism in the Museum

In order to incorporate activism into a museum, it needs to be embraced at all levels of the institution. This includes individual museum professionals, leadership, and the organization

as a whole. Changes are also necessary in policies and practices within the museum in order to incorporate activism.

Individuals. According to various scholars, museum professionals at all levels must embrace activism for museums to become agents of social change. On an individual level, museum professionals must work within their organizations, and even speak out via social media, to spotlight the necessity of activism within the museum field (Coleman & Moore, 2019; Hollows, 2019; Wood & Cole, 2019). Wood and Cole (2019) called for activist and community training to be incorporated into graduate museum studies programs, through which many emerging museum professionals pass. In order to become more engaged with activism, museum studies students should be taught a commitment to community, civic-mindedness, empathy and philanthropy (Wood & Cole, 2019). According to Hollows (2019), “in thinking about activism and the ability to create change, every member of staff is an agent with the choice to activate their potential contribution” (p. 81).

The Organization. However, to successfully embark on activist work within museums, there must be institutional support by others in the organization and leadership (Heal, 2019). An organizational culture needs to be developed within each museum that nourishes an agenda which embraces social justice and change (Fleming, 2012). Likewise, leadership that is committed to the cause of activism is crucial, at both the director and board level (Fleming, 2012; Heal, 2019). Fleming (2012) contended that no museum can change without effective leadership paving the way forward. According to Bergeron and Tuttle (2013), museum leaders set the vision for the institution and inspire others to adopt that vision. Additionally, a lack of commitment to social justice and activism from the board can undermine the progress towards change, which requires active board participation (Black, 2010; Fleming, 2012).

Transformational Leadership. When changing any organization and its culture, transformational leadership is equally necessary (Fisher, 2013). Riggio et al. (2004) contended that transformational leadership is well-suited for nonprofit organizations, such as museums. *Transformational leadership* occurs when a leader inspires commitment to a shared vision or cause, in addition to developing followers to become leaders themselves (Riggio et al., 2004). According to Goulaptsi et al. (2020), transformational leaders inspire innovation in their organizations, a necessary attribution when adopting an activist organizational stance. Four factors that comprise a transformational leader are: (1) *Idealized Influence*, (2) *Inspirational Motivation*, (3) *Intellectual Stimulation*, and (4) *Individualized Consideration* (Riggio et al., 2004). *Idealized Influence* characterizes a leader who acts as a role model, which inspires followers' commitment to a cause (Fisher, 2013; Riggio et al., 2004). *Inspirational Motivation* generates followers' belief in a shared vision that everyone in the organization strives towards (Fisher, 2013; Riggio et al., 2004). *Intellectual Stimulation* occurs when a leader empowers followers to be innovative and creative in the face of problems (Fisher, 2013; Riggio et al., 2004). Finally, *Individualized Consideration* transpires when a leader demonstrates respect for team members and acts as a mentor in their professional development (Fisher, 2013; Riggio et al., 2004).

Similarly, Genoways et al. (2017) identified five practices of exemplary museum leaders: (1) *Model the Way*, (2) *Inspire a Shared Vision*, (3) *Challenge the Process*, (4) *Enable Others to Act*, and (5) *Encourage the Heart*. A museum leader should *model the way*, in which they affirm shared values and set an example to all in the organization by fulfilling their word (Genoways et al., 2017). In *inspire a shared vision*, leaders have a vision of the future in which they are able to enlist others (Genoways et al., 2017). Leaders also *challenge the process* by innovating and

taking risks in order to change and improve their museums (Genoways et al., 2017). To *enable others to act*, leaders strengthen others in the organization by building trust and fostering collaboration (Genoways et al., 2017). Finally, *encourage the heart* means that leaders create a shared sense of community in the museum and appreciate the good work of others (Genoways et al., 2017). These practices align with the aforementioned four characteristics indicated as belonging to a transformational leader. Genoways et al. (2017) also emphasized that an exemplary leader works toward change and innovates through experimentation and risk taking.

Policies. According to the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), every museum should have an institutional code of ethics that aligns with the AAM's Code of Ethics, which was last amended in 2000 (American Alliance of Museums, n.d.-a). Such ethics policies are necessary for museums to maintain public trust, accountability, and transparency (American Alliance of Museums, n.d.-a, n.d.-b; Marstine, 2011). However, Marstine (2011) called for a new ethical code for museums that incorporates activism as a key responsibility to the public. Marstine (2011) also contended that ethics policies should be continually reassessed in order to change with society and meet its needs.

Museums with anthropology collections must also have special policies in place that guide the handling of their unique collections, which can include Indigenous cultural heritage and human remains (Kreps, 2011). Strong ethics and specific collections policies can guide a museum along the decolonization process, which is an important step to becoming more socially responsible (Kreps, 2011). Additionally, museums need policies that address the topics of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) within their institutions (American Alliance of Museums, 2018). The AAM considers DEAI issues one of the primary concerns in the current

museum field, and it is crucial for each museum to confront them in order to progress in the future (American Alliance of Museums, 2018).

Social Media and Online Engagement. In their examination of grassroots activism in American museums, Coleman and Moore (2019) detailed the expansion of activism and its growing circle of engagement due to the internet and social media. With the growth of social media, the potential for museums to use those platforms to advance issues of social justice have begun to be explored (Wong, 2012). According to Wong (2012), social media could not only promote conversations on important issues, but different platforms could be utilized to expand the exhibition space of the museum, thus permitting museums to react to current events with their collections. McFadzean et al. (2019) credited social media as a powerful tool through which museums and communities can engage and even co-create. Social media has also amplified the voices of individual museum professionals who are calling for change, and even allowed them to organize themselves into groups devoted to important issues in the field and society (Carvill Schellenbacher, 2019; Coleman & Moore, 2019). This movement in social media has expanded in the last handful of years. For example, Jennings (2015) criticized the lack of response by museums regarding the police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. At the time, Jennings (2015) called for museums to respond to such incidents on social media to show that they are engaged in the struggle against racism, in addition to addressing it in programming. Museums and museum professionals can use social media as a call to action regarding the pivotal issues of the day (Carvill Schellenbacher, 2019).

Museums, Race, and Indigenous Culture

Since their origins as royal collections and cabinets of curiosity, museums have focused on the display of other cultures, especially once western Europeans began exploring the globe in

the 15th century (Simmons, 2016). Collecting from other cultures and the display of those objects in museums aided the public in understanding the broadening world around them (Simmons, 2016). This period also coincided with the formation of a racial hierarchy that would survive centuries and have lasting effects until today (Anderson, 2019). Museum displays of anthropological collections would act as justification of the racial and ethnic biases of the white public up until the early 20th century (Teslow, 2014).

Critical Race Theory

Central to the study of racial and ethnic minorities today is *critical race theory* (CRT) (Adams, 2017). CRT began as a legal movement that attempts to alter the relationship between race and power. CRT first emerged in the 1970s, as scholars and activists reacted to the Civil Rights Era's progress slowing due to legal and legislative limitations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Scholars and activists alike were dismayed by the lack of progress regarding racial matters and what they perceived as the strategies of the Civil Rights Movement no longer working (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Though initially limited to the legal realm, CRT has expanded to become employed in other fields, such as ethnic studies and education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

CRT features a series of basic tenets essential to its understanding. One of these tenets is that race is not a biological fact but a social construct (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Instead, *race* may be more accurately defined as “the framework of ranked categories segmenting the human populations that was developed by western Europeans following their global expansion beginning in the 1400s” (Sanjek, 1994, as cited in Anderson, 2019, pp. 18-19). Though race has no genetic basis, it remains a societal reality (Anderson, 2019).

Another CRT theme is what Delgado and Stefancic (2017) define as *ordinariness*, meaning that racism is difficult to confront and remedy because it is often not recognized. Adams (2017) described racism as permanent because of how deeply embedded it is in American society. *Interest convergence* is another feature of CRT (Adams, 2017). Interest convergence suggests that the majority group allows advances for minorities regarding racial justice only when it is in their self-interest, rather than an actual desire to help (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). One of the most recent additions to the tenets is *differential racialization*, which refers to how mainstream society views and treats racial and ethnic groups differently depending upon society's period or needs (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Finally, the *voice-of-color thesis* contends that different groups experience racism in unique ways that they should explain to their white counterparts in order to inform them (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Adams (2017) used these themes within CRT to inform how museum exhibitions and programming can better address the topic of race. Adams argued that museums must use their unique collections and storytelling tools to help dismantle racism instead of merely displaying it (Adams, 2017). In addition, museums must change their narratives, allowing for diverse voices and moving away from the dominant stories and histories of the past, which are often told from the perspective of white males (Adams, 2017).

History of Museums, Anthropology and Race in America

The natural science origins of anthropology has had a profound impact on the discipline's relationship with race. This origin meant that early anthropology was predominantly focused on the sub-discipline of physical anthropology (Bennett et al., 2017). *Physical anthropology*, with its emphasis on skeletal remains and the measurement of them, played a crucial part in the perception of race by the American public (Teslow, 2014). Paul Broca, regarded in field as the

father of physical anthropology, introduced into this sub-discipline the use of measurements and quantifiable data to analyze race (Teslow, 2014). The measurements of skulls, referred to as *craniometry*, was used to justify the existence of a racial hierarchy, based off of 18th century scientific typologies of race and ethnicity (Anderson, 2019; Teslow, 2014).

In particular, the work of Samuel Morton, a 19th century American scientist and early physical anthropologist, was emblematic of the scientific view of race at the time. Morton's measurements of the brain capacity of a wide variety of skulls were seen as evidence of the mental inferiority of non-whites (Menand, 2001-2002; Teslow, 2014). In turn, these findings were used as justification for the American system of slavery and mistreatment of Native Americans (Anderson, 2019; Menand, 2001-2002; Teslow, 2014). The quantification of the supposed differences between races by Morton and his contemporaries, based on data they misconstrued and sometimes manipulated, confirmed to the white American public their pre-existing beliefs on race (Menand, 2001-2002; Teslow, 2014). The role of physical anthropologists in the public perception of race persisted into the early 20th century until it began to be challenged by cultural anthropologists such as Franz Boas (Teslow, 2014).

In the late 19th and early 20th century, anthropology was located in museums, which, according to scholars, made them complicit in anthropology's position on race (Anderson, 2019; Bennett et al., 2017; Teslow, 2014). Henry Fairfield Osborn, paleontologist and longtime president of the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) during the early 20th century, was an advocate for racial superiority, racial purity, and eugenics (Bennett, 2004). During his tenure, the AMNH hosted eugenics conferences, and Osborn permitted museum displays that showed racist and eugenics sympathies (Bennett, 2004; Bennett et al., 2017; Teslow, 2014). At Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History (FMNH), the exhibition *Races of Mankind* was

conceived during a period of racial unrest in the city as issues over immigration raged throughout the country (Teslow, 2014). Opened in 1933, the FMNH exhibition featured 101 human statues that were thought to be physically representative of different racial and cultural typologies (Teslow, 2014). With *Races of Mankind*, the FMNH combined ethnic and racial stereotypes with earlier scientific typologies to create the statues, which conveyed to the public an idea of racial essentialism (Teslow, 2014). By the late 1960s, as anthropology and its understanding of race had evolved, the racist displays in both the AMNH and the FMNH were dismantled (Teslow, 2014).

History of Museums, Anthropology and Indigenous Culture in America

In the 19th century, the portrayal of Native Americans in museums was linked to anthropological research (Lonetree, 2012). At that time, *salvage anthropology*/*ethnography* motivated anthropology's study of Native Americans (Conn, 1998; Kreps, 2003, 2020; Lonetree, 2012). Salvage anthropology/ethnography was a campaign of frenetic fieldwork and collecting driven by the belief among anthropologists that Indigenous cultures were supposedly vanishing and therefore needed to be studied immediately for posterity (Kreps, 2020; Lonetree, 2012). Government policies of expansion and domination propelled the vanishing nature of Native American cultures, which resulted from populations decimated by disease and tribes forced from their native lands (Lonetree, 2012; Kreps, 2020; Teslow, 2014). Anthropologists have since "denounced 'salvage anthropology' for being authoritarian and paternalistic" (Kreps, 2003, p. 87).

Aggressive collecting practices were normal during this period of museums and anthropology. While some artifacts were legitimately acquired, many others were stolen or sold under duress (Lonetree, 2012). These collecting practices were the result of the increasing

demands for material culture on behalf of museums (Kreps, 2003; Lonetree, 2012). Native scholars referred to this time as the Dark Ages of Native American history and nadir of North America's Indigenous populations (Lonetree, 2012). Much of the Indigenous material in today's anthropology collections resulted from this period (Kreps, 2020; Lonetree, 2012). For this reason, Lonetree (2012) explained that museums are often difficult for Native people due to their links to colonialism, which decimated their communities and robbed them of their cultural material and lands.

The anthropological study of Native Americans was also heavily influenced during its early period by the natural sciences (Conn, 1998). Museums and scholars considered Native American material cultural objects the same as natural history specimens with similar power to inform (Conn, 1998). Additionally, Darwin's theory of the evolution of species affected how anthropologists classified cultures at the time (Conn, 1998; Kreps, 2020). Anthropologists hypothesized that, like the human species, civilizations evolved in a linear, progressive manner, with modern Western civilization at the apex (Conn, 1998; Kreps, 2020). Native Americans and other Indigenous cultures were considered primitive and at the base of the cultural evolutionary scale as opposed to civilized Westerners (Conn, 1998; Kreps, 2020). Thus, museums displayed Indigenous cultures as inferior savages (Conn, 1998; Kreps, 2020; Teslow, 2014). Conn (1998) linked this model to the necessity of superiority in the power dynamics of Western colonialism. According to Kreps (2020), the work conducted by anthropologists, on behalf of museums, became part of the justification of Western colonial power, as cultures judged to be barbarians were subjugated by those that viewed themselves to be more civilized.

Physical anthropology and the study of human remains also influenced early anthropology collections and museums (Conn, 1998; Kreps, 2020). Museums and physical

anthropologists considered Native American remains, particularly skulls, highly covetable (Daehnke & Lonetree, 2011; Lonetree, 2012). These scholars examined skulls under the now-debunked belief in craniometry, which held that the skull measurements could predict intelligence (Lonetree, 2012; Teslow, 2014). At the time, it was used to justify ideas of racial hierarchy and white supremacy (Daehnke & Lonetree, 2011; Lonetree, 2012; Teslow, 2014).

The plunder of Native American graves resulted from the demands of anthropologists and museums for research materials and collections for display (Daehnke & Lonetree, 2011; Lonetree, 2012). Army field doctors gathered remains and grave goods at the request of the Army Medical Museum's curator; these eventually became part of the Smithsonian Institution's collections (Daehnke & Lonetree, 2011). Anthropologist Franz Boas unearthed graves at night during his fieldwork on the Northwest Coast (Lonetree, 2012). Boas later sold these remains to Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History and buyers abroad (Daehnke & Lonetree, 2011; Lonetree, 2012). By 1990, one estimate stated that between 300,000 and 2.5 million Native American remains were in museums and private collections, in addition to millions of cultural artifacts (Lonetree, 2012).

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and Indigenous Rights Movement

In the wake of the aforementioned treatment of Native Americans, their cultural heritage, and human remains, the Indigenous rights movement emerged to demand change. The Indigenous rights movement arose in the 1960s as part of the broader civil rights movement (Kreps, 2020). Aside from their social and political activism, Native Americans demanded museums enact a series of reforms (Kreps, 2020; Lonetree, 2012). Native activists objected to their history and culture's stereotypical depictions in museum displays and requested they be updated (Kreps, 2020; Lonetree, 2012). Further, activists challenged the authority of museums to

display their culture without involving and incorporating actual Native American perspectives and thus advocated for the training and hiring of more Indigenous staff by museums (Kreps, 2020). Native activists protested museums' display, collection, and possession of Native American remains (Lonetree, 2012). Finally, they pressured museums to repatriate Native cultural objects, funerary objects, cultural patrimony, and human remains (Kreps, 2020: Lonetree, 2012).

Ultimately, this pressure from the Indigenous rights movement resulted in the 1990 passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) by the United States Congress (Daehnke & Lonetree, 2011; Kreps, 2003; Lonetree, 2012). NAGPRA requires any federally funded museum to inventory all Native American and Native Hawaiian human remains and associated funerary objects (Daehnke & Lonetree, 2011; Kreps, 2003). Museums also had to prepare summaries of unassociated funerary objects, sacred objects, and objects of cultural patrimony (Daehnke & Lonetree, 2011; Kreps, 2003). These inventories and summaries are made available to Native American tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations, along with information regarding the tribal affiliation of said objects and remains (Kreps, 2003). Tribes or descendants are then able to request the repatriation of remains or objects once cultural association and ownership were determined (Kreps, 2003). According to Lonetree (2012), NAGPRA is necessary to address the historical wrongs of the past. Kreps (2003) added that the previous inaction of museums necessitated government intervention. Overall, NAGPRA has had the positive effects of increased communication and cooperation between Native Americans and museums (Kreps, 2003).

However, NAGPRA has not been without its problems and critics. Museums, scholars, and Native groups alike have complained about the ambiguity in the language of the law, which

has led to debate over the spirit of the law versus what it actually contains (Kreps, 2003). Additionally, some anthropologists and archaeologists have expressed concern over repatriation, which they believed would endanger research and lead to the emptying of museums through the return of artifacts and remains (Lonetree, 2012).

Daehnke and Lonetree (2011) identified two significant problems with NAGPRA – the issues of culturally-unaffiliated human remains and non-federally recognized tribes. Museums are not required to repatriate human remains that cannot be traced to a federally recognized tribe or Hawaiian organization (Lonetree, 2012). One estimate has stated that 80% of human remains in museums reported under NAGPRA fall into this category (Daehnke & Lonetree, 2011). Native Americans have decried this and called for all Native human remains in museum possession to be returned to tribal communities for reinternment (Daehnke & Lonetree, 2011). Further, tribes that lack formal government recognition are ineligible to have human remains or objects repatriated (Daehnke & Lonetree, 2011). According to Lonetree (2012), more work is necessary to decolonize NAGPRA itself.

Decolonization

In addition to NAGPRA, museums are under increasing pressure to decolonize, driven by both societal criticism and Native activism (Kreps, 2020). *Decolonization* is defined as "the process of revealing and dismantling colonialist power in all its forms" (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 63). For museums, decolonizing is a process of acknowledging past injustices and Western biases while moving to transform museums through inclusion of diverse perspectives (Kreps, 2020). Smith (2012, as cited in Kreps, 2020) placed the obligation to decolonize and change on the institutions themselves as part of the dominant cultural group, versus putting additional responsibility on Indigenous communities. Moreover, decolonizing has required museums to

take an ethical and moral stand by acknowledging their own role in colonialism and the responsibility they have towards source/descendant communities (Kreps, 2011).

According to scholars, decolonization has the potential to empower both museums and the Indigenous communities with whom they engage (Kreps, 2020; Lonetree, 2012). Lonetree (2012) further explained that decolonized museums have the power to promote healing, revitalization, and nation-building in Native communities that have struggled with the legacy of colonial practices. Kreps (2020) argued that museums should use this empowerment to increase advocacy and engagement.

Steps to Decolonization. For museums, the decolonization process begins with the dual acknowledgment of the legacy of colonialism for Indigenous people and the role that museums played in in furthering racist agendas (Kreps, 2020). Similarly, Lonetree (2012) held that museums must speak the "hard truths of colonialism," honestly and explicitly, to become sites of understanding and healing for the "historical, unresolved grief" many Indigenous people face (pp. 5-6).

The previous narratives told by museums are replaced with new ones during the decolonization process (Kreps, 2011, 2020; Lonetree, 2012). Decolonization necessitates museums to reorient their authority and knowledge away from previous Eurocentric ideals (Vawda, 2019). First, museums must replace the former representational stereotypes of the Indigenous *Other* as a primitive or noble savage (Lonetree, 2012). This change is aided by the acknowledgment and incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives (Kreps, 2011; Lonetree, 2012; Onciul, 2015). Finally, Lonetree (2012) stated that museums needed to act as places of "knowledge-making and remembering" for Native communities and the general public to be considered decolonized (p. 171).

Collaboration between Indigenous communities and museums has been crucial to the decolonizing process (Kreps, 2020). Kreps (2020) defined *collaboration* as an engagement between museums and stakeholder communities that builds respectful relationships to the benefit of both parties. Clifford (1997) called for museums to establish *contact zones* to act as spaces of shared authority and collaboration with community partners. This model has since become influential in the field as what museums should strive to enact (Boast, 2011; Kreps, 2020; Lynch & Alberti, 2010; Onciul, 2015). In response to Clifford's contact zones, Onciul (2015) created her own model that she termed *engagement zones*. Onciul (2015) defined these as "conceptual, physical and temporal spaces in which participants interact in an unpredictable process of power negotiations" (p. 72).

However, contact zones and the act of collaboration have faced criticism. Some scholars have doubted the ability of museums to escape the trappings of their colonialist pasts through work in contact zones (Boast, 2011). According to Boast (2011), this model did little more than mask "fundamental asymmetries, appropriations, and biases" that persisted in museums (p. 67). These asymmetries have led to accusations of unequal power and tokenism on behalf of community collaborators (Lynch & Alberti, 2010; Onciul, 2015). Lynch (2011) explained that museums fear the loss of control in collaboration, leaving power imbalances between the museums and communities that ultimately lead to mutual resentment and mistrust. As a result, Lynch and Alberti (2010) promoted the idea of *radical trust*, where museums cede some of their control in the collaborative process to community partners. In order to have a more meaningful collaboration, museums should embrace contestation instead of trying to avoid confrontation (Lynch & Alberti, 2010).

American Anthropology and Museums

An Introduction to Anthropology

Anthropology is defined as the "study of the human species and its immediate ancestors" (Kottak, 2011, p. 5). A holistic investigation of the human species occurs through the four subdisciplines of anthropology: (1) *Cultural Anthropology/Ethnology*, (2) *Biological/Physical Anthropology*, (3) *Archaeology*, and (4) *Linguistics* (Conn, 1998; Kottak, 2011; Kreps, 2020). *Cultural anthropology/ethnology* is the study of human society and cultures, while *biological/physical anthropology* investigates human biological and physiological diversity and development (Kottak, 2011). *Archaeology* uses material remains to reconstruct and interpret human behavior and culture (Kottak, 2011). *Linguistic anthropology* studies the social role and development of language (Kottak, 2011).

Anthropology became its own distinct discipline during the 19th century, when it emerged from natural history and was influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution (Kottak, 2011; Kreps, 2020). Due to its roots in science, physical anthropology was initially the predominant subdiscipline in early museums before cultural anthropology took precedence (Bennett et al., 2017). In America, early anthropological study concerned itself primarily with the research of Native Americans before expanding to other world cultures (Bennett et al., 2017; Kottak, 2011). Initially, the study of race also played a large role in anthropology (Anderson, 2019; Teslow, 2007, 2014). During this time, anthropological research, especially through the examination of physical specimens, was used to establish a discriminatory racial and cultural hierarchy (Anderson, 2019; Teslow, 2007, 2014). Teslow (2014) contended that early American anthropology emerged from the strains between Enlightenment ideals of the universality of

human nature and rights and the unique racial and ethnic conflicts in the young nation over who exactly was a legitimate American citizen.

A History of Anthropology Museums in America

Museums and anthropology have been entwined since the beginning of the discipline of anthropology in the early 19th century (Ames, 1992; Conn, 1998; Kreps, 2020). Initially, either art or natural history museums housed anthropology collections (Conn, 1998; Kreps, 2020). The first American museum devoted solely to anthropology was the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University, which was established in 1866 and illustrated the lasting ties between anthropology museums and universities (Conn, 1998). From the 1840s to the 1880s, this period of anthropology's history is often referred to as the *Museum Period* because anthropologists at the time were concentrated in museums prior to the creation of university departments (Ames 1992; Kreps, 2020).

During this initial period, anthropology displayed what Kreps (2020) termed as an *object orientation*, wherein anthropologists believed that objects themselves embodied knowledge and had the ability to represent entire cultures and belief systems (Conn, 1998; Kreps, 2020). Thus, museums were of central importance as repositories for these artifacts and centers for the production of anthropological knowledge (Kreps, 2020). Along with purchases and donations, field expeditions across the country and the world, funded predominantly by museums, led to the growth of anthropological collections (Kreps, 2020).

Once more universities established anthropology departments starting in the 1880s and 1890s, the *Museum-University Period* emerged. This period saw anthropologists dividing their responsibilities between teaching in universities and working with museum collections (Ames 1992). Additionally, this period featured the significant expansion of anthropology collections, as

practitioners focused their attentions on documenting all aspects of what they believed to be the vanishing Indigenous cultures of the world (Kreps, 2020; Lonetree, 2012). Due to the growth in the number of museums, anthropology began to be introduced to and understood by the public during this period (Kreps, 2020).

Shifting Paradigms in Anthropology

As the field of anthropology expanded and evolved, the relationship and alignment between the discipline and the museum field altered as well. From the 1920s onward, anthropology's power dynamic shifted from museums to the university, where anthropologists were increasingly educated and employed (Ames 1992; Conn, 1998). Thus, this period became known to scholars as the *University Period* of anthropology (Ames 1992; Kreps, 2020). With research focused on the university, many anthropologists and museums alike abandoned collections, resulting in exhibitions that disseminated outdated theories and collections left unstudied.

During the University Period, anthropological research also changed its focus from the study of material culture to the recording of cultural intangibles, such as ceremonies, languages, and beliefs (Ames, 1992; Bennett et al., 2017). Franz Boas, regarded by anthropologists as the father of American anthropology, promoted this transition, claiming that objects themselves offered only fragmentary information but that an object’s overall context was needed to better understand a particular culture (Conn, 1998; Kreps, 2020). Thus, anthropological field studies shifted from amassing artifacts that eventually became museum collections to documenting the behaviors of their research subjects (Kreps, 2020). This meant that museum collections ceased their material expansion and furthered the divide in anthropology between museums and the university.

Another movement in anthropology affected how the field understood different cultures. Previously, anthropologists considered some cultures, particularly Indigenous ones, to be inferior and consequently framed them as the primitive Other due to their differences from dominant Western culture (Kreps, 2020; Teslow, 2014). Franz Boas introduced the theory of *cultural relativism* to the anthropological field in an effort to combat this (Kreps, 2020; Teslow, 2014). Cultural relativism is the idea that a person's beliefs and practices can only be evaluated within their own cultural context and should not be judged according to outside cultural standards (Kottak, 2011). The establishment and adoption of this theory led to a more objective view of cultures by anthropologists and challenged the idea of Western superiority by no longer placing Western culture as the standard by which to judge others (Kreps, 2020; Teslow, 2014).

With these changes, museums ceded their position as seats of anthropology and its research. In museums, collection displays remained framed on past theories and concepts and shared outdated knowledge with the public (Conn, 1998). This furthered the divide between museums and anthropology, which would last until the later 20th century, when anthropologists started re-engaging with institutions and collections (Kreps, 2020).

Museums

Definition and Responsibility

As of 2007, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) defined a *museum* as "…a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment" (International Council of Museums [ICOM], n.d.). The museum field generally agrees that a museums' primary concern is service to the general public, to whom they are

accountable (Marstine, 2011; Weil, 1999/2002). According to Weil (1999/2002), museums should be empowered to act as agents of social change, aside from their duties to educate. Silverman (2010) concurred that museums should strive to be "agents of well-being" and realize their potential to change society for the better (pp. 2-3).

A Brief History of Museums

The word *museum* was derived from the Greek *mouseion*, meaning "the place of the Muses" (Simmons, 2016, p. 31). The Muses were minor Greek goddesses believed to inspire their followers in endeavors from the arts to the sciences (Simmons, 2016). The earliest museum was a hybrid temple to the Muses, academic institute, and library located in Alexandria, Egypt during the 3rd century BCE (Silverman, 2010). During the Renaissance, princes and popes assembled their own private collections to display their wealth and power (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). In the Enlightenment period, this practice became popular among prominent scholars and merchants, who assembled so-called *cabinets of curiosity*, in which they sought to classify and make sense of the ever-expanding world around them (Ames, 1992; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Silverman, 2010; Simmons, 2016).

It wasn't until the political revolutions of the late 18th century and industrial revolutions of the early 19th century that what could be considered the modern museum emerged. Private collections were opened to a limited selection of the public for the first time, and national museums were established from previously royal collections (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000; Simmons, 2016). At the time, museums were also closely entwined with the imperial ambitions of the period's world powers, leading to collection expansion due to increased exploration and colonialization (Ames, 1992; Kreps, 1988). With the rise of the middle class and urbanization in the 19th century, the belief developed among intellectuals and reformers that museums could

improve society as a whole and impart civic values in individuals (Bennett, 1995; Silverman, 2010). As the number of museums increased, they became sites of scholarship, where the display of objects from around the world served to educate the public (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000).

Shifting Museum Paradigms

In the second half of the 20th century, museums evolved from the collections-focused paradigm that had been in place for almost a century. During this period of fundamental change in society, museums shifted their focus from studying and expanding collections towards serving and educating their visitors (Hudson, 1998; McCall & Gray, 2014; Weil 1999/2002). Cameron (1971/2012) framed this changing museum environment as a dichotomy between what he termed *the temple* and *the forum*. Cameron's museum as a temple represented a place for the elites to display their values and objects, which was the existing model for museums (Cameron 1971/2012). He called for its replacement with a forum-like setting, a place of debate and experimentation more accessible and meaningful to the general public (Cameron 1971/2012).

In particular, the evolution within museums revolved around their relationship with the public. Hudson (1998) deemed "the most fundamental change" that affected museums during this period to be the "universal conviction that they exist[ed] in order to serve the public" (p. 43). The museum field increasingly recognized that in order to justify their existence and receive funding, they needed to refocus on serving their communities (Weil, 1999/2002). Since then, community outreach, collaboration with community partners, and programming within museums have expanded (Weil, 1999/2002).

Community Engagement. It is now generally accepted within the museum field that institutions must have a relationship with their communities (Bergeron & Tuttle, 2013; Crooke, 2006; Hirzy, 1992; Weil 1999/2002). Museums have a duty to become more responsive to their

communities in order to fulfill their public service role (Weil, 1999/2002). Community engagement also requires long-term investment in building relationships (McFadzean et al., 2019). In their study, Bergeron and Tuttle (2013) outline two strategies for museums to connect with their communities. First, museums need to embrace a public service agenda that aligns with both their mission and the needs of the community (Bergeron & Tuttle, 2013). Second, museums should foster collaborations with the community and its organizations, which can aid in realizing the full potential of a museum (Bergeron & Tuttle, 2013). Together these recommendations not only benefit the community, but also ensure that relevancy of the museum (Bergeron & Tuttle, 2013).

Museums can act as social agents to produce positive change for their communities (Crooke, 2006). For instance, a three-year AAM initiative in the 1990s titled *Museums in the Life of a City* brought together Philadelphia museums and community groups that built relationships, empowering both to tackle pertinent issues facing the city (Crooke, 2006). The initiative also aimed to demonstrate that museums could serve diverse communities that were under-represented in the cultural sector (Crooke, 2006). Museums should listen to their community and its needs to learn how to become active on the community's behalf (Black, 2010; McFadzean et al., 2019). Additionally, through their exhibitions and programming, museums can transform their communities by highlighting disparate voices and previously untold stories (McFadzean et al., 2019).

New and Critical Museology. How museums themselves were analyzed and theorized has evolved over the last century. Sigfúsdóttir (2020) defined *museology* as "the discipline that studies museums as public institutions and develops a theory of their role and function in society" (p. 196). Museums have been accused by critics of being elitist, isolated, and obsolete to

society under the former paradigm (McCall & Gray, 2014). Vergo (1989, as cited in Sigfúsdóttir, 2020) introduced *new museology*, in which he called for critical scrutiny of the role of museums and their ethical, social, and political relevance. This new museology also altered museums' focus from curators' work and their research to that of the educator (Boast, 2011).

More recently, other museum practitioners and thinkers have termed this new outlook *critical museology*. According to Kreps (2020), critical museology “illuminate[d] the historical imbalances of power and authority embedded in museum collections and practices and involve[d] the creations of more democratic, inclusive, and reflexive strategies and interventions” (p. 7). This critical museology was informed by *post-colonial theory*, which examines the lasting implications from colonialism, cultural theories such as identity politics, and the on-going debates regarding the true nature of history (Witcomb and Message, 2015). To many scholars, critical museology has represented the opportunity for museums to address society's concerns and aid minority and disadvantaged groups (Sandell, 2002; Witcomb & Message, 2015).

Further, Dewdney et al. (2013) and Kletchka (2018) have called for *post-critical museology*. In post-critical museology, museums were encouraged to be “responsive to the communities that they serve and sensitive to and aware of the social conditions that shape community members’ lives” (Kletchka, 2018, p. 308). Dewdney et al.’s 2013 study of the Tate Modern in London led to a list of findings that inform the post-critical museum model. First, the research team found that visitors’ subjectivities are not static and that their personal complexities and agency are of growing importance to museums (Dewdney et al., 2013; Kletchka, 2018). Next, the researchers determined that the relationship between museums and the public should be reconceived, along with the internal practices of museums (Dewdney et al., 2013; Kletchka,

2018). Kletchka (2018) summarized this adjustment of museum work as moving from an object orientation to a visitor focus and ending with becoming more responsive to social issues.

Summary

Museums now accept that the paradigms within the field have shifted (Coombes & Phillips, 2015; Kletchka, 2018; Ünsal, 2019). Though the process began over 50 years ago, the pressures to respond are only increasing as society has evolved (Janes & Sandell, 2019). Through a review of the scholarly sources, the histories and changes within both museums and anthropology were examined. Additionally, scholars have argued that the activist potential of museums must be realized to maintain public relevance and address the society's ills (Janes & Sandell, 2019; Sandell, 2007; Ünsal, 2019). A review of the literature of activism within museums revealed positive indications the capacity for museums to improve society. Finally, the literature exposed the complicated and difficult historical relationship between race, Indigenous cultures, anthropology and museums in the United States and the processes through which museums are attempting to mend the fracture (Lonetree, 2012; Kreps, 2020).

Based on the review of the scholarly literature, a gap became apparent pertaining to anthropology museums and activism. In view of the literature and its gap, this study was designed guided by the following research question:

> RQ: How can anthropology museums evolve to become more socially responsible and realize their activist potential in the face of systemic racism and decolonization?

In the following chapter, the methodology employed in the process of data collection and analysis is described. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research project. Finally, Chapter 5 features a discussion of the findings and the literature, as well as a list of recommendations.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

This research project sought to identify ways for anthropology museums to engage more fully with activism in the wake of societal discourses on racism and decolonization, which are uniquely relevant to their collections. In order to gain a clearer understanding for future recommendations, four anthropology museums were investigated to examine how they have approached these issues. The following methodology was developed to address this research question:

RQ: How can anthropology museums evolve to become more socially responsible and realize their activist potential in the face of systemic racism and decolonization?

A qualitative, collective case study was chosen as the primary methodology for the project. This method was selected due to its in-depth inquiry of multiple cases that aided in comparison across museums. Content and textual analysis were used to investigate the cases, which focused on four anthropology museums across the United States. The museums were chosen based on their similar collection types and sizes, which narrowed the field to the Museum of Us, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography (Peabody Museum), the Penn Museum, and the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology (Hearst Museum). The content and textual analyses allowed for the examination of websites, media reports, Twitter posts, and documents in search of common themes and instances of variance within and across the museums on topics involving race, decolonization and activism. This chapter provides a detailed description of the methodology employed, the rationale behind the choices made, the process of data collection and its analysis, and the limitations of the study.

Method Description and Rationale

A qualitative research method was chosen to conduct this study. *Qualitative research* is "an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 15). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), qualitative research involves the utilization of a range of interpretive practices in order to gain a thorough understanding of the research topic. In qualitative research, the data to be collected and analyzed is nonquantitative and textual (Saldaña, 2011). Qualitative research is also holistic in nature, which provides a more complete understanding of complex phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For these reasons, qualitative research was determined to be best suited to the investigation of how anthropology museums could engage with activism.

Case study was selected for this research project as the most appropriate qualitative methodology. *Case study* research is "a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 96). A *bounded system* means that the research is clearly limited by specified parameters, such as those of time and space (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Harrison et al. (2017), case studies are about exploring and explaining an issue at length to achieve a greater depth of understanding. The method of a case study is well-suited to answering research questions involving *how* and *why*, which is a reason it was chosen for this project (Harrison et al., 2017; Yin, 2018). Case studies can also be either *intrinsic*, meaning that a particular case is studied in detail, or *instrumental*, such as when the case is used to understand a particular phenomenon (Simons, 2014).

A collective case study, also known as a multiple case study, was determined to the be the best sub-type for the exploration of social responsibility and activism in anthropology museums. *Multiple cases* were selected because "the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall multiple-case study is therefore regarded as being more robust" (Yin, 2018, p. 54). In a project utilizing multiple cases, a single phenomenon or concept is necessary in order to link the cases (Stake, 2006). A multi-site case study is also often chosen for comparative purposes during the analysis phase (Moore et al., 2011). For this project, a multi-site study was deemed most appropriate in order to compare the phenomena of social responsibility and activism across multiple anthropology museums.

Because of the project's reliance on documents and publicly available online resources, textual and content analyses were then selected to process the data. *Textual analysis* involves the examination of either a text's structure or its meaning and content (Lockyer, 2008). In this study, the content and meaning of the texts were the focus of data analysis. Though it can be either quantitative or qualitative, a qualitative approach to content analysis was additionally chosen for this project (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). *Content analysis* is defined as the "process of categorizing qualitative textual data into clusters of similar entities, or conceptual categories, to identify consistent patterns and relationships between variables and themes" (Julien, 2008, p. 120).

Once the four anthropology museums to be examined as cases were selected, sources of information were gathered for analysis, primarily in the form of documents. A *document* is an umbrella term for a wide array of written, digital, physical and visual materials that constitute the basis of most qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Schensul, 2008). According to Bauer et al. (2014), the use of documents as a key data source is essential to research limited by spatial and temporal distances. Documents can include *primary data*, which is data gathered by

the researcher, or *secondary data*, which is data gathered or published by others (Schensul, 2008). This study relied on secondary documents that were publicly available online. Documents and written texts were compiled from multiple sources in order to triangulate the data. *Triangulation* involves discovering agreement between multiple sources of evidence, which then increases the accuracy of the findings (Moore et al., 2011). Not only does triangulation allow for a more in-depth study of the cases, but it also produces research that is more highly regarded in terms of quality (Yin, 2018).

In the final phase, the textual and content analyses of each case aided in a comparative analysis of the cases all together. *Comparative analysis* is considered an essential aspect of case studies (Mills, 2008). Yin (2018) uses the term *cross-case synthesis,* which follows patterns across the cases while maintaining the completeness of the individual cases. A cross-case, comparative analysis was determined to be a key analytic strategy for this project since it allowed for comparison of the phenomena of social responsibility and activism across the various museums examined.

Data Collection

As previously stated, the purpose of this research project was to assess the role of activism and social responsibility in anthropology museums pertaining to racism and decolonization. To conduct this research, four anthropology museums were chosen as case studies. According to Blatter (2008), the careful selection of cases with thorough criteria is essential in case study research. Stake (2006) recommends three criteria when choosing cases: (1) relevance to the phenomenon to be studied, (2) diversity among the cases, and (3) the opportunity to learn about the phenomenon in-depth.

When selecting the museums to be included in this research project, a set of criteria was created for eligibility. It was decided that only museums in the United States would be included to investigate the unique phenomena of activism specifically in this country. Within that framework, only museums solely devoted to anthropology, archaeology and ethnography were eligible for inclusion. This eliminated other museums that sometimes house anthropology collections alongside other collections, such as natural history museums and art museums, which often approach interpretation and use of anthropological collections in a different manner. Museums were selected that had similar collection sizes and types in order to aid comparison. Ultimately, four museums were determined to fit the criteria. The museums selected for study inclusion were the Museum of Us, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography (Peabody Museum), the Penn Museum, and the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology (Hearst Museum). Of these four, two, the Museum of Us and the Hearst Museum, are located on the West Coast and two, the Penn Museum and the Peabody Museum, on the East Coast. The two West Coast museums were established in the early 1900s, while the East Coast institutions were formed in the late 1800s. Three, the Penn Museum, the Peabody Museum, and the Hearst Museum, are connected with prominent universities and involved in research. The Museum of Us, however, evolved from a World's Fair, which was how a number of museums around the country and world were founded as well, such as the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago (Simmons, 2016).

The first case study selected was the Museum of Us, formerly known as the Museum of Man, in San Diego, California. The mission of the Museum of Us is stated as "inspiring human connections by exploring the human experience" (Museum of Us, n.d.-e) The museum emerged from the 1915 Panama-California Exposition, which took place to commemorate the opening of

the Panama Canal (Lacy, 2018). Collections were initially assembled for anthropology exhibits at the exposition (Lacy, 2018). The museum's collections would grow to around 400,000 objects (West Rhode & Roberts, 2019).

The second museum examined as a case study was the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Peabody Museum was founded in 1866, making it the oldest museum in the United States devoted solely to anthropology (Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, n.d.-b). According to their mission, the museum "engages in, supports, and promotes the study and appreciation of ancient and contemporary peoples from around the world. The Museum collects, preserves, and interprets cultural and related materials and offers unique opportunities for innovative teaching, research, and enrichment at Harvard and with communities worldwide" (Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, n.d.-d). The Peabody Museum's collection numbers 1.2 million objects, making it one of the largest anthropology collections in the Western hemisphere (Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, n.d.-f).

The third anthropology museum chosen as a case study was the Penn Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Formerly known as the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, the museum was established by the university in 1887 (Penn Museum, n.d.-h). The mission of the museum is to "transform understanding of the human experience" (Penn Museum, n.d.-h). It currently houses nearly a million ethnographic and archaeological objects from across all the inhabited continents of the world (Penn Museum, n.d.-d).

The fourth case study included in this research project was the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, located on the campus of the University of California Berkeley. The museum

was founded in 1901 when Phoebe A. Hearst donated some of her collections to create the University of California Museum of Anthropology (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, n.d.-a). The mission of the museum is "to steward a vast collection of objects spanning the infinite breadth of human cultures to advance knowledge and understanding," with the vision of building "a fuller understanding of all cultures based on respect, interest, and empathy" (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, n.d.-a). The museum's collection includes an estimated 3.8 million objects, spanning all the inhabited continents (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, n.d.-a).

After the set of museums was determined, textual data was then gathered from each of the institutions. First, each museum's website was examined for relevant mission or value statements, announcements, press releases, programs, exhibition sites, promoted media stories, annual reports and collections information that could help to reveal their positions on activism, racial issues and the decolonization movement. If the websites had a search feature, institutional information regarding the terms *decolonization*, *racism* and *activism* were sought. Next, a Google search of each of the museum's names was conducted for media stories from January 2020 to March 2021 pertaining to each of the museums. In these searches, local media, university newspapers, national media, and art-specific media stories were given priority as reputable sources. In total, 38 media stories were included in this study. A search for the Hearst Museum yielded four media stories relevant to the topic of this study, while the Museum of Us (along with a search for its former name the San Diego Museum of Man) produced nine stories. The Penn Museum had 13 relevant media stories covered in this study, and the Peabody Museum had 12 stories.

Finally, each museums' Twitter accounts was reviewed for posts from January 2020 through January 2021 that were deemed to be activist or related to this study's societal concerns with racism and decolonization. When such a post was found, if there were user comments, two random associated user comments were also included in the data. Social media was utilized in the data collection due to its importance in meaning making, thus placing it at the center of textual analysis (Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori, 2018). In total, 89 tweets and retweets from the Museum of Man were examined for this project, along with seven user comments. The Hearst Museum had 23 tweets with four user comments, while the Peabody Museum had six tweets and one user comment. For the Penn Museum, 12 texts were deemed activist, yielding four user comments.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is "the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it" (Flick, 2014, p. 5). Creswell and Poth (2018) describe the qualitative data analysis process as consisting of five parts: (1) *organizing of data* (2) *reading and memoing ideas* (3) *describing and assigning codes or categories* (4) *developing interpretations* (5) *reporting the data* (p. 187). This research project followed these steps through the data analysis period. The analysis component of this study occurred from February to March 2021.

Based on the process described by Creswell and Poth (2018), the first step after data collection was to order the data according to museum and document type (social media posts, media story, etc.). Once this was completed, the data was thoroughly read through several times

in order to gain a clear understanding of it. During this process, significant portions of the text were highlighted, and initial notes were recorded as memos in the margins.

Next, the data was coded. *Coding* is "the process of generating ideas and concepts from raw data… [and] refers to the steps the researcher takes to identify, arrange, and systematize the ideas, concepts and categories uncovered in the data" (Benaquisto, 2008, p. 85). An emergent coding process, such as that based in grounded theory that moves from open to more focused (axial) coding as analysis continues, was utilized in this project (Benaquisto, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Based on the initial readings, a list of categories was generated, and a table was created to record the coding data. The data was then read through once again, this time for specific quotes and messages that could be categorized. Any quotes that fit into the categories were added to the table, along with the information about the kind of source and museum to which it pertained.

Finally, once all of the data was coded, the data was further analyzed and compared across the cases. Themes that were similar across the museums were noted. The data was continually read until it was determined that it had been exhausted. The findings from the data analysis are presented in Chapter 4.

Limitations of the Study

As with any research methodology, there were limitations to the study. One of the major limitations of a case study is the rigorous and time-consuming nature of the in-depth analysis and description that must occur, especially in multiple case studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moore et al., 2011; Yin, 2018). Case studies also rarely result in generalizable findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Additionally, this project relied on the use of secondary documents for data, which leaves open the possibility of bias from the original authors of the documents (Bauer et al.,

2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Finally, textual analysis was utilized in this project, which can be subject to the unique perspective of the researcher that analyzed the text (Lockyer, 2008).

Though Creswell and Poth (2018) stress that ideally multiple sources of information should be gathered for case studies, such as interviews, observation and documentary evidence, only documentary information was utilized for this research project due to the time constraints of the study, along with the unique situation posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, many museums were operating with reduced staff and were closed due to local coronavirus restrictions. This situation limited the ability to set up interviews or observations for primary data. Secondary data from websites of the museums themselves, their social media postings, and media stories were determined to provide sufficient data for research purposes.

Summary

A qualitative case study was selected as methodology for this research project after the limitations and the benefits were considered. A multi-site case study was identified as the most appropriate form of this methodology. This methodology was chosen to elucidate the following research question:

> RQ: How can anthropology museums evolve to become more socially responsible and realize their activist potential in the face of systemic racism and decolonization?

Once the anthropology museums were selected for the cases, content and textual analyses were undertaken with data collected from each museum's websites, social media, and media stories. The data was then processed to find the major themes, which were compared across the cases. In the following chapter, the findings from the data collection and analysis are presented. Chapter 5 will provide a discussion of the findings and further recommendations for anthropology museums to engage with activism.

Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

As imparted throughout these chapters, a gap in the scholarly literature exists regarding the potential for activism specifically in anthropology museums. While the scholarly literature has outlined the capacity of the museum field to enact a positive social impact by dealing with difficult topics, the museums most likely to engage with activism are institutions devoted to art, history and science, not anthropology. Because anthropology museums were historically linked with colonialism and the perpetuation of now-rejected anthropological theories of a biological racial hierarchy, they are uniquely poised to address issues such as racism and social justice that are currently at the forefront of society. However, anthropology museums have lagged behind other museums when it comes to grappling with their pasts and vital social issues. As such, this project was developed around the following research question:

RQ: How can anthropology museums evolve to become more socially responsible and realize their activist potential in the face of systemic racism and decolonization?

In order to investigate this research question, a qualitative, multi-site case study of four anthropology museums across the United States was conducted. After searching for similarity in collection type and size, the museums chosen for the study were the Museum of Us, the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography (the Peabody Museum), the Penn Museum, and the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology (the Hearst Museum). As detailed in Chapter 3, data was collected from the museums' websites, Twitter accounts, and media stories, which then underwent textual and content analyses.

Upon comparative analysis across the cases, five major themes emerged from the data. The five themes were: (1) *Activism*, (2) *Decolonization Efforts*, (3) *Community Engagement*, (4) *Public Accountability*, and (5) *Transformational Leadership*. Within each of these themes, two additional subthemes were identified to aid in organizing and explaining the data. The theme of *Activism* is divided into the topics of *Actual Activism* and *Performative Activism*. *Decolonization Efforts* are detailed under the subthemes of *Acknowledgement* and *New Narratives and Contemporary Voices*. *Community Engagement* examines interaction in a museum's *Local Community* and with each collection's *Descendant Communities*. *Public Accountability* is elaborated with the subthemes of *Ethical Controversies* and *Radical Transparency*. Lastly, *Transformational Leadership* features the subthemes of *Leading the Way* and *Transformative Potential*. Following both of the subthemes, an analysis of the significance of the findings for each theme is presented, relating it back to the research question that guides this project. This chapter concludes with a summation of the findings and brief introduction to the discussion and recommendations in Chapter 5.

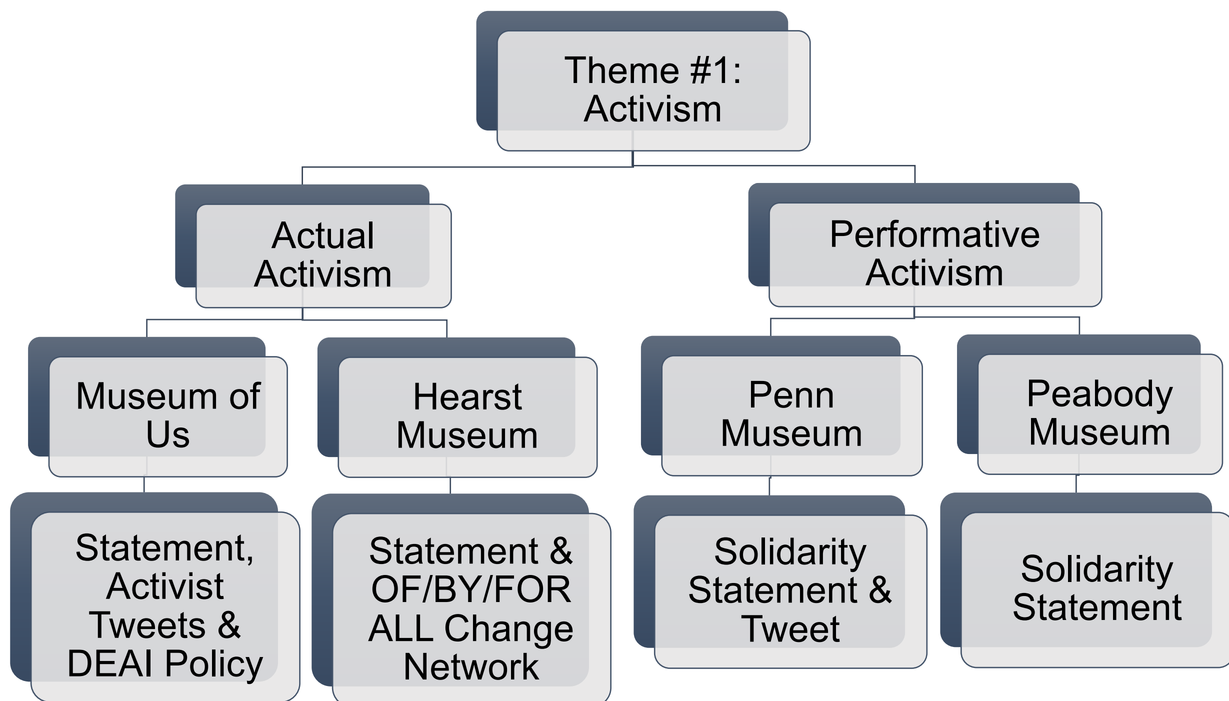
Theme #1: Activism

The theme of *Activism* became apparent immediately within the data collected for this study. Due to the museums' varying responses, subthemes were utilized to better understand the theme, as illustrated in the hierarchy chart in Figure 1 that visualizes the findings of the research. *Actual Activism* was categorized by museums, in this instance of the Hearst Museum and Museum of Us, that took concrete actions to change their institutions and/or community to combat wider societal issues. *Performative Activism*, which is defined as activism for the purpose of personal gain or an increase of social capital instead of actual support of a social issue or movement, was also present (Ira, 2020). By their lack of visible action, aside from solidarity

statements following the police killing of George Floyd, the Peabody Museum and the Penn Museum were categorized as displaying performative activism.

Figure 1

Hierarchy Chart of Activism Theme



Note. This chart provides a visualization of how the theme and subthemes of activism presented itself through the data. Under each subtheme is the name of the museum whose response illustrated the subtheme, and below the museum name, the actions that each museum took.

Actual Activism

Following the police killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020 and the subsequent nationwide protests in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, the first of the museums in

this study to respond was the Museum of Us. On May 30, the Museum of Us acknowledged the unjust systems that have led to racial oppression in a Tweet, along with providing a list of books that address the topic of racism (Museum of Us, 2020c). On June 1, the museum again tweeted (Figure 2), this time with a quote from African American author bell hooks, stating that silence over racial injustice is in fact complicity (Museum of Us, 2020d). In addition to the Tweet, the Museum of Us posted a blog on its website stating that it stands with the Black community and against racism along with the hashtags #BlackLivesMatter and #MuseumsAreNotNeutral (Museum of Us, 2020e). The blog post also provided links to resources on anti-racism topics. Though the museum remained closed due to the pandemic, it continued to write informative Tweets with links about important racial topics such as redlining, ending chokeholds in San Diego county (Figure 3), and the inequal impact of the pandemic (Museum of Us, 2020f, 2020g, 2020h).

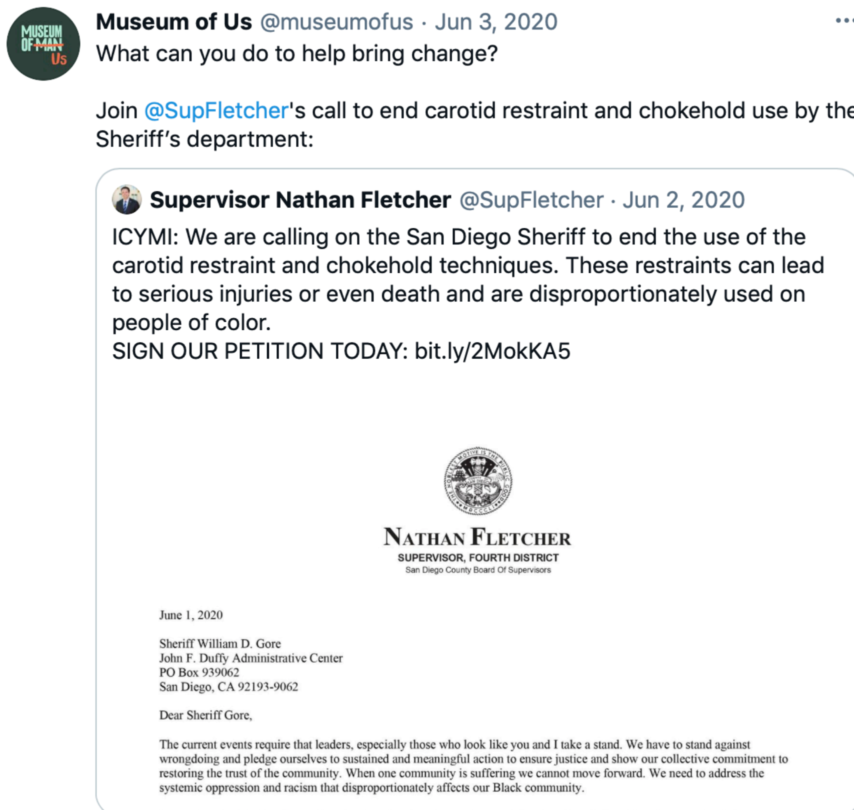
Figure 2

Tweet from the Museum of Us After Death of George Floyd (Museum of Us, 2020d)

Note. This Tweet illustrates the Museum of Us' recognition that the museum should not remain silent in the face of racism.

Figure 3

Tweet from the Museum of Us to End Chokeholds in San Diego County (Museum of Us, 2020f)



Note. This Tweet illustrates the Museum of Us taking actual action to change their community.

In addition to tweeting and blogging on activist topics, in November 2020, the Museum of Us' board approved a new institutional diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion (DEAI) statement. The statement articulated that the museum is "dedicated to finding ways to promote social justice and freedom from oppression" throughout the institution, museum field, and society itself (Museum of Us, 2020i, para. 1). The museum committed to accountability through action, challenging the very practices of the museum (Museum of Us, 2020i). Outlined in the document were strategies for action, including addressing inequalities in all aspects of the

museum, committing to community collaboration, diversifying staff, and promoting institutional ideals through communication, policies, programs and exhibitions (Museum, 2020i).

Likewise, the Hearst Museum issued a response on June 2 to the ongoing nationwide protests after the death of George Floyd. The Hearst Museum released a message from its directors, Lauren Kroiz and Caroline Fernald, on its website, stating that they stand with the Black community (Kroiz & Fernald, 2020). As a part of the statement, links were provided to learn more about anti-racism and how to get involved with the struggle against white supremacy and police brutality (Kroiz & Fernald, 2020). Then, in September, the museum announced that it had joined the OF/BY/FOR ALL Change Network, which is an organization devoted to aiding civic and cultural institutions in becoming more responsive, inclusive and equitable within their communities (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, 2020b). According to a Tweet from the OF/BY/FOR ALL account, which was retweeted by the Hearst Museum, the museum joined the network because of an internal push for long-term change that would make the museum more inclusive (OF/BY/FOR ALL, 2020).

Figure 4

Tweet from OF/BY/FOR ALL Change Network about the Hearst Museum (OF/BY/FOR ALL, 2020)

Note. This Tweet explains the purpose of the OF/BY/FOR ALL Change Network that the Hearst Museum joined, with a statement on the decision provided by the education coordinator of the museum.

Performative Activism

After the death of George Floyd and the protests for racial equality, the Penn Museum released a statement in early June expressing their solidarity with the Black community and protesters (Penn Museum, 2020a). In the Penn Museum's statement, it acknowledged that museums "cannot remain silent about discrimination and systemic violence against Black communities" (Penn Museum, 2020a, para. 1). The museum pledged to join the fight for racial equity and against systems of oppression by amplifying Black narratives and providing a forum for its community to have difficult conversations (Penn Museum, 2020a). The Penn Museum

also tweeted its support for the Black community on June 4, 2020, with a link to their press release (Penn Museum, 2020b). Between the Tweet and the press release, the museum stated that it would listen to the community and try to be the institution the community needs (Penn Museum, 2020a, 2020b). There is, however, little evidence of institutional change or increased engagement with the Black community aside from an October lecture discussing the links between monuments and the movement for racial justice (Penn Museum, 2020c).

Figure 5

Tweet from Penn Museum with Link to Solidarity Statement (Penn Museum, 2020b)

Note. This Tweet illustrates the Penn Museum's verbal commitment to solidarity, though the museum took no visible actions to support their words.

The Peabody Museum also released of statement of solidarity with protestors and the Black community following the death of George Floyd. Specifically, the Peabody Museum committed to examining its institutional practices, educating its staff and continuing the ethical stewardship of its collections (Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, 2020). The

Peabody Museum also provided links to a website from the National Museum of African American History & Culture that discusses racism, equity and inclusion (Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, 2020). Jane Pickering, the director of the museum, stated during an event that the museum was trying to transform in response to demands for equity and inclusion (Mineo, 2020). Though the Peabody affirmed its commitment to racial equity and social justice, no evidence could be gathered from its website, media stories or its Twitter account that any actions are being taken in support of those causes.

Analysis

All four museums in this project released statements following the death of George Floyd in solidarity with the Black community against police brutality. The disparity that arose across the museums was if the words were followed by concrete, visible action. The Museum of Us and the Hearst Museum both took steps, of varying degrees, towards fulfilling their statements of solidarity with their Black communities and battling inequity. The Museum of Us, for instance, increased its activism via Twitter, since it was not open due to the pandemic. From the period of January 2020 to January 2021, the Museum of Us issued 89 Tweets or retweets that were considered to have an activist message. Of those 89 Tweets, 56 occurred after the death of George Floyd. This is an increase from the first half of 2020, when there were 33 activist Tweets. The Museum of Us issued a simple statement that Black lives matter, and museums are not neutral. Though also issuing a simple statement, the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum did provide links to resources to get involved in the struggle against racism. Additionally, by joining the OF/BY/FOR ALL Change Network, the museum showed that it is committed to becoming more inclusive and equitable internally for the sake of its community.

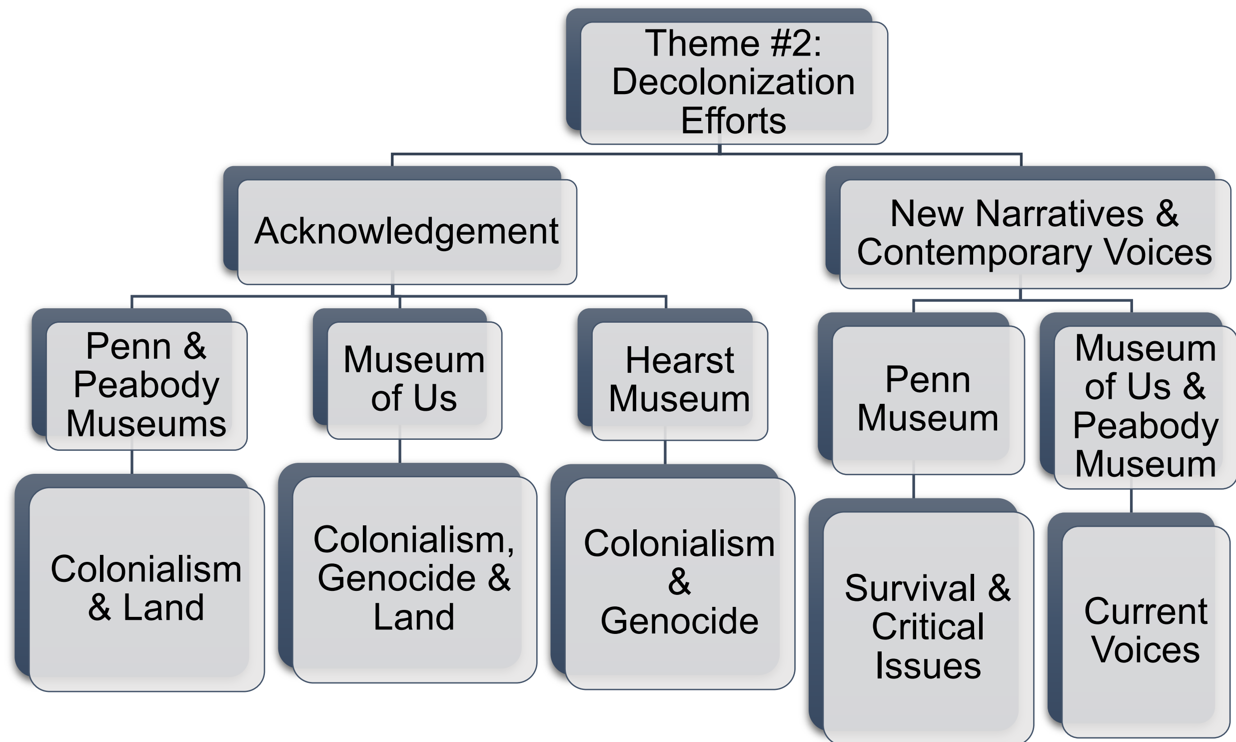
In the case of the Penn Museum and Peabody Museum, their inaction seemed to align more with expressions of performative activism. Neither the Penn Museum nor the Peabody Museum appeared to follow their statements of solidarity with any visible action that was trying to make a difference, though it is possible that they worked internally to address changes.

Theme #2: Decolonization Efforts

The second theme of this study, *Decolonization Efforts*, characterizes the work that many museums are currently undertaking to counter past narratives and practices associated with colonialism. This theme is especially pertinent to anthropology museums, where collections relating to Indigenous peoples are often preserved. As illustrated in Figure 6, the theme is divided into the subthemes of *Acknowledgement* and *New Narratives and Contemporary Voices,* followed by the museums and the evidence that supports the subtheme. *Acknowledgement* was visible in the data from all of the museums in this study, in the form of acknowledging Native American lands and the harmful effects of colonialism on Indigenous peoples. Data also supported the subtheme of *New Narratives and Contemporary Voices*, as several of the museums in this study are working to update the narratives in their displays to more accurately and fairly represent Native Americans.

Figure 6

Hierarchy Chart of Decolonization Efforts Theme



Note. This hierarchy chart presents the data findings for the theme of *Decolonization Efforts* and its subthemes. Underneath the name of each museum is the action taken that illustrates the subtheme.

Acknowledgement

According to Ho-Chunk scholar Amy Lonetree (2012), one of the first steps of decolonization is speaking the difficult truth of colonialism. In its solidarity statement following the protests after the death of George Floyd, the Penn Museum acknowledged that the “museum was built on colonialism and racist narratives” (Penn Museum, 2020a, para. 2). The Hearst Museum also acknowledged in its post-George Floyd message that the museum’s work and

collections "occur within broader historical systems of power, violence, injustice and exclusion" (Kroiz & Fernald, 2020, para. 2). During an event titled *Reimagining Museums: Disruption and Change*, director of the Peabody Museum Jane Pickering admitted to the colonial legacy of the museum, stating that the Peabody "benefitted enormously from imperialist and colonial activities" (Mineo, 2020, para. 14). On its Decolonizing Initiatives page, the Museum of Us specifically acknowledges that the museum "emerged from the colonial endeavor, white supremacy, and the self-righteous belief that to the victor goes the spoils" (Museum of Us, n.d.-b, para. 4).

Many museums now also have *land acknowledgements*, which is a statement that the land upon which the museum rests originally belonged to an Indigenous nation. As the Museum of Us explains on its page dedicated to the topic, a land acknowledgement is a part of the decolonization process, as well as a step towards including the Indigenous voices that museums have historically silenced (Museum of Us, n.d.-d). The Museum of Us has a page dedicated to informing the public of the significance and purpose of land acknowledgements, and at the top of all the pages on its website, it includes an acknowledgement of the Kumeyaay land upon which the museum sits (Museum of Us, n.d.-d). Additionally, the museum's acknowledgement expresses "its respect and gratitude to the Kumeyaay peoples who have lived here since time immemorial" (Museum of Us, n.d.-d, para. 1).

Both the Peabody Museum and the Penn Museum offer land acknowledgements on their websites. The Peabody Museum's About informational page acknowledges the homelands of the Massachusett people and their continued presence, along with the neighboring Wampanoag and Nimpuc peoples (Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, n.d.-a). The Peabody Museum's statement also recognizes the other Indigenous groups represented in its exhibitions

and collections (Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, n.d.-a). For the Penn Museum, a land acknowledgement is present at the bottom of its webpages, which states that it respectfully acknowledges that the museum is located in Lenapehoking, the homeland of the Unami Lenape (Penn Museum, n.d.-i). Additionally, a plaque was installed in its remodeled entrance lobby with the same acknowledgement (Saffron, 2019).

New Narratives and Contemporary Voices

To begin to decolonize, museums must abandon the old stereotypes of Indigenous museum representation in favor of new narratives that include contemporary voices (Lonetree, 2012). When the Museum of Us refurbished its *Kumeyaay: Native Californians* exhibition, the staff started by listening to the Kumeyaay community itself (Jones-Rizzi & Mann, 2020). The museum collaborated with the Kumeyaay Nation so that they would have a central role in an exhibition dedicated to their own history and culture (Hatzipanagos, 2018). The exhibition they created with the museum emphasizes both the traditional and contemporary lives of the Kumeyaay and their connection to the museum's collection (Museum of Us, n.d.-c).

For the Peabody Museum's exhibition titled *Wampanoag Voices: Beyond 1620*, the museum brought in current members of the Mashpee and Aquinnah Wampanoag tribes to discuss Wampanoag objects from the museum's collection (Stanley, 2020). In the exhibition, the contemporary voices are central to the narrative, as the tribal members talk about the significance of different objects and how they are still relevant to contemporary Wampanoag people (Stanley, 2020). The message of the exhibition is one of *survivance*, meaning the survival and continued presence of Native peoples (Stanley, 2020). However, Meredith Vasta, collections steward at the Peabody Museum and member of the Chippewa Indian tribe, admits that museums need to do

more to acknowledge contemporary Indigenous people and address the issues with which they are currently grappling (Stanley, 2020).

At the Penn Museum, the idea of survivance is also central to its exhibition *Native American Voices* (Penn Museum, n.d.-a, n.d.-g). The exhibition was created with Native American advisors and over 70 Native American consultants (Williams, 2013). Topics relevant to contemporary Native Americans were chosen as the organizing themes of the exhibition: *Local Nations*, *Sacred Places*, *Continuing Celebrations*, and *New Initiatives* (Penn Museum, n.d.-a, n.d.-g). Under those themes, the exhibition addresses issues such as sovereignty, self-determination, political activism, language revitalization, and identity (Penn Museum, n.d.-a). Both the Penn Museum and the Native American advisors wanted the emphasis of the exhibition to be that Native Americans are still living and fighting for their rights (Penn Museum, n.d.-a, n.d.-g).

However, Lonetree (2012) cautions against simple narratives of Indigenous survivance in museums, and additionally advocates for truthful histories of the toll of colonialism on Indigenous people. On its webpage with information on its North American collections, the Hearst Museum acknowledges that the Native Californians whose artifacts the museum now holds faced *genocide* at the hands of settler colonists (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, n.d.-d). The Hearst Museum further discloses that some of the collection was the product of salvage ethnography, which occurred because anthropologists believed Indigenous people were destined for extinction (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, n.d.-d). The Museum of Us was the only museum in this project that addresses this difficult issue in its exhibitions and programming. In its Colonial Pathways Policy, the Museum of Us pledges that it

will “truthfully address the history and legacy of colonialism … in policies, exhibitions, and programs” (Museum of Us, 2018, para. 9).

Analysis

It appears that with increasing public scrutiny and pressure to decolonize in the museum community, the four anthropology museums in this research project are making efforts to decolonize their collections and narratives. All of the museums acknowledged that museums are inextricably tied to colonialism. With the exception of the Hearst Museum, the museums all also had land acknowledgements of some degree on their websites. In addition to its land acknowledgement, the Museum of Us has adopted a formal Colonial Pathways Policy guiding its decolonization efforts.

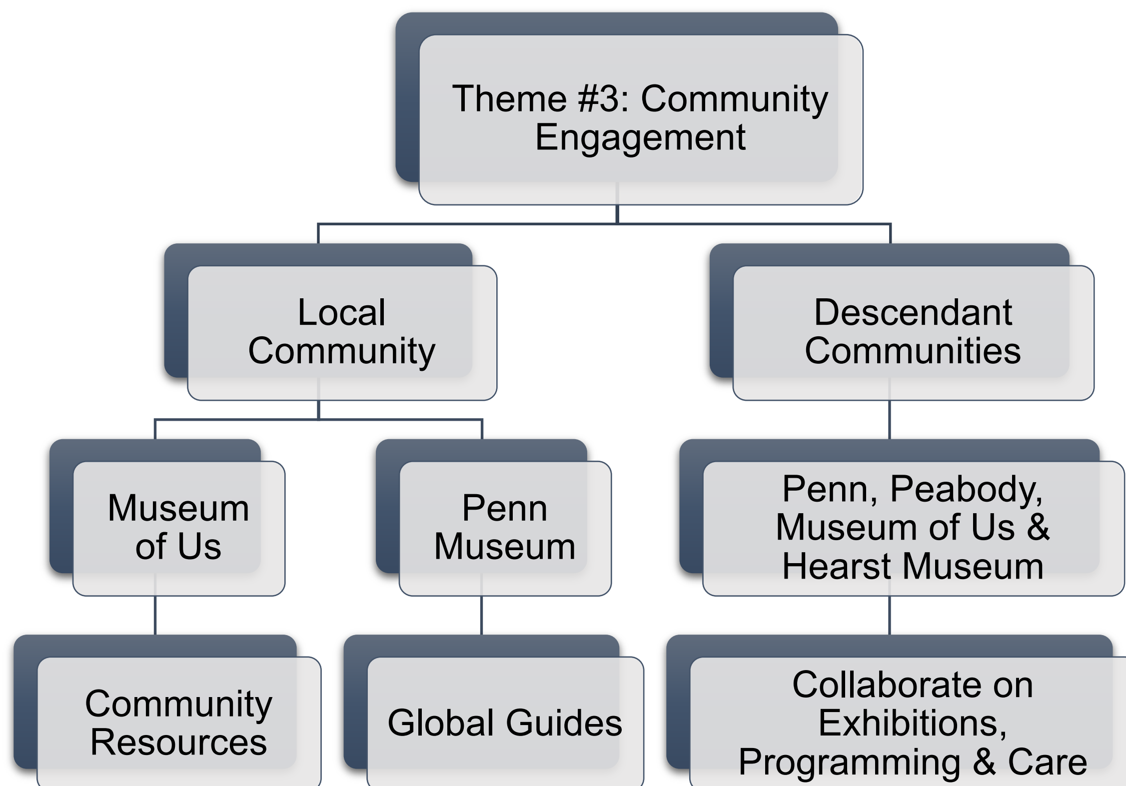
Another key component of decolonization is moving beyond the old stereotypes of Indigenous peoples to provide new narratives with contemporary voices. In the case of the Hearst Museum, it was difficult to discern if the museum is updating its perspectives. Though the North American collection is the museum’s largest, it does not appear that there is currently an exhibition devoted to that collection. For the rest of the museums in this study, updating their exhibitions meant consultation with Native American tribes to incorporate their perspectives and ideas. The Museum of Us, the Peabody Museum, and the Penn Museum all included the voices of contemporary tribal members, with the Penn Museum in particular discussing important topics relevant to Native Americans’ continued struggle over sovereignty and land. While those three museums all address the issue of survivance in their exhibitions, only the Museum of Us has a specific policy that pledges to speak the truth about the history and legacy of colonialism. Only the Hearst Museum and Museum of Us specifically use the word genocide to describe the treatment of Native Americans.

Theme #3: Community Engagement

The theme of *Community Engagement* emerged from the data when investigating the activist potential of anthropology museums, as more institutions are learning to listen and advocate for their communities' needs. Anthropology museums are increasingly attempting to engage with their *Local Community* to create an environment that benefits both the museum and its community. Due to the ethnographic nature of their collections, anthropology museums have the additional responsibility to engage with the *Descendant Communities*, as was apparent in all of the museums in this study. In Figure 7, a hierarchy chart illustrates the division of the theme into *Local Community* and *Descendant Communities*, followed by the museums and the data which supports inclusion under the subthemes.

Figure 7

Hierarchy Chart of Community Engagement Theme



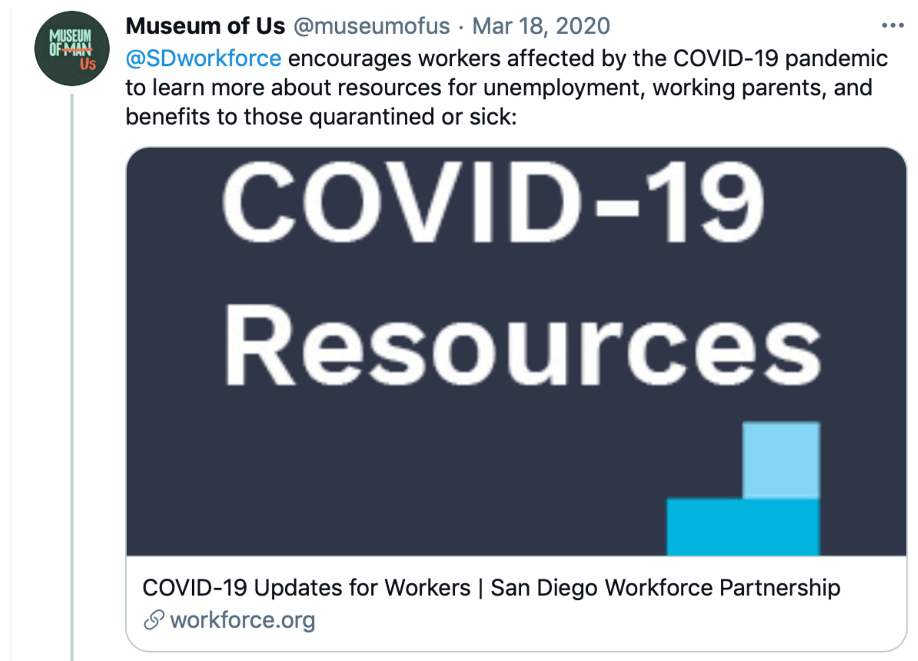
Note. This chart explains the subthemes for the *Community Engagement* theme. Under each subtheme, each museum is listed that supports the subtheme, along with their actions.

Local Community

The Museum of Us is an integral part of the San Diego community, and this was especially true during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to CEO Micah Parzen, when the pandemic struck, the museum sought suggestions from stakeholders on how it could help the community (Collins, 2020). The museum made a plan to become a distribution site for the food bank Feeding San Diego, but the city decided it was not comfortable with opening the museum's surrounding Balboa Park to the public during the pandemic (Collins, 2020). Though the museum was closed, the Museum of Us continued to utilize Twitter to inform its community of vital resources. When the pandemic initially began, the museum's twitter provided links to COVID-19 resources that could aid the community (Figure 8) (Museum of Us, 2020a). As the mental health effects of the pandemic lockdowns began to be discussed, the Museum of Us again provided links and phone numbers to a variety of organizations for community members in need of mental health assistance (Figure 9) (Museum of Us, 2020b).

Figure 8

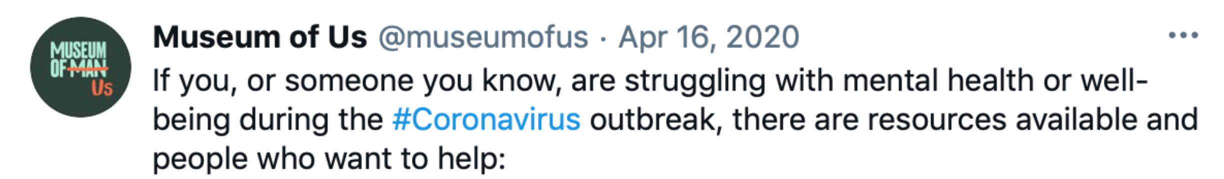
Tweet from the Museum of Us with Resources for San Diego Workers Affected by COVID-19 (Museum of Us, 2020a)



Note. This Tweet illustrates the Museum of Us providing resources for its local community.

Figure 9

Tweet from the Museum of Us Starting a Thread with Mental Health Resources (Museum of Us, 2020b)



Note. This Tweet is evidence of the Museum of Us trying to aid its local community.

For the Penn Museum, the local immigrant community has become an important part of its programming through the popular Global Guides tours. In the program, tours of certain galleries are led by immigrant and refugee docents from countries represented in the galleries

(Penn Museum, n.d.-e; Ulaby, 2020). The immigrant docents are able to inform visitors more about where the objects come from, in addition to how the objects relate to the docent's life personally (Penn Museum, n.d.-e). Global Guides began in the Middle East galleries, with tours led by Syrian and Iraqi refugees (Ulaby, 2020). The tours were so successful with visitors that the program expanded to include the renovated Africa and Mexico & Central America galleries (Ulaby, 2020). The Penn Museum also believes that the program benefits the community at large. Local immigrants and refugees are introduced to the program through local non-profits, and they are paid $20/hour for their work, which sometimes even includes translating documents for the museum (Ulaby, 2020). In addition to the Global Guides program, the Penn Museum has recently hired its first Development Diversity Liaison, a position charged with leading community initiatives to strength the relationship between the museum and its community (Penn Museum, 2021b).

Descendant Communities

All of the museums in this research project have some degree of relationship with their collection's descendant communities. This is especially true with the Native American collections, due in part to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act's (NAGPRA) requirement that museums contact tribes or groups whose objects they hold. The Hearst Museum's website includes a page dedicated to descendant communities, whose involvement it states to value (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, n.d.-c). On its Community Research & Outreach page, the Hearst Museum explains that people from descendant communities are welcome at the museum and collaborations with them are actively sought (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, n.d.-b). Also detailed are ongoing collaborations with descendent communities, such as the Breath of Life workshop, which centers

on language revitalization efforts using recordings in the collection (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, n.d.-b). The Hearst Museum also provides information on repatriation and traditional care, in which the museum assures communities that it will follow traditional care guidance for the collections when possible and provide information on how to contact the museum about repatriation (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, n.d.-f).

At the Museum of Us, staff works extensively with the Indigenous communities from which its collections were derived in accordance with its decolonizing initiatives. In 2017, the museum passed a policy on human remains that stated the museum could not display or even hold in its collections ancestorial remains without the permission of descendant communities (Hatzipanagos, 2018). This policy extended to the Egyptian mummies that had been on display (Museum of Us, n.d.-a). The Museum of Us' Board of Trustees approved a Colonial Pathways Policy in 2018 which requires the museum to have documented agreements with Indigenous communities to hold or display their cultural resources (Garcia et al., 2019; Museum of Us, 2018). On its Decolonizing Initiatives page, the museum makes a point of stating its commitment to focus their work on the Kumeyaay, on whose ancestral lands the museum is located, and include Indigenous voices on all levels of decision-making (Garcia et al., 2019; Museum of Us, n.d.-b). Additionally, when the museum sought to refresh its exhibition about the Kumeyaay, staff reached out to the Kumeyaay community to work with them on devising the exhibition. (Jones-Rizzi & Mann, 2020).

Consultation with descendant communities is an essential part of the work at the Penn Museum. Under NAGPRA, the museum "has mailed out over 3,000 letters to federally recognized tribes" across the nation about objects and remains in its collections (Penn Museum, n.d.-f, para. 3). While staff admits that the consultation and repatriation process under NAGPRA

is not without contestation sometimes, they note that it has its rewards as well (Williams et al., 2016). It has allowed the museum to begin forming relationships with communities such as the Yokut and Tlingit tribes, in addition to learning more about the collections that they still hold (Williams et al., 2016). For the installation of the *Native American Voices* exhibition, Indigenous communities were again involved in the process, with contemporary topics that mattered to them presented (Penn Museum, n.d.-g). In the remodeled Africa gallery, the Penn Museum again consulted the African diaspora community to ask what they wanted presented in the exhibition, and museums in West Africa were additionally contacted in hopes of creating collaborations (Gaittens, 2020).

According to Jane Pickering, the director of the Peabody Museum, the institution is actively involved with descendant communities and seeks to build relationships with them (Mineo, 2020). In a newly announced initiative, the Peabody Museum will work to digitize its ethnographic archives from the Marshall Family Expedition in the Kalahari, which it will then share with the descendant communities of the Ju/'hoansi and G/wi (Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, n.d.-g). Through collaborations with universities in South Africa and Botswana and the Museums Association of Namibia, an exhibition will be created at a San heritage center, and universities will be able to help disseminate the archives with additional descendant communities (Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, n.d.-g). For the Peabody Museum's newest exhibition, *Wampanoag Voices: Beyond 1620*, the museum worked with the Mashpee and Aquinnah Wampanoag tribes to create an exhibition centered on contemporary perspectives of objects in the museum's collection (Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, n.d.-c; Stanley, 2020). As for NAGPRA, the museum states that it is in communication with 574 federally recognized tribes and nations (Peabody Museum of

Archaeology and Ethnography, n.d.-e). The Peabody also seeks collaborations with tribes, such as when it welcomed the Delaware Tribe to view and study parts of its Lenape collection (Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, n.d.-e).

Analysis

When it comes to local communities, the Museum of Us was the most responsive and engaged. After the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the museum used Twitter to stay connected to the community, regardless of the fact that its building was closed. The museum's Tweets of resources to help San Diegans through a difficult period were an example for other museums. The Penn Museum has the Global Guides program, which aids not only the immigrant community in Philadelphia, but also the museum itself. The remaining museums lagged behind on engaging their local communities, which is part of becoming an activist institution.

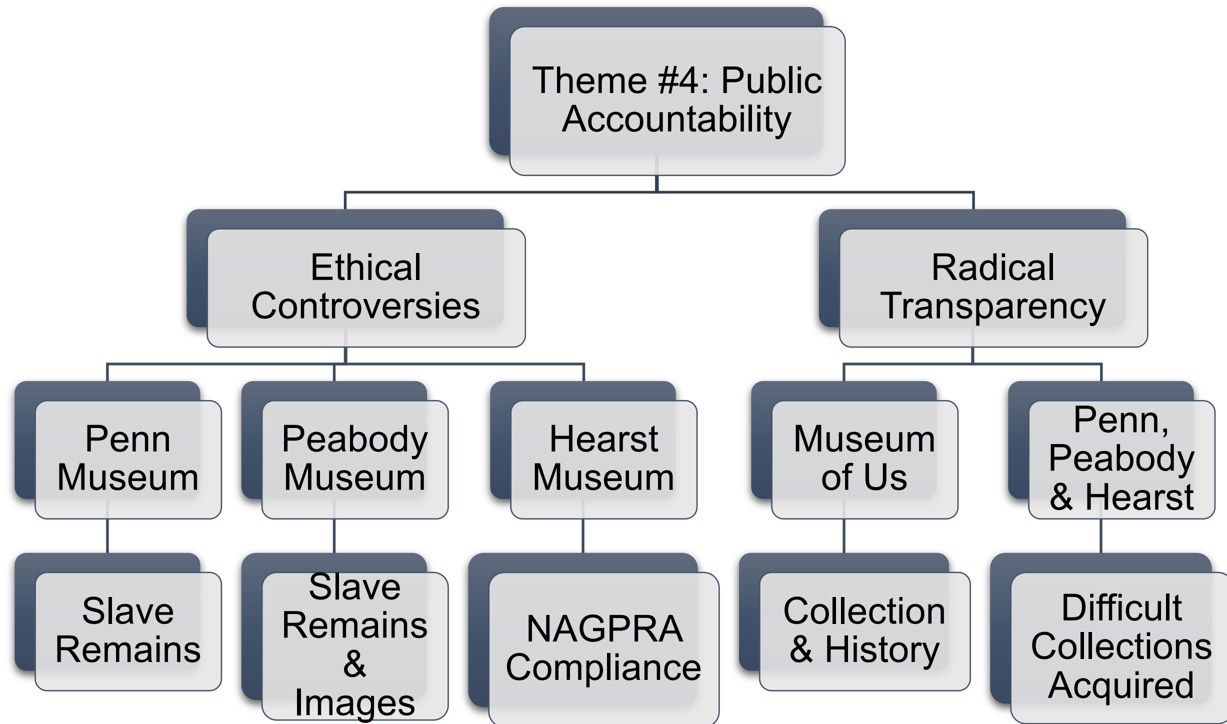
It now appears to be considered a best practice for museums to have involvement and collaboration with descendant communities. All of the museums in this project collaborated on some level with their descendant communities, especially when crafting new exhibitions. Though this can be attributed partially to the requirements of NAGPRA, the practice has extended beyond Native American communities to other collections, such as the African collections for the Peabody Museum and the Penn Museum. With its recent policies on human remains and decolonization, the Museum of Us is the most advanced in their engagement with descendant communities. It is important to engage actively with descendant communities when becoming more social responsive since museums steward their cultural heritage and must therefore be knowledgeable of their needs.

Theme #4: Public Accountability

Though the theme of *Public Accountability* can relate to all museums, it is especially relevant to anthropology museums due to the nature of their collections. It is now understood that in the past, anthropology museums engaged in practices now considered problematic regarding how and what objects they collected. Accountability for these past actions and collections are necessary for the public to trust museums, which is also a component of an activist museum. The hierarchy chart in Figure 10 depicts how the theme of *Public Accountability* was divided into the subthemes of *Ethical Controversies* and *Public Accountability*, with the museums that displayed those subthemes below that with each's supporting data. With the exception of the Museum of Us, all of the museums in this study had faced public *Ethical Controversies* in the last year that could impact public trust. To ensure accountability to the public, all of the museums in this study seem to have adopted some degree of *Radical Transparency*. Museum scholar Janet Marstine (2011) refers to *radical transparency* as "a mode of communication that admits accountability – acknowledgement and assumption of responsibility of actions" (p. 14). According to Marstine (2011), it is also a feature of an ethical museum with a sense of social responsibility to the public.

Figure 10

Hierarchy Chart of Public Accountability Theme



Note. The hierarchy chart visualizes the theme of *Public Accountability* and its subthemes of *Ethical Controversies* and *Radical Transparency*. Each museum with evidence of the subtheme is listed beneath, followed by the instances which support the subtheme.

Ethical Controversies

In 2019, Tamara Lanier sued Harvard University and the Peabody Museum over the so-called Zealy daguerreotypes, which are believed to be some of the oldest images of slaves in the United States (Azoulay, 2020; Martinez, 2020). Lanier sued for possession of the daguerreotypes that depict two of her enslaved ancestors, Renty and Delia (Azoulay, 2020; Hopkins, 2020). In the daguerreotypes, Renty, Delia, and other slaves were stripped and forced to pose for the photographer Zealy at the behest of Harvard scientist Louis Agassiz (Hopkins, 2020). Agassiz

commissioned the daguerreotypes in 1850 as evidence of *polygenism*, the belief that different races were actually different species (Hopkins, 2020; McKinney, 2020). Known to have held racist beliefs, Agassiz thought that polygenism explained the supposed inferiority of Africans (Bolotnikova, 2020; McKinney, 2020). In 2020, the Peabody Museum published a book on the Zealy daguerreotypes with essays on their legacy, which suggests that the museum profited off of the images (Bolotnikova, 2020). Since the lawsuit began, 43 descendants of Agassiz have petitioned for the daguerreotypes to be given to Lanier, and the Harvard Undergraduate Council unanimously passed a statement condemning Harvard University's ownership of them (Martinez, 2020; Sehgal, 2020). Students have written to the student-run newspaper *The Crimson* decrying the university's stance against the lawsuit and Harvard's "dismissive, aggressive behavior toward descendants of slaves" (McKinney, 2020, para. 2). McKinney demanded that both Harvard University and the Peabody Museum "stop promoting and exploiting images of Renty and Delia" and honor Ms. Lanier's wishes (McKinney, 2020, para. 19). In March 2021, however, a Massachusetts judge ruled that photographs are the property of the photographer, not the subject, and therefore the property of Harvard and the Peabody Museum (Dafoe, 2021). Lanier plans to appeal the ruling (Dafoe, 2021).

Most recently, the Peabody Museum discovered in January 2021 that its collections contained the human remains of 15 people of African ancestry who were possibly alive during the period of slavery in the United States (Bolotnikova, 2021). This was uncovered as part as a review of the ethical stewardship practices of the museum and Harvard University's continuing reckoning with its own legacy of slavery (Bolotnikova, 2021). In response to the discovery, Harvard established a steering committee on human remains that will research the remains further to aid in their possible return and burial (Bolotnikova, 2021). The director of the Peabody

Museum apologized in a statement released by the museum and pledged to confront the historical practices of the Peabody Museum (Pickering, 2021).

In June 2020, the Penn Museum came under scrutiny for its possession and classroom display of the Morton cranial collection after a column by student Gabriela Alvarado was released in student-run newspaper, *The Daily Pennsylvanian* (Alvarado, 2020). Samuel Morton was an early 19th century physician who amassed his collection from a worldwide network of colleagues, some of whom were not above resorting to grave-robbing for skulls (Alvarado, 2020; Renschler & Monge, 2008). The collection would eventually number nearly 1,300 crania from around the world (Alvarado, 2020; Diaz, 2020; Renschler & Monge, 2008). Morton measured the cranial capacity of the skulls, which he then used to verify his racist theories of the inferiority of other races (Alvarado, 2020; Renschler & Monge, 2008). Known as the father of scientific racism, Morton's white supremacist views were utilized in the South as a justification for slavery (Dafoe, 2020; Renschler & Monge, 2008; Patel, 2020). Transferred to the Penn Museum in 1966, the crania and their CT scans have continued to be studied by anthropologists and scientists alike (Dafoe, 2020; Diaz, 2020; Renschler & Monge, 2008).

While the museum has worked to repatriate those Morton crania that are subject to NAGPRA, national attention was stirred after it came to light that 53 of the skulls belonged to Africans enslaved in Havana, Cuba (Alvarado, 2020; Patel, 2020). Not only did the museum possess the human remains of enslaved individuals, but the remains were also displayed in open storage in a classroom within the museum (Alvarado, 2020; Patel, 2020). Faced with negative press and demands from University of Pennsylvania students, the museum was forced to admit its mistake and relocate them in July 2020 (Diaz, 2020; Patel, 2020). Students are demanding that the enslaved skulls be repatriated, and the Penn Museum indicates that it is working to do so,

though the museum acknowledges it could be a lengthy process (Dafoe, 2020). In storage, the collection continues to be accessible to researchers, to which students object (Dafoe, 2020; Patel, 2020). In the column, Alvarado wrote that the museum "keeping the crania of the Morton is racist, oppressive and a violation of basic human rights" (Alvarado, 2020, para. 1). Some students at the University of Pennsylvania campus agree, with the student group Police Free Penn demanding the complete abolition and repatriation of the entire Morton collection (Patel, 2020).

The Hearst Museum faced increased scrutiny in both the online arts magazine *Hyperallergic* and the local University of California Berkeley (UC Berkeley) student newspaper *The Daily Californian* regarding its adherence to NAGPRA (Lefebvre, 2020; Rao, 2020). A state audit of the University of California system's compliance with NAGPRA revealed that the Hearst Museum had returned only about 20% of around 500,000 eligible Native American artifacts and remains (Lefebvre, 2020; Rao, 2020). This is compared to the University of California Los Angeles' repatriation rate of 96% (Alexander, 2020). The state audit found that the Hearst Museum required tribal petitions for repatriation to submit evidence for tribal affiliation of artifacts or remains beyond just geography or oral history (Lefebvre, 2020). The audit also found that the committees overseeing the repatriation process did not have tribal representation, as required by law (Lefebvre, 2020). Representatives for UC Berkeley, the university with which the Hearst Museum is affiliated, acknowledged the criticism, while also relating the problems to the size of the collection, as well as the lack of federal recognition for many of the local tribes whose objects the museum holds (Lefebvre, 2020; Rao, 2020). A 2018 California state law relating to NAGPRA closes this gap, however, offering repatriation to non-federally recognized tribes, which the museum says it will adhere to in its new policies

(Alexander, 2020; Lefebvre, 2020). Another apparent issue was the former NAGPRA committee, which was made up of curators from the museum, who "had a vested interest in maintaining the collection and slowing repatriation" (Alexander, 2020, para. 13).

Both UC Berkeley and the Hearst Museum indicate they are taking steps to address the problems outlined in the audit, such as new policies and a new NAGPRA committee (Lefebvre, 2020; Rao, 2020). According to *The Daily Californian* reporter Sage Alexander, "it shouldn't take decades of legislation to do something as morally unambiguous as returning remains and artifacts to their descendants" (Alexander, 2020, para. 17). Phenocia Bauerle, director of Native American Student Development at UC Berkeley, believes that the university and the Hearst Museum will have to work hard to repair their relationships with Native Americans and confront their own historic wrongs (Lefebvre, 2020).

Radical Transparency

In a January 2021 statement addressing the aforementioned controversy over possibly enslaved human remains in its collection, the director of the Peabody Museum was transparent about the situation. The director acknowledged that the Peabody Museum is "intricately linked to 19th-century legacies of settler colonialism and imperialism both in the United States and around the globe," and had benefited from collecting practices that ignored the wishes of descendant communities (Pickering, 2021, para. 1). Additionally, Pickering apologized on behalf of the Peabody Museum for the institution not confronting its past sooner and handling the issue of human remains in a more urgent, ethical manner (Pickering, 2021). Pickering outlined in detail the steps that the museum would be taking to become more ethical stewards of its collections, including working with a Harvard University steering committee on human remains and an initiative examining the history of the museum (Pickering, 2021). At the end of the statement,

Pickering committed once again to facing the Peabody's difficult history and trying to return human remains to their affected communities (Pickering, 2021).

When the Penn Museum was reinstalling its Africa galleries, the museum decided to be transparent about how the collection was acquired. The museum believes that it may be the "first in the United States to explicitly acknowledge the less-than-savory means used to assemble its collection of antiquities" (Saffron, 2019, para. 15). In the new Africa galleries, the museum acknowledges to visitors in wall text that many of the objects on display "were created in or taken out of Africa during periods of enslavement and colonialism" (Penn Museum, n.d.-b, para. 3). For example, the Penn Museum is in possession of materials from Benin City that were looted from its palace during the 1897 British punitive expedition (Saffron, 2019). These Benin objects are displayed in the new galleries, where their history is detailed for visitors (Penn Museum, n.d.-c). Tukufu Zuberi, the lead curator of the Africa galleries, specifically wanted to address the colonial legacy of the museum in the exhibition to prompt visitors to reconsider traditional narratives and the colonial acquisition of objects (Penn Museum, n.d.-c). The Penn Museum discovered through surveys that this kind of transparency was preferred by visitors (Saffron, 2019).

The Hearst Museum is now being transparent about a difficult part of its past – the treatment of Ishi, who was believed to be the last surviving member of the Yahi people of California (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, n.d.-e). After his family and the remainder of his tribe were massacred, Ishi went into hiding, but was captured by local authorities (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, n.d.-e). He was then turned over to the Hearst Museum, where he would live and work until his death four years later (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, n.d.-e). The Hearst Museum admits that Ishi was essentially a living

exhibition at the museum, where he would be displayed for white audiences to demonstrate Yahi culture (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, n.d.-e). According to the museum itself, Ishi lived as an indentured servant, working as a janitor and researcher for his keep at the museum (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, n.d.-e). After Ishi's death from tuberculous, his last wishes to be cremated in the tradition of his people were denied, and his body was instead autopsied for science, with his brain sent to the Smithsonian Institution (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, n.d.-e). His remains were later cremated and buried in his homeland thanks to the efforts of several tribes (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, n.d.-e). The museum is transparent about its treatment of Ishi on a webpage dedicated to him, rather than covering up its past mistakes.

At the Museum of Us, radical transparency is readily embraced, especially regarding past practices and the history of the institution. The museum openly acknowledged that throughout its history, "the museum effectively erased the genocide, warfare, displacement and oppression perpetuated against Indigenous communities" whose cultural materials the museum collected (Garcia et al., 2019, para. 7). In the museum's Colonial Pathways Policy, the museum admits to harming Indigenous communities by extracting their artifacts and bodies in the name of preservation and education (Museum of Us, 2018). Specifically, the museum recognized in the policy that it "contributed to structures of racism through its presentations of race and ethnicity stemming from prevalent ideas and practices in biological and cultural anthropology" (Museum of Us, 2018, para. 4). The policy states that the museum was complicit in the erasure of the history of genocide against Indigenous communities, unjustly acquired Indigenous bodies, and excluded Indigenous voices from the decision-making and exhibition processes (Museum of Us, 2018). The Museum of Us also supported the dual practices of truth-telling and accountability in

its DEAI statement by admitting that “existing systems of power give inequitable privileges and access to different people” (Museum of Us, 2020i, para. 2). The DEAI statement specifically referred to those systems as embodying classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, white supremacy, systemic racism, and socio-economic segregation (Museum of Us, 2020i). Micah Parzen, the CEO of the Museum of Us, believes that such transparency and accountable can possibly lead to the museum becoming part of the solution of such issues (Parzen, 2020).

Analysis

In this age of increased public scrutiny, it is essential for museums to be accountable for their actions and decisions. This means admitting mistakes when they are made and taking action to avoid them in the future. With many of the institutions having controversial pasts, it was not surprising that the museums in this research project, with the exception of the Museum of Us, have faced problems within the last year regarding ethical violations with their collections. For the Peabody Museum, the ruling that they are able to retain and profit from images of slaves is legally correct, but perhaps not ethical. As for the remains of enslaved individuals, it should be noted that the Peabody was proactive and open with the public in searching for possibly problematic collections when the remains were discovered. However, without Harvard University’s ongoing reckoning over the role of slavery in the campus’ early history, forced by the student body, it is possible that the remains would not have been uncovered. Likewise, the Penn Museum only moved and offered to repatriate the skulls of enslaved men and women after public and student scrutiny. Again, while the enslaved skulls are not subject to laws such as NAGPRA, repatriation is the most ethical course of action. The Hearst Museum, however, did not adhere to NAGPRA. It appears that museum utilized loopholes in the law, which California

has subsequently closed, to retain its collection. Only when the Hearst Museum was under audit did the museum begin to make changes to address the problems.

The exception of the Museum of Us from the ethical controversies is notable because the Museum of Us was also the most transparent and proactive of the museums. In both its policies and media articles, the museum was honest about its history and problematic past practices. The Museum of Us used frank language to outline what the museum has done wrong in the past, and it put in place steps to avoid problems moving forward, before facing an ethical or legal dilemma.

As is the case with all of the museums in this study to some degree, it is also necessary for museums to practice radical transparency. This is especially important for anthropology museums due to the historical legacies of the institutions and their conduct with their collections. All of the museums in this study have acknowledged their ties to colonialism, and they are increasingly addressing in a transparent manner how exactly they came to be in possession of their collections. Accountability and transparency are necessary before a museum can become ethical and activist.

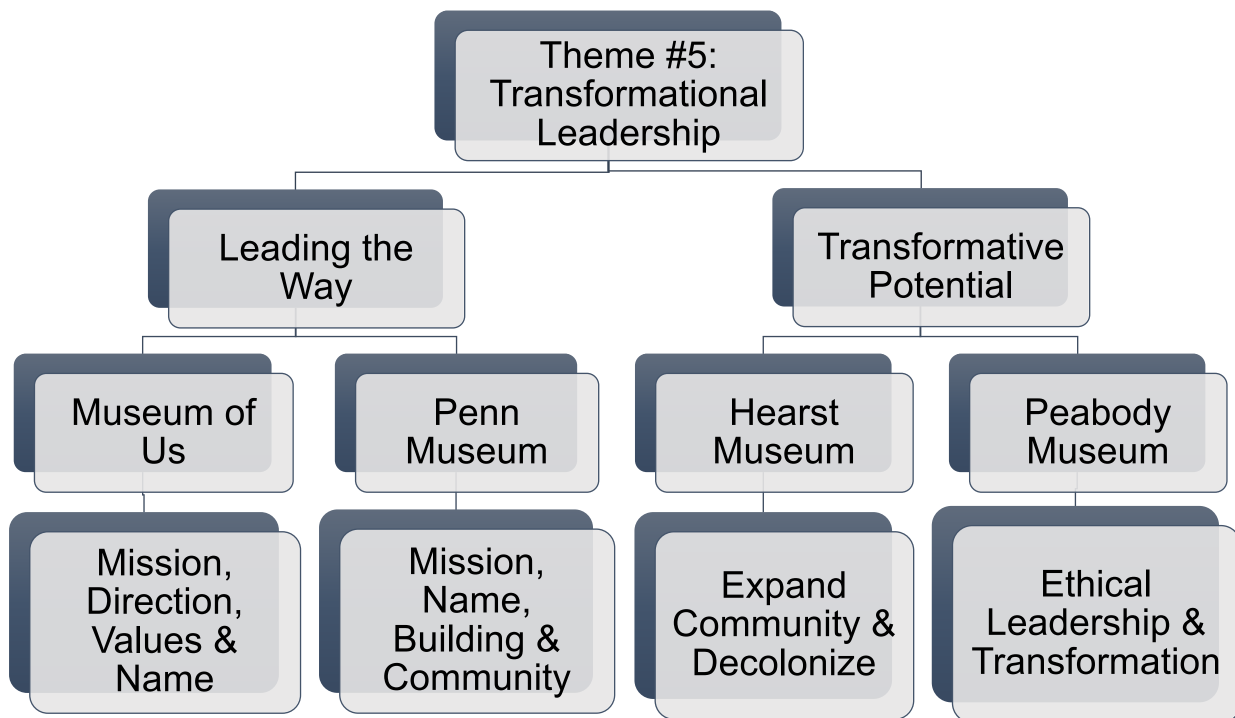
Theme #5: Transformational Leadership

Transformational Leadership was the final theme that emerged from the data. According to Riggio et al. (2004), *transformational leadership* involves "a leader who inspires commitment to a vision or cause but also develops or 'transforms' followers to reach their highest potential and to take on the responsibilities of leading the organization toward its mission" (p. 50). As shown in Figure 11, this theme was divided into the subthemes of *Leading the Way* and *Transformative Potential*. In *Leading the Way*, the leaders of both the Museum of Us and the Penn Museum displayed all of the characteristics of being transformational leaders within their

institutions by changing the direction of their museums. At the Hearst Museum and the Peabody Museum, the leaders showed *Transformative Potential*, as they each begin working to change their museums.

Figure 11

Hierarchy Chart of Transformational Leadership Theme



Note. This chart provides a visualization of the *Transformational Leadership* theme and its two subthemes. The museums are listed under their appropriate subtheme, followed by the actions undertaken that support inclusion in the subtheme.

Leading the Way

When Micah Parzen became the CEO of the Museum of Us in 2010, he inherited not only a financially unstable institution, but a directionless one described as "seemingly moribund"

(Chute, 2012, para. 4; Semmel, 2017). Parzen immediately set to work reinventing and reinvigorating the museum, drafting a budget plan in addition to a three-year strategic plan that was adopted in 2012 (Chute, 2012; Semmel, 2017). Both Parzen and the board agreed on new mission, vision and value statements for the museum that reflected its new direction (Semmel, 2017). Specifically, the new vision highlighted the museum's desire to become a dynamic place that contributes to its community while also building connections, which Parzen deemed as "part town hall, part center for cross cultural exchange, and part participatory museum" (Chute, 2012, para. 10; Museum of Us, n.d.-e). Additionally, Parzen and the museum decided that exhibitions should focus on relevant, contemporary themes cross-culturally to better engage with visitors (Chute, 2012; Semmel, 2017). Parzen also recruited board members and staff to begin working towards the new institutional goals (Semmel, 2017). As for his own leadership skills, Parzen emphasized the abilities to work as an effective team and inspire those around him, while also being transparent in regular communication with internal and external stakeholders (Semmel, 2017).

As audience numbers, memberships and fundraising all rose, the board adopted another strategic plan in 2015 aimed at continuing this new course charted by Parzen (Semmel, 2017). With an emphasis on institutional innovation, experimentation and flexibility, Parzen and the museum sought to diversify its audience while maintaining the new mission and vision as the institutional guide (Semmel, 2017). Though the number of donations and visitors have continued growing, some donors and supporters have left the museum over what they deemed a too "politically correct" direction (Semmel, 2017; Wilkens, 2020, para. 9). Nationally, however, these changes have led to the museum being viewed as a leader in the field on the topic of

decolonization, which the institution has readily embraced through its policies (Hatzipanagos, 2018; Wilkens, 2020).

At the time Parzen became the CEO, the museum was called the San Diego Museum of Man. However, Parzen, the staff, and the board all agreed to change the name in order to reflect the new institutional ethos (Peterson, 2018; Wilkens, 2020). Though the museum had long gotten complaints over the name, in 2018 museum leaders went public with the decision to change the name, asking for the public's input over a two-year process (Peterson, 2018; Wilkens, 2020). The museum formally became the Museum of Us in August 2020, a name which is more reflective of the current institution's commitment to inclusion, diversity, decolonization, and social change (Museum of Us, n.d.-f; Wilkens, 2020). According to staff members, the new name spearheaded by Parzen demonstrates that the museum is serious about changing and taking action (Wilkens, 2020).

In 2012, Julian Siggers was appointed the 11th director in the 125-year history Penn Museum (Penn Museum, 2012). At that time, the university museum was primarily a place for academics and researchers (Hurdle, 2019; Kenney, 2019). Siggers, however, wished to make it more accessible for the general public while still preserving its academic integrity (Hurdle, 2019; Penn Museum, 2012). Additionally, Siggers examined the permanent galleries of the museum, many of which were outdated (Siggers, 2013b). To begin the transformation process, Siggers changed the mission, "the North Star" of the museum to state, "The Penn Museum transforms understanding of the human experience" (Siggers, 2013a, p. 3). Siggers also outlined four central pillars to guide the museum forward – excellence in research, collections stewardship, education and public engagement (Siggers, 2013a).

Next, Siggers turned his attention to crafting a strategic plan for the museum through 2020 with help of staff, the board, and the university provost (Siggers, 2014b). A complete transformation of the building and some of the exhibitions were deemed necessary in order to achieve the goals described above, especially those of increased accessibility and public outreach (Siggers, 2014a, 2014b). Through a phased plan, the building work began in 2014, and will be completed when new Egyptian galleries open in 2021 (Kenney, 2019). While renovating and reinstalling some of the galleries, Siggers explained that the involvement and acceptance by both the board and the staff were vital to the transformation (Hickman, 2018). For example, the education department was involved in the design process for the first time, which led to more accessible displays and inclusive text (Hickman, 2018). Additionally, the museum was renamed the Penn Museum from the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in 2019, complete with a new modern logo (Kenney, 2019; Penn Museum, 2019b). Siggers and the board approved the name change to emphasize that it was now a museum open for everyone, not just the University of Pennsylvania community (Penn Museum, 2019b). Though Siggers left the museum in April 2020, it is anticipated that the museum will continue its transformation and further expand its outreach to diverse audiences under the direction of Christopher Woods, who will be the museum's first Black director (Penn Museum 2021a; Salisbury, 2021).

Transformative Potential

Upon becoming the new director of the Peabody Museum in July 2019, Jane Pickering admitted that the museum was at a "critical point in its history" (Aggarwal-Schifellite, 2019b, para. 4). Pickering stated that the Peabody faced challenges stemming from collection stewardship, collection interpretation, and the changes in perceptions of anthropological

collections (Aggarwal-Schifellite, 2019b). In an interview with *The Harvard Gazette*, the director expressed her desire to transform the Peabody into a leader when it comes to handling the difficult topics affecting the entire museum field (Aggarwal-Schifellite, 2019a). Pickering acknowledged the challenges of stewarding an anthropology collection but vowed to confront those challenges in innovative ways (Aggarwal-Schifellite, 2019a). Additionally, Pickering addressed furthering the museum's relationships with Indigenous communities, as well as its social responsibility (Aggarwal-Schifellite, 2019a). Finally, the director committed to expanding audiences and programming, which she had done in her previous position at the Harvard Museums of Science & Culture (Aggarwal-Schifellite, 2019a, 2019b). During her tenure, Pickering led an examination of the stewardship of their collection, especially their human remains (Pickering, 2021). In light of this examination and Harvard University's reckoning with its own history of slavery, it was uncovered that the Peabody Museum's collection contained the remains of people who were possibly enslaved (Pickering, 2021). The Peabody Museum is confronting the problematic practices of its past in order to be able to move forward.

The Hearst Museum similarly welcomed a new leader in January 2020 with the introduction of Dr. Lauren Kroiz as the faculty director (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, 2020a). Kroiz is an art historian focused on modern American art, while also researching issues of race and representation (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, 2020a). The museum's announcement stated that Kroiz's experience would bring an understanding of the impact of colonialism on the work and collections of the museum (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, 2020a). Additionally, it suggested that Kroiz's experience would aid her in repatriation work and building relationships with Indigenous communities, with which the museum has historically struggled (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology,

2020a). Under Kroiz's leadership, the museum entered the OF/BY/FOR ALL network, which, as previously explained, suggests a commitment to community work and meaningful change (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, 2020b).

Analysis

All four leaders in this study displayed some attributes of transformative leadership, which bettered their museums. In the case of both the Museum of Us and the Penn Museum, the respective leaders were able to enact the most visible change in their institutions. Parzen, with the staff and board supporting him, changed the direction of the museum to one that became more relevant to the public and current social issues. Under Parzen's leadership, the Museum of Us decided to become more active in its community and embrace an agenda of social change. Through the policies enacted by the board and the support of staff, Parzen had led the museum to becoming a leader in the museum field.

Similarly, when Julian Siggers became the director of the Penn Museum, he recognized that the museum needed to become more open and welcoming to the general public instead of so-inwardly focused on research and academics. While this meant renovating the building itself to enable accessibility, it also necessitated changing the guiding mission of the museum to make it more universal and inspirational. Such changes needed the board and staff to agree to this new vision, which they both did. Though not as visibly activist as the Museum of Us, the Penn Museum has begun making progress in that direction.

For the Peabody Museum and the Hearst Museum, the potential exists to transform, and some initial steps have been taken. In her statements upon being hired as director of the Peabody Museum, it was clear that Pickering was well aware of the challenges she would face as leader (Aggarwal-Schifellite, 2020a, 2020b). Pickering has been proactive regarding some of these

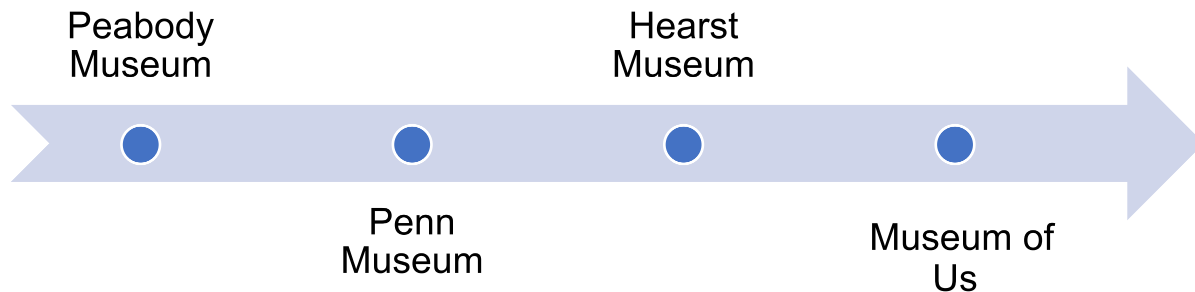
issues, as evidenced by ordering a survey of the collections for problems. Likewise, the Hearst Museum made the decision to choose Kroiz to lead the museum towards change. Though Kroiz and Pickering have taken some steps, both have five-year tenures in which to enact lasting change toward activism.

Cross-Case Synthesis: The Spectrum of Activism

This research project found that the four anthropology museums involved in this study (the Museum of Us, the Peabody Museum, the Penn Museum, and the Hearst Museum) were all in the process of evolving towards greater social responsibility. Additionally, they all exhibited some components of activist practices, though to varying degrees. Upon analysis of the data, it also became clear that the four museums involved in the study could be viewed on a spectrum of activism (Figure 12), each at different points on the journey to becoming more activist. This is reflective of Bailey's (2019) argument that many museums in the United States are in transition away from the concept of neutrality towards becoming more involved with activism. Based on the data that emerged, the most activist museum was the Museum of Us, while the least activist was the Peabody Museum, with the Penn Museum and Hearst Museum falling in between the two. According to Bailey (2019), museums are generally moving towards engaging with activism more fully. This results of this study, which will be outlined in the following chapter, support this as well.

Figure 12

The Spectrum of Activism (Bailey, 2019)



Note. This figure shows the spectrum of activism of the museums involved in this study, with the left being the least activist and the right being the most.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the four case studies chosen, and textual and content analyses conducted for this study. Upon comparative analysis across the four anthropology museums, five themes emerged from the data as relevant to becoming more socially responsible: (1) *Activism*, (2) *Decolonization Efforts*, (3) *Community Engagement*, (4) *Public Accountability*, and (5) *Transformational Leadership*. Each of these themes was then divided into two subthemes that helped to further explain and organize the data, followed by a brief analysis of the findings. In this project, each of the five themes related back to the following guiding research question:

> RQ: How can anthropology museums evolve to become more socially responsible and realize their activist potential in the face of systemic racism and decolonization?

The themes discussed in this chapter are elements that an anthropology museum needs to fulfill in order to become truly activist. Chapter 5 begins with a discussion of the research project's findings and how they relate to the literature review of Chapter 2. Then, a series of

recommendations will be presented based on the findings and scholarly literature. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the strength and limitations of the project, as well as potential directions for future research.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

Introduction

This project endeavored to understand how anthropology museums can engage more effectively with the growing movement towards activism within the museum field. Activism is omnipresent in today's society, and museums are under increasing pressure to engage with activism for the benefit of society. This is especially relevant to anthropology museums, which were once linked to now-abandoned anthropological theories that denigrated Black and Indigenous people. A review of the scholarly and professional literature centered on the role of activism in museums, shifting paradigms in the museum field, the emergence of anthropology museums, and the relationship between museums, race, and Indigenous cultures. A qualitative, multi-site case study of four anthropology museums in the United States was then conducted and included: the Museum of Us, the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography (Peabody Museum), the Penn Museum, and the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology (Hearst Museum). The cases studies further utilized content and textual analyses in an examination of each museum's website, media stories, and Twitter account in order to answer the following research question:

> RQ: How can anthropology museums evolve to become more socially responsible and realize their activist potential in the face of systemic racism and decolonization?

After the data was collected and analyzed using comparative analysis, five major themes emerged across the cases: (1) *Activism*, (2) *Decolonization Efforts*, (3) *Community Engagement*, (4) *Public Accountability*, and (5) *Transformative Leadership*. Within each of these themes, two additional subthemes were identified to better organize and explain the findings. The theme of

Activism was divided into *Actual Activism* and *Performative Activism.* This was followed by *Decolonization Efforts*, which were explained in *Acknowledgement* and *New Narratives and Contemporary Voices.* Next, *Community Engagement* involved both the *Local Community* and *Descendent Communities. Public Accountability* was then elaborated on with the subthemes of *Ethical Controversies* and *Radical Transparency*. Finally, *Transformational Leadership* was detailed under the subthemes *Leading the Way* and *Transformative Potential*. Based on the findings and the literature review, a series of recommendations were crafted to guide anthropology museums towards becoming more activist.

The following chapter discusses the relationship between the findings outlined in Chapter 4 and the literature review presented in Chapter 2. Next, the following recommendations are explained in no particular order: (1) *Strengthen and Expand Policies*, (2) *Install Transformational Leadership*, (3) *Adopt Radical Transparency*, (4) *Increase Community Engagement*, and (5) *Enhance Communication through Online Resources*. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the project, as well as possible areas of future research.

Discussion

Theme #1: Activism

The first theme that emerged during the data analysis process of this research project was *activism*. After the police killing of George Floyd in May 2020, all of the museums in this study released statements of solidarity with the Black community and the Black Lives Matter movement. By doing so, the museums recognized that silence would in fact be a statement of its own, which some might view as complicity (Bailey, 2019). Each museum determined it was a moral imperative to speak up, which is a component of activism (Janes & Sandell, 2019;

Marstine, 2011). Additionally, by issuing statements, none of the museums remained neutral. This aligns with Janes & Sandell's (2019) argument that neutrality is a myth museums should abandon for the sake of activism.

Actual Activism. The subtheme of *actual activism* was then used to describe the actions of the Museum of Us and the Hearst Museum, both of which published solidarity statements and undertook public action. For instance, the Museum of Us increased their activism noticeably after Floyd's death by demanding changes in its community and embracing a more inclusive and responsive approach to its work. Meanwhile, the Hearst Museum joined the OF/BY/FOR ALL Change Network, which is dedicated to helping cultural institutions connect with their communities to become more inclusive, responsive and equitable. As a result of these actions, both museums became "active agents of cultural change" (Janes & Sandell, 2019, p. 15).

Performative Activism. In contrast, the Penn Museum and Peabody Museum, which also issued statements, may have instead expressed *performative activism*. Performative activism occurs when acts of activism are done simply for show, or to give the appearance of action (Lynch, 2019). In these cases, the data did not reveal that either museum took any steps towards changing their institutions or policies. While it is possible that the museums could have made internal changes not discernible to this research project and its limitations, the Penn Museum and the Peabody Museum did not appear to advocate more for the Black community or embrace activism beyond issuing a statement after Floyd's death, based on the data analyzed.

Theme #2: Decolonization Efforts

Under the theme of *decolonization efforts*, the data clearly showed that all four of the anthropology museums in this study were taking steps towards decolonizing, though their implementation of such efforts varied. This reflected Ashcroft et al.'s (2002) definition of

decolonization, which described it as an on-going process of revealing and dismantling colonial structures. Kreps (2020) further elaborated that the decolonization process is specific to time, place and institution, making it difficult to compare across museums. While the Museum of Us fully embraced decolonization, as evidenced through the specific policies in place to guide it, the remaining museums were similarly progressing, albeit at a slower pace. Decolonization and its various stages are an important process involved with creating anthropology museums that can begin to be more reactive to the key issues of the day.

Acknowledgement. The subtheme *acknowledgement* is especially significant in anthropology museums. According to both Lonetree (2012) and Kreps (2020), acknowledging the colonial legacy of anthropology museums and the effects of colonialism on Indigenous people is the first step towards decolonization. All of the museums in this study acknowledged that they benefitted from colonialism and in some cases were actively involved in the harms that it caused. Several of the museums additionally have land acknowledgements, which is another part of the process of decolonization. *Land acknowledgments* are statements that attribute the land upon which an institution is located to the historic Indigenous tribe that previously lived there; they are also a sign of recognition of and respect for the tribes (Museum of Us, n.d.-d). The Museum of Us, the Peabody Museum, and the Penn Museum all had land acknowledgements on their websites. Only the Hearst Museum failed to acknowledge that the museum's location once belonged to Native Americans.

New Narratives and Contemporary Voices. Another critical component of the decolonization process can be found in the *new narratives and contemporary voices* subtheme. The adoption of new museum narratives that break away from old stereotypes concerning Native Americans was one of the original demands of the Indigenous rights movement of the 1960s

(Kreps, 2011, 2020; Lonetree, 2012). All of the museums in this study have updated their exhibitions to include contemporary Native American voices, who especially stressed the idea of the *survivance* of Indigenous people, that is, their survival through hardship and enduring presence and lifeways. Though survivance is a key component of exhibitions, some caution that its emphasis obscures the difficult truth of the treatment of Indigenous people, which should also be confronted in museums (Lonetree, 2012; Onciul, 2015). In this study, only the Hearst Museum and the Museum of Us addressed the past treatment of Native Americans explicitly by using the word *genocide*. Additionally, all of the museums examined in this project developed their exhibitions through a process of collaboration with Native American stakeholders, another key component of decolonization (Kreps, 2020; Onciul, 2015).

Theme #3: Community Engagement

Community engagement is an additional theme that emerged during this study. There was a clear correlation between involvement with communities, both a museum's local community and the ones descended from its collections and being more engaged with activism. The Museum of Us most clearly displayed this connection between community engagement and activism. According to Little and Shackel (2014, as cited in Kreps, 2020) civic engagement in museums is related to promoting social justice and possessing a sense of social responsibility. Kreps (2020) connected this idea of civic engagement to the role anthropology museums should play in their communities, which all of the museums in this study exhibited.

Local Community. This study found that on the subtheme of *local community*, the most activist museum was also the most engaged with its local community. For instance, while the museum was closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Museum of Us engaged with the local community on Twitter instead and provided information on resources for the community. Weil

(1999/2002) and Silverman (2010) both recognized that museums have the potential to affect the well-being of their communities. This is also reflective of Crooke (2006), who stated that museums can produce positive outcomes for their community. Meanwhile, the Penn Museum created a program that employs local immigrants and refugees to lead tours of their homelands' galleries and relate ancient objects to their own modern stories. While this program aids the museum, it also helps visitors see immigrants and refugees in a more accepting light. This relates to McFadzean et al. (2019), who advocated for highlighting disparate voices and hidden stories, such as those of immigrants and refugees, to better inform communities.

Descendant Communities. All of the museums in this study were involved with the *descendant communities* of their collections, which now appears to be common practice (Kreps, 2020). The Museum of Us was most engaged with their descendant communities, even requiring their written consent to maintain custody of artifacts. The Peabody Museum, Hearst Museum, and Penn Museum also collaborated with their collections' descendant communities, especially when crafting new exhibitions or programming. This type of collaboration is one of the key components of decolonization (Lonetree, 2012; Onciul, 2015). It is also central to building relationships with descendant communities, as it permits them to have a voice in their portrayal and the care of their artifacts (Kreps, 2020; Lonetree, 2012; Onciul, 2015). In the literature, Clifford (1997) and Onciul (2015) both promoted the idea of museums acting as areas of shared authority and negotiation, while Boast (2011) and Lynch (2011) cautioned about potential exploitation and power imbalances. This power imbalance can perhaps be seen in the case of the Hearst Museum, which has historically struggled with establishing relationships with Indigenous descendant communities based on its problematic NAGPRA implementation practices.

Theme #4: Public Accountability

Another theme that emerged from this study was that of *public accountability*. According to the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), because museums hold collections in trust for the public, they must in turn maintain high standards of transparency and accountability (American Alliance of Museums, n.d.-b). This theme presented itself in this research project's findings in the form of controversies that several of the museums faced, as well as their collective embrace of transparency. Sandell (2011) argued that activism and ethics work together and are both imperative for museums. This means that being an accountable museum that can withstand public scrutiny is necessary for activism.

Ethical Controversies. With the notable exception of the Museum of Us, the remaining museums in this study all grappled with the subtheme of *ethical controversies.* The Peabody Museum dealt with issues stemming from possible remains of enslaved individuals in its collections, as well its possession of slave daguerreotypes. At the same time, the Hearst Museum was exposed for not complying with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). Meanwhile, the Penn Museum has a collection of skulls that was not only formerly used to justify racist theories, but also contain the remains of slaves. Each of these occurrences violates AAM's *Core Standards of Public Trust and Accountability*, as well as the AAM's *Code of Ethics* (American Alliance of Museums, n.d.-b, 2000). With the media attention all of these stories garnered, trust in the institutions eroded, though each began taking steps to try to remedy the situations.

Radical Transparency. The subtheme of *radical transparency* appeared across the museums in this study. According to Marstine (2011), radical transparency is an admission of accountability that acknowledges mistakes and assumes responsibility. Each of the four

anthropology museums explicitly admitted their responsibility for how their collections had been gathered, in addition to their role in the harm colonialism caused. Such transparency aligns with AAM's *Core Standards of Public Trust and Accountability*, wherein museums are required to be committed to accountability and transparency in their operations (American Alliance of Museums, n.d.-b). Marstine (2011) further believed such a level of transparency is necessary to maintain public trust.

Theme #5: Transformational Leadership

Additionally, the data in this study showed that *transformational leadership* is a key component of moving towards more activist museum practices. In this study, each museum leader displayed some degree of transformational qualities, which Riggio et al. (2004) described as inspiring commitment to a shared mission and uplifting followers. According to Fleming's (2012) estimation, all of these leaders must therefore be effective in their positions, otherwise they would not have been able to enact such institutional changes.

Leading the Way. The subtheme *leading the way* highlighted the way in which the leaders of the Museum of Us and the Penn Museum transformed their museums. Both Micah Parzen of the Museum of Us and Julian Siggers, formerly of the Penn Museum, inherited stagnant institutions that they morphed into more outwardly focused museums. Genoways et al. (2017) specified that a good museum leader embraces change and takes risks at times, which is exactly what both of these leaders did by adopting new missions and values to guide their institutions. By garnering the support of both the staff and their boards to enact such changes, they each displayed traits of transformational leadership (Riggio et al., 2004). Additionally, Parzen and the Museum of Us have fully embraced activism, which equates with Heal's (2019) assertion that there must be institutional buy-in to create a truly activist museum.

Transformative Potential. At both the Peabody Museum and the Hearst Museum, the relatively new leaders each displayed *transformative potential*. Both Jane Pickering of the Peabody Museum and Lauren Kroiz of the Hearst Museum exhibited several of Genoways et al.'s (2017) five practices of exemplary leaders, such as *Modeling the Way* and *Challenging the Process*. While neither has adopted sweeping changes such as those at the Museum of Us and the Penn Museum, they are taking small steps towards evolving. Each has acknowledged that their institutions benefitted from colonialism and made solidarity statements with Black Lives Matter. The Peabody Museum is moving towards being more proactive with their collections, while the Hearst Museum has joined a group dedicated to increased community involvement and institutional change. Such steps, according to Bailey (2019), are part of the pendulum swing towards activism. Both are committing "to efforts to bringing people closer together, to enhance possibilities for greater respect and empathy" (Bailey, 2019, p. 298).

Recommendations

Upon comparison of the literature and the findings of this research project, a series of recommendations were created. These recommendations are: (1) *Strengthen and Expand Policies*, (2) *Install Transformational Leadership*, (3) *Adopt Radical Transparency*, (4) *Increase Community Engagement*, and (5) *Enhance Communication through Online Resources*. The recommendations are meant to help guide anthropology museums to becoming more socially responsible and engaged with activism. In the following sections, each recommendation is explained, with support from the literature.

Recommendation 1: Strengthen and Expand Policies

Based on the results of this research project, it is clear that anthropology museums need to adopt stronger and more expansive policies in order to become more socially responsible and

activist. According to the AAM, every institution should have its own ethics policy, which needs to be strengthened and enforced in order to avoid the kinds of controversies revealed in this study. As Sandell (2011) contended, an activist museum must also be an ethical museum. Additionally, anthropology museums should craft their own decolonization policy, perhaps similar to the Museum of Us' Colonial Pathways Policy, to guide the process of decolonization that many museums are undertaking. It is advisable to have policies that specifically deal with the treatment of human remains as well. The unique nature of anthropology collections makes it especially necessary for such policies to be enacted to avoid potential problems. Finally, diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEAI) policies should be established to guide museums in becoming more equitable institutions that are able to host diverse audiences. All museums should also make their policies available on their website for the sake of transparency, which signals to the public that accountability is welcome within the museum.

Recommendation 2: Install Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a key element to becoming a more socially responsible museum that engages in activism. Studies conducted by Riggio et al. (2004) have shown that a transformational leader can inspire change within an organization and commitment to a new mission, such as increased activism. Additionally, transformational leaders mentor their staff and allow them to reach their fullest potential. Staff is often where activism starts, and a transformational leader can harness this to propel the museum forward. By installing transformational leaders, museums can more effectively adopt an activist stance, as this project showed.

Recommendation 3: Adopt Radical Transparency

As Marstine (2011) states, "Radical transparency is necessary because museums continue to be perceived as a trusted source of knowledge" (p. 14). Because of this trust that the public places in museums, they should become institutions that are radically transparent about their operations, practices and policies. It is also necessary for museums to be proactive when they find issues in their collections by revealing those issues to the public. By adopting radical transparency, museums would signal that they are accountable institutions in which the public can have confidence.

Additionally, anthropology museums must have acknowledgement pages on their websites. On these pages, the museums should acknowledge the role that anthropology played in the history of colonialism and explain how that pertains to their collections. Land acknowledgements can also be included on websites and at the museum itself, which would show that the institution understands the impact of colonialism on Indigenous people and the importance of decolonization. Such steps would signal to communities, especially descendant ones, that the museum understands its role in past harms and is serious about changing. Radical transparency is necessary for museums to be able to move forward and begin to adopt an activist stance.

Recommendation 4: Increase Community Engagement

Museums have long been seen as institutions that can positively affect the communities that they serve (Silverman, 2010; Weil, 1999/2002). This study showed that the more involved a museum was with its communities, the more likely it was to engage with activism. Therefore, anthropology museums, which can often be seen as distant research institutions, should engage more with their communities, especially their local communities. Not only will that help a

museum reach its full potential and maintain relevance, but it will also inform the museum about its community (Bergeron & Tuttle, 2013). Growing awareness of their communities and their needs can inspire increased activism, and ultimately benefit not only the museum, but also the public.

Recommendation 5: Enhance Communication through Online Resources

Within the data gathered for this study, it became apparent that online resources are being under-utilized as a means of outreach and activism. According to Wong (2012), online platforms can effectively expand the exhibition space of a museum and allow them to promote social justice. While it is often difficult to change exhibitions in the physical space of a museum to deal with current topics that are facing society, it is possible for museums to create either online exhibitions, programs or videos on activist topics that relate to their collections.

This study also showed that Twitter was an effective platform with which to promote the activism of the museum and inform the public about the museum's stance on issues. While most anthropology museums have social media accounts, they are most often used simply to promote the museum and programming. Museums should additionally incorporate activism into their social media posts, which can lead to increased awareness on important issues among the general public and even provide needed resources.

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

One of the strengths of this research project was that it filled a gap in the scholarly literature pertaining to anthropology museums and museum activism. Museum activism is a relatively new area of study within the field of museum studies, and much of the scholarly literature pertaining to it is from art and history institutions rather than anthropology museums.

Additionally, most of the scholarly literature did not provide recommendations for how institutions could become more activist, but instead either addressed the benefits of increasing activism or reviewed how an exhibition that was activist was assembled.

Another strength of the study was in its rigorous data collection and analysis processes. A variety of sources were collected as data to inform the findings of this project and enhance the validity of the findings. Twitter posts, news stories, and each museum's own website were used to triangulate the data, which increases the accuracy of the findings by using multiple sources (Moore et al., 2011). Additionally, four anthropology museums were chosen as part of the collective case study to compare the phenomenon of activism across the museums. By utilizing multiple sites and comparative analysis, a fuller picture of the spectrum of activism in anthropology museums is presented in this study, which is yet another strength. The methodology utilized in this study added to its overall strength.

Limitations

Though this project answered the research question, there were some limitations. Both textual and content analysis are subject to the unique perspective of the investigator analyzing the text (Lockyer, 2008). A different researcher may have arrived at different themes to guide the findings when utilizing comparative analysis. Coding is also a complex and time-consuming process, and it is possible that an error or misinterpretation occurred during the process. Another researcher could possibly code the same section of text differently. Therefore, this project presents one interpretation of the findings. Additionally, only Twitter was examined as a social media outlet within this project and its data collection, and it is possible that certain museums engage more on other social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram.

Another major limitation of the project was the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the time period of this study in a profound way. Except for the Penn Museum, all of the museums were closed to the public during the entirety of the project and were working with reduced staff. This meant that it wasn't feasible to conduct interviews or a more in-depth examination than what was undertaken in this project. Due to this, data collection for this study was limited to the museums' websites, pertinent news stories from January 2020 through March 2021, and Twitter posts from January 2020 through January 2021. A less constrained study may have yielded different findings.

Future Research

While the research conducted for this project was robust, there are several areas which researchers will be able to explore in the future, especially considering the aforementioned limitations. For instance, a greater time frame at each or one of the museums could be examined in the future to better understand how the museums have evolved over an extended period to become more socially responsive. In the future, an investigation into if and how the museums in this study engage in activism through other modes of social media, such as Facebook or Instagram, could be undertaken. Additionally, this study could be further expanded to include in-depth interviews with staff to fully understand what actions towards increased activism could be happening out of the public's view, beyond the means of this project.

The museums in the study were limited to anthropology museums because of their unique histories and the gap in the literature pertaining to their activity with activism. This project could be expanded on in the future to explore best practices for museums of another type, for instance art or history, to increase their activism. A replication of this study could also be conducted to in the future to validate or dispute the findings of this research project. Future research might

explore the application of the recommendations in this study within a museum to determine if it altered the level of activism on the behalf of the institution. Finally, there is little research regarding audience and public response to activism in museums, and this should be investigated more extensively.

Conclusion

In today's society, activism is pervasive. Whether it is athletes taking a knee during the national anthem in support of Black Lives Matter or protests over climate change, activism is increasingly present as people try to affect the world for the better. Museums are not immune to this growing wave of activism either, as they seek to navigate their role in society. Under increased public scrutiny to engage in activism and speak out on important issues, museums are grappling with how to best to manage this situation. Anthropology museums are particularly vulnerable to this scrutiny due to the historic role that they played as repositories for colonial conquests and purveyors of harmful racial stereotypes.

A review of the literature was conducted to understand the relationship between museums and activism. It was determined that museums have the potential to change society for the better, and according to several scholars, this should be done through activism. The literature also revealed the shifting paradigms in the museum field, the relationship between anthropology and museums, and the historical practices of how anthropology museums presented race and Indigenous cultures. Through the literature review, a gap in the literature became apparent when it came to the topic of activism within anthropology museums. With this gap in mind, the following research question was developed:

> RQ: How can anthropology museums evolve to become more socially responsible and realize their activist potential in the face of systemic racism and decolonization?

In order to answer this research question, a qualitative, collective case study of four anthropology museums in the United States was undertaken. The museums determined to fit the criteria of similar collection type and size were the Museum of Us, the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography, the Penn Museum, and the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology. Data was collected using each museum's website, relevant media stories, and Twitter account. With this data, textual and content analyses were then conducted. After these analyses, a comparative analysis across the cases then occurred, which examined the data for similar themes.

The themes that emerged across the cases for the findings were: (1) *Activism*, (2) *Decolonization Efforts*, (3) *Community Engagement*, (4) *Public Accountability*, and (5) *Transformational Leadership*. Each theme was then explained through two subthemes, which was then followed by an analysis of the theme. From these themes, a series of recommendations were made to guide anthropology museums in becoming more engaged with activism. These five recommendations were: (1) *Strengthen and Expand Policies*, (2) *Install Transformational Leadership*, (3) *Adopt Radical Transparency*, (4) *Increase Community Engagement*, and (5) *Enhance Communication through Online Resources*.

In conclusion, this research project sought to fill a gap in the literature that existed regarding activism's potential role in anthropology museums. This project also continued the growing conversation in the museum field on the topic of activism. Additionally, it traced the on-going evolution of anthropology museums into institutions that are more socially responsible. This research project succeeded by creating a series of recommendations that can aid museums in incorporating activism into their operations. Overall, this research project encourages the

museum field to continue on its journey to incorporating more activism into its operations and practices in order to help shape a more just and equitable society.

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