Remembering Idora Park: Landscape, Memory, and Discourse in an Urban Amusement Park

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Master of Arts

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This thesis titled

Remembering Idora Park: Landscape, Memory, and Discourse in an Urban Amusement Park

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ABSTRACT

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Remembering Idora Park: Landscape, Memory, and Discourse in an Urban Amusement Park

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Currently, memorialization and commemoration studies have been largely conducted within the geographical discipline. Drawing on elements of past memorialization studies, this research focuses its attention on the connection between the discourses/narratives created by memorial landscapes and individual memories in relation to Idora Park, a former trolley park in Youngstown, Ohio. Semi-structured interviews and fieldwork at five memorial sites were conducted in order to reveal the discourses associated with each medium. The study utilizes Richard Schein’s framework concerning materialized discourses within a landscape. The thematic data revealed common trends between each site and the individual memories paid tribute to more than simply Idora Park. In addition to remembering this space, these materialized discourses revealed more general ideals that continue to influence society today, on both a local and national level.
To my grandparents, Kenneth and Patricia Kubina, who began their life together at Idora Park, thank you for this work’s inspiration.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Growing up in the Mahoning Valley, I often heard stories of an old amusement park once located within the city of Youngstown: Idora Park. Members of my family or close family friends normally related these personal memories and testimonies. Their stories were filled with joy and excitement about the good times had within the park, which was only a short walk or bus ride from their home. The park provided what seems like endless entertainment for my family members. My grandparents and great-aunts used to tell me about dances that occurred in the Idora Park ballroom. Young men and women dressed in their best suits and gowns would dance before heading to Idora’s midway to play carnival games and ride on the rollercoasters. Later on, in Idora’s final operational decades, my parents, aunts, and uncles told stories of visiting the very same ballroom to attend rock concerts. The park and, especially, the ballroom provided my family with entertainment for decades.

The story that stands out most in my mind is the one my maternal grandparents have told me time and time again. The two had met at the Idora Park ballroom during an over-18 dance. My grandmother almost did not attend this particular dance due to her work schedule, but decided to go at the last minute. However, she was not accompanied by my grandfather, but rather arrived at the dance with another man. My grandmother tells me she danced with her date, but, during the dance’s intermission, my grandfather asked her to ride the Wildcat. Even though my grandmother hates rollercoasters, how could she refuse such an offer from such a handsome young man?! She tells me she hated every minute of the ride, but, in the end, got the man out of the deal. Without Idora Park
my grandparents may have never met and fell in love. As Idora Park was where my grandparents met, the space holds a special place in their hearts and mine. My grandfather even described Idora Park as “home” during a preliminary interview for this study.

Without the stories of my family members, I would have never realized amusement parks were easily accessible in the not so distant past. When Americans visit an amusement park today, myself included, they normally visit places such as Cedar Point, Busch Gardens, and Universal Studios. Many of these amusement parks are located in remote, suburban areas and may require lengthy journeys for potential visitors. Thus, a vacation or weekend getaway is often required to experience the entertainment activities that amusement parks have to offer. However, amusement parks were not always located in far away, often distant locations of the country; historically, many were built on the outskirts of both major and minor cities, requiring only a rather short trolley or inter-urban journey to urban peripheries in order to enjoy a day of fun and excitement.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the American city was the setting for rapid manufacturing growth. This, in turn, attracted large numbers of individuals into urban areas. Consequently, cities began to rapidly grow with the new influx of laborers. During this same era, many industrial workers’ wages increased, while their work hours decreased (Nasaw, 1993; DeBlasio, 2010). The rise in expendable income drove the demand for public amusements, leading to the creation of the urban amusement park, also known as a trolley park (Cross, 2006). Due to the park’s location at the end of trolley lines, the new form of entertainment was easily accessible. Trolley
parks provided inexpensive and accessible fun for urbanites during the first half of the twentieth century, but most of these urban amusement parks no longer exist, as they have been abandoned or torn down (Nasaw, 1993). However, for a brief time this form of entertainment served millions of visitors and impacted people’s day-to-day lives.

While most of these urban amusement parks no longer are in operation, they have left behind a legacy in the American landscape in the form of paintings, murals, photos, relics, artifacts, museum exhibits, and even restored trolley park attractions. Not only have these parks left behind physical mementos of the past, but former employees and visitors of such places continue to remember the traditional American trolley park. This is especially true for the community members of the Youngstown area. To understand the existing impact Idora Park has had on the Youngstown community, I decided to explore both the memorialization of the space and individual memories concerning the former amusement park. As stated earlier, Idora Park left behind physical artifacts and sites of memorialization that remain for the current society to enjoy and remember. These objects, places, and memories help to commemorate and memorialize a public place from our nation’s past. Moreover, the sites containing Idora Park attractions, artifacts, and memorabilia preserve and generate discourses/narratives inspired by the old urban amusement park. Alongside an examination of the memorial sites, the study also explores the discourses the trolley park has instilled in former employees and patrons. These personal narratives continue to influence each individual in their lives today.

In order to understand the influence landscape and personal memory each have on our society and its ideals, a case study of Idora Park was undertaken. This particular
study had several goals. One was to reveal and define the discourses/narratives associated with commemoration sites paying tribute to a physical place that no longer exists. The study also aimed to uncover the personal narratives manifested via individual memory concerning the same lost space along with the impact of such discourses. Once the discourses of both the commemorated landscapes and individual memories were defined, the two could be compared to reveal any significant similarities and/or differences. Overall, the discourses created by both mediums provide insight into what exactly is being commemorated and remembered in relation to Idora Park spaces and memories. This, in turn, illustrated the current impact and influence these discourses have had on our society and culture today.

In order to understand how Idora Park is memorialized in the landscape and remembered by former visitors together with the discourses/narratives created by each, the study focused on the following research questions:

1. What social discourses/narratives are materialized in the landscape?
2. What social discourses/narratives have been “implanted” in former Idora patrons with regard to their memories of the space?
3. How do the discourses within the landscape of memorialization compare to those narratives of individuals’ memories?
4. What exactly are these discourses, sites, and memories commemorating?

Rationale

This study of Idora Park is important for three main reasons. First, it contributes to and expands on the current memorialization literature written by geographers. Second, even though Idora Park has been closed for approximately thirty years, the study reveals
the modern impact the park’s legacy and memory has on the Youngstown area. Finally, the results of this study provide insight into understanding perceptions of and discourses surrounding deindustrialization in the United States.

A case study of Idora Park’s commemoration sites has expanded on the current literature concerning memorialized landscapes. Large portions of memorial space studies have focused their attention on monuments, museums, and even performance based memorials (Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004). While this study does explore the materialized discourses found within two museums that contain Idora Park artifacts, two other sites do not follow this rather “traditional” trend. Instead, they are attraction and entertainment spaces that contain operational rides that were originally within Idora Park. These sites’ primary purpose is not to preserve the memory of the park or the past, but rather to provide an entertainment service to patrons. The entertainment spaces that pay homage to the former trolley park help to expand the definition and idea of a memorial site. Moreover, this particular research study not only explores memorialized landscapes, but also compares the narratives within these spaces to those found within individuals’ memories. The comparison adds to scholars’ fundamental and essential knowledge of the similarities and differences between the discourses represented within a landscape and those considered important by community members.

Further, this case study demonstrates the overall impact Idora Park has on the city of Youngstown and its surrounding areas. Idora Park was an attraction that many community members continue to reminisce about today. The park is engrained in the city’s culture and history via discourses and memorials. It has clearly had a lasting impact
on the city and its citizens. Thus, this study reveals how today’s Youngstown is still influenced by the urban amusement park given that the impact of the park is still relevant and important to this particular population.

Finally, this study can add to our understanding of national-scale discourses regarding deindustrialization in America’s northern manufacturing belt. As many cities across the United States had their own trolley parks in the pre-WWII era, some of the findings are applicable to other former “trolley park” cities. A large number of trolley parks closed in the 1950s and 1960s; the parks thrived during America’s manufacturing boom during the first half of the twentieth century (Nasaw, 1993). As will be discussed later, there is a clear connection between the urban amusement park phenomenon and industrialization; the two are intertwined in the minds and memories of former trolley park employees and visitors. Therefore, many of the discourses that are materialized in the landscape and in the minds of individuals reflect not only the idea(1)s of Idora Park and trolley parks, but also the past ideals concerning an industrial America. The study adds a layer of understanding with regard to the perceptions of deindustrialization in the United States.

Study Area

Youngstown, Ohio

As Idora Park was situated on the urban fringe of Youngstown, it is important to understand something of the city as a whole before discussing the site of the former trolley park. Youngstown was incorporated in 1867 and named for John Young. Young had previously purchased the land Youngstown sits on and surrounding areas in 1867.
The city is located in Mahoning County in the northeast section of the state. Before the turn of the twentieth century, the area’s economy was primarily driven by the iron industry. However, at the time Idora Park was built, Youngstown’s economy was dominated by the steel industry (City of Youngstown, 2016).

In 1895, the first steel producer in Youngstown, The Ohio Steel Company, opened its doors. Many other companies flocked to the area. By 1920 seven major steel corporations had built facilities within and around the city of Youngstown (Allgren, 2009; DeBlasio, 2013). The three companies that dominated the Youngstown steel industry included Carnegie Steel, Republic Iron & Steel, and Youngstown Sheet & Tube. As these companies began to boost Youngstown’s economy, many individuals, especially immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, began to flock to the area to secure employment in the steel factories (DeBlasio, 2013). The population of Youngstown rose rapidly in just one decade, from 44,885 in 1900 to 79,086 in 1910, a 43% increase (U.S. Census Bureau, 1901; U.S. Census Bureau, 1913). At Youngstown’s peak population, 170,002 individuals called the city their home (U.S. Census Bureau, 1931).

With this rapid rise in population, a rather diverse culture emerged. Southern and eastern Europeans of Italian, Hungarian, Slovak, and Polish decent began to arrive at the turn of the twentieth century. These individuals settled primarily in ethnic enclaves around the Irish and Germans already present in the area (Rogers, 2009). African Americans from the South were also drawn to the newly industrialized city to find low-skill, high paying jobs (DeBlasio, 2013). While many tended to settle in ethnic enclaves, the diverse ethnicity drawn to the Youngstown area created many traditions. Some of
these include the presence of cookie tables at weddings, the birthplace of Brier Hill Pizza, and the site of numerous summer festivals, such as Italian Fest, which celebrates the rich history and ethnic clans of Youngstown. Along with these cultural traditions, the wealth created by the presence of the steel mills brought Youngstown many establishments that locals are still proud of today (DeBlasio, 2013). Youngstown is home to the Butler Institute of American Art, the Edward W. Powers Auditorium, Stambough Auditorium, and Youngstown State University (DeBlasio, 2013; City of Youngstown, 2016). Idora Park was established to meet demand for Youngstown’s entertainment base (DeBlasio, 2013).

While Youngstown was a thriving, growing city during much of the first half of the twentieth century, a decline in its population and economy soon occurred. After 1930, Youngstown’s population began to slowly decrease each decade, as locals flocked from the inner city to the suburb. By 1970, Youngstown’s population had decreased to 139,788, a 17% decrease since 1930 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1973). Along with the decrease in population, a slow demise of the once prosperous steel industry began after World War II, as companies and corporate head offices began to relocate outside of the Youngstown area (High, 2002). By 1969, the last “locally-controlled firm,” Youngstown Sheet and Tube, was obtained by an outside corporation, marking a significant change in Youngstown’s steel industry (High, 2002, p. 101). On September 9, 1977, known to Youngstown locals as “Black Monday,” the new owners of Youngstown Sheet and Tube announced the closure of the facility. Over 5,000 jobs were lost, leaving many community members unemployed (High, 2002; Allgren, 2009). The closure of this large
plant correlates to a rapid drop in the city’s population in 1980. The city suffered a 17% decrease in its population in just a ten-year time span (U.S. Census Bureau, 1983). Moreover, after the closure of Youngstown Sheet and Tube, four more steel mills closed in less than a decade’s time (High, 2002). The city and its inhabitants were forced to live in a deindustrialized city, one continually seeking new and creative solutions to boost its economy in a service economy-dominated society.

_Idora Park_

Idora Park was situated on the South Side of Youngstown. The park was built to entertain the growing working class of the surrounding area. The highly paid, unskilled workforce now had more time to spend outside of the home and work, creating a demand for public entertainment outside the central city. In response, and realizing the potential profit to be made, Idora Park, originally named Terminal Park, opened in 1899. Like most traditional trolley parks, the space was located on the outskirts of the city at the end of a trolley line. Idora Park originally sat on a modest seven-acre lot, parallel to Mill Creek Park, Youngstown’s largest natural urban park. The public space initially contained only a few key attractions, including a bandstand, a casino, picnic tables, swings, and a theater (Nasaw, 1993; Shale and Jacques Jr., 2000; DeBlasio 2001).

Eventually, due to its popularity, the space expanded to over 25 acres. Parkview Avenue, McFarland Avenue, East Park Drive, and Mill Creek Park formed the borders of the park, making it a landlocked amusement park (see Figure 1.1). “Youngstown’s Million Dollar Playground,” as it was affectionately nicknamed, attracted visitors from not only Youngstown, but also surrounding areas, as far away as western Pennsylvania.
However, Idora catered to its local visitors; the steel mills and other industrial factories often held their annual company picnic at Idora. These picnics helped to boost Idora’s profits each season. Many ethnic groups also held picnics at Idora, honoring their country of origin and heritage. Besides picnicking, park patrons could enjoy many other activities and forms of entertainment, including arcade games, baseball games, carnival-like rides, concerts, dances, and numerous other activities and events. Two of Idora’s star attractions were the Wildcat, a traditional-style, wooden rollercoaster, and the Lost River Ride, a water ride. When the park eventually closed, the space contained over fifteen major rides, a Kiddie Land, ballroom, miniature golf course, baseball field, concession stands, and picnic areas (see Figure 1.2) (Shale and Jacques Jr., 2000; DeBlasio 2001; Allgren, 2009).

Figure 1.1. Location of Idora Park in Youngstown, Ohio. Image retrieved from Google Map, November 3, 2014.
After the 1984 season, Idora Park permanently closed its gates to the public. The closure of the former “Million Dollar Playground” was due to a combination of a declining patron base and a large, damaging fire. At the beginning of the 1984 season, a fire sparked by a repairman’s welding torch caused the Lost River Ride to catch fire. Park employees and firefighters were unable to control the fire, which quickly spread to other areas of the park. Although the fire was successfully extinguished, a significant amount of damage was done. The fire destroyed two of the park’s major attractions, the Wildcat and Lost River Ride, along with the park office and the records contained within (Shale and Jacques Jr., 2000).
Even though the park owners decided to open the park that season, they determined it would be Idora’s last. The final owners of Idora Park were unable to find a buyer for the park in its entirety. Therefore, they decided to hold an auction, where all park equipment and rides were sold. Other park owners came to purchase equipment and rides, while Idora enthusiasts attended in order to acquire a piece of the park to hold onto. The highlight of the auction was when David and Jane Waltenas bid on the Idora Carousel, saving the attraction from being sold piece by piece. According to those at the auction, after the Waltenas placed their bid on the carousel as a whole, the crowd erupted in a loud cheer. Although the park was permanently closed and a majority of the attractions had been sold or removed from the site, the Idora Park ballroom remained open until May of 1986 (Shale and Jacques Jr., 2000).

Today, the park space is owned by Mount Calvary Pentecostal Church. The church originally planned on building a new gathering place on the land, called the “City of God,” but was never able to complete the project (Shale and Jacques Jr., 2000). Currently, the land sits vacant with a metal fence around its borders. During the summer of 2015, I visited the Idora Park site accompanied by the owner of the Idora Park Experience, Jim Amey. The land has now been reclaimed by nature, as grass and weeds have begun to grow in the cracks of the concrete once laid for the park (see Figure 1.3).
Without prior knowledge of the land’s previous use, it would be difficult for an individual to recognize an urban amusement park was once situated here. While most of the remnants of Idora Park have been removed, a few remained on the site during my visit. One of the first large items I saw on the park’s property was the old base of the Turtle Ride, covered in moss and surrounded by trees (see Figure 1.4). Not far away, the remains of miniature golf holes were still in place, allowing me to somewhat visualize the course (see Figure 1.5). The final major relic still on the old Idora ground was a large stone water fountain (see Figure 1.6). While the water fountain was missing pieces of stone, the item was in fairly decent condition. Much like the other items, the water fountain was surrounded by grass and weeds were even growing inside of the relic. While the remnant of the water fountain stood during my visit to the Idora Park grounds, by the
end of the summer it was removed from the site. Jim Amey, owner of the Idora Park Experience, received permission from the Mount Calvary Pentecostal Church to remove the water fountain in order to display the relic in his museum. The park is being reclaimed by nature and deteriorates each day; the site’s future is currently unknown and unclear, standing as a reminder of what once filled the space.

*Figure 1.4.* The remaining piece of the Turtle Ride: the base that helped to operate the cars. The base is now covered in moss, surrounded by grass, trees, and weeds. Photo by author.
Figure 1.5. The remnants of one of the holes of Idora’s former miniature golf course. The bricks are still shaped, as if they were surrounding a green. The green for golfing has been replaced by new “green,” the weeds sprouting up from the dirt. Photo by author.

Figure 1.6. The stone water fountain found in Idora Park. Photo by author.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Literature Review

Before considering the memorialization and individual memories surrounding Idora Park, it is important to examine previous literature completed by other scholars in similar fields. As Youngstown’s trolley park was not unique, previous research concerning trolley parks should be investigated. Further, as studies concerning natural parks contain similar themes, the two types of parks will be discussed simultaneously. A final research topic, memorialized landscapes, will be explored since this study’s scope focuses on the memorialization of Idora Park.

_Urban Amusement and Natural Parks Literature_

Urban amusement parks were quite common in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. These types of parks were also known as trolley or terminal parks, as trolley companies provided transportation to the amusement parks, which were located on the periphery of the city (Shale and Jacques, Jr., 2000; Mohun, 2001). Even though many of these parks only operated until the post-World War II era, they have nevertheless attracted the attention of many scholars (Nasaw, 1993). The literature on trolley parks discusses the new landscape and society these parks created, the rides and attractions within the parks, and the differing experiences of visitors. It is important to also consider research completed on urban natural parks; many of the same themes are present in this literature, making natural park research applicable and valuable to this particular study. After a close examination of the literature, it is clear that although most of the works are not written by geographers, many of the articles and books employ
similar techniques and ideas utilized by historical geographers. Further, the examination of the literature allows one to notice a clear gap that can be filled when exploring trolley parks via a modern, historical geographical perspective.

Creating a New Landscape and Experience in the City

Urban amusement parks created an entirely new landscape within the American city. Within urban amusement parks, the combined elements of nature and industry produced a fantasyland for visitors (Aalberg 2003; Sally, 2007; DeBlasio 2010). Cross (2006) argues technology allowed this fantasy world to become a reality. Trolley parks relied heavily on electricity not only to transport guests to the park, but also to produce rides and attractions to thrill and fascinate city dwellers (Nasaw, 1993). Rides and buildings, such as carousels and Greek-style ballrooms, reinforced the idea of a mystical landscape (DeBlasio, 2010). In this new landscape, visitors were able to escape the stress of city life in a relaxing, magical environment (Cross 2006; DeBlasio 2010). Not only could visitors relax, but these spaces also allowed adults to act like children for the day (Cross, 2006).

Although many urban amusement parks were designed for visitors to escape the city and enjoy a fantasyland, Whittom’s (2011) case study of Al Fresco Amusement Park in Peoria, Illinois, describes a different type of experience. Al Fresco was a relatively small city with little ethnic and cultural diversity, as most of the city’s residents were white, native-born individuals. Thus, the citizens of Peoria did not experience a busy lifestyle surrounded by people of various ethnic backgrounds, in contrast with the experience of citizens living in larger cities. Similar to other trolley parks, the small city
amusement park created a landscape filled with both natural and industrial elements. However, the park owners focused on providing their visitors with a big city experience, rather than helping visitors to escape city life. Many of the park’s attractions were meant to showcase diversity and other cultures. Although other parks created attractions based on these ideas, it was not to the same extent as those within Al Fresco. These elements within the landscape gave Peoria citizens a chance to experience a large, diverse urban area. This case study illustrates the idea that urban amusement parks did not always create the same landscape and experiences, as these elements varied based on the park’s location and surrounding community (Whittom, 2011).

Other scholars have also explored regional and landscape differences among urban amusement parks. Sally (2007) explains the landscape differences between two of Coney Island’s amusement parks, Luna Park and Dreamland. Luna Park created a fantasy-type landscape focused on space-like rides and attractions. The extraterrestrial landscape invited all types of individuals into the park to enjoy themselves without judgment from other visitors. While Luna Park’s landscape and theme welcomed men and women of all ethnicities and classes, Dreamland’s landscape was not as inviting. Built a year after Luna Park, Dreamland’s environment was “clean, spacious, and devoid of chaos” (Sally, 2007, p. 43-44). The landscape consisted primarily of white buildings to produce a white cityscape, symbolizing the idea of white supremacy. This urban amusement park was meant for white, upper-middle class individuals, as enforced via the white environment. Even though both landscapes created a fantasy world, each contained
certain architectural elements that reflected who exactly “belonged” in each space (Sally, 2007).

Similarly, Cross (2006) explores the regional differences among amusement parks. In his study of New York’s Coney Island and Great Britain’s Blackpool, he found location, climate, and the surrounding communities influence not only a park’s landscape, but also what rides and attractions are found in a park. For example, Coney Island’s heterogeneous community of working-class immigrants and native-born Americans demanded a fantasy landscape with thrilling rides. On the other hand, Blackpool’s surrounding homogenous community of white, Protestant individuals wanted a more stable environment without themed rides and attractions. Therefore, there are regional differences between individual urban amusement parks and their landscapes, which are influenced by numerous factors (Cross, 2006).

Urban natural parks also created a new type of urban landscape. Tuason (1997) explores two types of early urban parks, the large landscape park and the small playground park. Large landscape parks, created from approximately 1840 to 1890, resembled a “rural or country-like setting” on the peripheries of urban areas (Tuason, 1997, p. 125). These parks were accessible to individuals of all backgrounds, allowing them to encounter nature and escape an industrializing city. Beginning in 1890, small playground parks emerged. The small playground park included play equipment for children, while still creating a nature-like landscape within the city (Tuason, 1997). Natural parks focused on creating a relaxing environment for all citizens, similar to many trolley parks, through the replication of a natural landscape/environment.
Connection to historical geography. In this particular literature theme, the authors explored how both trolley and natural parks created a new landscape within the American cityscape. This exploration of a built landscape is clearly geographical in nature, as it is similar to Kniffen’s (1965) study of folk housing. However, these researchers diverged from Kniffen (1965) and Sauer’s (1925) methodology, as they did not study these landscapes by conducting fieldwork. Instead, they utilized historical archival documents to study parks, such as newspapers and park records. This methodology can be related to more current historical geography works, such as Hoelscher’s (2003) exploration of the Jim Crow South and Dwyer’s (2000) study of the Civil Rights Movement. Similarly, the authors discussed above were not able to visit the study site, but, instead, had to rely on historical records of the past in order to explore their topic.

Also within this particular theme, many of the authors explained how each landscape was influenced by the society/culture surrounding the park and vice versa. These arguments are relatable to Schein’s (1997) own work concerning landscapes. Schein (1997) explains that social discourse, whether it is written or spoken, helps to alter a landscape in significant ways. The above authors have supported Schein’s own claim. For example, Cross’ (2006) study illustrates how various communities and their wants and beliefs influenced the construction of trolley parks and what elements were built inside. This study compared an American community to a British one, in which the author found that these two different types of communities helped to create two distinctive urban amusement parks. Clearly, each community’s ideals were embedded in each park. Further, in Whittom’s (2011) study, the author explains how the town citizens
of Peoria wanted to experience a large city environment. Therefore, in order to please the local community, a trolley park was built around this particular discourse, creating a city-like landscape within the park. Clearly, these studies on urban amusement parks support Schein’s (1997) ideas that discourses become materialized within a physical landscape.

Creating a Better Society

Along with creating a new type of landscape in an urban setting, urban amusement and natural parks were built with the intention of improving urban society. Many urban amusement parks, including Idora Park, took numerous measures to promote middle-class family values, while encouraging all city dwellers to become upstanding citizens. In order to encourage these ideals, amusement parks did not sell alcohol, kept out those deemed as “undesirable,” and even hired their own police officers (Nasaw, 1993; DeBlasio, 2010). These parks created a safe haven for city dwellers, while seeking to improve the surrounding urban society.

Similarly, scholars have argued that urban natural parks were created with the primary goal of bettering the city. City officials and urban citizens believed the presence of natural parks would allow city dwellers much needed access to nature (Young, 1995). More importantly, the city’s interaction with nature would solve society’s problems; an urban public park would lead to prosperity, wealth, and health (Young 1995; Tuason, 1997; Platt, 2010). Moreover, reformers, especially socialist reformers, felt the surrounding natural environment would aid in strengthening society’s overall morals and values (Tuason, 1997; Platt, 2010). Young (1995) explicitly discusses the modernization process of urban parks in the twentieth century. New plants and buildings were added to
urban natural parks in order to attract people of various cultural backgrounds. These additions promoted the importance of exercise, as well as interaction with strangers. Natural parks, it was believed, helped to create a healthier, more democratic society. Urban society’s disconnect with nature was thought to be the root many social issues, leading to the creation and update of many urban natural parks during the first half of the twentieth century (Young, 1995).

*Connection to historical geography.* As with the previous theme, all of these authors relied heavily on historical archives to complete their study, a central method of historical geography according to Harris (2001). Further, many of the authors discuss both urban and natural parks were built with particular discourses in mind that would help to create a better society. Schein (1997) would argue the discourses revolving around creating a better society influenced these built landscapes. However, there is a larger process that transformed these spaces as well. Both government officials and businessmen, who were in positions of power, helped build these parks. Harris (1991, p. 678) argues that “power requires space,” both space and power shape one another. Thus, agents of power utilized space to build landscapes that reflected the discourses they wanted the city to adopt; these discourses were enforced via the parks (Harris, 1991; Schein, 1997). Clearly, the idea that individuals in power with particular goals in mind created urban amusement and natural parks illustrates how power can control and is represented in space.
Excitement and Thrills Reflect an Industrialized City

Urban amusement parks relied on thrilling and exciting attractions and rides to draw in large crowds. Many of the most popular and successful attractions resembled and mimicked the real-life dangers experienced in an urban setting. In the trolley park, however, these pseudo-dangers were safe for patrons, allowing them to face their fears in a controlled environment (Mohun, 2001).

Roller coasters proved to be the most popular attraction at most urban amusement parks. These thrilling, yet safe rides resembled railroad trains and industrial work (Mohun, 2001; DeBlasio, 2010). Throughout the existence of urban amusement parks, roller coasters were constantly updated to ensure a patron’s safety. Juxtaposing the importance of safety, guests wanted to experience a sense of danger. Both men and women were thrill seekers, and rides were not altered for either gender. Mohun (2001) argues these types of rides created gender neutrality at trolley parks, as both men and women experienced the same danger. Overall, risk-taking became a form of entertainment in high demand, as it helped visitors relieve stress created by an urban, industrial lifestyle (Mohun, 2001).

Not only did crowds want to experience the dangers of an industrialized society, they were also fascinated by viewing others risk their own lives (Mohun, 2001). Sally (2007) illustrates this demand in her examination of fire spectacles/shows at Coney Island. During these shows, an urban apartment building was set on fire; audiences watched in suspense as firefighters expunged the fire and saved tenants from the burning building. Sally (2007) argues this attraction was extremely popular because patrons were
captivated by the destruction of the “urban order” in which many visitors actually lived (p. 51). The spectacle represented the controllable and uncontrollable elements of modernity and industrialization (Sally, 2007). Rides and attractions that resembled everyday city life allowed visitors to both avoid and experience the dangers of urban life as a form of enjoyable entertainment (Mohun, 2001).

*Connection to historical geography.* The three authors discussed above focus on studying the attractions built within urban amusement parks, which are elements of a society’s material culture (Sauer 1925; Kniffen, 1965). These attractions resembled elements of an industrializing city, which frightened many local citizens. Thus, the parks utilized this particular social discourse and built this fear into their attractions (Schein, 1997). However, these parks did not simply materialize this discourse, but rather altered it. Rather than making these attractions solely reflect the alarming elements of the surrounding city, park builders slightly altered the discourse. While the attractions were still frightening, they were also safe and controllable, which allowed citizens to face their fears of an industrializing nation. Thus, rather than reflecting the idea that the city was dangerous, these attractions created an entirely new discourse via these built attractions. These attractions implied the industrializing city was a thrilling, rather than dangerous, place. This incorporation of an altered discourse into a materialized element illustrates how space and discourses help to shape one another (Harris 1991; Schein, 1997).

*A Place for Everyone?*

Urban amusement parks provided an opportunity for city dwellers to escape reality for a day while enjoying the various amusements these venues had to offer.
However, the experiences within the park for various types of individuals were not always the same. This is especially true for those excluded and segregated from urban amusement parks in the first half of the twentieth century.

Although many urban amusement parks allowed people of different genders, classes, and ethnicities to gather, there was one major group of society excluded from this form of entertainment. Black individuals were either banned from or had limited access to many early trolley parks in order to “protect” white visitors (DeBlasio, 2001; Wolcott, 2006). Not only were black individuals segregated from these public spaces, but many trolley parks also featured racist games and attractions, further alienating black visitors (Nasaw, 1993). Segregation practices persisted until the early days of the Civil Rights Movement. Wolcott (2006) explains that once these amusement spaces were integrated, trolley parks became focal points for racial violence and riots, as white visitors felt threatened by black visitors in this once predominately “white space.” Moreover, Wolcott (2006) argues urban neighborhoods were also destabilized during this era as a result of “ethnic and racial succession” (p. 88). This destabilization was mirrored in the city’s amusement parks, leading to their decline and closure (Wolcott, 2006).

While many urban amusement parks excluded the black community during much of the parks’ existence, these public spaces helped to assimilate other groups of individuals into American culture. By excluding African Americans from the urban amusement park experience, native-born, white Americans and European immigrants gathered in one place to celebrate their common “whiteness.” Working class immigrants
were welcomed into these parks alongside upper and middle class, native-born, white individuals with little to no resistance (Nasaw, 1993; DeBlasio, 2001).

In a case study of Idora Park, DeBlasio (2001) argues the urban amusement park allowed European immigrants to assimilate themselves into American culture, while still holding onto their ethnic roots. The park allowed these individuals to leave their ethnic clusters for the day and interact with strangers. This new interaction led to revised “American manners and morals” since people of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds gathered together, consequently altering societal norms (DeBlasio, 2001, p. 80). Even though immigrants now had an opportunity to become American, the park also helped ethnic groups hold onto their cultural roots. Various ethnic groups began to hold picnics at parks to honor their heritage and nationality. During these ethnic picnics, immigrants celebrated their culture, while simultaneously celebrating their new American identity. The urban amusement park provided a place for this co-habitation and assimilation to occur (DeBlasio, 2001). Cross and Walton (2005) suggest upper-middle class Americans accepted this social mixing because immigrants were expected to, and did, dress and act as if they were a part of the “respectable” middle and upper classes.

Urban amusement park scholars also believe these parks allowed intermingling between the sexes. Amusement parks gave men and women, particularly young adults, the chance to meet and interact with one another. The rides and ballrooms even provided couples with the opportunity to share in private, intimate moments (Nasaw, 1993). Trolley parks were not gender-specific, but rather were “heterosocial spaces,” where both
men and women were able to participate in the same social activities (Mohun, 2001, p. 292). The trolley park created a space for both genders to enjoy equally.

Contrasting amusement parks, equal gender mixing was not always present in urban natural parks. Cranz (1980) explored women’s role in urban parks overtime, dividing park history into five distinct eras; for the purpose of this study, it is important to understand her analysis of the reform park and the recreation facility. These two types of parks existed at the same time as urban amusement parks, allowing for comparison. Throughout all urban natural park eras, a woman’s purpose within the public space correlated to the problems of the urban society. The reform park, which existed from 1900 to 1930, was built within city limits for the working class to easily access. While this space engaged women in park activities and recreation, women’s activities were separate from men’s. This separation enforced gender stereotypes and created a gender-segregated park. However, the recreation facility park, which was popular from 1930 to 1965, focused on bringing both men and women together in the same areas for leisure activities. Park reformers wanted family units to stay together, promoting the importance of family values. Despite the integration of the sexes, gender stereotyping still occurred. Clearly, research has shown urban natural parks provided women with a much different experience than men, differing from the experiences of women in urban amusement parks (Cranz, 1980).

*Connection to historical geography.* Within this particular theme, there are numerous connections that can be made to historical geography scholarship. First, as the trolley park scholarship illustrates, urban amusement parks tended to segregate African
Americans from this pseudo-public area. These parks were viewed as a “white space,”
reflecting the segregated culture of the mid-1900s. Mitchell (1995) argues that the idea of
culture aids in “othering” those individuals not a part of the dominant, in-power group.
Due to this “otherness” created within the parks, black individuals were excluded from
this form of entertainment or welcomed inside reluctantly. Wolcott’s (2006) study
illustrates that dominant cultural ideals are represented within society and carried out via
its physical landscapes, leading to the creation of “otherness” and exclusion (Mitchell,
1995).

Second, the above authors explored the discourses present in these new
landscapes. Similar to the previous themes, the authors demonstrate a park’s ability to
materialize dominant discourses of society (Schein, 1997). For example, Cranz (1980)
explains how a woman’s intended role in natural parks correlated to specific urban issues
in the twentieth century. Originally, women were separated from men in parks. However,
once city officials felt the need to promote the importance of family values, gender
inclusive activities dominated the landscape. A woman’s role was altered based upon the
discourses society felt would help better the city and its families. Many of these
discourses were enforced via buildings and recreation centers built around such needs,
allowing the discourse to become materialized within natural parks (Cranz, 1980; Schein
1997).

Not only were discourses materialized within these landscapes, but urban
amusement parks allowed new cultural ideals and discourses to arise. As DeBlasio (2001)
explained, trolley parks were a place for new immigrants to celebrate their own culture,
while becoming American, which, in turn, created an entirely new “American” identity. This new, “American” identity centered around participating in the host society’s culture, while still holding onto native/ethnic cultural traditions and beliefs. These parks provided a stage for the creation of this new “American” identity, and discourse, to arise, supporting Foucault’s idea that discourses occur in space (Harris, 1991). Further, DeBlasio’s (2001) idea that Idora Park aided in the creation of this new discourse can relate to Habermas’ argument that modernity disrupts traditional ways of thinking and/or acting (Harris, 1991). In this case, the park represents modernity, as it allowed many classes, ethnicities, and genders to gather together; this disrupted the ethnically segregated society outside of park limits. In the park, new ways of becoming American evolved, as immigrants were able to adopt some American cultural traits, while holding onto aspects of their native culture. To be an “American” meant one could now hold onto their own ways of life, while participating in American cultural activities and ideals. Thus, this space aided in the creation of a new discourse that challenged the dominant way of thinking.

A Gap in the Literature

After exploring current literature involving trolley parks and applying a historical geographic lens to the scholarship, many gaps within the literature can be identified. However, there is one in particular that stands out. This trend focuses on the memorialization of past events and places. Memorials and their locations can reveal information concerning how societies remember and construct the past (Hoelscher, 2003; Post, 2009). Dwyer (2000) has illustrated when researchers examine memorial sites with
a critical lens and embrace qualitative analysis, not only can we understand what and who is represented, but also who is left out of the public memory. By examining memorialization landscapes both for what they do and do not represent, researchers will be able to understand what discourses are dominant within society and how it impacts the claiming of space. Due to the fact that trolley parks were influential in American cities until World War II, these parks have been memorialized within the American landscape (Nasaw, 1993). While many of these memorials are not grand statues or monuments, these parks are still remembered via murals, photos, artifacts, museums, and even operational attractions. These trolley parks shaped many American societies and still impact them today via memories. Thus, a memorialization study of trolley parks should be conducted to fully understand how these parks are represented and what discourses surround these sites. This exploration will allow us to understand why trolley parks are influential even today.

_Landscapes and Memorialization_

_What is a Site of Memorialization?_

Before addressing how memorialization impacts our society, the idea of a memorialization site must first be defined. According to Hoelscher and Alderman (2004, p. 350) geographers have focused much energy and attention on “monuments, memorials and museums” in order to study sites of commemoration and memory. While these rather conventional spaces are studied in relation to memory, other geographers have expanded the idea of what it means to be a space of memorialization. Geographers have also studied street naming and renaming as a form of commemoration (see Alderman 2000;
Azaryahu, 2012; Alderman and Inwood, 2013). Besides these physical artifacts that memorialize the past, Hoelscher and Alderman (2004) explain performances can also help to relate memory and place to one another. Hoelscher’s (2003) own study of the “performances of whiteness” in a Mississippi city focuses on a site of commemoration by examining the performance of the Natchez Pilgrimage. A site of memorialization has a broad scope. Furthering this broad scope, Dwyer (2004, p. 431) argues “all places are memorials of a kind—in order to be known, they must be memory laden.” Therefore, according to this logic, any landscape or space can be considered a site of memorialization.

*Approaches to Studying Memorialization*

There are multiple ways in which to study a site of memorialization. When exploring a memorialization site, it is important to remember interpretation and reinterpretation should occur, as various individuals will constantly discover new ideals and findings within the same space (Schein 1997; Dwyer 2004). As with any landscape, Schein (1997, p. 676) believes observation and analysis “should be processual and reflexive.” Further, researchers are encouraged to challenge current interpretations and find alternate ones (Schein, 1997).

Dwyer and Alderman (2008) outline three different approaches to examining and analyzing memorial landscapes. The first and most common method echoes the idea of reinterpretation, which looks at memorials as text. Examining the site as a text recognizes the changing meaning within the landscape along with society’s current ideals. This
approach emphasizes that the site and the surrounding landscape produces multiple discourses and meanings by examining the various elements present within the space.

Second, exploring a memorial site as an arena, examines the “politicized nature of collected memory” (Dwyer and Alderman, 2008, p. 171). As memory is considered to be a “social activity,” a space of memorialization may represent a “group identity” (Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004). However, the presented group identity is not always agreed upon. In this specific approach, geographers and other scholars are encouraged to explore the political conflicts and debates between various individuals and groups surrounding a site of memorialization. With this approach, a scholar asks questions centering on who is included and excluded from the memorial, who was responsible for its creation, etc. Tyner et al.’s (2012) study explores memorialization of former violence in post-genocide Cambodia in this manner. In the study, the authors explore the selective sites of memorialization by the People’s Republic of Kampuchea. The authors argue a visitor to said sites is given no “contextual understanding” of the genocide in order to separate the new government in place from the horrible, violent acts (Tyner et. al., 2012, p. 860). For example, victims are not represented in an old prison, but only the remaining artifacts from the former torture and holding cells, silencing the personal experiences of the victims from the site. Further, there are many other sites local Cambodians feel are more representative of the violent acts of genocide that remain unmarked. There is a clear discrepancy between what the new government has chosen to memorialize versus what local Cambodians feel should be present and marked in order to fully recognize the
terrible violence that occurred. This discrepancy illustrates the politics that surround a collective memory.

The final approach, as outlined by Dwyer and Alderman (2008), examines a memorial landscape as a performance. In this approach, one should not only explore how literal performance acts, such as dances and reenactments, represent the past, but also how employees of the site interact with visitors, visitors interact with the site, and the actual maintenance of the place. The authors argue that the discourses and norms displayed within a memorial site can help to strengthen ideals within society, or instill new ones. Hoelscher and Alderman (2004, p. 348) similarly argue both social memory and space “conjoin to produce much of the context for modern identities,” meaning memory and place combine to influence and reflect society’s overall characteristics and ideals. For example, in Hoelscher’s (2003) study of the Natchez Pilgrimage, a “traditional” performance that focused on portraying a “white,” Old South during the Jim Crow Era, illustrates the impact a site, or, in this case, a performance, of the past can reflect issues within society. The author explains there was a clear racial divide within these performances between black and white performers. Black performers were depicted as inferior to their white counterparts. Not only did this racial divide surface via the performances, but it also carried into Natchez’s society and residential life. Hoelscher (2003) found the same hostilities of whites towards blacks influenced biased political decisions and led to the segregation of races by place and space. Therefore, the performance meant to romanticize the Old South created, instilled, and even strengthened
a specific discourse associated with the citizens of Natchez, Mississippi, especially those who participated in this act of memorialization.

**Memorialization Discourses and Challenging the Present Narratives**

As memorials are set in a larger landscape, it is important to understand how landscapes and memorialization shape and are shaped by society. Schein (1997) reveals that discourses, written and spoken, both enable and limit cultural landscapes. These varying abstract ideals are materialized by society, allowing a researcher to understand a region, its people, its social interactions, and its culture. Furthermore, modern discourses help to significantly alter the landscape (Schein, 1997). Dwyer’s (2000) own memorialization study concerning commemoration sites of the Civil Rights Movement in the Southern United States, illustrates this idea. In his study, Dwyer (2000) focuses on how social factors, such as the tourists of these memorial sites, and political factors and conflicts, such as the 1996 Summer Olympics, impacted how the historical event is represented in the memorialized landscape. The author found that contemporary/modern discourses of society alter and shape interpretations of the past, and, in turn, the landscape that represents and memorializes our past. Landscapes of memorialization are a “production of the past,” rather than just honoring and reflecting the past (Dwyer, 2004, p. 425).

While landscapes of memorialization contain social discourses and narratives present in our society today, these spaces and discourses are sometimes contested. Social and political agendas are often behind memorial landscapes, often controlled by the dominant group in society (Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004). Therefore, not everyone in
society will agree on the representation of a certain event or region, creating tension and challenges to said representation. One way to contest current memorials and the narratives they represent is via the creation of new memorials. Dwyer’s (2000) study of Civil Rights Memorials, as previously discussed, illustrates the creation of new memorials dedicated to honoring this movement in the South. These new memorials were built to contest and challenge Southern memorials that celebrated a white, elitist Southern past, changing the discourse of the memorial landscape in this American region. This is a clear example of how new memorials can challenge the memorial landscape and its discourses.

A second way in which individuals and groups challenge the current memorial landscape is via the addition/modification of current commemoration sites (Post, 2009). This idea was first introduced by Foote (1997) in his work on landscapes of violence and tragedy. In reference to Texas memorials, Foote (1997) explains that commemorative accompaniments can be added to already established memorials, a process called symbolic accretion. The author goes on to explain how the site of the San Jacinto battle is now home to two memorials: the retired USS Texas and the POW-MIA memorial in honor of Vietnam Veterans. The later was added after the former. Foote (1997, p. 232) argues the addition of the POW-MIA memorial reinforces the battlefield’s “status as a meaningful place.”

Dwyer (2004) broadens Foote’s (1997) research on symbolic accretion in his study of memorial sites in Selma, Alabama. He agrees a majority of symbolic accretion aids in enhancing the discourses/narratives associated with the existing memorial
landscape. However, he argues there are some cases in which the act “is used to contradict or otherwise disrupt a memorial via the addition of a counter-narrative” (Dwyer, 2004, p. 421). Therefore, there is a possibility for symbolic accretion and politics of memory to relate to one another. Dwyer (2004) explains there are two extremes of accretion: allied and antithetical. The first helps to emphasize the existing discourses/narratives within the site, while antithetical accretion refers to the contradiction and modification of the memorial’s existing discourse/narrative.

Importance of Memorialization Scholarship

Overall, scholars have found there are many ways to study various sites of commemoration. As these sites are not simply representations of the past, memorial sites tend to reflect ideals of the current society and even impact society today. However, adding a complex element to this area of study, memorial sites are often contested and challenged by individuals who do not agree with the present representation of the past. For this reason, memorialization is a research topic that should continually be studied in order to understand the current representations of the past and how these representations were influenced by and influence our society today.

Methodology

Research Principles

Before explaining the actual process of my methodology, it is important to discuss and outline my own, personal beliefs in regards to this particular study. This research aligns with the idea of relativism as an ontological stance, in which there is no fixed reality; instead, there are multiple and indefinite realities, socially constructed by
individual experiences and interactions (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). The idea of relativism relates to the belief that various scholars will not interpret the same landscape in a consistent manner. Instead, new interpretations, discourses, and narratives will be found for the site, depending on the researcher (Schein, 1997). While my own background and personal beliefs will influence my interpretation of Idora Park memorial sites, the conclusions drawn will still be relevant and valid. All viewpoints and realities are credible and true (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999).

Keeping this mind, I believe it is the job of a researcher to simply understand individuals’ personal experiences and realities, rather than confirm or deny their accuracy and truthfulness (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). During the interview process, visitors and workers of Idora Park shared their own personal experiences and perceptions of the former trolley park, which was impacted by their own background and personal beliefs. No one experience is more or less credible than another, as the individual is the only person who knows exactly what he/she experienced and felt (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999).

Along with obvious direct interaction with interview participants, I also decided to be an active observer during my visits to the Idora Park memorial sites. By being an active observer, I communicated with fellow visitors of the sites. These interactions were crucial to my research, as it allowed me to gain others’ insights and perceptions about the spaces and Idora Park in general (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). Along with these interactions, I immersed myself in the research area and participated in various activities. For example, at Jane’s Carousel, the site of the former Idora Park carousel, I not only
observed the site and its landscape, but I also participated by riding on the carousel myself. This direct interaction with my research area, subjects, and data provided me with personal experiences, allowing me to relate to and build rapport with other community members. The immersion within the study areas helped strengthen the bond between researcher and participant during interviews. For example, during many of my interviews I was able to personally relate to former visitors’ discussions about the carousel. Further, the interaction with other visitors at the Idora Park Experience, a museum dedicated to preserving the memory of Idora Park, provided me the opportunity to conduct and schedule multiple interviews. By following a transactional and subjective epistemology, I was provided the opportunity to meet new individuals and gain their significant insights (Guba and Lincoln, 1998; LeCompte and Schensul, 1999).

Methodology Process

For this particular research, a two-fold methodology was employed to discover the discourses/narratives that are materialized within the memorialized landscapes of Idora and fixed in the memory of former park employees and patrons. First, sites of memorialization were chosen based upon their relevance to Idora Park and its memory. Each site was personally visited in order to conduct in-person observations of the site and the surrounding landscape. Second, semi-structured interviews with former visitors and workers of Idora Park were conducted and analyzed. While these two steps of the methodology will be discussed separately, the two occurred simultaneously throughout the summer of 2015.
Sites of Memorialization Fieldwork

In order to understand the discourses that dominate the landscape of Idora Park memorialization, various sites that commemorate Idora Park’s existence in one way or another were visited. Between May 2016 and September 2016 I visited five total sites. Each can be considered a site of memorialization because they contain an artifact from or tribute to the park, causing former visitors of Idora to remember their past experiences. Interestingly, the site of Idora Park itself was not one of the memorial sites, as there is little remaining on the property, as discussed previously.

Instead, all of the memorial sites are located beyond the site of the park (see Figure 2.1). Three of the five sites are located in Mahoning County, Ohio, the same county where Idora Park was located. The first site is the Idora Park Experience, which is a museum dedicated to preserving artifacts from Idora Park and sharing the memory of Youngstown’s former attraction. The museum is located at the residence of Jim and Toni Amey in Canfield, Ohio. This is the only site I visited twice, as it directly commemorates Idora’s presence in Youngstown and opens multiple times a year. The Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor located on Youngstown State University’s campus was also visited due to its display of the iconic Idora Park sign. Finally, I attended Idora Day at Mill Creek Park, a one-day memorial event dedicated to honoring and educating the public about Idora Park.

Two other sites that are located outside of the Mahoning Valley were also visited and considered to be a site of memorialization. First, Pymatuning Deer Park served as a site of observation because the old Idora Park train is an attraction there. Although there
is no plaque or direct dedication to the train’s original location, the space still recognizes its origin via its commercials and webpage (Pymatuning Deer Park, 2016). Further, former visitors of Idora Park recommended that I visit the park, as the train reminds them of when the attraction operated in Youngtown’s “Million Dollar Playground.” Finally, I visited Jane’s Carousel located at Brooklyn Bridge Park in Brooklyn, New York. The attraction is home to the carousel that once sat on Idora Park’s property, which was one of Idora’s most beloved and popular attractions. A sign acknowledges the carousel’s original location, as do books available for former Idora employees and patrons to sign. The employees of Jane’s Carousel even offer a free ride on the attraction to Idora visitors, all of which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

These memorial sites were personally observed during my visits to each space. Observations lasted anywhere from one to twelve hours for each location. As explained above, I actively participated in each attraction/event rather than simply observing. During my interaction with and observation of the study sites, I jotted down notes about my own experiences, observations, and interactions with fellow visitors. At a later date and time I used my jottings from my fieldwork to write complete, comprehensive field notes full of detail, outlining the observations and experiences at each site.
Figure 2.1. Map of Idora Park Memorial Sites, outlining the location of the five sites studied compared to the actual location of Idora Park. Map created by author.

After visiting the five sites and completing my field notes, I began the analysis process. For each site, I returned to my field notes to determine the most prominent discourses at each landscape. The amount of discourses for the sites ranged from three to five, many of which were present in a majority of the memorialized landscapes despite the diversity in each site’s attraction and location. It is important to note, as I did grow up near Youngstown, Ohio and grew up hearing stories of Idora along with my participation in the sites, my own interpretations were very likely influenced by these factors. The
values I grew up observing in my fellow community members, as well as some of my own, helped to form some of the conclusions drawn in the analysis.

Semi-Structured Interview Process

While visiting the five study sites, I also conducted nineteen interviews with former Idora Park employees and visitors. Before scheduling my interviews, I first decided to perform semi-structured interviews with my participants. This type of interview allowed me to focus on the content, but deviate from the question protocol when necessary (Dunn, 2010) (see Appendix A). The flexibility provided in a semi-structured interview allowed my research participants to have a say in the interview process and discuss their own ideas and issues. Further, the interview’s format allowed for a much more conversational atmosphere between researcher and participant. The semi-structured interview process granted me the flexibility to converse freely with the interviewee, while still acknowledging the main objectives of the study (Dunn, 2010).

As Idora Park has been permanently closed for approximately thirty years, interview participants were not enlisted by visiting the study area. Instead, I utilized snowball sampling to gain interview participants. As I am a native of Youngstown, I have many relatives and friends that used to visit the park. Two of my relatives were interviewed for this particular study. However, more importantly, my friends and family provided me with multiple connections to other potential interviewees. Each connection, along with two participants whose contact information I retrieved online, was contacted either via e-mail or telephone. During each conversation, I initially introduced myself, explained how I obtained his/her contact information, briefly explained my research, and,
especially, why I wanted to interview the individual (Dunn, 2010). If the individual agreed to participate in my research, I then negotiated a date, place, and time for the interview, mostly concerned with what was most convenient for the interviewee (Warren, 2001; Dunn, 2010). Finally, nine of my interview participants were discovered during the May 2016 opening of the Idora Park Experience. As I conversed with fellow visitors of the museum’s opening, I told many individuals about myself and my research related to Idora Park. During many of these interactions, I asked the former employees and visitors of Idora if they would be willing to conduct an interview with me about their experiences at the former trolley park. Five of the individuals agreed and requested to complete the interview process at the museum’s site that day. Others were asked for their contact information in order to contact the individual at a later date in the hopes of setting up an interview date and time. Four of these individuals who provided me with their contact information were chosen randomly and completed an interview with me outside of the museum atmosphere.

With the exception of one interview, all the semi-structured interviews took place in the Youngstown area. One interview took place in Stow, Ohio, just west of Youngstown. The nineteen total participants varied in both age and gender. The oldest participants began visiting Idora Park during the 1930s and the youngest in the 1970s. A total of ten participants were female, while nine were male. Further, eighteen of the nineteen interviewees were originally from the city of Youngstown or the surrounding areas. Appendix B provides a full list of each interview participant along with basic demographic information about each individual.
Before each interview began, I first explained my research and its objectives in an open and honest manner. I felt it was important to be clear and honest about my research because honesty further establishes a relationship with participants, while ensuring that individuals are not objectified. The honesty also created a more comfortable atmosphere, which, in turn, produced better results alongside an ethically sound study (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). After discussing my research, I then asked each participant to read, complete, and sign a consent form, which described my study, its risks and benefits, and other crucial information (see Appendix C). Each semi-structured interview was recorded with a small recording device to ensure complete accuracy in the answers and conversation between the interview participant and myself.

Prior to analyzing the semi-structured interviews, I transcribed each interview using ExpressScribe. The software allows audio to play while a transcriber can easily start, stop, rewind, and slow down audio using keys in order to easily complete a record. After each interview was transcribed, I then began my coding process in order to understand what discourses were present among former Idora visitors and workers. First, using three of the interview transcripts, I decided to use an open coding process to discover common themes and discussion points brought up during the interviews. I focused on using codes that simply described what was happening rather than why an event was occurring (Emerson et al., 1995; Charmaz 2006). As Emerson et al. (1995) suggest, I tried to use process orientated open coding, in order to stay close to the data, but at a rather superficial level. While most of my open codes were descriptive, I did utilize a few in vivo codes with words or phrases that continually appeared in the data
Both of these types of codes worked very well during the open coding process, as I began to notice patterns while keeping an open mind about the information contained in the data set.

Finally, after identifying patterns, I was able to discover major themes within the data to create a list of focused codes. While my original codes were descriptive, I concentrated on generating analytical and thematic codes that were applicable to multiple events, interactions, and observations (Cope, 2010). A hierarchy of the focused codes was created from the generated list of open codes. Once the complete list of thematic codes was completed, I began to code each interview with the predetermined analytical/thematic codes. The thematic coding process was undertaken using NVivo, a software program designed to aid, organize, store, and retrieve qualitative data easily. After each interview went through the thematic coding process, I began to analyze the data in order to understand what discourses were present and most prominent within the experiences and memories of these nineteen Idora Park employees and patrons. A total of six discourses were discovered in the interviews, which were then compared to the discourses/narratives materialized within the various Idora Park memorial sites.
CHAPTER 3: COMMEMORATIVE SPACES OF IDORA PARK

Theoretical Framework: Discourses Materialized

In order to analyze the spaces that contain Idora Park artifacts and/or honor the park’s memory, Richard Schein’s (1997) conceptual framework, as outlined in “The Place of Landscape: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene,” will be employed. Schein (1997) argues that discourse both enables and limits cultural landscapes. A discourse refers to an abstract idea, which can be written or spoken, and Schein (1997) explains that discourses lead to individual decisions, which, in turn, can result “in a tangible landscape element” (p. 663). When this occurs, Schein (1997) argues that the cultural landscape becomes the embodiment of a discourse materialized. The discourses embedded within a cultural landscape provide insight into a particular region, its people, its social interactions, and its culture. In this particular study, each site of memorialization will be treated as a cultural landscape that contains materialized discourses. Such spaces of commemoration both reflect and reproduce “ideas about the past,” while helping to shape the future (Dwyer and Alderman, 2008, p. 167). As such, the identification of the discourses embodied in each site will illustrate what ideas of the past influence our society today.

Jane’s Carousel: Site of Idora Park Carousel

Jane’s Carousel is a historic carousel built by the Philadelphia Toboggan Company in 1922. The carousel was originally purchased by and placed within Idora Park, quickly becoming one of the trolley park’s star attractions. After the 1984 season, the owners of Idora Park put the carousel up for auction. During the auction, New
Yorkers David and Jane Walentas bid on the historic carousel and their offer was uncontested (Shale and Jacques, Jr., 2000). In this way, the pair was responsible for both saving and moving the Idora Park carousel in its entirety. The carousel now sits in New York after twenty-two years of handcrafted restoration work completed almost entirely by Jane Walentas.

In 2011, Jane’s Carousel was opened to the public and placed in the DUMBO neighborhood of Brooklyn, near the Brooklyn Bridge Park and the East River. The attraction is housed in a large glass building, allowing visitors to observe the carousel from both inside and outside the enclosed area (Figure 3.1). Just outside the building, stands a large silver sign that explains the attraction’s history (Figure 3.2). Inside the building, light brown wooden benches line the glass walls (Figure 3.3). There is also a small metal concession stand where Jane’s Carousel memorabilia and tickets are sold.

*Figure 3.1. A view of Jane’s Carousel near the Brooklyn Bridge and Manhattan. Photo by author.*
Figure 3.2. Jane’s Carousel sign. Photo by author.

Figure 3.3. An example of a bench situated within the glass building. Photo by author.
On the morning of July 28, 2015, I traveled to the Brooklyn Bridge Park to visit Jane’s Carousel and meet with Jane Waltenas. Although this site’s primary function is not dedicated to preserving the memory of Idora Park, this study considers it a site of memorialization due to the carousel’s reputation in Youngstown together with the subtle elements at the site that recognize and pay tribute its original home. The fieldwork and discourse analysis involving this landscape element reveal five major discourses that are materialized in this landscape: the appeal of a fantasyland, the importance of diversity, an emphasis on family values, a celebration of the past, and a continuing ownership.

*The Appeal of a Fantasyland*

From a distance, an observer of Jane’s Carousel will first notice the juxtaposition of industrial and natural elements surrounding the attraction. Similar to the trolley parks of the past, Jane’s Carousel creates an entirely new landscape by combining the two elements. According to scholars, trolley parks used the elements of industry and nature to create a fantasyland for visitors, which is mimicked in this particular landscape (Aalberg 2003; Sally 2007; DeBlasio 2010).

Jane’s Carousel is surrounded by numerous industrial elements. The surrounding landscape not only is home to the Brooklyn Bridge, but just across the East River lies the cityscape of nearby Manhattan (see above Figure 3.1). These two significant manmade elements remind a visitor of their location in the city. Further, the Jane’s Carousel sign is made of shiny, silver metal, almost mimicking steel. The three-dimensional triangle contains a brief history of the carousel, including the fact that Jane’s Carousel “was originally installed in Idora Park in Youngstown, Ohio, then a prosperous steelmaking
“The steel-like material used to create this sign not only displays industrial elements, but the story on the plaque suggests the importance of industry to the carousel’s history. The industrial elements in the landscape communicate the importance and value of hard work.

However, a clear juxtaposition of these industrial ideals is created via natural elements within the landscape. The East River situates the carousel on a body of water. Further, as the carousel is located in a park, across from the carousel’s entrance is a green space filled with bushes, flowers, and trees (Figure 3.4). These natural elements provide a relaxing and fun atmosphere, reminding visitors of the importance of leisure time.

Figure 3.4. View of Jane’s Carousel entrance and the green space surrounding it. Photo by author.
While riding on the carousel, a visitor has the opportunity to observe the surrounding landscape from inside the glass building. During this ride both the elements of industry, including the bridge and cityscape, and nature, including the river and park shrubbery, appear side by side throughout the circular moving ride. When combined, these two elements create a fantasy-type environment, where both industry and nature are in harmony. Moreover, when combined these two elements work to create a discourse that is part of a fundamental American narrative: to work hard and play hard. The landscape communicates to its visitors that honest and hard work and leisure time are both important to the American lifestyle.

Importance of Diversity

During my visit to Jane’s Carousel, I was able to observe the types of people the space attracted. Although my visit was rather short, it was clear that the attraction created an atmosphere appealing to a diverse group of individuals based on one’s age and race.

Around eleven o’clock, when the ride opens its doors, there was a large group of children ranging in age from one to twelve walking towards the carousel. The group was led by a smaller group of women, appearing in their 30s and 40s. The children, many of whom were jumping up and down in excitement, were led into the glass building. Other groups similar to this one followed. Jane Waltenas revealed that these groups are not uncommon to find in the carousel, and that toddlers tend to visit the park daily. Further, each group of children and their adult counterparts appeared to come from various backgrounds. Inside, there appeared to be children and adults of African American, Asian, European, and Hispanic descent. The children all rode the carousel, while some of
the women accompanying them either rode with them or sat on the benches lining the inside of the building.

Not only was the space filled with children and their chaperones, but adults of all ages went to the carousel as well. A group of elderly men sat on the wooden benches and talked to one another while the carousel ran. Further, during my own ride on Jane’s Carousel, I was accompanied by a group of adults: two men and two women. Within the group, there was an older couple, appearing to be in their 50s, and a younger couple, appearing to be in their 30s. Even though a young boy accompanied the group, all four adults were laughing and smiling during the ride’s duration. While these adults did not exemplify the same racial diversity as the children, they do provide an example of the age diversity of individuals visiting and enjoying the attraction.

Jane’s Carousel and its landscape, including the benches and carousel itself, creates a space that promotes diversity. Clearly, individuals of varying ages, ethnicities, and race visit the carousel. Further, not everyone participates in the same activity; some guests rode the carousel, while others simply sat on a bench to observe the ride and chat with fellow visitors. Regardless, the landscape promotes the importance of diversity within society, as this particular site illustrates how people of varying ages and backgrounds can enjoy the same place in harmony with one another.

An Emphasis on Family Values

Not only does this particular site communicate the importance of diversity to its visitors, but it also provides an atmosphere that emphasizes family values. In order to
emphasize family values several elements of the landscape provide entertainment for various members of the American family unit.

First, the carousel itself provides seating for all generational members of the family: the child, the parent, and the grandparent. Jane’s carousel comprises 48 horses and two chariots (Figures 3.5 & 3.6). These two seating options on the ride allow for any member of the family to experience this attraction. Any family member is able to ride on a horse. Small children that cannot lift themselves onto the horse can be lifted up by their parents. Further, the carousel floor provides enough space for a parent, or grandparent, to stand next to the child throughout the duration of the ride. For those members that cannot pull themselves onto a horse, or simply do not want to, the chariots provide seating alternatives. These riding options provide the opportunity for all members of the family to experience the ride together. Therefore, the ride itself promotes the importance family values by providing riding options for all family members despite age or physical ability.

*Figure 3.5. A Jane’s carousel horse. Photo by author.*
In addition, Jane’s Carousel provides benches that line the glass building. These benches provide a seating area for family members that cannot, or may not want to, ride the carousel. A member of the family can opt out of physically riding on the attraction to simply sit. The benches are situated inside the building, allowing for those sitting on them to still partake in the attraction. An individual may not physically be on the carousel, but he/she can still experience the attraction by watching the carousel, waving at their loved ones as they spin by, and listen to the upbeat music playing. Therefore, the wooden benches allow any member of the family who may not be able to or want to ride on the carousel to still be a part of the fun Jane’s Carousel has to offer, promoting family togetherness.

Not only does the landscape appear to promote family togetherness and values, but families have been observed visiting the location. During my visit, as explained above, I witnessed many children accompanied by chaperones. Many of these chaperones
appeared to be parents of some of the children. The parents normally participated in the attraction in one of two ways. First, some parents accompanied their child on the ride, either by riding on a horse themselves or standing next to the child’s horse. Second, other parents chose to watch their child on the carousel from the benches. Many of the parents waved to and took photos of the children on the carousel either from the benches or while standing on the edge of the ride. Further, as discussed above, a family comprising a set of grandparents, parents, and a child accompanied my own ride on the carousel. This family unit all rode on the horses and shared the experience together. The five were laughing and smiling, exemplifying the very discourse the landscape is promoting: family unity and togetherness.

Finally, Jane Waltenas alluded to the idea that the carousel helps to promote family values in the city. During our discussion, Jane revealed that toddlers and their parents are spotted at the carousel daily. Further, Jane’s Carousel hosts children’s birthday parties; two parties a day are booked for the next six months. The fact that this location hosts birthday parties for children shows the carousel helps to promote family values, as it provides a site to celebrate a child’s birthday with his/her family and friends. The carousel also hosts wedding ceremonies and receptions. Therefore, as the site is a location where two individuals profess and commit themselves to one another and begin a family unit illustrates the family values this landscape promotes. Both the birthday parties and wedding celebrations are joyous occasions that celebrate the family unit and the values that accompany it, such as togetherness, love, and commitment, which supports the idea that this particular landscape promotes these family-oriented ideals.
Jane’s Carousel is a historic attraction that dates back to the 1920s and the attraction itself celebrates the era in which it was created in numerous ways. As discussed earlier, the Jane’s Carousel silver sign pays tribute to the attraction’s original home: Youngstown, Ohio. The sign both explicitly and implicitly celebrates the past. Explicitly, the sign outlines the carousel’s history beginning with its creators, outlining its time in Youngstown, and, finally, describing its journey to Brooklyn. This recounting of the carousel’s long history directly celebrates the attraction’s past. The sign itself also celebrates past eras. As explained above, the sign is made of a shiny, silver material, mimicking steel. The steel-like material represents the era from which the carousel was made and originally used, as the steel industry thrived during the 1920s. As Youngstown was once a steel-producing city, the sign’s material honors the carousel’s original home, while remembering the past. Both the sign’s written words and material help to celebrate the past by paying tribute to the carousel’s history and its past home.

Before leaving Youngstown, Jane’s carousel was repainted numerous times (Shale and Jacques, Jr., 2000). Jane herself explained that approximately twelve layers of paint were removed by hand before exposing the original color scheme. Further, Jane had decided to restore the carousel herself back to its original condition, as others wanted to quickly finish the work using chemicals and spray paint. Therefore, the artist spent years researching the restoration process, scraping off paint with an X-acto knife, and repainting the carousel’s fixtures. Jane even repainted the entire carousel in its original color scheme using original documents displaying the attraction’s original design and
color pallet. As Jane’s carousel was restored back to its original condition, the attraction itself serves as a celebration of the past. The colors transport a visitor back to the 1920s, as the carousel’s colors are muted tones of brown, black, red, yellow, and blue with accents of silver and gold (see Figure 3.7). The addition of large, yellow light bulbs help to communicate this carousel is from a past era. A visitor will feel as if he/she has stepped into a classic movie made from the first half of the twentieth century while riding and visiting the attraction.

Figure 3.7. This photo illustrates the color scheme and lights used on Jane’s Carousel. Photo by author.

Not only does the color scheme celebrate the past, but also Jane’s restoration process mimics the work done in the era the carousel was created. Much like the steel workers in Youngstown used their hands in the factory, Jane also restored the carousel by hand instead of relying on modern techniques and technology. Therefore, the carousel
celebrates a past America, in which hard, quality work completed by hand was the ideal way to build or create products.

Along with the atheistic elements of Jane’s Carousel, the sounds produced by the carousel help to celebrate the past. During the ride, upbeat, oompah music fills the room. The music is instrumental using brass instruments and accordions. The old-fashioned music transports a participant to the past when live bands were popular in the first half of the twentieth century. Therefore, the music tells a visitor about the good times of the past that we have lost as a society today.

Multiple elements of Jane’s Carousel combine to create a landscape that celebrates the past. A visitor can travel back in time to an era when hand crafted work and simplicity were praised and encouraged. The landscape not only remembers its past, but also represents a past America, where these ideals were the basis of American life and industry.

\textit{A Continuing Ownership}

Although the carousel has since departed from Idora Park and the Youngstown area, there is still a strong discourse that gives native Youngstown citizens personal ownership of the once local attraction. The idea that the carousel is a local entity in Youngstown is still persistent with Jane’s Carousel in Brooklyn Bridge Park. Inside the carousel’s glass building stands a silver concession stand. At this stand, a visitor can purchase ride tickets and Jane’s Carousel memorabilia. However, a visitor can also ask the attendant behind the cart to view the carousel’s Idora Park guest book. As a tribute to the carousel’s past location, Jane keeps guest books for individuals from Youngstown
and visitors of Idora Park to sign (see Figure 3.8). When I had asked to view the guest books, I was handed three different ones; two of the books contained hand-written messages and one was filled with personal e-mails to Jane. In each of these books, past visitors of Idora Park thanked Jane for saving and restoring the carousel. Many of the notes and letters claimed personal ownership of the carousel. For example, individuals would thank Jane for saving “my” or “our” carousel rather than referring to it as “the carousel” (see Figure 3.9). These books and the notes that fill them not only help to celebrate the carousel’s past, but they also provide visitors with a discourse of personal ownership and attachment to the carousel. These notes filled with possessive pronouns referring to the attraction communicate that the carousel is still Youngstown’s local attraction despite its move to Brooklyn Bridge Park.

*Figure 3.8.* The three Idora Park guest books. Photo by author.
Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor: Site of the Idora Park Entrance Sign

The Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor is dedicated to sharing and preserving artifacts and photos that commemorate the steel making industry that dominated the Youngstown labor force during the twentieth century. The museum is located on Wood Street on Youngstown State University’s campus. The center is open to the public only a few days of the week. The iconic Idora Park entrance sign is located at this site, making this a site of Idora Park commemoration.

On August 5, 2015, I visited the Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor. The museum is housed in a rounded brown brick building with dark green accents and a circular extension located on top of the building (see Figure 3.10). On each side of the building, a line of large, green trees extends in a line from each front corner of the building. The inside of the building houses artifacts, such as pamphlets, tools, photos,
signs, and life size exhibits, from the many steel mills and other industries that were located in and around the Youngstown area during the twentieth century. The walls are covered with signs from these industries, as well as large murals depicting scenes of workers in the mines and mills. Much of the color scheme inside the museum is filled with muted tones of brown, grey, and black (see Figure 3.11).

![Figure 3.10. The front exterior of the Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor. Photo by author.](image)

Although the museum is primarily dedicated to preserving and celebrating the memory of the steel industry in Youngstown, the site is also home to the iconic Idora Park sign that once welcomed park visitors. The sign is fastened to a tan pillar and the ceiling. Compared to the neutral tones of the museum, the Idora Park sign stands out due to its brighter color scheme. The sign is painted a royal blue with red and white accents. The words “Idora Park” are painted white in bold lettering and outlined with tube lighting.
The home of this iconic sign produces four major discourses materialized within the museum’s landscape: the importance of leisure and work, a fun filled atmosphere, celebration of the past, and the tragedy of a lost space.

*Figure 3.11.* A view of the inside of the museum. Note the muted color palette, large photo mural, and industry signs hung on the fence. Photo by author.

*Figure 3.12.* The brightly colored Idora Park sign. Photo by author.
The Importance of Leisure and Work

Unsurprisingly, the Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor communicates to its visitors the importance of working hard. Most of the artifacts inside the space celebrate Youngstown’s industrial past and its workers. Life size murals and cut out, black and white photos of factory workers illustrate the hard work completed in this era. Not only do these photos depict hard work, but they are also celebrating it. Along with these life-like photos, the museum is filled with signs from the factories, work pamphlets, and plaques describing the past labor industry of Youngstown. These items are depicted in a favorable light. For example, a plaque hanging from the ceiling near the Idora Park sign reveals “[n]one of us went to school and learned the chemistry of it from books. We learned the trick by doing it, standing with our faces in the scorching heat while our hands puddled the metal in its glaring bath” (see Figure 3.13). This quote from an industry worker explains to the audience that laborers worked under difficult conditions, but still were able to learn and prosper through hard work and dedication. The combination of these items helps the visitor to understand an underlying message of the museum’s landscape: it is important to work hard.
Figure 3.13. This quote from an industry worker illustrates the dedication and work ethic embodied in both steel workers and the landscape celebrating them.

Juxtaposing the message for visitors to carry on the tradition of a strong work ethic, the museum also communicates to visitors the importance of leisure time. Alongside the artifacts dedicated to the labor industries that once dominated the Youngstown economy sits a small collection of leisure memorabilia from the same era. Many of these items are placed near the Idora Park sign, which is, itself, a symbol of the leisure time Youngstown dwellers once experienced in order to relax and enjoy themselves. Just behind the sign is a small glass case filled with said items, including a doll, bocce balls, a Republic Steel and Coke Plant baseball jersey, and a Youngstown Sheet and Tube company clothing badge (see Figure 3.14). These items were all used in some sort of recreational activity, most of which were public activities. However, parallel to this leisure display stands a small replica of a house. The house is meant to mimic that of a laborer’s home from the first half of the twentieth century. Inside the house is a small living room where a woman is sitting in a chair sewing, while a young boy is displayed
on the floor with jacks. The room also contains a phonograph. On the glass outside of this display is a sign that states “[t]ime at home with the family” (see Figure 3.15). This particular display explains to visitors that leisure time at home is just as important as public leisure time. The combination of the public and private leisure activities reveals to a visitor the importance of relaxation and leisure outside of the work environment.

Figure 3.14. Some of the leisure memorabilia display, including the bocce balls, clothing badge, and baseball jersey. Photo by author.

Figure 3.15. The display of household leisure communicating the important of fun and relaxation with one’s family outside of the work place. Photo by author.
While many of the artifacts and displays help to communicate the idea of hard work and dedication to one’s livelihood, a few elements within the space communicate a different idea: play is just as important as work. The combination of work and leisure items in this space communicates to a visitor the importance of working hard, while also taking the time to relax and enjoy oneself with the ones he/she cherishes the most. Simply put, the landscape provides a discourse encouraging others to work hard and play hard, two elements important to the American lifestyle, especially during the twentieth century.

A Fun Filled Atmosphere

As discussed in the previous section, the Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor includes various artifacts that commemorate the leisure activities popular during the height of Youngstown’s steel production. The Idora Park sign is included in this section of the museum, surrounded by numerous artifacts that represent twentieth century leisure time. Not only do these artifacts represent leisure, they also symbolize the fun and enjoyment an individual had by participating in the activities. Thus, the Idora Park sign tells visitors that Youngstown’s former trolley park created a fun atmosphere.

While all the leisure items in the museum represent enjoyment and fun, the Idora Park sign stands out among them. As discussed earlier, the museum’s color scheme is rather dull and muted, filled with shades of black, brown, white, and grey. The Idora Park sign does not conform to this color scheme. Instead, it is a blue and white sign with red trim, deviating from the museum’s primary colors. Further, the sign hangs from the wall and is comparatively large (see above Figure 3.12). These elements of the sign cause the
artifact to stand out among the hundreds of other artifacts in the museum landscape. A visitor’s eye is drawn to the colorful, large object. Moreover, the color scheme and size of the sign represent an atmosphere filled with enjoyment and fun. The Idora Park sign symbolizes the fun former visitors, and steel workers, had at the park. Although industry workers’ days were filled with hard, sometimes mundane tasks during the week, as represented by the muted color scheme, Idora Park allowed guests to escape the habitual and enter a fun-filled atmosphere. Even though this space no longer exists, the fun atmosphere Idora Park contained is communicated through this materialized discourse.

*A Celebration of the Past*

As this site of memorialization is a museum, the space clearly celebrates the past and traditions associated with the Youngstown area. The celebration is apparent via the artifacts, photos, murals, signs, stories, etc. that fill the rather small, yet intimate area. However, the site not only celebrates the past, but also situates one within history. During a visit to the Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor, a patron will feel as if he/she is traveling back in time to the early to mid-twentieth century.

In order to place a visitor in Youngstown’s past era of steel production, the museum walls are decorated with large, life-size murals depicting scenes of industrial workers (see above Figure 3.11). Along with these life-size murals, the museum contains walk-through and interactive exhibits. Near the Idora Park sign, there is a display that includes a lamppost, mailbox, and two benches patrons can sit on to represent the streets of the past (see Figure 3.16). A second interactive exhibit, also situated near the Idora Park sign, is a small model of an industrial worker’s home complete with a stocked
kitchen and living room displaying a mother and son within the space (see above Figure 3.14 & 3.17). A visitor can walk through the home. Finally, at the back of the museum, there is an exhibit that displays the locker room of industry workers. In this display, manikins are placed on benches near lockers to represent the factory workers. Further, the nearby lockers are filled with items that would have been placed in a worker’s locker from each decade the steel industry was alive in Youngstown. These walk-through and interactive elements of the museum not only celebrate the past, but also allow a visitor to feel a part of and connected to the past. The patron can literally step into the past where Youngstown citizens worked, lived, and even relaxed. The museum’s life-like exhibits transport a patron back in time to the not-so-distant past when Youngstown’s economy was booming.

Figure 3.16. The display of a typical street, including benches, a mailbox, and a lamppost. Photo by author.
Much like the citizens of Youngstown found the loss of Idora Park a sad event in the city’s local history, the museum also communicates the tragedy of the park’s demise. The idea that Idora Park’s permanent closure was a tragic event is communicated to its visitors in the small, yet powerful display in the commemorative space.

Just underneath the iconic Idora Park sign, a black and white plaque is placed on the wall. The plaque includes a photo of the sign before it was taken from the park’s site. In the black and white photo, the sign is in the right hand corner, appearing to be rusted. The park grounds appear abandoned and unkempt with the remains of a roller coaster in the background. The photo is accompanied by a caption that states: “A view of Idora Park in the late 1980s, after it was closed. The sign in the photograph has been restored and can be seen in the museum” (see Figure 3.18). This simple, yet powerful plaque tells the reader that Idora Park is a place Youngstown citizens have lost, as the photo in the
exhibit displays the sign after the park’s closure. Further, the fact that the photo depicts the Idora grounds as an abandoned, old, and rusted site tells the reader the loss of Youngstown’s playground was a tragic event.

*Figure 3.18.* The plaque and blank television screen sitting just below the Idora Park sign, which depicts the tragedy of losing this once lively, fun space. Photo by author.

Below the photograph of the Idora Park sign standing at its original location is a small television (see above Figure 3.18). According to a former museum employee, the television is there to display footage of the park throughout its existence. However, earlier in the summer, I had visited the museum with one of my interview participants and the television screen still did not display the footage. The fact that the television screen is meant to show Idora Park footage but, in fact, only is a blank space mimics the Idora grounds. Much like the blank television screen, Idora Park was once the site of an
urban amusement park filled with patrons and movement, but, now, the site is simply abandoned and empty. Therefore, this blank television screen tells the story of a lost space that once brought joy to individuals, but now is a blank/empty space. The combination of this blank television screen and the plaque just above, tells the reader of a once lively space that was tragically lost back in the 1980s.

Pymatuning Deer Park: Site of the Idora Park Train

Pymatuning Deer Park is a family owned and operated petting zoo located in Jamestown, Pennsylvania. The park contains over 250 different species of animals and birds for visitors to feed, pet, and interact with, including bears, deer, and primates. Along with the many animals the park holds, the site contains other attractions, including a replica Main Street patrons can walk through and pony rides for children. Most relevant to this study, Deer Park also offers train rides across a nature and deer filled terrain aboard the former Idora Park train. The attraction is now referred to as the “Deer Park Express” (Pymatuning Deer Park, 2016).

Similar to the previous sites of memorialization discussed and analyzed, Pymatuning Deer Park does not explicitly commemorate Idora Park. However, the fact that this place is the new home of an Idora Park attraction warrants an exploration of the site. The “Deer Park Express” is located at the very back of the petting zoo. In order to board the train, a patron must walk through a wooden building adorned with a brown tin roof and a large railroad crossing sign (see Figure 3.19). The train’s front car is painted entirely in red, while other train cars are made up of wooden benches with red arm rests (see Figures 3.20 & 3.21). A red and white striped canopy covers the seating area on the
train. On the sides of each bench, a small painted figure of a Native American between the year 1863 is placed on a yellow, oval-shaped plaque.

On August 7, 2015, I visited the new home of the Idora Park train. During the visit, multiple narratives were presented via the park’s landscape. The most prominent discourses that the landscape helped to materialize included: the appeal of a fantasyland, the importance of diversity, an emphasis on family values, and a celebration of the past.

Figure 3.19. The boarding area for the Deer Park Express. Photo by author.
The Appeal of a Fantasyland

As previously discussed, many trolley park scholars have found these historical spaces created a fantasyland by combining elements of industry and nature (Aalberg, 2003; Sally, 2007; DeBlasio, 2010). Much of Deer Park focuses on natural elements throughout its landscape, such as animals, flowers, and trees. However, during the train
ride, the industrial train combined with the natural elements of the park mimics the fantasyland Idora Park once created for its patrons.

During a ride on the Deer Park Express, a visitor is taken to the highest hill in the park. A patron is able to look down at the park’s landscape, where numerous animals are on display for patrons to feed and watch in their habitats. Further, the train ride itself is situated within a natural landscape filled with green grass and large trees. In this same area, free roaming animals, including deer and large birds, are able to walk up to the train’s passengers (see Figure 3.22). The close encounter with animals in a green, nature-filled space is made possible by the train, which is a manmade form of transportation powered by electricity. This industrial-like attraction carries passengers via the natural landscape. The combination of these two elements mimics the landscape Idora created for its visitors: a fantasyland. Moreover, the presence of both industrial and natural elements communicate to a visitor how the two can combine in order to achieve the “impossible.” Industry and nature can be combined to create something special, and sometimes unthinkable, in our society today, which is a discourse represented in the train ride’s scenery.
The Importance of Diversity

During a visit to Deer Park, a patron is able to participate in multiple activities. While I did not observe a diverse group of visitors at the park based upon one’s ethnicity and/or racial make-up, the atmosphere still communicated the importance of diversity in our society based upon this factor. The narrative was communicated via the multiple attractions a visitor is able to partake in during a day spent at the petting zoo despite one’s age.

As Deer Park is primarily a space to interact with animals, there are multiple activities that emphasize the interaction between animal and human. Patrons are able to purchase animal feed at the front ticket entrance in order to feed various animals throughout the park that are behind fences, including deer. For patrons that want a face to face interaction with the animals, the park provides an area called the “Kidde Zoo,”
where visitors are able to feed and pet free range baby animals and birds. Further, as explained above, patrons can encounter animals up close during a ride on the Deer Park Express. Children can also interact with ponies on the Deer Park property by taking a pony ride via the park guided by a park employee. For those visitors that do not want to feed and/or be in close proximity to the animals on display, the park includes multiple benches around the park, where patrons are able to sit, relax, and watch the animals. The park provides a diverse option of animal interactions that a visitor is able to partake in while visiting Deer Park.

In addition to the multiple activities centered on the animals at Deer Park, the space provides various other activities for patrons. For children, just before you reach the boarding area for the Deer Park Express, there is a large wooden playground shaped like a ship (see Figure 3.23). Benches are also situated around the playground, allowing adults to sit and watch their children play on the jungle gym. Also near the Deer Park Express is a life size replica of an Old West Main Street complete with a bank, hotel, jail, one room schoolhouse, and trading post. Visitors are able to walk into some of these buildings in order to interact with the display and take photographs. Further, throughout the back of the park, the owners placed painted picture cut-out stands for patrons to place their own faces within the image to take a photo (see Figure 3.24). During my visit, I observed two young girls accompanied by two adult women and one adult man crowding around a picture cut-out stand. One of the older women was taking a photo of the rest of the group with their faces placed in the cut-out. The family unit was laughing and smiling as they
did so together. Finally, Deer Park provides a pavilion picnic area just outside of its entrance gate for visitors to bring a lunch to enjoy outdoors.

*Figure 3.23.* The ship-shaped playground near the Deer Park Express. Photo by author.

*Figure 3.24.* An example of a picture cut-out. This one allows a patron to place their head inside the lion’s mouth. Photo by author.
Clearly, Pymatuning Deer Park offers a diverse variety of activities for its visitors to partake in. Moreover, the activities serve a diverse group of people based upon one’s age and interests. The park provides multiple ways to interact with the animals on display. There are benches to observe the animals for those who want a more passive interaction or older patrons unable to stand for long periods of time. Although the “Kiddie Zoo’s” name appears to be an activity for just children, the Pymatuning Deer Park website explains that this space “welcomes young and old alike to get up-close and personal” with the animals (Pymatuning Deer Park, 2016). Individuals of all ages can enjoy riding on the Deer Park Express, as the bench seating allows anyone of any age or size to ride on the attraction. While the playground is primarily for children to play on, the replica of an Old West Main Street is large enough for both children and adults to enter and interact with. Finally, the picnic area accommodates all types of people in order to enjoy an outdoor meal with fellow visitors. The fact that this one landscape includes these multiple, diverse attractions within one space communicates to a visitor the importance of diversity. There are numerous activities within Deer Park that allows people of different ages to enjoy the same space together, promoting the idea of diversity.

While the multiple activities geared at pleasing patrons of all ages communicates the importance of diversity, the animals themselves also illustrate this idea within Deer Park. The park contains over 250 different species of animals and birds. These species are both domestic and exotic. They include African lions, black bears, camels, deer, and Siberian tigers. Each species of animal or bird is accompanied by a plaque that states its name and country of origin (see Figure 3.25). The combination of domestic and
international animals and birds along with the overt recognition of each species’ origin communicates to a visitor that diversity is important. The diverse group of animals and birds represents how diversity can create an atmosphere where all can come together in one place for a common purpose. In this case, the common purpose is to educate patrons about animals and birds while entertaining. Regardless of their rather simple purpose, the landscape communicates to its visitors that diversity is important in our society today and should be celebrated and recognized.

Figure 3.25. An example of an international animal represented at Deer Park. Notice the plaque explaining the species’ name and country of origin. Photo by author.

An Emphasis on Family Values

While Deer Park’s various activities and spaces help to communicate the importance of diversity to its visitors, some of the same elements also help to emphasize the importance of family values. The multiple activities and ways to experience each helps to include all generations of a family into one activity and space. For example,
family members of all ages can feed and observe the animals either up close or afar from sitting on a bench. Each family member can partake in animal friendly activities in multiple ways while spending time with their loved ones.

The Deer Park Express also provides seating conducive to all family members. The seats are simply wooden benches, allowing any individual to ride. For children who are too young to sit alone, the benches provide enough space to be accompanied by an older family member; the child has enough space to either sit next to or on the lap of an adult. Clearly, many of the attractions provide enjoyment for all generational members of the family, producing an environment that emphasizes the importance of being together as a family.

Not only does the number of activities at Deer Park help to create a family-friendly atmosphere, but the owners of the petting zoo also advertise themselves as family oriented space. On the park’s “About” page located on their website, the space is described as “family-owned” and has been a “family tradition” for the owners (Pymatuning Deer Park, 2016). As the park is owned and operated by generations of family members, the atmosphere exudes the feeling of familial ties. The owners want the park to provide a space for family fun, as the “About” page continues to discuss visitors in relation to the family unit. For example, when discussing the Deer Park Express attraction, the website’s author explains “families love to count how many deer they can spot” while riding on the train (Pymatuning Deer Park, 2016). As discussed earlier, the website also suggests the “Kiddie Zoo” can cater to patrons both young and old. Finally, on the website’s home page, the author suggests guests should “enjoy a picnic at the park
with family and friends” (Pymatuning Deer Park, 2016). These explicit references to family when speaking about Deer Park visitors suggests the owners wanted to create a landscape that promoted family values and togetherness. The ideal was clearly communicated on the website, as well as via the multiple activities and seating options.

The emphasis on family values was also observed directly during my visit to Deer Park. Throughout my visit, fellow guests of Deer Park came with their own family units. I even visited the park with my mother in order to recall the memories of the park we had together when I was a child. While walking through the parking lot, there was a group of individuals consisting of two toddler girls, two adult women, and one adult man unpacking their silver van filled with coolers and strollers. Before placing the two young girls into strollers, the children were excitedly jumping up and down and smiling outside the park. Later on, I noticed the same family unit posing near a picture-cut out in order to take a photograph, documenting their time at the park together. Based on my observation, the family spent the day at the park.

Other families like the one described above were also visiting the park together. While feeding the deer, a man, appearing in his 50s, helped a small boy, appearing to be around five years old, feed crackers to the creatures. A woman, appearing in her 40s, holding a small baby, soon joined the two. The group interacted with one another while feeding the deer and documenting the moment utilizing a camera. The group appeared to be a family spending time together. Another family was observed riding the Deer Park Express. During my ride, I noticed two older adults in their 60s boarding the attraction with two small boys, approximately seven and nine years old. The group appeared to be a
set of grandparents with their grandsons. The four individuals laughed while pointing out the animals we encountered on the train.

These are just three examples of the families I observed during my visit to Deer Park. All groups during my specific visit appeared to be made up of a family unit in some form. The fact that Deer Park appears to primarily attract families supports the idea that the activities and space are not only meant to provide a place for family bonding, but actually do create and facilitate a family-friendly atmosphere. Clearly, the commemorative site communicates to a visitor that family togetherness should be prioritized and valued.

A Celebration of the Past

The final discourse materialized at Deer Park focuses on celebrating a past American society. Specifically, the landscape of the park pays homage to a small town, western American past via the Main Street replica and the Deer Park Express.

Just next to the Deer Park Express, the park has built a replica Main Street that includes an Indian Trading Post, a hotel, one room school house, a jail, and even a small mining operation (see Figure 3.26). The main street also includes cut out figures of miners and Native Americans. These figures combined with the mining operation and wooden buildings suggest the street is meant to appear as if it were in the old frontier West during the mid-1800s. Patrons of Deer Park are able to interact with this “frontier” Main Street, allowing them to visit the past via this built landscape.
After examining the landscape, the importance of both small town America and the mining operation is clearly communicated to Deer Park visitors. The small replica of Main Street represents small town America, in which a tight knit, local community is celebrated. The importance of a tight-knit community and working together with one’s neighbors is illustrated via the multiple businesses side by side on the same street. Moreover, the inclusion of small mining figures and the mining device allows guests to understand the importance mining had on our American economy. Visitors can visualize the hardships associated with the profession, highlighting the importance of hard work and dedication. These ideals that can be seen via the old frontier Main Street helps to celebrate and highlight the valued ideals of an American past.

Along with the Main Street replica, the Deer Park Express celebrates a past America. The train itself is a symbol of a past America, as trains were the first mode of transportation to connect the nation with the old frontier West. Trains were utilized to
carry both passengers and goods across the country, aiding in the rise of an industrial nation. The train ride through the woods of Deer Park symbolizes our nation’s exploration and expansion into the West. Further, the train clearly celebrates America, as the attraction’s front car is adorned with two American flags (see Figure 3.27). The train attraction celebrates a past America that helped to conquer, explore, and even industrialize the unknown territory of the West. This celebration explains to guests via the landscape that bravery and curiosity are two valued American ideals that should be adopted in our world today in order to continually improve society.

![Figure 3.27. The front car of the Deer Park Express. Notice the American flag near the front of the car. Photo by author.](image)

Idora Day at Lanterman’s Mill in Mill Creek Park

The Mill Creek MetroParks faculty and staff had organized a day devoted to remembering Idora Park during the summer of 2015 just adjacent to the park’s former location. “Idora Day,” as the event was named, was held at Mill Creek Park at
Lanterman’s Mill in Youngstown. The event included multiple activities, games, and vendor stands, all of which paid tribute to Youngstown’s former “Million Dollar Playground.” Idora Day at Lanterman’s Mill signifies a temporary site of commemoration directly relating to the park, making it an essential study site for this particular research.

On August 15, 2015, I traveled to the site of Idora Day to experience this temporary site of memorialization. The site was located near an old wooden mill surrounded by natural park elements. Idora Day included artifact displays, crafts, carnival games, and food for visitors to enjoy. After visiting the site of commemoration three particular materialized discourses were identified: the importance of diversity, a celebration of the past, and the value of intergenerational interactions.

Importance of Diversity

One of the first observations I made when entering the site of Idora Day was the number of activities guests were able to participate in. Not only was there a large amount of different activities, but each catered to various age groups all focused on paying tribute to Idora Park and Youngstown. The combination of these activities and the audiences they attracted created a discourse at Mill Creek Park that communicated the importance of diversity. Similar to Pymatuning Deer Park the idea of diversity was not represented based upon ethnic and racial diversity, but rather represented through age differences and various activities observed at the site.

One of the first attractions a guest would have encountered at Idora Day was the artifact display located on the first floor of Lanterman’s Mill. The artifacts included
multiple items from Youngstown’s past, half of which were related to Idora Park. Some of the Idora Park memorabilia on display included old ride tickets, pamphlets, a popcorn box, photographs, and t-shirts (see Figure 3.28). Accompanying this display was a large mural that illustrated the history of Youngstown, which began with an image of founder John Young. Near the middle of the large mural, an Idora Park sign was painted next to the words “Always Open in our Hearts” (see Figures 3.29 & 3.30). At first glance, art and history buffs would likely be the audience attracted to these displays. However, after my observation, I noticed that the displays drew a much more diverse crowd than expected. Near these displays stood the owner and painter of the artifacts and the murals, discussing the history and importance of Youngstown, Idora Park, and the artifacts on display. The man, Bob Barko, approached two young children with their mother. The children, a boy and a girl, both appeared to be approximately five years old. Bob bent down to their level to explain the artifacts on the display tables, as well as the history of Youngstown, utilizing the mural as a source of reference for the children. Both children and the mother were engaged in the explanation, smiling and listening quietly. Further, while looking at the display tables, there were individuals around the artifacts of varying ages. The crowd’s ages ranged from approximately fifteen to eighty. Bob approached me after he noticed my note taking. He then began to speak to me about the various items in his collection and his knowledge of Idora Park. As we spoke, a crowd of other guests began to congregate around Bob, all interested in the historical conversation about Idora. The final group consisted of about eight people, including teenagers, young adults, middle-aged individuals, and elderly individuals. The group was made up of both men and
women. The fact that these displays and the conversations they sparked attracted such a diverse group of individuals based upon age and gender communicates to an observer that diversity is an important value. Further, people of varying generations can relate to one another over one common item or idea in order to create a diverse and tight-knit atmosphere.

Figure 3.28. A sample of the Idora artifacts on display. Photo by author.

Figure 3.29. Left side of the history of Youngstown mural. Photo by author.
The second floor of the mill had very different activities than those downstairs. While the bottom floor focused on the history of Idora Park and Youngstown, the activities upstairs catered to educating children about the park via arts and crafts. There were three long tables set up with three different types of arts and crafts. The first table had colored sand for children to layer in a figurine. The second table contained coloring pages with crayons and markers; the pages depicted various images, including a Ferris wheel, a carousel, and a rollercoaster. All the images represented a different attraction from Idora Park. The final table had coloring utensils along with a roller coaster hat for guests to color, assemble, and wear (see Figure 3.31). Each table was monitored by two Mill Creek MetroPark staff members. At the “hat table,” one of the male workers encouraged me to make my own hat. Although the upstairs was not filled with any guests yet, it was clear the activities in the space catered to children, but could also be utilized by adults. These activities were much different than those on the first floor of the mill, but had the potential to bring people of all ages together, creating a discourse that encouraged diversity within the space.

*Figure 3.30.* Right side of the of Youngstown mural. Photo by author.
Just outside of the mill was a tent display devoted to the Wildcat rollercoaster, one of Idora Park’s most beloved attractions. The tent included Wildcat memorabilia for sale, including key chains and picture frames made from the wood of the Wildcat rollercoaster itself. Next to the tent was a Wildcat car situated in front of a large photograph of the actual coaster (see Figure 3.32). Yellow stairs were situated near the car for people to climb into and take their photograph while sitting in the car. This stand was a different attraction from those in the mill. The items in this tent were for sale and meant to be taken home by those wanting a piece of Idora Park. Further, the car display would allow anyone who was able to get into the car to recreate and experience being inside Idora Park’s Wildcat rollercoaster. Throughout my visit, guests of the display were of varying ages, from toddlers to the elderly. This different activity in the landscape attracted various age groups, communicating the importance of diversity.
Another interactive attraction at Idora Day was the mini-Midway located on a wooden bridge just near the mill. Mill Creek MetroPark employees were stationed at various games on the bridge for guests to play. One of the park employees explained that these games were similar to ones an Idora Park patron would have played on the park’s midway. During my time on the “midway,” young children were the ones who mostly participated in these games. Two young boys, appearing to be six and ten years old, played a milk bottle game and a ring toss game, as an older man, appearing in his 40s, watched the two. Another game consisted of a small Kiddie pool filled with yellow rubber ducks. The object of the game was to find two ducks that had matching bottoms. After much persuasion, I played the game myself and won two prizes. Two five-year olds, a boy and girl, accompanied by their mother, then played the duck game. The two
won prizes as well after their mother helped them choose ducks from the pool. Although children mostly participated in this activity, the environment still communicated the idea of diversity. The Mill Creek employees were all over the age of 60. They explained the game and passed out prizes to the children. The adults accompanying the children assisted them with the games, while the children themselves directly played the midway games. The children made each adult smile and laugh. These various roles each age group played within the landscape illustrates the positive power of diversity and working together.

Finally, besides the many activities at the Idora Day event, the park included numerous benches and seating areas. These benches welcomed people to sit, relax, and socialize with one another. A group of older gentlemen, all appearing in their 60s, congregated around one bench. The group of men laughed and reminisced about the past. Sitting at another bench was a mother, appearing in her 30s, and daughter, who was approximately twelve years old. The two were eating French fries from the local food truck and conversing on the bench. Each group was talking and laughing at this outdoor Idora event. The landscape helped to create an atmosphere that encouraged socialization between various people of the community.

Overall, Idora Day contained multiple activities that each attracted a rather diverse set of individuals based upon age. The distinct combination of activities and guests helped to create an atmosphere of diversity. This type of atmosphere communicated to an observer that diversity is important in our society, as it allows different people to come together in one space. Further, diversity creates a helpful and
powerful society where each person can be valued for his/her role within a larger community.

A Celebration of the Past

The entire event that occurred at Mill Creek Park was devoted to celebrating Youngstown’s Idora Park. Idora Day was meant to bring the community together to educate and reminisce about the former trolley park. The activities, artifacts, games, and stands within the landscape transported a community member back to the days of Idora. The landscape also displayed the historical impact and value the park had on the Youngstown community.

The atmosphere of the event’s landscape was rather old-fashioned, as a majority of the landscape represented Youngstown’s history. First, inside the mill, the artifact tables filled with both Idora and Youngstown memorabilia help a visitor to understand the history and connection of these two places. The artifacts each told a story about the community’s past, allowing guests to situate themselves in the past. Further, the Wildcat car that was set up for individuals to sit in and take photos inside literally allowed visitors to step into the past. A guest of Idora Day was able to climb into a rollercoaster car that once ran at Idora Park. The coaster car transports an individual back in time to the days when wooden coasters dominated the amusement park landscape. Finally, while the games on the faux-“midway” were not directly from Idora, each contained rather simple rules. Each game was easy enough for small children to partake in and win. The games were what one could consider classic, old-time carnival games, such as the milk bottle toss and ring toss games. These games helped to transport a guest back to an old-
fashioned carnival. The prizes were even old-fashioned, as the tokens were small plastic toys, pencils, and small Frisbees. The simple, yet fun games and tokens created a historical atmosphere that transported a guest back to the times of Idora Park.

Overall, these activities celebrate Idora Park’s past. Each part of the event was devoted to creating a fun, simple atmosphere that allowed guests to step back into time and revisit the former trolley park. By combining actual historical artifacts from the park with activities that mimicked the park’s past attractions, the landscape created this particular narrative. Through this celebration of Idora, the landscape explains to a guest the importance the place had on the surrounding community.

Value of Intergenerational Interactions

Idora Day clearly helped to communicate the importance of Youngstown’s past history, but the landscape also facilitated an area where community members were able to gather together to create a common experience. Moreover, older community members were given the opportunity to share their past experiences from Idora with younger generations. The site of memorialization materialized the past of Idora and Youngstown via the temporary landscape, but also communicated the value of interactions between generations.

The worth of intergenerational interactions was displayed in the same ways the idea of diversity was within the event space. Idora Day included numerous activities and stations that catered to visitors of varying ages and generations. Not to mention, at each section of Idora Day, individuals of different generations were seen enjoying themselves together. The fact that the landscape allowed for this mixing and mingling of generations
to occur demonstrates the value of intergenerational interactions. Each individual, despite their age or generation, conversed with one another about the community’s past. The past served as a commonality for all individuals, uniting those who visited the site. The event’s attempt to create various activities appealing to multiple age groups, as well as the observations of different generations within the space interacting with each other illustrates the idea that intergenerational experiences should be valued in our society. The space allowed adults to share their past experiences with younger generations, while children and teens were able to partake in fun events based upon this past experience.

The Idora Park Experience

Located in the city of Canfield, a suburb of Youngstown, stands a museum dedicated solely to preserving and sharing Idora Park artifacts with the local public. The Idora Park Experience (IPE) is housed in a warehouse on a private residence owned and operated by Jim and Toni Amey. In recent years, Jim, a former employee of Idora Park, and Toni have spent a large amount of their time searching for and restoring Idora Park rides, signs, and other park mementos. The pair stores the artifacts in their warehouse, which they open to the public two to three times a year.

While the IPE exhibits and general set up differs during each opening, the layout remains consistent. Visitors of the museum park their cars in a large grass lot in front of the warehouse. Before entering the museum, the Ameys normally have multiple ride cars from Idora Park both in original and restored condition on display outside (see Figure 3.33). Inside the museum, the entire space is filled with Idora Park artifacts displayed on the walls, in display cases, and simply placed on the floor. The artifacts vary in size and
shape. Some of the artifacts include ride cars, signs, ride and entry tickets, brochures, small trinket, and t-shirts (see Figure 3.34).

Figure 3.33. One of the ride cars on display just outside the IPE. This ride car is one of the restored cars from the Hooterville Highway ride once located in Idora Park. Photo by author.

Figure 3.34. A view of inside the IPE filled with multiple artifacts including ride cars, a t-shirt, and signs. Photo by author.
During both visits to the IPE, in May and September of 2015, the museum included stands with various items for sale. One of these was a cotton candy stand, where Tammi Anderson sold her family’s original cotton candy that was once sold in Idora Park. Jim and Toni had a table set up inside where guests could purchase t-shirts and other small items, such as coffee mugs and ornaments, adorned with the Idora Park logo. During the May 2015 opening, Rick Shale, author of *The Last Ride of the Summer*, had his own stand, where he sold signed copies of the book. The IPE also set up stands that were dedicated to raising money for a charity during each of my visits. At the May 2015 opening, guests were able to purchase an egg to throw at the fire hydrant that failed during Idora’s devastating 1984 fire. The proceeds were donated to the Disabled American Veterans. During the September 2015 opening, Angels for Animals had two tables set up with a raffle drawing for prizes. Finally, a stand inside the museum was dedicated to remembering Boots Bell, a famous local DJ that emceed dances at the park, where both of his children sat and interacted with the museum guests.

After both visits to the IPE it was clear that the landscape within the museum was filled with various items and people. The landscape surely contained innumerable materialized discourses. However, after careful observations and a close examination of the data there are five discourses that stand out. These include the illusion of a fun filled atmosphere, remembering the past, the importance of experiencing and sharing the past, the value of consistency, and an emphasis on local community.
A Fun Filled Atmosphere

The IPE combines multiple elements that aid in creating and facilitating a fun-filled atmosphere, mimicking the fun and enjoyment individuals had when visiting Idora Park. Entering the museum, a guest is confronted with bright string lights and Idora items that vary in colors (see Figure 3.35). These bright lights and colors create an enjoyable and pleasurable atmosphere, communicating to the guests that the museum is meant to be a fun-filled atmosphere, similar to Idora’s atmosphere. One of the guests at the opening even exclaimed that being inside the IPE surrounded by all the Idora items made him feel like he was back in the park. The items and bright lights helped to create this feeling within the museum, communicating the importance the fun-filled atmosphere had on Youngstown and surrounding communities.

Figure 3.35. Inside the IPE. Notice the bright lights and multi-colored artifacts helping to create the illusion of having fun. Photo by author.
The IPE also included activities for guests to partake in that facilitated the fun-filled atmosphere. As mentioned earlier, there was a cotton candy stand where adults and children alike purchased original Idora cotton candy. The stand allowed participants to eat the sugary treat while walking around the brightly colored museum. As the treat is normally associated with carnivals and parks, the addition of this stand strengthened the idea that the museum is a fun-filled place. Also mentioned previously, the museum included multiple ride cars that have been restored from Idora Park. Many of these cars were interactive, in which the owners of the museum encouraged guests to climb inside the cars to remember the ride and take photographs (see Figure 3.36). These interactive exhibits helped to create a feeling of enjoyment for those who decided to sit inside these cars.

*Figure 3.36. Kenneth and Pat Kubina sitting in the paratrooper car inside the IPE. Photo by author.*
The IPE included these multiple elements in order to create a fun-filled atmosphere for its guests. The landscape undoubtedly encouraged visitors to have fun while remembering Idora Park. During the September 2015 opening, the museum even had the word “FUN” spelled out on the wall in bright blue, yellow, and green letters (see Figure 3.37). The addition of this word communicates to the guests that the museum and Idora were both places to have fun and they, themselves, should enjoy themselves inside the warehouse. A majority of these guests were influenced by the landscape elements encouraging them to have a pleasurable time inside the museum.

During the May 2015 opening, I was asked numerous times to take photographs of guests inside the Idora Park cars. Each time the guests smiled and laughed while in the cars. Some even pretended to ride the actual attraction, as they put their hands in the air while inside the car. One couple asked me to photograph them inside the Ferris wheel car set in front of a backdrop of the actual Idora Park Ferris wheel. As I took their photo, the man put his arm around the woman and the two laughed and smiled. Like this couple, my own grandparents visited the museum and wanted their photograph in the Ferris wheel car. While getting inside the car, my grandmother laughed and exclaimed “it was easier to get in when we were younger!” Once inside, my grandfather wrapped his arm around my grandmother and the two smiled wide. The attraction cars helped to create a feeling of enjoyment for its guests, as most smiled, laughed, and even pretended to be riding the actual ride.
Not only did the interactive attraction cars facilitate the feeling of fun within the museum, but many guests were also observed laughing and smiling while walking around the museum. For example, a man appearing in his 50s had bought cotton candy from the stand for himself. The cotton candy man walked around the museum while eating the sugary treat and smiled constantly. The man licked the sticky treat off his fingers, giving him the appearance of a small child. A woman with him shared the cotton candy and exclaimed to another guest “we’re having so much fun.” The two embodied the fun-filled atmosphere in a wondrous, child-like way they once, presumably, experienced at the actual park itself. During my visits to the IPE, similar interactions and reactions to the museum occurred. A majority of guests smiled and laughed while inside the museum. The warehouse was constantly filled with the noises of laughter and chatter, creating a fun-filled atmosphere. All of these combined elements within the landscape and the actual interactions created the illusion of a pleasurable atmosphere. This explains to a
Remembering the Past

As the IPE is a museum solely dedicated to honoring and remembering Idora Park, the landscape itself communicates to a guest that there is value in remembering one’s past. This discourse can be seen via the multiple artifacts and replications of Idora items placed and hung inside the warehouse. The entire museum is filled from floor to ceiling with various items related to Idora Park. Further, Jim and Toni Amey placed a card table in the middle of the museum with books filled with old newspaper clippings and photographs of Idora Park for guests to glance through. The books served as a reminder of past events that occurred in the park. Along with the artifacts and books, the museum also included a small television mounted on the wall that displayed footage from Idora Park. The combination of these three types of items in the museum helped to facilitate a landscape focused on remembering the past and its value.

For those who once visited the park, the artifacts served as a reminder of Idora and the past experiences the park provided each of them. For example, during his visit, a man named Ken S. continuously recalled new stories of his own experiences at Idora triggered by the artifacts within the IPE. The man knew of my research and continued to tell me the latest story he remembered thanks to an artifact located in the IPE. The fact that these artifacts in the museum landscape helped individuals remember Idora and their past experiences inside the former park was very common during my visits. Guests were constantly pointing to familiar objects and telling new stories about their past visits to
Youngstown’s trolley park. The museum’s landscape helped to facilitate this recollection, communicating the idea that there is value in remembering the past, as it helps to create a common bond and a good feeling for patrons.

Experiencing and Sharing the Past

The IPE not only communicates the value of remembering the past, but the landscape also encourages guests to relive the past alongside their fellow visitors. The very same elements of the landscape that helped demonstrate the value of remembering the past also creates this new narrative. Many patrons were able to experience the past Idora via this landscape while sharing the experience with former visitors and younger generations.

The artifacts and items on display at the IPE caused many patrons to feel as if they were visiting the park itself. For example, Rick equated being inside the museum to being inside Idora Park. In a similar fashion, a female patron with long grey hair pulled into a ponytail explained to me that the museum allows patrons to “enjoy the park.” Many former guests of Idora had similar feelings as those described by these two visitors; the museum’s landscape helped situate local guests back in Idora Park, allowing them to re-experience the past. Each visitor who felt transported back in time was overwhelmed with emotions of happiness and joy. A man named Larry had heard the background music playing in the museum, which he identified as the Lost River Ride soundtrack, the water ride located in Idora. After realizing the music’s significance, Larry exclaimed he “got goosebumps” and began laughing. Larry was overwhelmed by the music and was transported to the past, causing the extreme positive emotion. Another patron stated after
examining the rocket ship ride car that “those were the days.” With this statement the woman recalled the days of Idora to be happy and special days. Further, she appears to have placed high value in the past. Clearly, these patrons’ reactions to the museum’s landscape illustrate how the IPE allows individuals to experience the past. Moreover, the reactions to the landscape demonstrate Youngstown locals’ desire to return to the past, as they equate Idora with a better, happy time for themselves and their community. The museum creates a discourse that romanticizes the past via recreating a similar landscape as Idora Park, which elicits positive feelings in the museum’s guests regarding Idora Park and Youngtown.

The IPE also allows guests the opportunity to share the past with younger generations, communicating the importance of intergenerational experiences and interactions. While a majority of the IPE guests were those individuals that had once visited the park, there were many children and teenagers who accompanied them. A rollercoaster enthusiast, Mark, brought his son and another young boy to the museum. During their visit, Mark pointed to numerous artifacts, while explaining their significance to the two young boys. The two boys appeared very interested inside the museum, as they were smiling and nodding. Groups including children accompanied by adults became very common during the May 2015 visit. Many of the children reacted the same way as the two young boys, appearing to enjoy their time at the museum with their adult counterparts. During the September 2015 opening, a group consisting of three generations visited the museum: a teenage grandson, an adult son, and an elderly grandmother. The three walked through the museum together, as both the son and
grandmother reminisced about the past park to the grandson. The three asked me to take their photograph and thanked me due to the special memory the IPE was creating for them. The museum provided a space for the family to spend time together, while teaching the youngest member of the group about Youngstown’s past. The fact that many individuals had brought younger children and teens to the museum illustrates that this particular commemorative site encourages interaction between generations. Further, the fact that each member of the youngest generation appeared to enjoy themselves within the museum further proves the landscape helped to facilitate these interactions. The IPE and its commemorative landscape encourages individuals of various generations to interact with one another and communicates the positive value these interactions hold.

*The Value of Consistency*

Along with encouraging guests to celebrate, remember, and share the past, the IPE creates an atmosphere that communicates to its guests that consistency in our world should be valued. This particular discourse is especially noticeable after multiple visits to the IPE. During both the May and September 2015 visits, the museum had the same general set up: larger artifacts sat outside on a concrete slab, the warehouse held multiple Idora and Idora-like items varying in size, and there were vendor tables inside as well.

However, the IPE did rearrange the artifacts in order to slightly change the aesthetics of the museum. For example, the Kiddie Land train was placed in the center of the warehouse during the May 2015 opening, but during the September 2015 opening the same artifact was placed outside on the concrete slab (see Figures 3.38 & 3.39). Further, the IPE did add a few new artifacts to its overall display. The September 2015 opening
featured several new artifacts, such as a tin man statue from the water ride, a small replica of Laffin’ Lena’s Loonyland, and the stone water fountain from the Idora grounds (see Figure 3.40).

*Figure 3.38.* The Kiddie Train located inside the middle of the warehouse during the May 2015 opening. Photo by author.

*Figure 3.39.* The Kiddie Train now place outside of the warehouse on the concrete/grass during the September 2015 opening. Photo by author.
Although the IPE rearranged and added new artifacts and displays, the overall landscape remained consistent and similar during both 2015 openings. Each had a similar set up with the same artifacts and vendor tables, including the cotton candy stand, Idora memorabilia stand, and the Boots Bell stand. The consistency within the museum’s landscape communicates to its guests that stability and tradition should be valued in our society today. An unchanged, or slightly changed, environment can create the same experience over and over that guests will continue to visit and enjoy. Therefore, the landscape explains a constant in our lives should be valued.

*An Emphasis on Local Community*

The final discourse materialized found within the landscape of the IPE is the idea that local community is important. This discourse was apparent within the IPE due to the presence of the charity tables located outside of the warehouse during both 2015 openings. The May 2015 opening featured an egg toss that benefited the Disabled
American Veterans, while the September 2015 opening had a basket raffle table to benefit the local chapter of Angels for Animals. The presence of these charity tables within the IPE communicates to the visitor that helping local community members is important. The tables encourage guests to give back to their community via the presence of these tables.
CHAPTER 4: INDIVIDUAL MEMORIES OF IDORA

Theoretical Framework: A Materialized Landscape Creates Discourses

As the previous chapter illustrated, sites that commemorate Idora Park contain multiple and various discourses that are embedded in the landscape. However, in order to fully understand how these discourses compare to individual memories of the park, the semi-structured interviews conducted with past Idora Park visitors and employees must be analyzed before comparison can occur. Drawing on semi-structured interviews, this chapter further employs Schein’s (1997) conceptual framework of “materialized” discourses, but modifies this framework to argue that its corollary is useful in the analysis of landscapes as well; while it has been shown that the landscape can help to materialize discourses, this chapter will focus on how the materialized landscape of Idora Park has embedded various and rather consistent discourses and idea(1)s into past visitors (Schein, 1997). As these discourses have continued to influence individuals over time, individual memory and commemoration of the space not only reflects and reproduces past ideals, but has also shaped the present-day and future Youngstown societal “identity” (Dwyer and Alderman, 2008).

The Value of Familial Ties

One major reoccurring theme emerging from the individual interviews was the idea of familial ties. A majority of the interview participants described Idora Park as possessing a family atmosphere. Not only did the interviewees contextualize the space as a family place, but many also revealed that they themselves visited with family members.
These descriptions and personal testimonies suggest the strong “family values” that Idora Park instilled in its visitors, creating a discourse that emphasizes the value of family.

When asked to describe Idora Park’s atmosphere John C., a former visitor now in his 90s, described the space as “a conventional family park.” Similarly, Lisa used the phrase “fun family place” to describe Idora Park. Many other interviewees had similar responses, primarily portraying the park in general as a family-oriented place in their interviews. For example, both Mark and Jan described the park as “family oriented.” When asked what types of people the interviewees encountered at Idora Park four respondents, John T., James, Kae, and Susan all remembered being around families while visiting the park. All of these respondents painted a clear picture that Idora Park is remembered as engendering a family oriented atmosphere, which likely promoted family values in each of these respondents.

Not only did the respondents remember the park as a family fun place, but many also recalled visiting the park with their own family members. At some point during each interview, eighteen of the nineteen respondents remembered visiting Idora Park with a family member at one time in their life. For example, Betsy explained that she frequently visited Idora Park and would “usually go on Italian Day with [her] parents.” Both Christopher and Leslie, children of the famous Youngstown disc jockey Boots Bell, recounted visiting the park with their mother and father. Kae revealed that she primarily visited the park with her mother, father, and sister after eating dinner at her grandparents’ home near Idora. When asked if she attended Idora with anyone else, Kae explained that she also went with neighborhood friends, but that their family members would
accompany them as well. Both Ken S. and Lisa fondly remembered visiting Idora Park with their cousins. John T. and John C. visited the park with their children. The trend of visiting Idora Park with one’s family was a consistent theme throughout all of the interviews. The wide array of family members with whom these participants went to Idora illustrates the personal family ties each former visitor had to the park, strengthening the discourse of the value of family communicated by the park’s landscape.

While each of the former visitors recalled visiting the park alongside family members, some of the interviewees revealed a much larger familial connection to Idora Park. Both Cheryl and Patricia discussed visiting the park as a child with their parents and later on as an adult with their children. Patricia explained that she “loved sharing” the experience of Idora Park with her own children. She visited the park with her children and father, creating an intergenerational experience for the family within the space.

Tammi also formed an intergenerational connection with the park, as her family owned the cotton candy business in the park. When asked why Tammi chose to visit Idora she explained “cause my great-grandmother went there in 1929 and started her business, so I didn’t choose. I had no choice to be put there to work as a family employee.” Tammi explains it was her familial duty to be inside the park, but expressed she loved being there every day. Moreover, the former employee revealed that if Idora Park were still open she would be running the “cotton candy business there” because it is “the family tradition.” Tammi’s time at the park working alongside her family instilled a strong tie to the space because, for her, Idora Park and the family business became an influential part of her family’s history.
Another former visitor to the park revealed that her family connection to Idora began before she was even born. During her interview, Kae discussed an important event in her family’s history.

I didn’t mention my mom and dad met there. It was at Heidelberg Gardens. It was a big dancehall. There was a ballroom in Heidelberg Gardens and they met right before World War II. They had a dance there, so that was always special.

Kae brought this information to the interview without being prompted, suggesting this fact about Idora and her family is important to her own life. Idora Park not only promoted family to Kae, but helped to begin her own.

As illustrated by the responses above, Idora Park created a discourse that promoted the value of family that stuck with former visitors until the present day. Some of the participants even recognized that this narrative taught them to value family ties. Kae believes that the park “promoted families coming together and doing things together.” The former visitor recognizes the influence Idora Park had on the surrounding community, as the place provided a space that families could share together. In a similar vein, Lisa supports this idea by stating the park helped to draw in families and make Youngstown a better community. These two women recalled the ability of Idora landscape’s to create and promote this particular discourse, connected to the value of spending time with one’s family. Lisa even believes this type of discourse helped to create a better society. Mark explains that Idora Park promoted values for its visitors that “touched a lot of people.” When defining the term “value,” Mark defines the term as “what was important as means of entertainment as a family.” With this response, the rollercoaster fanatic feels that Idora’s atmosphere and landscape helped to instill certain
values in its visitors, which he identifies as the importance of spending time together as a family. The combination of individuals’ perceptions and recognition of the park’s influence on family values along with their descriptions of the park as a family atmosphere, their stories of visiting with family members, and larger familial ties to the space all suggest a larger discourse that the park engendered. The high value placed upon one’s family was a discourse promoted by Idora Park, and this particular discourse remained with the former visitors of Idora Park over time.

An Appreciation of History

Idora Park was viewed as a historically important place within the Mahoning Valley. Former visitors recalled the historic feeling they experienced during a visit to the trolley park. Further, these feelings are manifested into a discourse that allows these former patrons to have an appreciation for history.

Many interviewees explained the “old-fashioned,” historic atmosphere that Idora encompassed during a visit to the park. Mark repeatedly described the park as an “old-fashioned traditional amusement park.” He further recounted that the park was “set in a different era.” With these statements, Mark reveals that Idora Park contained historical value due to his descriptions of “old-fashioned” and “traditional.” By describing the park as being “set in a different era,” Mark suggests a historic, nostalgic feeling he experienced while visiting Idora, being figuratively transported back to a different time. Likewise, Cheryl reminisced about the park in stating that

walking up the midway, you get up—it was halfway through that park, you’d hear that carousel. It was wonderful. It was so nice. It’s like a different space. A different era…A different place and time.
Cheryl recalls walking through the park with sound of the carousel that helped to transport her to a past time period. This route back in history was a positive experience for her, as she describes the feeling as “wonderful” and “nice.” The nostalgic feeling she experienced in Idora caused her to value the idea of history in general. Ken S. also contextualized the carousel as a historic site within Idora. Referring specifically to the carousel, this former employee stated:

I got to honestly say back then—even then…I fell in love with the merry-go-round. I mean because of the pictures in there. It almost felt like a museum…It just was something special.

By comparing the Idora carousel to a “museum,” Ken S. recognized the historical value of the attraction. Moreover, this was a positive component as he explains that the carousel and its museum-like atmosphere was “something special.” Presumably, the attraction and its nostalgic atmosphere instilled a love and appreciation of history into Ken S.’s mind.

Another attraction former visitors of the park identified as soliciting a nostalgic feeling was the penny arcade. John T. explained there was one section of the arcade “that was a link to the old ‘20s and ‘30s penny arcade.” The former visitor remembered a section of games within the arcade that were from a former era, connecting visitors to the time period. Ken B. supports this idea by explaining that there are similar machines at Kennywood Park. He states that the machines are “really cool…it’s, like, wow, that’s great. I mean, they were in the early 1900s.” While Ken B. is directly discussing the penny arcade machines located at Kennywood Park, he is comparing them to those that used to be inside Idora Park’s penny arcade. Thus, the statement reveals Ken B.’s
fascination with these old machines that date to the early 1900s, which most likely arose during his time spent at Idora Park.

As illustrated above, the former employees and patrons of Idora Park have recognized the creation of an “old-fashioned” atmosphere within the boundaries of the space, creating a connection to a historical past. This feeling about Idora has instilled the idea into these interviewees that one should appreciate the past and its history, as many believe the trolley park has a historical significance to the valley. Cheryl explains, “I always wish that it were still there, but it’s just a part of history that is no longer there, but it’s alive in people who can talk about it.” In this statement, Cheryl reveals her longing for the now closed trolley park, but recognizes although it is no longer a physical piece of history, its legacy continues on through individual memories of the park. This oral history is important to Cheryl, as it is the only way to truly remember the park. In a similar statement, Betsy explains that Youngstown is not better off without the existence of Idora Park: “it diminishes us in a way because it’s a tie to our past.” The Youngstown native explains Idora Park helped to connect the community to the past, which was something to be cherished, as she believes the loss of the physical space has “diminished” the community. Betsy extended this sentiment to other landmarks she considers historically significant within Youngstown, such as Stambough Auditorium. These two women have an appreciation for history and the historical value of Idora Park, which the former park landscape helped to embed within their minds.

Mark also believed the park “was historically significant to the area and has a lot of history to it.” However, Mark further discussed his own appreciation for history. The
self-proclaimed roller coaster enthusiast travels to various amusement parks throughout the country, which have a similar old-fashioned atmosphere as Idora. Visiting these parks has become a large part of his life, which he now shares with his son. Mark explains “if it wasn’t for Idora, I wouldn’t have the appreciation I do, historically, for these types of amusement parks.” The amusement park-goer reveals that Idora Park initiated his love and appreciation for family-owned, traditional amusement parks, suggesting the park influenced his appreciation for history. Ken S. also explains his love of history in reference to Idora, as he would like to go back to Idora because he enjoys history. He told me “it’s just me. I’m a history thing.” Ken S. explains his appreciation for history as a part of his identity, which is one reason he would like to revisit the park. This appreciation of history may go back to his fascination with the museum-like carousel, as discussed previously. The park helped to instill this ideal into Ken S. as a teenager during his years of employment and visits.

Patricia and Jan, along with Ken S., also illustrate their appreciation of history through their regrets in reference to park mementos. All three former patrons expressed a regret for not having saved small tokens from the park in order to remember the space. For example, Patricia wished she did so in order to “show my grandkids and tell them about how it used to be.” The former visitor suggests her desire to share a part of her personal and local history with her grandchildren, illustrating her own appreciation for history. Jan wanted to keep them for the memories, revealing her appreciation for a personal and local history.
Overall, Idora Park created a landscape that promoted the appreciation of history via its own attractions and atmosphere, as former patrons revealed the park transported them back in time. These feelings led to an overarching discourse promoting historical significance and value. Interviewees mentioned their belief that Idora Park was historically significant to the area and even to their own personal lives and memories. Each person remembers its history in a positive manner, suggesting the park helped to create each individual’s own appreciation of history.

The Value of Nostalgia and the Past

Along with recognizing the historical value of Idora Park, the space also engendered a lasting discourse concerning nostalgia. Throughout the interviews, former employees and patrons explained their feelings of nostalgia both towards the park and in general concerning the past state of Youngstown. The park served as a site of “coming of age” for many of these individuals, creating very fond, positive memories of the park and surrounding city. For many, these nostalgic feelings about Idora and Youngstown have caused many to feel as if the past community was better than today, creating a discourse promoting the value of nostalgia and the past.

General Feelings of Nostalgia

While recounting memories of Idora Park, interview participants expressed their positive feelings of nostalgia towards the space. Two former employees of the park, David and Ken S., recounted their collection of items from Idora, including blueprints, papers, and parts of the Wildcat rollercoaster. When asked why each man took and keeps these Idora items David replied “great memories” and Ken B. simply stated “memories.”
Both of these men have held onto these items for over thirty years in order to remind them of Idora Park and the good times they each had there. The mementos serve as a symbol of their nostalgia.

Rick suggests the ideal of nostalgia was embedded within the park itself as he thinks “that there’s maybe much more of a nostalgia factor with places like Idora Park because they didn’t change.” In this statement, Rick believes Idora Park itself contained elements that represented the idea of nostalgia, explaining parks similar to Idora contain a “nostalgia factor.” This was embedded in the attractions and landscapes that remained consistent, as he explains this “factor” occurred due to the fact that Idora “didn’t change.” Further, he believes the good times had within the park created this “nostalgic and emotional attachment to Idora Park.” Therefore, Rick personally recognized the discourse contained within both the landscape and experience of being inside Idora, which was an emphasis on nostalgia and the past.

Supporting Rick’s notion that Idora contained a “nostalgia factor,” a handful of interview participants recognized their own feelings of nostalgia towards Idora Park in an explicit manner. When asked why Christopher would want to return to Idora Park, the former park visitor would go “for the nostalgic reasons” and “for the fact that it was fun.” These two reasons support Rick’s own notion, as Christopher explains he would want to return due to the good experiences he had at the park and the park would provide a reflective feeling of the past. Cheryl explained that the music on Idora’s carousel is “so nostalgic” and I would love it. This particular statement reveals Cheryl’s recognition of the worth of nostalgic feelings. She explained that the carousel provides this type of
feeling. Further, when telling me I would love the feeling, suggests her own love of that sensation. In a much more overt manner, Rick has the same feelings towards the carousel. During our conversation, Rick expressed his interest in visiting Jane’s Carousel. I asked him why he would like to go ride the carousel at its new location to which Rick stated “nostalgia.” Clearly, the carousel created feelings of nostalgia in both Cheryl and Rick, causing them each to remember it fondly and even desire to travel to the attraction’s new location. Both past visitors display the value each has placed on the idea of nostalgia.

Site of “Coming of Age”

While a handful of interview participants explicitly recognized the nostalgic factor within Idora Park and their feelings towards the space, others expressed these feelings in a more implicit manner. Many of these feelings of nostalgia were discussed in reference to the participants’ teenage years spent at Idora Park. The park served as a site of “coming of age” for a majority of the participants, where the once teenagers were exposed to new experiences and ideas during their formative years. These new experiences included being alone without one’s parents, the obtainment of a first job, and romantic encounters. As many of the former visitors and employees expressed these formative experiences that occurred at Idora, they, simultaneously, revealed their feelings of nostalgia.

Independence from Parents

A majority of the former visitors to Idora expressed that they each visited the park without any adults. Several of the interviewees recounted that during their middle and high school years they began visiting Idora with their cousins and friends. For many, this
independence from their parents created a sense of independence, fostering the development of strong feelings towards the park.

Fourteen of the former visitors explicitly revealed once he/she “got older,” they were able to visit Idora with no adult supervision. When asked with whom Betsy primarily attended the park she explained

mostly my friends. Well, as I got older, it was my friends. My parents stopped going. We went on a couple of school outings [and] a couple of concerts there in the ballroom. We saw Bobby Sherman. I was a kid, what could I say—I was 16, he was cute. I was with my girlfriends, so that’s mostly who I went with. My friends.

For Betsy the park became a place to spend time with her friends over the years. At Idora Park, she was able to participate in activities that she was interested in, such as listening to a “cute” pop star play music and sing. In the same vein, Patricia, who used to visit Idora Park with her parents as a child, revealed she often went to Idora Park once a week “especially when I got older and we could go without our parents. That was something we girls…went [to] every week. To those over 18 dances.” Much like Betsy, Idora Park turned into a place to socialize with one’s friends as Patricia got older. Similar to these two women, both John C. and John T. explained they began visiting the park during junior high with other children from each man’s neighborhood. Similar stories continued with many other former visitors of Idora.

As illustrated above, Idora Park created a space for pre-teenagers and teenagers to gather together without adult supervision. For many, this created a new found sense of independence. David, whose parents would drop him and his brother off at Idora Park, explains that
your parents could let you go run loose for hours and not even worry about where you are and if you’re safe or anything like that, but it was just a great feeling. It really was.

In this statement, David reveals that being on his own in Idora was a “great feeling,” suggesting he felt independent inside the park’s boundaries. David could do anything he wanted inside, making him develop positive, even nostalgic, feelings towards the park.

Kae also recalls being allowed inside the park without adult supervision as she mentioned “you’d get dropped off by your parents and picked up…you’d be on your own and have fun for the day.” With this statement, Kae equates the two ideas of being on “your own” and having “fun for the day,” suggesting the reason she enjoyed herself within the park was due to a lack of adult supervision. This independence created a positive experience for the former visitor.

Other former visitors explicitly mentioned the feeling of independence they felt at Idora Park. For example, a story that stood out in Leslie’s memory was a time she was able to visit the park with her boyfriend and his friends. The woman explained this was a special memory for her “because I was on my own. I was closer to being an adult. It was cool that you got to go with your grown up friends more.” Leslie’s experience of attending the park with her boyfriend and friends gave her a new sense of independence and a taste of adulthood. Clearly, this experience was formative, as it was the only story that stood out in her mind about Idora, suggesting a strong connection to Idora due to its influence on her as a teenager. Lisa, an out of town visitor, revealed similar feelings. She explained how she felt “happy” and “grown up” in the park “because you were by yourselves.” Her happiness inside the park was partially due to the fact she and her
cousins were able to be alone inside the park, giving them a greater sense of independence. The separation from adults made Lisa feel “grown up” during her formative years.

Being alone without adult supervision was a recurrent theme associated with these individuals’ experiences at Idora Park. Many of their memories centered on being in the park with cousins and friends during their formative years. These strong and positive memories suggest this feeling of independence is one reason for the participants’ strong attachment to Idora Park. Further, these positive and vivid memories instilled feelings of nostalgia. Christopher explicitly recognizes this particular connection. The park visitor revealed he would want to return to Idora “for the nostalgic reasons,” and “for the fact that it was fun—it was a stomping grounds of my youth.” As Idora Park served as a regular “hang out” for Christopher, he feels very wistful towards the former trolley park. This statement perfectly explains why so many interview participants have nostalgic feelings towards Idora, as it served as a site to spend time frequently with other children their age during formative years much like Christopher.

First Job Experience

Six of the interview participants were employed by Idora Park during their adolescent years, experiencing the job market for the first time. The park provided an atmosphere where each learned to work for a wage, listen to authority figures, and even have fun while working. This specific experience at Idora for each of the former teenage employees generated multiple positive memories for each, creating a fond, nostalgic feeling towards their first job experience within the park’s boundaries.
For each of the former employees, Idora Park provided a rather significant work experience. When asked if anything significant happened to him at Idora Park, David responded that being an “Idorable” at the park “was my first job…I guess, significant in the fact that it was my first taste of actually making money.” David’s experience dressing up as a character at the park provided his first work experience, which he identifies as a noteworthy part of his life. During David’s interview, a majority of his stories were from when he worked at the park. These stories combined with his statement suggest his fondness for the park due to his employment there as a teenager. Tammi also exhibited strong, positive feelings in reference to being an employee at the park. When asked if she went to the park often with her family, Tammi quickly corrected me in saying “I didn’t go there. I worked there. I was employed when I was about 13 years old” in the family business. This explanation that she did not actually visit the park, but rather worked there, expresses Tammi’s pride in being a former Idora employee. Like David, much of Tammi’s interview focused on her memories about being a worker in the park. She developed a strong attachment to the park due to her family’s business located within Idora Park, creating a nostalgic feeling towards the space itself.

Both John C. and James describe how the park provided experience with listening to and respecting authority. One impression about Idora that stood out in John C.’s mind was the fact that he “learned how to get bossed around because you always had a boss watching you.” As this was one of the memories of Idora that stood out in his mind, the experience of listening to authority figures was a significant experience the former employee took from working at Idora. The job prepared him for working later on as an
adult. In a similar vein, James said that he loved working at the park as it was the first time he was “in charge of something…It was my first real introduction to any kind of authority.” James not only learned to answer to an authority figure, but was also able to be an authority figure within the park, instilling a very positive memory of the space. Both of these men’s first experiences with authority was a significant moment in their lives, suggesting a strong attachment to the park itself.

Not only did park employment provide these six former employees a chance to gain experience in the workforce and with authority figures, but Idora Park also created a fun and positive atmosphere in which to work. These fun and positive memories regarding employment in Idora suggests a reason the six former employees have developed a strong attachment to, and a nostalgic feeling towards, the park. As explained previously, David and Tammi primarily discussed their positive experiences within Idora Park as former workers. Further, Ken B., former operator of the Wildcat rollercoaster, also focused much of his interview on his memories of working there. For example, Ken B. explained the fond memories he had of working at the park and bonding with his fellow employees after hours. These stories that surfaced during the interviews suggest each person’s strong attachment to the park. Ken S., explaining what it felt like to work at Idora Park, reveals that “it would be like an alcoholic getting a job at a bar. Here I got a job where I would have been, probably, anyway, so it was like getting paid to have a good time.” With this metaphor, Ken S. explains his strong feelings towards Idora Park both as an employee and a visitor, suggesting he very much enjoyed himself at the park. When Ken S. explains he was “getting paid to have a good time,” the individual reveals
his work was fun and enjoyable, creating a positive feeling towards his time as an employee. James also said that working at Idora Park “was a lot of fun,” suggesting one reason for his positive feelings towards the space. Further, he explained that his love of working at Idora was due to the fact that “you felt like you were somebody special because you worked at Idora Park.” This statement reveals that James’ strong attachment to the park as an employee was because it made him feel distinct and unique. As an employee, James had fun, while feeling like an extraordinary person, creating an attachment to the park.

Overall, the six former employees of Idora Park who worked there as adolescents, overwhelmingly, expressed their positive memories and feelings towards the experience. By obtaining their first job within the park and learning new skills, the individuals developed a strong attachment to the park, as illustrated through their thoughts and stories centering on the experience. Further, as each expressed the good time he/she had while working, the attachment appeared to be stronger. The combination of each participants’ first job experience at Idora along with the enjoyment it provided them, suggests the strong nostalgic feeling each has towards the space due to their adolescent job experience.

Romantic Encounters

Trolley parks have been found to provide a “comfortable” space for young adolescents’ and adults to meet “members of the opposite sex” (Nasaw, 1993, p. 90). Nasaw (1993) explains parks included multiple environments, including a ballroom and dark rides, for couples to meet, spend time together, and even share intimate moments.
Idora Park was no different than the typical trolley park in this case, as a majority of the interview participants discussed their own romantic experiences within the space. Many of the participants were young teenagers at the time of his/her experience with love at the park. These romantic encounters have stayed with them over the years, creating a rather fond and nostalgic feeling towards the park that allowed them to experience new love and emotions.

The interview participants explained that there were multiple places for teenagers and young adults to share intimate moments together within the park environment. One of these spaces was the water ride, which was known both as the Tunnel of Love and, in Idora’s later years, The Lost River Ride. Cheryl explains

we [would] go on the Lost River. That was the big thing in high school. That was a big thing…because it was a type of ride…it could be intimate. I mean, if that was your mindset, so for some of them it was.

Cheryl reveals the Lost River was a ride that “some” high school aged children rode in order to become intimate with another individual. By stating going on the Lost River ride “was the big thing in high school,” the Pennsylvania native reveals the attraction created a significant experience for those children wanting intimate time with another individual. The ride provided this particular romantic opportunity, which is one of the reasons the water ride was popular among teenagers. A few other participants mentioned the romance the water ride offered adolescents. Patricia explained the favorite ride in Idora was the Tunnel of Love “probably because when you went in with your boyfriend, you snuck a kiss here and there.” The Tunnel of Love, as it was previously called by teenagers, allowed them to kiss in a semi-private setting because, as Patricia explains “it was in the
dark.” Supporting this idea both John T. and Ken S. also explained the purpose of the
Lost River Ride according to young adults. John T. stated that “it was a good necking
tunnel” and Ken S. revealed “that was the make-out ride.” Both of these men and Patricia
reveal this specific ride allowed for private moments for teenagers to partake in together.

Although the Lost River Ride was primarily identified as the ride for adolescent
individuals and romance, there were other areas that provided similar opportunities. For
example, Ken S. explained there was “a mini-mountain in the center of the park…that
was make-out mountain” where young couples would go during record hops. The
caterpillar ride was also identified as an attraction that simulated romantic encounters.
Rick stated

the caterpillar had a canopy that…took you up and down a bumpy track in a
circle, but the big attraction was that this canvas canopy would come over you
shortly after the ride started. So you were in total darkness. You’re spinning
around for a few minutes in circles. Well, there’s nothing to do, except wait for
the ride to be over and the canopy would open again, but, if you’re with someone
of the opposite sex, who was a willing partner, who knows what could happen in
the dark.

Although Rick never rode the caterpillar himself, he explains one of the appeals of this
ride was the opportunity for short romantic exploits for teenagers within the semi-private,
covered attraction car. The mention of these spaces along with the Lost River Ride by
multiple interviewees illustrates their knowledge of and even suggests their involvement
in said encounters. The fact that these interviewees discuss these activities reveals that
romantic encounters were important personal experiences at Idora, which will be further
illustrated via individuals’ personal testimonies.
Supporting Nasaw’s (1993) idea that trolley parks were great spaces for young adults to meet one another and spend time together, the interview participants pointed to this type of social gathering occurring in Idora. When asked why the interview participants chose to visit Idora Park, James, John T., and Ken S. all revealed they each went to the park to meet and spend time with girls. James even went to the park on his days off because “there were pretty girls everywhere.” These men reveal the park drew them into the space because they had the opportunity to meet and interact with “pretty” girls. As a youth, the park was a social gathering for young adults, where new love could be found and experienced. Some participants even met boyfriends and girlfriends at the park, which strengthens the attachment to the space. For example, David mentioned having a girlfriend from the park was a moderately significant event from his life. Jan also met a teenage significant other at the park. She considers meeting her now ex-boyfriend a significant life event. Idora Park clearly provided and delivered to young adolescents the chance partake in romantic encounters. These opportunities have stuck with the interviewees, suggesting their attachment to Idora somewhat stems from these past activities, interactions, and relationships.

Although both relationships above did not last for the two interviewees, other former visitors of the park found love within Idora and/or spent time with their life partner within the space. Patricia detailed the story of when she and her now husband met at a dance in the Idora Park ballroom as the first memory she associates with Idora Park. This is utmost in her mind because, as she reveals
that’s my life. If I wouldn’t have went, I would have met [him]. And if he wouldn’t have been at Idora Park when I was then we wouldn’t have met each other.

In this statement, Patricia explains the impact Idora Park has had on her life. The park’s ballroom facilitated the meeting between she and her husband, or as she refers to her “life.” The park began the romance and life Patricia and her husband now share, creating a strong attachment and fondness for the space. John C. also remembers visiting the ballroom with his now wife at the Idora Park dancehall. He told me when asked if he went to any dances he said “oh, god. Mary Jane went an awful lot. My wife and I went an awful lot.” While John C. did not detail their time spent together in the ballroom, his short, simple statement suggests the vast memories he had with his wife at Idora. John C. claimed he and Mary Jane “went an awful lot” as young adults, suggesting the significance the space had on their relationship and times together during their youth. By saying they went a lot, John C. suggests their enjoyment of the Idora Park dances. John T. also revealed he spent time with his current wife at Idora Park. The former visitor revealed that he and his wife used to kiss inside the Lost River Ride while smiling and laughing. This reaction illustrates John T.’s remembrance of their young love, suggesting a bond to the park due to the time spent within it with his wife. These three interview participants told stories of their experiences within Idora with their live long partner, each suggesting the bond that occurred within the space. The fact that Idora was a site for them to meet and build their love for their partner, suggests a strong attachment and even nostalgic feeling towards the space.
As demonstrated by a majority of the interview participants, Idora Park served as a site for romantic encounters for teenage individuals. Many visited the park to meet potential romantic interests and/or to share intimate moments together. Some found young love within the park that had an impact on their lives in the short term, while others found a life-long love within the space. The park provided the opportunity for young love to bloom and grow. These instances of romantic encounters are very present in the minds of the former Idora Park visitors, as a majority discussed these events in their interviews. Articulating this idea, Christopher explained that inside the park he felt excited “because…at that time you’re discovering young love or something like that.” Christopher reveals his excitement was due to the chance of spending time with a crush. The idea of finding love was very present in his mind within Idora Park. The frequency and quantity of these discussions strongly suggests a reason many of the former employees and visitors enjoyed visiting Idora, creating a stronger attachment and nostalgic feeling.

Site of “Coming of Age” Leads to Nostalgic Feelings

As demonstrated by the former employees and visitors of Idora Park, the space served as a “hang out” spot for young adolescents. Each of the interview participants mentioned in one way or another utilizing the space during their adolescent years. David even revealed that some of his “best memories of growing up” occurred at Idora Park. The former visitor and employee reveals his positive, nostalgic emotions towards the park that were instilled in him during a young stage in his life. As this specific stage of life is particularly formative to any individual, many experiences appeared to have left an
impression on each interviewee via the many stories concerning teenage years spent in Idora Park. John T. even explicitly supported this idea, as he revealed Idora was “an integral part of my life, during my formative years, which were my teenage years.” The park is intertwined with John T.’s life, as the space provided him with important lessons and positive memories from his teenage years. Much like John T., all the participants recounted stories about their teenage years within Idora in a positive manner, suggesting their fondness of both the memories and the park. The individuals had significant experiences within this setting, especially to a young person, including the first taste of independence, a first job experience, and even short-lasting or long-lasting romantic encounters. These formative and impressionable experiences created a bond between the individual and the park, generating a strong attachment to the park itself. The individuals’ attachment and fondness of the park produces a nostalgic feeling for each of the participants.

**The Better Society of the Past**

As illustrated above, the former patrons and workers of Idora Park have learned the value of nostalgia due to the park and each person’s individual experience within the space. These very strong feelings of nostalgia have led many of the interviewees to long for the past, creating a discourse in which the participants believe the past society of Youngstown is preferable to today’s. Many of these interviewees mentioned their fondness of the past and wish to return not only to Idora Park, but the past in general.
Two interviewees discussed the quality of Idora Park’s built environment compared to today’s craftsmanship. James explained that he would rather have a park like Idora due to the wooden games. He further clarifies you don’t see that anymore. Now everything’s plastic or tin or made in China. It’s not this good, old American craftsmanship when they made the stuff here. And they did a good job. Even the stainless steel rocket ship. That thing’s been out in the weather since probably 1948. Now I keep it indoors and I’ve had it for about three years now…but the stainless steel isn’t rusted. It’s good American stainless steel.

In this statement, James reveals his preference for American-made goods, as he believes the quality is better compared to items built in other areas of the world. By explaining the rocket ship car had not “rusted” illustrates one reason he believes this fact. While James uses Idora Park artifacts and old attractions as a reference point to compare today’s craftsmanship to, the interviewee is not only wishing for the past Idora Park. Instead, James suggests his belief that the past American, manufacturing society was better than today’s service driven society. He cherishes the past society where manufacturing and handcraftsmanship dominated the American economy. The Idora Park games and rides instilled this ideal in James, in which he believes the past created a better quality product.

Christopher also mentioned a similar ideal in his interview as he reveals old things, antiques are survivors. They don’t build things like they built them back in the day. A lot of these things sitting here today, if they were built today would have been rotted into the ground in five or ten years. And, as you can see, these things are 50, maybe 80 years old…and they’re still here.

Christopher illustrates his fondness for older items, as he uses the antiques from Idora as a point of reference. In this participant’s mind, these older products are better quality than any made today because today’s manufactured products would last a much shorter period
of time than those previously built. Much like James, Christopher reveals his belief that the past created a better quality product, which cannot be replicated in today’s economy. Both of these men long for a better society by discussing the building and manufacturing quality of items made during Idora’s time to today.

Interview participants used very similar words when describing the time period and society Idora Park was situated in. Some of these words included “innocent” and “safer.” Leslie explained that inside the park she felt “carefree” and it was “a simple time. I look back on that and it was very—it was so fun, but...the ‘60s was so much more of a simple time.” In this statement, the interview participant explains she remembers Idora Park in the 1960s as an effortless time in her life and society in general. Contrary to the interviewee’s belief, the 1960s in Youngstown was not exactly carefree and simple; the local society was subject to economic decline, racial segregation and violence, and the hardships associated with the Vietnam War (High, 2002; Posey, 2013). These controversial and stressful events most likely impacted the community, but Idora provided a place for children, and even adults, to escape the hard realities of society, helping to create an illusion of a “carefree” and “simple” society. This illusion of simplicity is cherished by the former visitor, as she said this time in her life was fun both inside and outside of the park. Further, Leslie explained she misses and would like to go back to that time, suggesting she is longing for the past. David also suggests his carefree feeling within the park saying that he absolutely loved it. It was something you could do and, of course, back at that time, it wasn’t like today, where things [have] gotten out of control. Your parents could let you go run loose for hours and not even worry about where you are and if you’re safe.
David explains the past was different than today because children could roam free without fear of being harmed. This is a feeling he loved and cherished. Lisa had a similar thought to David explaining she would run around Idora without supervision or fear, but “you couldn’t do that now.” Both Lisa and David point out an advantage the past society had over today’s, in which parents were not fearful of their children being harmed or kidnapped.

Many participants also described the past Idora and past society as a “simple” time. For example, Susan began discussing the time period Idora Park operated in explaining that “it was just a simpler time. You know, now you got kids on each end of a room texting each other. Back then we just talked to each other.” In this statement, Susan reveals her fondness of the past, as face-to-face interactions were more common. Cell phones have stunted these types of interactions, which is an advantage the past in general had over today’s society. In a similar fashion in discussing today’s society, Betsy explains she mostly texts her family members on occasion rather than writing or calling, which is something our society has lost. The participant suggests the art of written and oral conversation is lacking, but not being replaced by a quality communication technique. Instead, both of these women appear to be longing for a past where quality communication was common.

Patricia also demonstrates her fondness of the past’s simplicity, as she wants to take her two young grandsons back to Idora Park because I think they need to experience something like that. It would be nice…[be]cause kids need to know everything doesn’t have to be so blown up and, you know,
such an extravaganza. Just have good, old fun just walking down the midway and maybe riding the rides that just go around.

Patricia explains the simplicity of Idora Park by describing the experience as “just walking down the midway” and a ride that “just go[es] around.” These descriptions illustrate the idea of simplicity. Simplicity is a positive idea in Patricia’s mind, as she still describes the activities as “fun.” She explains this simplicity needs to be exposed to today’s youngest generation because the current trend is for children to want exaggerated, larger-than-life experiences and entertainment.

James also wishes that today’s younger generations could have experienced Idora Park, as he explains he feels bad for the local children who never knew about or visited Idora. When asked why he feels this way James replied because they don’t have the memories. What memories do they have—I mean I got to see Youngstown, not at its peak because at its peak was probably in the 40s and 50s. I was around in the 60s and 70s…I kind of look at today’s kids and I see that they’re sitting at home playing their…Sega…We didn’t do that stuff. We were outside playing, having a good time and if you were lucky you got to go to Idora Park.

First, James reveals his belief that the past Youngstown was better than today’s, saying it peaked before his birth and declined until today. He explains his fondness of his childhood experiences and entertainment over his perceptions of what children do today. By feeling bad for today’s children, James suggests his belief that the past created a better society (and Youngstown) for children to grow up in, suggesting that he longs for the past.

Each of these interviewees have pointed to ways in which the past was better than the present day, using Idora Park as a reference point to illustrate their thoughts.
However, while Idora Park helped to create these ideals, the participants are not just longing for a past Idora, but a “simpler,” industrial past in general. These feelings tend to come out of nostalgia for the park, but manifest themselves in a greater feeling that the past was a better place for Idora, Youngstown, and American society. There is a present narrative in these individuals’ minds that the past was a greater place and should be returned to. While these individuals are not explicitly saying they want to travel back in time, each implies their wish to go back to a simpler time or, at least, borrow elements of the past.

The Worth of Consistency and Familiarity

Another major discourse that arose during the interview process was the idea that both consistency and familiarity are admirable traits. Participants revealed that the park was similar from season to season, and changed little over time. This unchanging atmosphere instilled a discourse within the participants encouraging them to value consistency and familiarity in their everyday lives. While some held these beliefs during the park’s existence, for others it took losing the park to realize the value of familiarity. Both the landscape and the atmosphere helped to engender this particular discourse.

The landscape of Idora Park barely changed over its years of operation according to the former patrons and workers. Not only did the park remain largely unchanged, but the interview participants suggested the same atmosphere and landscape from year to year was a positive aspect of the park in general. Rick even believes that

If you somehow were able to transport multiple generations of a family back to Idora, the grandparents [and] the great-grandparents would recognize it because it didn’t substantially change. You could take somebody who’s been dead a hundred years, drop them down on the midway, and they’d know their way to get to the
merry-go-round, the Ferris wheel, and some of the other rides. And there’s something charming about that…familiarity every year when it opened.

In this statement, Rick explains that he believes Idora Park contained the same landscape and atmosphere throughout its years of operation. The park created a familiar atmosphere that he viewed as a positive aspect of the park, as he explained this familiarity was “charming.” In recounting a visit to Idora with his daughter, Ken S., a former teenage employee, explained that the park was “basically the same.” He maintained that he enjoyed the park being the same because of the memories he was able to recount and share with his daughter and wife. In a similar vein, Lisa mentioned that she would enjoy taking her future grandchildren to Idora Park were it still open. When asked why the former out-of-town visitor would like to attend the urban amusement park with her grandchildren, Lisa revealed she wanted them to experience “the same atmosphere” she had experienced as a child. This wish suggests Lisa felt the park’s atmosphere remained consistent throughout her time visiting the park and that she valued this particular consistency, as the park’s familiarity is the primary reason for wanting her grandchildren to experience Idora Park. Leslie also referenced the park’s familiarity and unchanging landscape as a cherished quality of Idora. The former visitor does not recall many changes made to the park during her visits in the 1960s and 1970s, explaining “you always looked for the same things when you would go.” This statement reveals the consistent atmosphere and attractions Leslie remembers in Idora’s landscape. Further, the former visitor explains the consistency in attractions was valuable, describing the familiarity as “comfort” and equating the park’s familiar attractions to seeing “an old
friend.” These words suggest Leslie not only recalled an unchanging landscape, but also enjoyed and cherished this particular park quality.

Along with the physical landscape and overall atmosphere of the park, former guests and employees explained Idora Park also allowed them to interact with similar people, emphasizing the value of consistency and familiarity. A former visitor of the park, Kae, reveals a reason for wishing her children could have visited Idora was the fact that “you’d always see people you knew there.” She then explained immediately after this statement that there were “a lot fun times within the park.” In this statement, Kae reveals Idora attracted people she was familiar with and, by revealing the park was “a lot of fun” immediately after stating this, the participant suggests the familiarity within the park and its guests were one of the reasons she valued visiting Idora Park.

Former employees also revealed the idea of familiarity concerning individuals within the park. Both Ken S., an employee in the early 1960s, and David, an employee during the late 1970s, explained that inside the park everyone knew everybody. Each man provided an explanation along with this statement suggesting this familiarity provided perks. Ken S. revealed that this familiarity with both the staff and the guests allowed him to feel as if he “fit in with everybody.” David explained the staff familiarity provided many perks for a teenage employee, including free or discounted food. Both of these men valued this quality because of the positive impact it had on their experiences in Idora. Tammi, an employee of the cotton candy stand, also noted the perks of being familiar with those inside Idora’s boundaries. Due to the fact that she “knew everybody,” Tammi felt comfortable riding various attractions on her own or with fellow employees. The
aspect of being familiar with the fellow workers and visitors gave Tammi a sense of
security and freedom to feel comfortable to explore the park alone, allowing her to value
this ideal.

While some of the former employees recounted the positive aspects of
consistency and familiarity, others did not feel the same way. John T. explained his
perception of the park’s consistency in a much different manner than the previous
visitors, recalling that “I was there so many times and so often that I became jaded to the
park itself,” after equating going to Idora to any daily mundane task. With this statement,
John T. revealed that Idora did, indeed, contain a familiar atmosphere and landscape, but
this consistency eventually became unappealing to him. In a similar statement James, a
former employee who worked there in the 1970s, revealed that he thought Idora would
always be open, so he remembers wanting to go other places, such as Cedar Point.
However, the former employee now finds himself wishing Idora were still open and
could walk the grounds just as they were, explaining that he “just misses it.” James
suggests he also became bored because of the park’s familiarity, as he wanted to travel to
other sites for entertainment purposes. Once the park was gone, however, the former
employee now finds himself wanting the park back just as it was. Therefore, James
highlights the discourse of the value of consistency and familiarity because he now finds
himself wishing for the same Idora, illustrating this discourse in his way of thinking
about the park.

Many participants praised Idora Park for its familiar and consistent atmosphere,
landscape, and patron base. This consistency and familiarity inside the park’s boundaries
instilled the idea to its employees and patrons that these ideals should be valued, as many remember these aspects of Idora in a positive manner. The interview participants recognized the comfort, historical value, personal gain, and other perks that were associated with this particular discourse, which has continued to influence their thoughts and lives to present day.

Hometown, Local Pride

As explained previously, Idora Park was a locally owned and operated trolley park situated in the rather small city of Youngstown, Ohio. The trolley park communicated the idea that one should be proud of their hometown/local community, and this central idea is conveyed in multiple ways. Participants expressed their pride in their hometown park by mentioning the aesthetics of the landscape, Idora’s ability to cater to the local community and draw in “big city” entertainment, and their own feelings of personal ownership of the trolley park.

Aesthetically Pleasing

One of the reasons participants felt prideful about their hometown, local urban amusement park was the aesthetics contained therein. Many interviewees commented on the beauty and cleanliness of the park. Susan, a former visitor and resident of the South side of Youngstown, explained that Idora “was just beautiful…they had flowers growing everywhere. It had a Mill Creek Park setting all the time. And clean. You never saw it dirty. Never.” With this statement Susan is expressing her pride in the beautiful, clean park adorned with natural elements, as she compares it to the largest natural park located in Youngstown: Mill Creek Park. The attributes she gave to the park, “beautiful” and
“clean,” are emphasized. Susan reveals that beauty to her meant natural elements, such as flowers, within the park. Further, the fact that the participant repeated the word “never” after stating the park was never dirty reveals this is a point of pride about Idora Park for Susan. Similarly, Tammi and Kae also revealed their pride in the beauty of the park by stating that Idora was aesthetically pleasing due to the flowers and the cleanliness of the park. The overall aesthetics of the park atmosphere provided a reason for these individuals to feel prideful about Idora.

Along with the overall beautiful atmosphere individuals pointed to concerning the aesthetic beauty of Idora Park, many participants were also proud of the pleasing aesthetics of specific attractions. One of these attractions patrons mentioned was the Lost River Ride. In describing the ride John T., a visitor in the 1950s and beyond, believes that the Rapids was unique. I don’t care where you go, you’ll never see a sight prettier than that windmill at night with the colored waterfalls. It was just beautiful because the windmill was unique.

This statement not only reveals John T.’s feeling about the beauty of the ride, but it also shows his pride in the ride’s aesthetics. When John T. states that “you’ll never see a sight prettier” than the windmill, he reveals his pride in the ride, as he believes this particular attraction within Idora cannot be replicated. The beauty of the attraction made it unique, which is something to be proud of, according to John T.

The Idora Carousel also served as an aesthetically pleasing attraction according to interview participants. Patricia explains that she enjoyed the carousel because it was “gorgeous.” While Patricia reveals the beauty of the carousel was a point of pride, Susan further explains why she was proud of the attraction. Susan believed that the carousel was
the focal point of the park “because it was so pretty.” Clearly, both these women were proud of the carousel’s beauty, as they each enjoyed the attraction due to its aesthetic appeal. By describing the carousel as the park’s focal point, Susan reveals its greater role in the park, as she believes the carousel and its beauty was the main point of interest within Idora. As Susan believes the carousel was the park’s primary attraction, the former visitor of Idora implies her pride of the ride.

Along with the Lost River Ride and Idora Carousel, both Mark and Patricia explained the aesthetic value of the ballroom located within Idora Park. Mark described the ballroom as “beautiful inside,” as the building was filled with “beautiful architecture.” Expanding on this idea, Patricia stated that “the ballroom was gorgeous. It really was. It was one of the nicest places in Youngstown at the time.” Both Mark and Patricia express the beauty of the ballroom, revealing that its aesthetics is something Youngstown locals could be proud of. However, Patricia takes this idea further by stating that the ballroom “was one of the nicest places in Youngstown.” This statement illustrates Patricia’s pride in the ballroom, as it was a nice, aesthetically pleasing place to gather within the city of Youngstown.

A Local Point of Interest

Idora Park appeared to have served its local community, as eighteen of the nineteen interview participants claimed to have grown up in the city of Youngstown or the surrounding areas. More importantly, the participants were quick to point out the importance the park had on their community and its reputation. Idora served as a
gathering place for its local community that created a special and big city feeling for its patrons, serving as a point of pride for these individuals.

Idora Park served its local community, allowing the overall park to have a hometown feeling. Rick stated in his interview that “Idora was the perfect example of the old time trolley park that largely drew from the community that it was situated in.” Supporting this notion of catering to the local community, Renee, a visitor in the 1970s, believes that the urban amusement park “catered more to the hometown first.” Both interviewees reveal the park was in place primarily to serve the surrounding area, giving the space itself a large connection to the local community.

As Idora Park primarily served the Youngstown area, many of the interviewees claimed that visiting the old trolley park was socially important during its existence. Ken S. explains that, living in Youngstown, Idora “was the place to be, the place to go.” Echoing this sentiment, many other participants explained to me that going to Idora created a distinctive experience for them. Cheryl, Betsy, and Rick all described an outing to the park was a “special experience;” Leslie described the experience as a “big treat to get to go,” while Lisa explained it was a “big deal” to visit Idora. Each of these former visitors reveals the importance Idora had on their lives, as they all believed it was a positive experience. The individuals’ positive reactions to the space demonstrates their pride in their hometown park.

Furthering this love and pride of the hometown, local trolley park another individual detailed the experience as more than a “special event” or “big deal.” Describing his reasoning for visiting the park in the 1960s as a child, James stated that
Idora “was an amusement park right here in town, so you couldn’t really beat it. How many towns have an amusement park? Very, very few.” In this statement, James explains that Youngstown’s trolley park was one of the best attractions within the city, stating “you couldn’t…beat it.” Further, he singles out the existence of this space within the city by asking how many other cities have an amusement park before stating “very few” do. James suggests that Youngstown had a very unique and special place in Idora, making its existence in the city something to be proud of.

While some of the interviewees were prideful of the ballroom due to its aesthetics, as previously discussed, many more mentioned the park and its ability to draw in big name acts in the ballroom throughout the years of its operation. When describing the ballroom at Idora, John T., a visitor starting in the 1950s, reveals that “there was a time when every major band in the country made their annual—might I add: annual—appearance at the Idora Park ballroom.” This statement reveals that John T. felt extremely popular bands would consistently play at the Idora ballroom. Moreover, John T. implies his pride in the ballroom and its ability to draw in these acts by emphasizing the word “annual” in his statement. Betsy supports John T.’s sentiment that Idora drew in very popular bands that would typically visit much larger cities. The former visitor explained that the Idora ballroom served as a stopping point for big name bands and acts traveling between Cleveland and Pittsburgh as well as Chicago and New York. Christopher, a visitor who himself played at Idora in the 1980s, also revealed that the “ballroom was the largest one between New York and Chicago and it gave Youngstown a real spot on the map.” By suggesting the ballroom gave the city a “real spot on the map,” Christopher
suggests his pride of the ballroom due to its ability to help recognize Youngstown on a national scale. The musician also explained the park even drew in rock bands, such as the Raspberries and the Eagles along with “heartthrob” acts, including David Cassidy and Bobby Sherman. Renee remembers going to see the Michael Stanley Band there in the 1980s. Earlier during Idora’s existence, Betsy reveals that the ballroom was able to book big name acts of the 1950s and 1960s, such as Duke Ellington and Frank Sinatra. The local, hometown park was able to draw in large city acts due to its ballroom and location, allowing local Youngstown citizens not only to experience city-type shows, but also be proud of its ballroom and ability to do so.

The park’s hometown feeling, overall experience, and ability to draw in big name bands and musical acts combined instilled the idea into the interview participants that Idora Park was an important place to visit in the Youngstown area. Renee believes that the park “was the place to go.” Furthering this idea, John T. explains that Idora “was the only show in town. Playgrounds were open, but Idora Park had that lure of excitement.” In a similar statement, Leslie explains that Idora “was the big thing” in terms of entertainment. The park clearly served as Youngstown’s major entertainment attraction, producing a sense of pride in its local citizens.

The fact that Idora Park provided a vast array of entertainment within the city of Youngstown clearly produced a discourse of hometown, local pride in former visitors. For example, former employee of the 1970s, David, revealed that Idora Park provided children and other citizens with a place to go to “enjoy themselves all day.” Further, he explained the fact that Youngstown had an amusement park drew people into the city of
Youngstown rather than out of it. David reveals Idora Park provided a space for local entertainment, allowing the community to come together rather than needing to travel for a similar type of entertainment. Renee echoes this idea by saying Idora Park helped to better Youngstown because “it did give people something to do right here at home.” With this statement, Renee reveals Idora Park provided entertainment very close to home, creating an allusion that Idora was also “home.” Both David and Renee summarize the rest of the interviewees’ pride in Idora Park, as this hometown park created quality entertainment for locals to enjoy. Idora Park’s ability to serve the local community, as well as provide the citizens with quality musical acts and other forms of entertainment caused a feeling of pride for many of the individual interview participants. The park instilled the idea in the former visitors that one should be proud of their hometown.

*Personal Ownership*

While a majority of the interview participants felt Idora Park was a point of pride, there are four particular former visitors that expanded upon this pride. Two former employees and two former visitors made statements during their interview in which each claimed to, in some way, own Idora Park. In this study, the phrase “personal ownership” does not refer to one’s actual financial ownership of a piece of property, building, or item. Instead, the phrase suggests that a person’s strong, positive feeling towards a piece of property, property, or item causes he/she to believe the individual does mentally own that particular object. These feelings of personal ownership appear to present themselves due to great pride in an object, which is the case for those who felt personal ownership of Idora Park.
Two participants displayed the feeling of personal ownership towards Idora Park in general. As a native of Beaver Falls, Cheryl, explained “big companies that were in Beaver Falls—everybody—took their company picnics to that park. So that’s what we [did] at our park.” In this statement, Cheryl explains that Idora Park served as a picnic site for the companies located in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, which is what the community did at Idora. However, Cheryl included the word “our” before saying “park.” This possessive pronoun suggests her prideful feelings towards Idora via this claim of personal ownership. In a much less explicit manner, Ken S. also expresses his feeling of personal ownership towards the trolley park. The former employee and I discussed the Idora Park Experience, which is the museum devoted to preserving and sharing artifacts and items associated with Idora Park. In our discussion, Ken S. mentioned that he called his cousin after visiting the museum and told the family member “my DNA’s on that stuff somewhere.” Ken S. was discussing the museum in a very enthusiastic manner when he told this particular story. The former employee and patron connects himself to the park items by claiming his own DNA is on them, implicitly claiming personal ownership of the items and park in general. Further, the manner in which he spoke suggests this personal ownership was driven by his pride of the park.

While Cheryl and Ken S. both suggested their feelings of personal ownership of the park in general, two other interview participants unveiled strong feelings when remembering Idora Park’s carousel. In conservation, after our official interview ended, James and I discussed the carousel that is now underneath the Brooklyn Bridge located in New York City. The attraction’s new name is Jane’s Carousel. However, James told me
that he never refers to the attraction as simply “Jane’s Carousel,” he, instead, calls it “Jane’s Idora Park Carousel.” He said he does this to recognize the ride’s original location. While James is not claiming personal ownership of the attraction for himself, he still illustrates the idea of ownership because he adds the words “Idora Park” to the attraction’s name. This addition to the name claims the attraction for its “hometown.”

During Betsy’s interview, we also discussed Jane’s Carousel. The former visitor mentioned that she was planning a trip to New York City in a few months, where she was planning to ride the carousel. Betsy said she was excited to ride the carousel. When asked why, the Youngstown native exclaimed “to see my carousel, of course!” The interview participant uses the individual possessive pronoun “my” to refer to the carousel, claiming personal ownership of the attraction. The use of the word “my” and Betsy’s plan to visit the ride while in New York demonstrates her pride in the former Idora Park attraction.

Through their statements of personal ownership for either themselves or an entire community illustrates both James’ and Betsy’s feelings of pride that this particular carousel was once located within the Idora Park boundaries.

*Creating a Discourse of Hometown, Local Pride*

The three sub-themes discussed above demonstrate the various ways in which the interview participants learned to be proud of their local community. Idora Park instilled this idea of hometown, local pride into the former employees and patrons via its aesthetically pleasing landscape and its ability to cater to the surrounding, local areas. These two themes served as a point of pride for a majority of the interview participants in one way or another. While Idora Park taught a majority of these individuals to be proud
of their hometown/local community, four participants felt extreme pride in the park by claiming personal ownership. These individuals felt so strongly about Idora that they have personally claimed the park or one of its attractions in one form or another either for themselves or their local community. Clearly, the physical space of Idora helped to create a discourse that one should have hometown, local pride that has been conveyed via each participants pride in “their local, hometown” Idora Park.

The Importance of Diversity

A final common theme in relation to Idora Park was the idea that the trolley park became a place for “everybody.” According to interview participants, the park contained various activities, attractions, and other forms of entertainment within its boundaries in order to keep its patron base amused and happy. Overall, past Idora employees and visitors felt these diverse activities within the park’s landscape improved the park and its atmosphere, strengthening a discourse within these individuals that diversity is an important concept in our society. However, after a close examination of these semi-structured interviews, these participants’ ideas of diversity do not necessarily dovetail with society’s definition today.

Interview participants echoed very similar ideas about the number of activities, attractions, and entertainment provided at Idora Park. Idora’s diverse amount of attractions and entertainment helped to create an atmosphere for all age groups to enjoy. One former visitor, Cheryl, from Pennsylvania recalls that the park had something for everybody. Absolutely everybody. Your grandma could go with the grandchildren. She could get on the train that went around the park…[grandmothers] could visit with one another and just talk…, while you’re down in Kiddie Land…so there was something for everyone.
In this statement, Cheryl explains that the park created a diverse atmosphere by providing “something for everybody.” In order to support this statement, the participant chose to explain the activities of two different age groups. First, Cheryl explains an elderly person, or a “grandma,” could either ride on tamer rides, such as the train, with their grandchildren or a person of this age can also sit on benches to socialize with other older visitors. Cheryl then explains that young children were able to enjoy the attractions catered to their age group located in a confined area known as Kiddie Land. Echoing Cheryl’s idea, Leslie believed that “anyone could gather” in Idora, as the park included a Kiddie Land for children, slower rides for the elderly, and wild rollercoasters for teenagers. As a teenager and adult, a self-described “rollercoaster junkie,” Betsy, admits going to Idora for the rides, especially the roller coasters. Clearly, the landscape made up of these various rides created a place for people of all ages to gather in order to enjoy themselves according to these two former visitors.

While various rides helped to attract people of differing ages to the park, not all interview participants enjoyed the rides the park offered. Many former workers and visitors of Idora remember an even more diverse attraction and entertainment base. Patricia, who began visiting the park as a child in the 1950s, was not fond any of Idora’s rides, but went to the park in order to enjoy the concession stand food, socialize with her friends, and play games in the penny arcade. While Jan, a visitor of the 1970s and 1980s, explained that she loved the rides, her siblings normally departed from her company once they entered the park due to differing interests. Illustrating this idea, Jan explains:
my sister would take me there for days that they had bands playing. She would see the bands and let me hang out at the park…[and] my brother didn’t go on anything. He would just walk around and win stuffed animals.

In this statement, Jan reveals three different activities she and her siblings participated in while being at Idora Park on the same day. Jan, herself, simply rode rides. Her older, teenage sister went to concerts, while her younger brother played games on the midway and in the penny arcade. There was more for people of any age to participate in within Idora besides ride-based attractions, embedding the idea of a diverse atmosphere into past visitors’ minds.

Idora Park not only included rides, food, and games for its visitors to enjoy, but a majority of the interviewees mentioned the Idora Park ballroom during their interview. The ballroom hosted a large number of events each season, mostly focused on dancing and music, bringing in various types of individuals into the park. Explaining the importance of Idora’s ballroom and the diverse people it attracted, Mark states part of the entertainment package was having a grand ballroom. It was beautiful and they had all the Big Bands come there to play. All of your parents and grandparents came there to dance. And, they also had sock hop things for teens. Eventually, rock and roll concerts and everything like that.

Mark reveals the ballroom was host to a variety of events that drew in very different crowds. Older individuals went to dance within the space, while sock hops specifically catered towards teens drew in a younger crowd. Further, for those more interested in listening to music rather than dancing, the ballroom hosted concerts. Interview participants recalled going to various shows in the ballroom including David Cassidy, Bobby Sherman, the Eagles, Spring Thing, the Monkees, Frank Sinatra, Duke Ellington, Tommy Dorsey, the Michael Stanley Band, college dances, sock hops, and many more.
The acts and events that came into the ballroom represents a very diverse music set, attracting different crowds based upon age and personality. The ballroom itself allowed former visitors to remember Idora as a diverse place, as it brought in very different forms of entertainment for various types of people.

To even further instill the idea that diversity is an important concept, Idora Park had even more activities for various people to enjoy within the park. John T. remembers the park hosting a BINGO game for its visitors. Ken B., Mark, and Rick all remember the baseball field in Idora Park. The three each revealed that a show similar to the Harlem Globetrotters visited the park called The King in His Court, which was a trick baseball show. David revealed in his interview that the park hosted a car show called Autoramma in the ballroom. Moreover, thirteen of the interview participants mentioned the picnic days Idora held for various companies and ethnicities during its existence. These are just a handful of the other events described by the Idora employees and visitors.

The attractions, activities, and forms of entertainment described above all occurred in one space. Idora Park is remembered as providing a wide range of activities for its patrons, including rides, food, dances, concerts, car shows, baseball games, and much more. These diverse activities instilled a very prominent discourse into its visitors that has remained with them today: Idora was a place for everybody. People with varying interests of differing ages were able to enjoy the same space, encouraging diversity. This idea communicated to the patrons that diversity is important in our society. However, once we expanded the importance of diversity to include people of differing racial backgrounds, it appears the instilled discourse does have its limits.
A Perception of Diversity

When specifically discussing the diversity of people within the park, not all former visitors tend to agree on who was present and welcomed into Idora Park. A former employee of Idora Park, David, recalls that there “was just a diverse group” within the park and that “anybody could get in there.” While this statement would suggest Idora was a site of inclusion, David went on to explain the make-up of this diverse group differed by “nationalities,” rather than discussing the differing racial make-up of park visitors. Further, other former park visitors discussed the presence of diversity based upon one’s socioeconomic class. Ken B. explains “it didn’t matter if people had money” within the park, while Ken S. furthered this idea by revealing the absence of a class system once a visitor entered the park’s boundaries. When past visitors of Idora Park explained the presence of diversity within the park environment, an emphasis was placed on the ethnicities and socioeconomic characteristics of those different than themselves rather than racial qualities. These responses imply that few African American families and individuals visited Idora Park.

However, one former park employee from the 1970s, James, recalls that “you saw people that were all races,” although, he does clarify later that within the park limits a patron would “not [see] as many blacks, as you’d see whites.” With this statement, the former employee recognizes that although he did see blacks alongside whites, the racial group appeared to be underrepresented within the park. Moreover, in 1970, Youngstown’s population was comprised of 25% African Americans (U.S. Census, 1973)
(see Table 4.1). This is a rather significant proportion of the population, suggesting exclusionary actions from Idora Park were in practice for black community members.

Table 4.1

Youngstown’s African American and White Population, 1950-1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>African American Population</th>
<th>% of Total Population</th>
<th>White Population</th>
<th>% of Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>21,459</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>146,763</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>31,677</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>134,784</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>38,559</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>74,825</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Differing in opinion from James, numerous other patrons recall a lack of racial diversity within the park. Both Patricia, who was a patron of the 1950s and beyond, and Jan, a patron from the 1970s and 1980s, recall that the overwhelmingly majority of fellow visitors were white. From 1950 to 1980, the African American population in Youngstown rapidly grew each decade, but still was not well represented within the park space (see above Table 4.1). In regards to this racial absence, the two women do not recall a presence of African Americans within the park boundaries, but are unsure if prejudices and segregation caused this lack of diversity.

After conducting research on the policies and regulations of Idora Park concerning race throughout its history, the space appeared to have discriminated against the racial group. A handful of attractions in Idora did not permit the entry of African Americans during the early portion of the twentieth century, including the dance hall, skating rink, and swimming pool. In response to the policies, an African American man
denied entry into the dance hall filed a lawsuit against the park. However, the establishment won the case as the court decided the hall was not a public place, making it legal to deny access to any potential patron. The ban on African Americans to utilize the dance hall was somewhat lifted by the late 1920s and early 1930s (Shale and Jacques, Jr., 1999). By the 1930s, African Americans were permitted into the ballroom, but could not “share the dance floor with whites” (DeBlasio, 2001, p. 82). Moreover, access into the ballroom for African American employees was restricted to one hour a day. While the dance hall’s policies did allow the entry of African Americans, the space was still segregated. As for the skating rink and swimming pool, Idora Park historically denied African Americans the right to utilize these facilities until the Civil Rights Movement (Shale and Jacques, Jr., 1999).

Although these bans and policies were no longer in place after the Civil Rights Movement in Idora, a legacy of segregation was already present within the space. This historical legacy continued to impact Idora and its visitors even after policy changed. For example, by 1949 the Idora Park owners closed the now integrated swimming facilities. Shale and Jacques, Jr. (1999, p. 79) reveal the removal of the pool was “to defuse racial tensions stemming from integrated swimming.” This statement reveals that white patrons began to feel threatened by the presence of African Americans in this once “white space,” presumably causing African Americans to feel uncomfortable and unwelcomed at Idora. Further, Idora Park became a site of racial tension in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, in 1967 the park was subject to a race riot that caused police to enter the park in order “to disperse a crowd of five hundred youths” (Shale and Jacques Jr., 1999, p. 99). Clearly,
even though the racial restrictions were no longer in place at Idora Park, the space appeared to still segregate and cause tension between races. The fact that Idora had “long histories of past discrimination and exclusion of people of color,” suggests one reason the significant African American population of Youngstown did not tend to visit Idora Park (Wolch et al., 2005, p. 31).

A former resident of Youngstown’s South Side and visitor of Idora Park, Susan, reveals that she does not remember minorities within the park, her neighborhood, or school setting until 1972, suggesting Idora Park began to welcome in African American patrons around that time. Offering his opinion on this racial inclusion, Ken B., a park employee of the 1970s and 1980s, explained that “the crowds changed—the people, they changed by color…you didn’t feel safe.” With this statement, Ken B. alludes to the fact that Idora Park began to see a higher presence of African American individuals. Further, the former employee suggests this inclusion threatened his safety for one reason or another. Another participant of the study alluded to the same idea as Ken B., equating the presence of African Americans to a lack of security and safety within the park environment.

After examining individual perceptions of the presence, or lack of, diversity within Idora Park and its polices and regulations, it is clear African Americans were excluded from the park atmosphere. While some patrons remember a “diverse” atmosphere, “diverse” does not equate to equal access based on one’s racial make-up. Instead, Idora Park was “diverse” based upon one’s Anglo ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, and personal interest. Clearly, the idea of diversity was still present in these
participants’ minds when discussing who entered the park, allowing the importance of diversity to remain prominent discourse that was created by the park atmosphere.

However, Idora and the participants appear to have created their own definition of diversity, which excludes the presence of African Americans. Keeping this in mind, Dwyer and Alderman (2008) have argued that past ideals, such as this one, can shape the future, which means this particular discourse and definition of diversity may still be influencing Youngstown’s community members and society as a whole today.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This commemorative study of Idora Park began with a personal motive to better understand a space that generations of my family had visited during their residency in the Youngstown area. A case study of Idora Park memorial sites was undertaken in order to discover how the past is commemorated in various areas of the nation, to analyze how the landscapes and individual memories compare to one another, and to better understand the lasting impact the space had on former visitors. This study not only provided findings about Idora Park and its impact on the area, but also revealed further information about the perceptions of our deindustrialized society in a once heavily industrialized part of the country. The findings directly relate to the Youngstown area, while providing insight into other former industrialized cities with the presence of a trolley park.

Although scholars, especially historians, have widely studied the once popular urban amusement park, the memorialization of such spaces has not been fully explored. Instead, the current literature focuses on the landscapes such spaces created within the city, the impact the parks had on society, the attractions that reflected industry, and, finally, guest experiences based upon one’s gender and race. Clearly, the literature tends to focus on the history of such spaces, while this study focuses on the societal impact the amusement park, its memory, and memorial landscapes has on our current society and culture.

After an examination of current commemoration and memorialization literature conducted primarily by geographers, a two-fold methodology was followed to answer the study’s main research questions. Five sites of memorialization that in one way or another
were connected to Idora Park were studied. Each site of memorialization was observed and analyzed in order to discover the major discourses materialized in each, drawing on Richard Schein’s (1997) methodology concerning landscape analysis. Along with landscape analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with nineteen former employees and patrons of Idora Park. These interviews revealed the discourses produced by Idora Park’s landscape that remain with the individuals today, modifying Schein’s (1997) framework of discourses materialized. The interviews were thematically coded to discover the major ideas revealed by the collective group of participants. Once the analysis was complete for both the landscape and interview data, the original research questions could be answered.

Materialized Discourses and Narratives within Idora Park Memorial Sites

Two of the study’s main research questions have already been answered and discussed in the previous two chapters. The first research question posed in this case study solely deals with the memorialized landscape of Idora and the discourses materialized in such spaces: What social discourses/narratives are materialized in the landscape? In chapter three, the various discourses for each of the five examined landscapes were discussed in detail. Although these landscapes varied in size, location, and purpose, many of the spaces contained similar discourses.

As one would expect from a memorial site, each of the landscapes paid homage to the past either directly to Idora Park or, more generally, the era during which it was built and existed. These discourses that paid homage to the past were found in each landscape, which ranged from celebrating the past to remembering the past to experiencing and
sharing the past. Three of the landscapes even communicated the importance of balancing work and leisure time, which was an “American” value prevalent during the industrial era. However, the Youngstown Historical Society of Industry and Labor was the only memorial site to illustrate the tragedy of losing Idora Park. Both this space and the Idora Park Experience museum, which are the two permanent landscapes studied within the same area Idora Park was built, mimicked the fun atmosphere that was created at Idora Park directly through its landscape. Although Jane’s Carousel was located far away, the landscape directly paid tribute to the former trolley park within its materialized discourse of continuing ownership; the landscape has allowed Youngstown citizens to express their love for the carousel and claim ownership of the attraction for themselves and the city of Youngstown manifested through the guest books.

Not only do the materialized discourses convey the importance of celebrating and paying tribute to the past, but the discourses found in each site also relate to today’s society. Two of the sites focused on communicating the importance of family ties within the landscape. Another two sites illustrated the value of a local, cohesive community; Idora Day at Mill Creek Park contained a discourse that illustrated the value of intergenerational experiences during a community event, while the Idora Park Experience emphasized the importance of one’s local community by helping fellow community members during the event. Finally, three of the sites exhibited a materialized discourse that communicated to its visitors the importance of diversity in society today. While the portrayals of diversity varied, the three sites still contained the general narrative within each memorial site. However, in contrast to this ideal, the Idora Park Experience was the
one site to not materialize this particular discourse. Instead, its rather unchanging landscape between visits provided its guests with a narrative that illustrates the value of familiarity and consistency within our world today. While some landscapes did contain unique materialized discourses, a majority of the narratives found in the studied sites tend to produce similar ideals communicated to visitors.

Social Discourses/Narratives of Former Idora Park Patrons

Much like the first research question, this study’s second research question was previously addressed in detail, which deals primarily with individual memories of Idora Park: What social discourses/narratives have been “implanted” in former Idora patrons with regard to their memories of the space? This question is addressed throughout the examination and analysis concerning the nineteen conducted interviews within chapter four. Many of these discourses overlap with those found within the Idora Park memorial sites.

Six major discourses were identified within the collection of interviews. First, former Idora patrons discussed the value of familial ties promoted within the park, as Idora created a family friendly atmosphere, promoted interaction between generations, and all participants discussed visiting the park with family members. The second ideal Idora Park helped to instill in its former visitors was that one should appreciate history. Interview participants revealed this discourse during their discussion of historic and nostalgic feelings within the park’s boundaries as well as the participants’ beliefs that the former urban amusement park was historically significant not only to the area, but to their own, personal history. Similar to the second discourse, a third narrative communicates
the value of nostalgia and the past. This particular discourse is primarily driven by the numerous conversions concerning visits to Idora during an individual’s formative years, creating an attachment to the space. Further, a majority of participants pointed to the past as a better, simpler society when industry dominated the city’s economy, creating a rather romanticized discourse that illustrates the value of the past. Continuing the idea of a better past, many participants alluded to a fourth discourse Idora Park’s landscape instilled within the individuals: the worth of consistency and familiarity. This particular discourse surfaced due to the mention of Idora Park’s unchanging landscape throughout its years of operation and the similar people and familiar faces one encountered during a visit to the park. A fifth discourse produced by Idora Park that continues to influence its patrons today is the idea of being prideful in one’s hometown. Interview participants pointed to Idora Park’s pleasing aesthetics, atmosphere, and attractions as something the local community could be proud of. Further, the site served as a community-gathering space that attracted the local population, while drawing in big name acts to the area. A handful of participants even expressed an immense pride in their local amusement park by claiming personal ownership of the space. Finally, the importance of diversity was the sixth discourse created by the former trolley park. However, as discussed, the definition of diversity that prevailed at Idora Park was solely based upon one’s age and social class, while racial diversity was not prominent throughout much of the park’s existence.

A Comparison of Landscape and Individual Discourses

One of this study’s main research questions was to understand how the materialized discourses of each memorial site compared to the discourses implanted in
former Idora Park visitors. Specifically, the question asks: How do the discourses within the landscape of memorialization compare to those narratives of individuals’ memories?

As discussed previously, not all memorial sites studied directly commemorate Idora Park; there are varying degrees of direct memorialization. This study separates the direct memorialization of an Idora Park landscape into four different categories: highly direct, moderately direct, slightly direct, and indirect. After a comparison of each materialized discourse within Idora Park memorial sites and the discourses present within the memories of Idora Park patrons, similarities between the mediums can be drawn.

*Jane’s Carousel Comparison*

The first landscape visited for this particular study was Jane’s Carousel, in which five main discourses were materialized. While Jane’s Carousel is the site farthest removed from Idora Park’s original site, the memorial space is considered to have a slightly direct degree of commemoration. This is due to the attraction’s mention of the carousel’s original home in Youngstown. While the attraction’s purpose is not to commemorate Idora Park, the sign still pays tribute to its history and Idora Park. Further, as discussed in chapter three, Jane’s Carousel includes three books filled with messages from Youngstown natives and former visitors of Idora Park, one of which current visitors are encouraged to sign. However, these books are not advertised to the public. Instead, an individual needs to know of their existence and ask the attendant to examine the books. Therefore, the mention of Idora Park and Youngstown, Ohio, on the sign and the books dedicated to the former visitors of the carousel at its original location causes this particular memorial site to have a slightly direct degree of commemoration.
Of the five discourses found within the materialized landscape of Jane’s Carousel, two discourses directly compare to those found within the individual memories of Idora Park visitors. First, both the landscape and interviews revealed a discourse emphasizing the importance of familial ties. The carousel provided seating for all generational members of a family unit, while interviewees revealed the park provided a family-friendly atmosphere, in part, thanks to the amount of activities that appealed to all generational members of the family unit. Further, both Jane’s Carousel and Idora Park appeared to draw in large amounts of families into each space. Second, the studied landscape continues the personal ownership individuals feel towards Idora Park. In the memory discourse of feeling prideful in one’s hometown, a handful of individuals claimed personal ownership of the park and its attractions, including the carousel. This ownership of the park and feeling prideful is represented within Jane’s Carousel’s landscape via the letters and messages within books that local Youngstown natives and visitors of Idora sent to Jane Waltenas. These two discourses directly compare to one another in both the materialized landscape of the site and the individual narratives expressed by interview participants.

Another discourse that is present within both the landscape and memories is the importance of diversity expressed within each. While this discourse is present in both mediums, the idea of diversity does differ. Throughout the interview process, individuals pointed to a diverse atmosphere at Idora based upon one’s age and class as well as the numerous activities the park provided. However, a diverse atmosphere in Idora did not include racial diversity, which is where the difference between these two discourses lies.
Jane’s Carousel did reflect a racial diversity within its landscape and patron base, as well as in age and class. Thus, the discourse of the importance of diversity has been expanded upon within the landscape compared to the idea of diversity expressed during the interviews.

Although the final two discourses materialized within Jane’s Carousel’s landscape do not directly correlate to those found in individual memories of Idora Park patrons, they do relate to one another. During the interview process, former employees and visitors expressed the value of nostalgia and the past instilled in them during time spent at the park. Jane’s Carousel helps to celebrate the past, suggesting there is value in remembering the past. Further, via this materialized discourse industrial work and hand-done work is celebrated, which relates to the interviewees placing value on a past Youngstown that was dominated by the steel industry and working with one’s hands.

Second, Jane’s Carousel also communicates the appeal of a fantasyland by combining elements of nature and industry in one location, similar to the landscape created within trolley parks (Aalberg, 2003; Sally, 2007; DeBlasio, 2010). Not only does this discourse relate to a trolley park in general, but also the materialized narrative communicates the importance of leisure and hard work in our American society. This idea resonates with the interview participants’ positive view of past American industry, in which they believe good products were made via hard work. The idea of hard work as an asset connects these two discourses, but they do not directly compare to one another.

Clearly, Jane’s Carousel and the discourses found within its landscape does somewhat compare to the discourses expressed by Idora visitors. However, many of these
similarities are rather small or expanded upon from the original Idora discourse. Similar themes can be found, but the meaning behind them differs.

Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor Comparison

As explained in chapter three, the Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor is home to the iconic red, white, and blue Idora Park sign that helped to welcome visitors into the park. However, this one Idora artifact is the only item of hundreds within the industrial museum that pays tribute to the former trolley park. For this reason, the memorial site can only be categorized as having a slightly direct memorialization status in reference to Idora Park. Within this site four major materialized discourses were found, but none of the discourses directly correlate to those found within the memories of former visitors. However, comparisons can still be drawn.

First, the most direct comparison that can be drawn between the two mediums is between the discourse of celebrating the past found within the memorial site’s landscape and the value of nostalgia and the past expressed through individual memories. While these two discourses do not exactly compare, the two can be linked by similarities. The museum’s landscape celebrates and honors a past Youngstown that was dominated by the steel industry via the vast amount of artifacts, signs, murals, and exhibits. This particular celebration of Youngstown’s industrial past correlates to the idea found within the individual memory discourse of valuing nostalgia and the past, in which interview participants pointed to this same era as a simpler, better time in the area’s history. Therefore, each discourse points to the same time period of, specifically, Youngstown’s past in relation to celebrating and valuing the past.
Along with celebrating the past, the Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor communicates two discourses that have similarities to those found within the individual memories. First, the museum communicates the importance of leisure and work in American society through the juxtaposing displays of industrial items near leisure artifacts from the same era. While the interviews did not discuss the importance of leisure time, the interviewees did point to the value of hard work during the industrial era within the larger discourse of the value of nostalgia and the past. The idea of hard work being an important value is communicated through both of these mediums. Second, the Idora Park display communicates to a visitor that losing such a space was a tragic event due to the presence of the black and white photo of the abandoned park and the blank television screen. While this same idea is not explicitly discussed in one of the prominent memory discourses, it is clear the participants feel Idora’s closure was a tragic event in the area’s history. This can been seen in the discussion of the interview participants’ idea that one should appreciate history. At the end of this particular discourse’s discussion, a handful of participants revealed their regret of not saving Idora Park mementos. Further, a second memory discourse that reveals the participants’ high value placed on nostalgia and the past illustrates the individuals desire for a past Youngstown when Idora was in existence. These two ideals relate to the museum’s discourse communicating the loss of Idora was a tragedy because the interview participants allude to this same feeling via their regrets of not saving trinkets to remind them of the park and the desire to return to the era in which Idora Park existed.
Finally, the museum’s display of the colorful Idora Park sign surrounded by the muted tones of the memorial site illustrated the fun filled atmosphere of Idora Park. However, this discourse was not one of the prominent discourses revealed by the individual memories’ of the nineteen interviewees. Regardless, the discourse can still somewhat relate to the individual narratives, as a majority of the participants did specifically describe their time at Idora Park as “fun” and/or “carefree” or allude to the idea by only discussing experiences within the park in a positive manner.

Overall, although this memorialized landscape does not include any of the same prominent discourses revealed by the individual memories, the two mediums are still comparable. Each medium clearly values Youngstown’s industrial past and the work ethic that surrounded the economy along with the idea that the loss of Idora was a tragic event in the area’s history. Further, although the idea that Idora Park was a fun-filled atmosphere was only a prominent discourse materialized within the landscape, this same idea was communicated by a majority of interview participants.

_Pymatuning Deer Park Comparison_

As explained in the third chapter, Pymatuning Deer Park is the new home of the Idora Park train attraction. However, within its landscape there is no commemoration or recognition of the train’s first home at Idora Park. Regardless, the landscape was still considered a site of memorialization due to the presence of the attraction. Further, although the landscape does not pay tribute to the attraction’s original home, commercials aired during the summer of 2015 and the Deer Park webpage both mention the train’s connection to Idora Park. Even though these two mediums recognize Idora
Park, the landscape does not causing the site to be categorized as an indirect site of Idora memorialization.

Of the four main materialized discourses found within Deer Park’s landscape, only one discourse directly compares to the discourses revealed by former Idora Park visitors: the value of familial ties. Both the landscape of Deer Park and the responses by Idora Park visitors revealed each atmosphere was “family friendly” and family units dominated the patron base. Further, the landscape of Deer Park provided a diverse amount of activities that serves any generational member of the family, similar to the vast amount of activities in Idora described by former visitors. Clearly, both the memorial landscape and the interviews produced a discourse communicating the importance of family.

Although the high importance of family values discourse is the only one to directly compare to the prominent interview narratives, two of Deer Park’s materialized discourses can be related to those found in the interviews. First, both mediums provide a discourse explaining the importance of diversity within our society. Much like the interview discourse, the landscape of Deer Park represents diversity based upon one’s age and the amount of activities within the space. However, in Deer Park, the idea of diversity was expanded upon via the animals and their displays describing their country of origin. Diversity is represented in a much more controlled and abstract way than the diversity revealed at Idora, which was based upon a person’s age, class, and ethnicity. Second, both mediums communicated the importance of celebrating and valuing the past. However, the past each medium celebrates differs. As explained above, the discourse of
valuing nostalgia and the past found within the individual memories of Idora visitors focuses on a past industrial Youngstown during the early twentieth century. However, in Deer Park the past being celebrated through its landscape is before the twentieth century. Deer Park’s landscape includes a small western Main Street, where mining is the dominant industry. The landscape pays tribute to the Old Western Frontier during the nineteenth century, which clearly differs from the past celebrated in the Idora Park interviews. While both discourses recognize the past’s contribution to our society, there are fundamental differences between the two tributes.

Finally, Deer Park includes a discourse that cannot be related to the Idora Park interview narratives: the appeal of a fantasyland. While this particular discourse was found within Jane’s Carousel’s landscape and was relatable to the interviews, this particular landscape’s discourse is not relatable. In this case, the discourse does not communicate the importance of hard work and leisure time, but rather the idea that nature and industry can combine to create a unique experience. While the combination of industry and nature in the Deer Park landscape does mimic the landscape created in an urban amusement park, this idea is not one of the main discourses found within the individual memories (Aalberg, 2003; Sally, 2007; DeBlasio, 2010). Therefore, even though the idea can be related to Idora Park in general, the materialized discourse is not relatable to the beliefs and discourses expressed by former visitors of Idora.

Overall, only one of the materialized discourses found within Deer Park’s landscape was directly comparable to the individual narratives of Idora patrons. This is rather unsurprising, as the memorial site is an indirect site of Idora Park memorialization.
The idea of diversity is expanded upon via the presence of domestic and international species. Further, while both mediums contain a discourse that celebrate and place value in the past, the specific past represented is from a different time and place. Finally, the appeal of a fantasyland is not a discourse that appeared in Idora visitors’ individual narratives.

*Idora Day at Lanterman’s Mill in Mill Creek Park Comparison*

This temporary site of memorialization was a one-day event that honored the memory of Idora Park and its significance to the Youngstown area. While the landscape was primarily devoted to remembering Idora, many of the historical displays also included artifacts and mementos that honored the past industrial Youngstown in general. For this reason, the memorial site is given a rating of moderately direct memorialization of Idora Park.

Of the three dominant materialized discourses analyzed at this particular site of memorialization, two can be directly compared to the narratives found within the Idora interviews. First, both the Idora Day landscape and the interviews revealed a narrative explaining the importance of diversity within our society. Additionally, the idea of diversity was represented in the same manner. Much like interview participants revealed of Idora, the Idora Day landscape provided a wide array of activities that attracted individuals of all ages. Interview participants primarily pointed to the various activities and age groups in Idora, while describing a diverse atmosphere. The only difference is the fact that interviewees explained the presence of class and ethic diversity within Idora,
which was something I could not observe with certainty at Idora Day. Second, both mediums share a discourse that helps to celebrate and place value in the past. Not only does the landscape and interviews demonstrate the importance of the past, but each medium also celebrates and values the same past. Both the Idora Day landscape and the interview narratives focused on the past industrial Youngstown during Idora Park’s existence. Idora Day was meant not only to celebrate Youngstown’s former “Million Dollar Playground,” but also the era the park existed within. Further, as many interview participants looked back fondly on Idora Park, a majority also explained their respect for Youngstown’s industrial past. Therefore, each medium contains the same discourse, as well as the same reasons to support the narrative.

While the final materialized discourse found within the Idora Day landscape is not exactly the same as a discourse revealed by the interviews, similar ideals are present between the two mediums’ narratives. The Idora Day landscape communicates the importance of intergenerational experiences via the multiple activities that facilitated and encouraged individuals of all ages to participate in together. While this idea is not a main discourse revealed by the Idora Park visitors, a similar ideal is present within the value of familial ties discourse. Interview participants discussed the generational ties and interactions they had at Idora Park, suggesting the importance of such interactions. Therefore, Idora Park and Idora Day appear to both have communicated the value of and facilitated these types of intergenerational interactions.

Clearly, this memorial site and its materialized discourses contain similar ideals and narratives discovered via the individual interviews. Two of the three discourses were
present within the individual memory narratives. The last of the materialized discourses was still comparable to the ideals discussed in one of the major narratives found by analyzing the semi-structured interviews.

*The Idora Park Experience Comparison*

The final site of Idora Park memorialization studied was a museum solely dedicated to preserving and sharing the memories of Idora Park via the site’s displays of small artifacts, tickets, ride cars, signs, newspaper clippings, photos, videos, and other items directly related to the urban amusement park. Due to the museum’s vast array of specifically Idora Park items and its main purpose, this memorial site can be categorized as highly direct commemoration of Idora Park. Further, this direct site of commemoration produced five prominent discourses seen via its landscape, all of which relate either directly or indirectly to narratives discovered within former visitors’ individual memories.

Two of the five discourses that materialized themselves within the museum’s landscape directly correlates to the individual memory narratives. First, the IPE communicates to its visitors the importance of remembering the past. Throughout its landscape, the museum is filled with various items that directly commemorate and share the history of Idora Park. These items create an atmosphere in which visitors remembered his/her past experiences within Idora, which, in turn, communicated the value of the past. Therefore, this particular discourse that explained the value of the past directly correlates to the discourse found in the individual memories that explains there is high value in nostalgia and the past. Both discourses remember the past in a positive manner through
Idora Park artifacts and memories. However, there is one minor difference between the two narratives. The IPE landscape tends to remember the past in relation solely to Idora, while the individual narrative expanded the idea of the past to the Youngstown area in general. Regardless, the two compare due to their message and overlapping content. Additionally, the appreciation of history memory discourse can also relate to this particular discourse materialized, as both narratives reveal the historical significance Idora Park had on the local community and society. Second, both the IPE landscape and individual memories created a discourse that illustrates the value of consistency and familiarity. Interview participants explained the Idora Park landscape and atmosphere underwent little to no changes from season to season. Further, the park drew in familiar faces. The interviewees explained they enjoyed and admired these constant qualities of the park. Similar to the way the former visitors of the park described Idora’s landscape and atmosphere, the IPE also changed very little from opening to opening. While the museum added a few new artifacts, the general set up of the museum remained consistent. Each landscape communicated to its visitors the value of consistency and familiarity, as the unchanging landscape of Idora Park was mimicked in the museum that honors its memory.

A third discourse found within the IPE landscape is also comparable to the individual memory narratives. Due to the presence of local charity tables at each IPE opening, the landscape illustrated the importance of local community. Although not exactly the same discourse, the individual memories revealed a narrative that encouraged former visitors to feel prideful of their local community. While the two discourses are not
exactly the same, both emphasize the importance of one’s local community. The landscape of the IPE encourages visitors to help their local community members, while the interviews revealed Idora Park communicated the importance of feeling pride towards one’s hometown and local community. The importance and value of a local community coming together connects these two discourses.

Finally, while two of the materialized discourses are not directly comparable to the major memory narratives, they can still be related to the former guests responses. First, the IPE not only helped to facilitate and encourage patrons to remember the past, but the landscape also allowed an individual to experience and share the past. Throughout the opening of the IPE, adults were observed teaching their younger children about Idora Park within the memorial site. The museum facilitated this intergenerational interaction, in which adults were able to share their past experiences with their children and grandchildren. These interactions created stronger family ties between various generations. Keeping this in mind, this particular materialized discourse can be related to the individual narrative that places value in familial ties. In this individual memory discourse, former patrons believed Idora was a family friendly atmosphere due to the large amounts of families that frequented the space, as well as the generational bonding that occurred in Idora. The IPE facilitated the same type of family visits and bonding. However, in the museum, the common activity that brought various family members together was to learn and share stories about Idora Park rather than visiting the park to participate in various entertainment activities. Second, the IPE and its landscape created a fun-filled atmosphere communicated via the bright lights and colors of the decorations,
which made the atmosphere aesthetically pleasing. Although the individual narratives did not reveal a major discourse revealing a fun atmosphere of Idora Park, the aesthetically pleasing atmosphere was a positive attribute many former patrons pointed out about the park. The aesthetically pleasing atmosphere, in this case, did not create a fun atmosphere, but, instead, contributed to the reasons individuals felt prideful of their hometown park. Regardless, the materialized discourse is still relatable to the interviews for this reason, as well as the fact that the interview participants constantly described the park as “fun” and/or “carefree” and only spoke of their experiences in a positive manner, as mentioned above.

The IPE was the only memorial site that focused its attention and energy on solely honoring and remembering Idora Park. The landscape contained two materialized discourses that were extremely similar to those within the individual narratives and memories. While a third discourse was not exactly the same, it was still comparable in each medium. Finally, although two of the discourses did not match a prominent individual memory discourse from the interviews, these final two narratives were still related to the discourses and the responses by the interviewees.

An Overview of Comparing Materialized Discourses to Individual Narratives

Overall, each studied memorial site of Idora Park communicated the same or very similar discourses revealed by the memories of Idora Park patrons. Although the memorial sites had varying degrees of direct memorialization in relation to Idora Park and are located in various areas of the country, there was no correlation between these factors and the similarities between landscape materialized discourses and individual
narratives. Each landscape contained one to two discourses that were exactly the same as
the individual memories, with the exception of the Youngstown Historical Center of
Industry and Labor. Additionally, a majority of the landscape discourses were in some
way relatable to the prominent individual narratives and interview responses. However,
the only site to produce a unique discourse that had no relation to the interviews was
Pymatuning Deer Park, which, interestingly, was the only site of indirect
memorialization. Regardless, the landscapes tended to reveal similar discourses not only
to the individual memory narratives, but also to each other, focusing on the importance of
diversity, family ties, and the past. These similarities suggest the landscapes and
memories are commemorating and remembering more than simply a former trolley park
within the Youngstown area.

A Commemoration of More than Idora Park

As alluded to in the previous section, the landscapes commemorating Idora Park
and the memories discussed by former patrons and workers memorialize and remember
more than simply Idora Park. Instead, the discourses found within the landscape and
personal memories are commemorating and communicating larger societal ideals that
often define a “traditional” American society. These ideals include an emphasis on family
values, diversity, and the past. These conclusions answer the study’s final research
question: what exactly are these discourses, sites, and memories commemorating?

Family Values Reflected in Discourses

First, the individual narratives and a majority of the memorial sites communicated
that family values are an important ideal to retain. Although some of the landscapes and
stories revealed the importance of family via the presence of Idora Park, other landscapes, such as Deer Park, did not communicate the value using the old urban amusement park. The importance of family values, for the most part, revealed itself via the landscape in the various activities conducive for family-fun and the observations of families spending time together at the sites. This particular value is not exclusive to Idora Park and its memorial sites. In fact, as explained in chapter two, both urban amusement parks and natural parks were created with the hope that the presence of these landscapes would better society and its values. One of the values the creators of these parks hoped to instill in its visitors was the importance of the family unit (Nasaw, 1993; Tuason, 1997; DeBlasio, 2010; Platt, 2010). The same value the original Idora Park was meant to promote was found not only within the visitors of said landscape, but also in the many landscapes that contain memorialized elements of Idora. Clearly, this particular discourse has remained in our society today and has spread to other parts of the country. Most notably, in relation to this study, the value has been spread to areas where memorialized elements of Idora Park are held. Therefore, the past ideal of the importance of a family unit has been preserved on in our modern society today, in part, thanks to the memory of Idora Park. Further, the idea has continued to influence those who visit the new memorial sites, as well as former Idora visitors.

A Limited View of Diversity

A second major reoccurring theme that presented itself via the materialized discourses of the landscape and individual narratives was the idea of diversity. While the definition of diversity varied from the individual memories and even between memorial
sites, its presence within these mediums is noteworthy. As discussed by a number of scholars, urban amusement parks were sites that welcomed in people of diverse backgrounds based upon one’s age, ethnicity, and social class (Nasaw, 1993; DeBlasio, 2001; Cross and Walton, 2005). However, the parks largely discriminated against African Americans, often alienating them from the park and its activities (Nasaw, 1993; DeBlasio, 2001; Wolcott, 2006). Interestingly, this same type of diversity was reflected within the individual memories and two memorial sites. The interview participants pointed to a presence of diversity within Idora Park, which they deemed to be a positive attribute. However, the idea of “diversity” appeared to end at racial differences, as the former visitors explained, as a whole, the group did not remember seeing a large number of African Americans within the park. A similar type of diversity was reflected in the memorial landscapes of Pymatuning Deer Park and Idora Day in Mill Creek Park. While both landscapes communicated the importance of a diverse atmosphere via the various activities for individuals of all ages, racial diversity was not observed within the memorial sites’ patron base. The patron base largely consisted of Anglo American families. The only landscape to draw in a crowd of and represent racial diversity was Jane’s Carousel, which, interestingly, is the farthest memorial site from Idora Park. Jane’s Carousel has modified the original discourse of diversity found in Idora, while the other two sites simply display a rather similar diversity discourse. The rather limited portrayal of diversity within these mediums can be considered problematic to today’s racially diverse America. This limited portrayal of diversity is being communicated to visitors of the memorial landscapes, which ignores a large portion of the American population.
Although further research should be completed on this topic, the limited definition of diversity present in these mediums may contribute to the many racial issues surrounding our country today, as sites, such as the ones in this study, focus on teaching visitors the importance of diversity based upon one’s age and class with little regard to racial diversity.

**Romanticizing the Past, Industrial America**

The final and most prominent ideal found within each memorial site as well as the individual narratives is the idea of a better past. All of the landscapes and personal memories communicate the importance of the past, celebrating the past, experiencing the past, remembering the past, and/or even longing for the past. Moreover, the sites and memories are not simply focused on celebrating the former Idora Park. Instead, with the exception of Deer Park, all mediums focus on celebrating and honoring an industrial America. In today’s deindustrialized society, this study reveals many individuals who lived through the major changes of deindustrialization believe the industrial past created a better, simpler society. In addition, the studied memorial landscapes also romanticize America’s past industrial economy. Although the past may or may not have been a better American society, the belief that it was is clearly communicated via the memories of Idora visitors and the landscapes’ discourses materialized.

This particular romanticism of an industrial past suggests two things about our current society. The romanticism placed on the past in both the interviews and local memorial landscapes suggest a longing for the past on a local level. More specifically, a desire for Youngstown’s prosperous past when the steel industry dominated the local
economy. After Black Monday, Youngstown’s prosperous economy and population rapidly declined, a tragedy from which the city has yet to fully recover. Scott Sowers of the New York Times reports that Youngstown “never recovered from the demise of the steel industry” (2015). Almost forty years after the closure of a major steel company in Youngstown, the city continues to struggle to recuperate its thriving economy and attract residents into the city. The discourses that have been revealed in this research may contribute to the slow revitalization of the city. As the research for this project has discovered, the former visitors and landscapes remembering Idora romanticize a past, industrial Youngstown. There is a common belief that this past was better than today’s current society, where manufacturing jobs have been largely lost and sent overseas. Perhaps this rather prominent discourse has overshadowed and stunted the necessary changes, growth, and even mindset required for this post-industrial town to move forward to a future in other economic ventures.

Regardless of the rather slow regrowth of the area, current trends have begun to provide hope for the area. According to the PNC Bank economic outlook, the entire region of northeast Ohio was expected to “gain momentum in 2015” (Staff report, 2015). Specifically, the Youngstown area has benefitted from the health care industry along with manufacturing and energy-related industries (Staff report, 2015). Further, leaders within the city of Youngstown have laid out and begun a plan for transportation infrastructure improvement throughout the region, as they believe improved roads and easier access to highways will result in economic development (Milliken, 2015). Finally, the downtown area of Youngstown is also undergoing a recent revitalization project of buildings with
the aid of Pan Brothers Associates and a local developer. Moreover, the project along with the growth of Youngtown State University and presence of companies such as, Turning Technologies and America Makes, are expected to help increase the city’s number of workers and residents (Sowers, 2015).

The discourse of an industrial Youngstown providing a better society for its citizens may not hold true in today’s post-industrial economy. Although some of the area’s uptick in economic growth can be tied to manufacturing industries, especially the auto industry, the revitalization has only recently begun to take off after forty years, thanks to a rise in the health care industry, development projects, and technology based companies. Therefore, the discourse of a better industrial Youngstown may have been holding back the area from growing and changing with America’s new, service based economy. While we should honor our past, we must be able to move forward to create a new society that will benefit the city and its residents today. The new efforts for growth both reflect the ideals of a good, industrial past, as it remains a large portion of the area’s economy, but it also looks to the future by expanding its economic base. Therefore, the discourse found within the individual memories and landscapes has been modified in local society today, as industry will help to better our future, but it will not be the sole factor. A new discourse that combines the importance of an industrial Youngstown along with new economic ventures may provide the city with the correct mindset to revitalize the city and its economy.

Second, this romanticism of an industrial past not only relates to the Youngstown area, but also a recent phenomenon in our current political system. The idea that the past
created a more beneficial and better society based on a manufacturing economy mimics the platform uttered by Republican presidential candidate, Donald Trump. The Republican primary frontrunner as of March 2016 has deemed the slogan of his campaign “Make America Great Again,” which alludes to the idea that the past industrial sector is what made America great. Further, the manufacturing industries are needed to reestablish a “great America.” Moreover, it is important to note other presidential hopefuls have also communicated a similar narrative by promising to bring back manufacturing jobs to America. This discourse is extremely prevalent in America’s 2016 presidential election. While this narrative is not exactly the same as the discourse revealed in the study’s findings, there is a clear similarity. Both the political narrative along with discourses from the landscapes and memories believe the past created a more ideal and better society, largely thanks to the manufacturing industry that dominated the American economy. The past industrial America is romanticized and deemed to be the answer to reclaiming a better America that once existed, as well as reducing the unemployment rate. Perhaps one reason for the businessman’s recent success in the 2016 presidential primary is the fact that individuals and landscapes in such towns affected negatively by deindustrialization feel that industry is the answer to many of our society’s current problems. Those cities that continue to struggle after deindustrialization, such as Youngstown, have no major economic stronghold to look forward to; therefore, the only economic plan that has proven to bring large wealth and prosperity to the area is the manufacturing industry. In support of this idea, just recently in the Ohio Republican primary, Donald Trump defeated Ohio Governor, John Kasich, in Mahoning County,
where Youngstown is located. Trump won 50.6% of the Mahoning County Republican vote to Kasich’s 37.4%, suggesting his narrative of returning to an industrial America is resonating with this former industrialized area (The New York Times, 2016). This idea suggests the dominant discourse reflected in memories and landscapes of Idora relates and even influences the current trends within our modern society.

Final Thoughts

Overall, the materialized discourses and individual narratives concerning Idora Park largely produced similar themes and idea(l)s. Interestingly, the discourses and memories largely memorialized a more general past rather than simply honoring Idora Park. Each medium, with the exception of Deer Park, honored and even idolized a past industrial America during the twentieth century. Many of the discourses, such as the importance of family and diversity, drew on the values promoted within the original trolley park, while maintaining and even altering the discourse in modern society. For example, Jane’s Carousel modernized the idea of diversity by expanding the definition of diversity to racial differences, combining the past and present into a modified discourse. Finally, the past industrial America was the most prominent theme discovered in this research project. The ideals comprising this particular discourse are not just reflective of the past, but are a “production of the past,” in which the memories and memorial site discourses are altered and shaped by the past and the present (Dwyer, 2004, p. 425). Further, this particular discourse relates to the current trends and phenomenon surrounding our political system today. This study provides insight into how deindustrialization of a community that was once dominated by manufacturing continues
to impact and influence the thoughts, beliefs, and actions of the individuals within the community, the local society, and similar communities.
REFERENCES


### APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

| Topic #1: Warm-Up/Background Information | 1. Can you tell me a little bit about the first time you visited Idora Park?  
- How did you feel inside the park? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic #2: Experience in and Feelings of Idora Park</td>
<td>1. How frequently did you visit the park?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Why did you choose to visit Idora Park?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Can you describe what the park looked like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. How did this park atmosphere differ from your neighborhood/town?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| | 5. What attractions did you frequently visit/use?  
- Why do you think you continued to use them? |
| | 6. Who did you attend the park with? Meet there? |
| | 7. What other types of people visited the park? |
| | 8. What were your overall experiences like in Idora Park?  
- Were they positive or negative?  
- How did you feel inside the park? |
| | 9. What changes were made to the park over time and your visits?  
- Which of these changes did you think were for the better?  
- For the worse? |
| | 10. When you reflect on Idora Park, what immediately comes to your mind?  
- Why do you believe that is what you first think of? |
| | 11. In your opinion, what made Idora Park unique? |
| | 12. Can you tell me a story (stories) about a time you visited Idora that stands out in your mind.  
- Why do you think this experience stands out in you mind? |
| | 13. Can you describe any significant events from your life that occurred at Idora Park? |
| Topic #3: Remembering Idora Park | 1. What do you do to remember Idora Park and its memory? (tell stories, look at photos, collect relics, visit somewhere…)  
- Why do you remember the park through these means?  

2. Do you visit any places that remind you of Idora Park?  
- Where are these places?  
- Do you go there specifically to remember the park?  
- Why does this place remind you of Idora Park? |
| --- | --- |
| Topic #4: Comparison to Today’s Parks | 1. If someone told you that Youngstown is better off now that Idora Park closed down, how would you respond to them?  
- Why would you respond this way?  

2. How did Idora Park differ from today’s amusement parks, such as Cedar Point or Walt Disney World?  

3. If Idora Park were still in existence, would you choose to go to Idora or another amusement park? Why? |
### APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT BASIC INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Decade Began Visiting Idora Park</th>
<th>Former Employee?</th>
<th>Hometown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James M. Amey</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Yes (games on the midway) Yes</td>
<td>Youngstown, Ohio (South Side)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tammi Anderson</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Yes (family-owned cotton candy stand) No</td>
<td>Youngstown, Ohio (West Side)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Bell</td>
<td>1960**</td>
<td>(but performed as a musical act in 1984)</td>
<td>Boardman, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leslie Bell-Redman</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Boardman, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Bitzel</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Peru, Indiana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken Brindle</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Yes (ride operator, primarily on the Wildcat)</td>
<td>Boardman, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betsy Burke*</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Youngstown, Ohio (Smoky Hallow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John B. Campbell</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Youngstown, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kae Joesph*</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Austintown, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Hackett</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Youngstown, Ohio (South Side)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia Kubina</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Youngstown, Ohio (West Side)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl McClendon</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Visited</td>
<td>Hometown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan C. Ohlin</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Youngstown, Ohio (South Side)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Price</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Youngstown, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken Senediak</td>
<td>1950**</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Youngstown, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rick Shale</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Boardman, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renee K. Sympson</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Struthers, Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John C. Thorne, Jr.</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Youngstown, Ohio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes pseudonym used for interview participant.

** Denotes estimation of decade began visiting Idora Park based upon individual interview data.
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Ohio University Adult Consent Form With Signature

Title of Research: Remembering Idora Park

Researchers: Megan Sympon

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

EXPLANATION OF STUDY

This study is being done in order to understand how people remember Idora Park. These memories will be compared to what artifacts and memorials remember Idora Park, in order to understand how mental and physical memories compare.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to discuss your own experiences within Idora Park and feelings about the place.

You should not participate in this study if you never visited and/or worked in Idora Park.

Your participation in the study will last approximately 30 minutes to 2 hours. A follow up interview may be asked of you at a later date.

Risks and Discomforts

No risks or discomforts are anticipated.

Benefits

This study is important to science/society because we will understand how people remember a place that has been permanently closed. Further, we will understand how and why past places are influential to society overall. The study will aid in understanding how remembering the past can still impact the present.

Individually, you may benefit from the study by remembering a fond memory of Idora Park.
Confidentiality and Records

The records of this interview will be recorded on an audio tape. The audio tape will be kept confidential by placing the recording of the interview in a locked safety deposit box and the recording will be located on a laptop computer locked by a password.

By participating in this study, you are consenting that all information recorded during your interview can be used in this study included, but not limited to, analysis, paraphrasing, and quoting of the interview content.

This study wants to give the participant two options in regards to his/her confidentiality of the recorded information taken during the recorded interview:

First, for the information provided today, the participant has the option of allowing the researcher to place the written transcribed interview in the research’s final product. Does the researcher have permission to place a written transcript of your interview at the end of the study’s final product? (Check YES or NO)

___ YES. By checking “YES,” you are agreeing that a written transcript of your recorded interview can be placed in an appendix of the final product of this study.

___ NO. By checking “NO,” you do not want a written copy of the recorded transcript to appear in an appendix of the final result of this study. Thus, the transcript of your interview will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team.

Second, the participant has the option to either allow the researcher to use his/her real name when discussing and analyzing what was said in the interview or the participant can choose to have the researcher use a “fake” name for the participant to keep your identity confidential. Can the researcher use your name when discussing what occurred and was said during the interview during this study and in its final product as well as in the final written transcript of your interview?

___ YES. By checking “YES,” you agree that the researcher can use your real name when discussing what was recorded during your interview during the study and in the study’s final product. Further, you agree that your name can appear on the final written transcript of your interview, if you have previously chosen to allow your transcript to be included in the final research product.

___ NO. By checking “NO,” you do not want your name to be used when referring to what was recorded during your interview. Instead, you consent that the researcher is allowed to use a “fake” name, or pseudonym, when referencing what was discussed in the recorded interview.
Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the investigator, Megan Symson at (330) 716-0470 or ms565914@ohio.edu, or the advisor, Dr. Timothy Anderson at (740) 593-0141 or anderst1@ohio.edu

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Chris Hayhow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664 or hayhow@ohio.edu.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:

• you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered;
• you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction;
• you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study;
• you are 18 years of age or older;
• your participation in this research is completely voluntary;
• you may leave the study at any time; if you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature________________________________________________ Date__________

Printed Name________________________

Version Date: 5/28/15