Revising Rhetorical Education: Museums and Pedagogy

Dissertation

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Abstract

The term “rhetorical education” is frequently associated with historical practices, such as *progymnasmata* of classical times or 19th century writing handbooks. It is also a term associated with formal education, like writing and rhetoric classrooms inside the walls of the academy. These associations indicate that rhetorical education is somewhat outdated and limited in its availability. However, in the current divisive American political climate, rhetorical education is arguably more necessary than ever. In a recent essay on the value of first-year writing from *Inside Higher Ed*, John Duffy explains, “To say that the current state of public discourse is abysmal seems self-evident. Toxic rhetoric has become a fact of everyday life, a form of entertainment, and a corporate product.” While Duffy suggests that first-year composition is a partial solution to this problem, claiming that it “promote[s] an ethical public discourse,” my dissertation seeks answers beyond the ivory tower, arguing that rhetorical education is a concept that needs reviewing and revising for the 21st century, both inside and far beyond the college composition classroom.

S. Michael Halloran defines public experience, like those that occur at popular tourist destinations, *as* rhetorical education. At such sites, explains Halloran, a collective identity is encouraged, allowing visitors to engage in public discourse based largely on their common experience at the site and their accompanying feeling of unification as
American citizens. Recent research by Jessica Enoch suggests looking outside of the academy for pedagogies that modernize rhetorical education. While Enoch points to an online activist group as one such site, I argue that museums are rich spaces to study rhetorical education since they frequently encourage civic discourse and participation both inside and outside their walls.

With conceptions of rhetorical education like those by Halloran and Enoch acting as a guiding framework, this dissertation answers recent calls to improve civic engagement by investigating how museums both educate visitors about history and encourage present-day participatory citizenship. To explore new directions for rhetorical education, I use qualitative methods, collecting data from museum exhibits and tours, staff and guest interviews, publicity materials, and museum archives. I then use rhetorical and discourse analysis to conduct case studies of three recently established historical museums: The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio (2004); The National World War I Museum in Kansas City, Missouri (2006); and the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum (2001). This project turns specifically to museums that represent trauma—always a controversial undertaking—as valuable sites of investigation because they frequently align historical events with present-day activist agendas, thus serving as complex models of rhetorical education. Each case study chapter analyzes data collected from one museum to refigure well-known pieces of rhetorical theory with special attention to pedagogy; specifically, identification, collectivity, and memory are addressed. Museums, I argue, offer important pedagogical insight, refiguring common conceptions of where and how rhetorical education takes place in the 21st century.
Dedication

To Mike and Carter, my little family. Thanks for sticking it out with me
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Vita

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Chapter One: Introduction to “Revising Rhetorical Education: Museums and Pedagogy”

An Argument for More Dispersed Rhetorical Education: Exigency and Goals of the Project

In Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Assent, Wayne Booth laments, “Passionate partisans cannot seem to find convincing ways of talking about their beliefs” (xi). Booth’s lamentation is spurred by what he perceives as the failure of on-campus protest movements during the 1960s, but his words remain relevant today in a world that is saturated with discourse in every medium, yet so much of it fails. This ongoing failure, which is arguably more pronounced than ever in the present day, is at the heart of my commitments as a scholar and teacher of Rhetoric and Composition and serves as the impetus for this project. “Revising Rhetorical Education: Museums and Pedagogy,” seeks models and methods to improve the current state of public discourse and engagement in the United States by investigating how museums both educate visitors about history and encourage present-day participatory citizenship. My main goal is to explore new directions for rhetorical education—by which I mean how people are taught to communicate and use language, particularly when the communication practices are linked to improved citizenship. My work has implications for both the public sphere and the university classroom.
In most scholarship, the term “rhetorical education” is frequently associated with historical practices, such as the rigorous *progymnasma* of classical times that trained students in the elements of rhetoric to prepare them for their own orations, or 19th century writing and self-improvement handbooks, often used by women with no access to schooling. It is also a term largely associated with formal education. It is generally accepted, for instance, that the composition classroom is a space of rhetorical education, as evidenced by the rhetorical analysis assignments that frequently appear on syllabi. Though both history and formal education are meaningful contexts in which to understand rhetorical education, these associations also demonstrate an understanding of the practice as outdated and limited in its availability and shape, which narrows the research on the subject. However, in the current divisive American political and social climate, rhetorical education is arguably more necessary and should be more dispersed than ever. In a recent essay on the value of first-year writing from *Inside Higher Ed*, John Duffy explains, “To say that the current state of public discourse is abysmal seems self-evident. Toxic rhetoric has become a fact of everyday life, a form of entertainment, and a corporate product.” While Duffy suggests that first-year composition is a partial solution to this problem, claiming that it “promote[s] an ethical public discourse,” my dissertation seeks answers beyond the ivory tower, arguing that rhetorical education is a concept that needs re-viewing and revising for the 21st century, both inside and far beyond the college composition classroom.
Building on the work of scholars like S. Michael Halloran and Jessica Enoch, who work to expand notions of rhetorical education, I turn to history museums as rich spaces to study since they frequently encourage civic discourse and participation both inside and outside their walls. Rhetorical education at the museums I study comes in the form of asking visitors to attend to certain artifacts, as well as the correlating civic issues and lessons. Visitors then are encouraged to engage with these issues—think about them, talk about them, write about them, and thus become more critically aware or even take action (Figure 1.1). In short, I argue that museums can refigure common conceptions of where and how rhetorical education takes place in the 21st century.

In this introductory chapter, I define rhetorical education and articulate how it operates as my guiding theoretical framework, specifying my intervention. I then offer a
brief history of museum education, with attention to how it connects with the pedagogical imperatives of rhetoric. I also explain my research sites, site selection process, and explicate my methodology. I conclude with an overview of my chapters.

**Theoretical Framework and Critical Intervention: Revising Rhetorical Education**

Halloran defines public experiences, like those that occur at museums and other historic sites, as rhetorical education. At such sites, suggests Halloran, a public, collective identity is encouraged, allowing visitors to engage in public discourse based largely on their common experience at the site and their accompanying feeling of unification as American citizens. He compares historic parks and tour roads to the lecture circuit of the 19th century, which provided rhetorical education at non-academic sites and allowed people to learn how to engage in public discourse. Halloran states, “the collective identity enacted [at public sites] is what makes it possible for us to be a public, and hence engage in public discourse. As in the classrooms that we more readily associate with the project of education, the first and most crucial fact is simply being together in a place that evokes a certain decorum and calls upon us to attend together to some object of common interest” (“Writing History on the Landscape” 130). Marie Secor and Davida Charney, in their preface to *Constructing Rhetorical Education*, speak more specifically about the sites and goals of rhetorical education: “A rhetorical education is not limited to teaching freshman composition (or any specific writing course), and the contexts in which it occurs are not limited to classrooms. An effective rhetorical education certainly results in the growth of writing skills, but its larger goal is to foster a critical habit of mind” (ix). In the introduction to the collection *Rhetorical Education in America*, Cheryl Glenn extends Secor’s and Charney’s reference to a “critical habit of mind”: “Ideally, rhetorical
education shapes all citizens for public participation…rhetorical education enables people to engage in and change American society” (viii). Halloran, Glenn, and Secor and Charney establish rhetorical education as involving a focused collective, going beyond the writing classroom, and being linked to public participation and critical awareness. These definitions inform my use of the term when discussing museums.

As these opening definitions indicate, rhetorical education is broad and relevant topic for research in the field of Rhetoric and Composition. But there are few recent scholarly monographs that take rhetorical education as their primary theoretical framework and guiding interest.¹ Jeffery Walker’s book *The Genuine Teachers of this Art: Rhetorical Education in Antiquity* (2011) focuses on the handbook tradition in classical rhetoric, ultimately arguing for rhetoric as an “Isocratean pedagogical discipline” which should have a goal of producing strong writers and speakers who can effectively participate in civic life. Takis Poulakas, in *Speaking for the Polis: Isocrates’ Rhetorical Education* (2008) examines Isocrates’ use of rhetoric to lessen tensions between political equality and social equality. Jessica Enoch’s book *Refiguring Rhetorical Education: Women Teaching African American, Native American, and Chicano/a Students, 1865-1911* (2008) shares the work of five female teachers who challenged gender norms and created pedagogies that met the cultural and civic needs of their students. Specifically, the book includes case studies of Lydia Marie Childs, Zitkala Ša, and Jovita Idar, Marta Peña, and Leonor Villegas de Magnón. Finally, Shirley Wilson Logan’s book, *Liberating

¹ While there are certainly innumerable books in the field that are invested in questions about rhetorical education and pedagogy, even if they do not use those exact terms, I am interested in books that use rhetorical education as their *guiding framework*. These monographs are interested in trying to (re)define the practice, explain its purpose, and ask readers to consider it in new ways. Such overriding goals are similar
Language: Sites of Rhetorical Education in Nineteenth-Century Black America (2009), methodologically similar to Enoch’s, identifies “non-traditional” language-based activities of African-Americans in nineteenth-century America. Some of her historical research sites include the black press, literary societies, and self-education in writing and elocution.

These books offer the field a sense of the deep, rich, and diverse history of rhetorical education. As demonstrated by the work of Walker and Poulakas, ancient rhetorical training was constantly concerned with the development of civic persona and encouraging citizens to better participate in the civic sphere. William Denman, in an essay tracking the development of rhetorical education from classical times to the present day, calls for a renewed focus on this “citizen-orator”—a rhetor who serves the community and participates in democratic life, embodied by Quintilian’s “good man speaking well” (10). Denman explains that this classical goal of rhetorical education carried over into colonial America; discourse was concerned with finding a “public consensus” as the basis of civic action, and it was assumed that moral authority rested in the community rather than individual convictions (Denman 4). By the nineteenth century, though, Denman claims that rhetorical education became professionalized, and there was an increased focus on individual economic survival rather than the public good. Of course, Denman is largely focused on formalized rhetorical education, and the audience for such rhetorical education was very limited. Training in ancient Greece, for instance, was not offered to women or anyone who did not meet the rigorous requirements of citizenship (land ownership, proper lineage, etc.); such exclusion continued throughout
history and exists even today. This is one reason why recovery research, like Enoch’s and Wilson Logan’s books, has become so central in rhetorical studies.\(^3\) Through such historical projects, scholars and teachers can finally gain a sense of how other people (particularly women and people of color) used rhetoric for civic purposes, awareness, and action. It is clear that, throughout history, instruction in rhetoric was frequently linked to participation in the public sphere—sometimes that instruction came from the academy, sometimes from lecture circuits, sometimes from handbooks, sometimes from unofficial teachers in the community, sometimes from community organizations, or sometimes from teachers who did things in a non-traditional or non-sanctioned way. What this brief historical overview points toward is that current books that explore rhetorical education (Walker, Poulakas, Enoch, and Wilson Logan) are strictly historical studies and largely interested in curricular notions of rhetorical education.\(^4\) Certainly each book also speaks to how the past can inform present-day understandings of rhetorical education, but there is currently no book-length study of extracurricular and contemporary practices of rhetorical education, and that is an absence I aim to fill with this project.

\(^3\) Enoch’s and Wilson Logan’s books categorize their focus as rhetorical education, but they are part of the a larger recovery movement in the field that includes projects by Cheryl Glenn, Lindal Buchanan, Jackie Jones Royster, Carol Mattingly, Malea Powell, and Nan Johnson, to name just a few.

\(^4\) In addition to these monographs, as I briefly touched on earlier, there have been two major edited collections focused on rhetorical education: Secor’s and Charney’s *Constructing Rhetorical Education* (1992) and Glenn’s, Margaret Lyday’s, and Wendy Sharer’s *Rhetorical Education in America* (2004). Despite both collections emphasizing in their introductions the broadness and relevance of rhetorical education, the essays within maintain the historical and classroom-based trend. In *Constructing Rhetorical Education*, of the nineteen included essays, eleven explore classroom topics, two are historical studies, and only the remaining six investigate questions of rhetorical education in other contexts, and largely those contexts are technical and professional communication (five essays address rhetorical education in these settings). The *Rhetorical Education in America* collection includes eleven essays. Six of those essays are historical studies, and they are often historical studies that are based in formalized academic settings. Three of the essays are contemporary in focus but apply to academic or classroom contexts only.
Recent research by Halloran, Gregory Clark, and, once again, Enoch moves toward addressing this absence, and my project builds on their work. Halloran and Clark each have an essay in the collection *Rhetorical Education in America*, and they are described by the editors as “companion pieces” (xv). Both essays explore landmarks and landscapes of public parks, suggesting such sites establish a collective national identity, which they view as a fundamental piece of rhetorical education. Clark and Halloran have co-authored other essays making similar arguments, and Clark also authored the monograph *Rhetorical Landscapes in America: Variations on a Theme by Kenneth Burke*, in which he analyzes tourist sites like the Grand Canyon and New York City to argue that public experience influences rhetorical power. This scholarship by Halloran and Clark in particular, with its focus on historical, public sites, has shaped my understanding of rhetorical education. Continuing to focus on these popular, present-day sites of rhetorical education, is necessary since, as Glenn points out in her introduction to *Rhetorical Education in America*, “Well-born males continue to receive the very best rhetorical educations, the best preparation for participating in the public sphere…its [rhetorical education’s] goals circle right back to the preservation of the dominant culture” (viii-ix).

With Glenn’s sharp assertion that rhetorical education still remains the domain of the elite, the study of how extracurricular sites can and do influence public discourse is that much more important. In short, I argue that rhetorical education must be understood and embraced as a far more dispersed practice, allowing for increased access and equity.

Enoch’s recent essay, “Composing Rhetorical Education for the Twenty-First Century: Taking It Global as Pedagogical Heuristic,” works with a very different site than
Clark and Halloran tend to research, but her approach is formative to my own project, as well. In her analysis of the rhetorical education offered by an online activist group (TakingITGlobal), Enoch offers what she calls a “different methodology” for modernizing rhetorical education. First, she wants to focus on the present rather than just the past when searching for rhetorical pedagogies. Second, she suggests looking outside of the academy for these pedagogies: “my analysis aims to modernize the ways we conceive of rhetorical education inside the academy by looking outside its walls to a politically interested group disconnected from traditional forms of rhetorical education” (166). For Enoch, an online activist group offers promising approaches and models. The questions she asks about this group align with those I ask of museums: “What are the rhetorical practices and pedagogies that enable this group’s form of civic engagement and how might its work prompt us to reconsider our perceptions of rhetorical education inside the classroom?” (167). I suggest that museums can provide new rhetorical and pedagogical models to encourage civic discourse and participation among students. In her study of the U.S. Holocaust Museum as an “anomalous place of learning” Elizabeth Ellsworth notes, “I believe that the value of readings like the one I have tried to offer is their ability to provide ‘inspirational data’—data that can stimulate educational imaginations and pedagogical design, rather than simply define a set of supposedly replicable pedagogical strategies” (30). My goal is not unlike Ellsworth’s then; I do not want to prescribe a particular museum-based pedagogy or claim that these museums offer ideal models for rhetorical education. Indeed, there are problems to address in them, as well. Instead, I explore ways that museums can change understandings of rhetorical theories and strategies, particularly in terms of how they encourage visitors to become
more involved in public discourse—and I then move to considering how these public pedagogies can affect practices within the academy.

Museums, which are already explicitly pedagogical spaces, can act as classrooms, asking visitors to attend to certain artifacts, as well as the correlating issues and lessons. Most contemporary museums also ask visitors to engage with these issues—think about them, talk about them, write about them, and eventually do something about them. This is the sort of rhetorical education taking place at the museums I study; people can certainly engage in new forms of public discourse with one another and with the space itself, while simultaneously being educated about the different types of rhetoric at their disposal. As Halloran explains it, “these [public places] are sites of rhetorical education, and the study of how they work to inform their visitors, and hence form those visitors as citizens, is a vast, inviting, largely unexplored, and deeply important field for rhetorical research” (144). Museums, then, prove to be rich and understudied rhetorical sites that can shed light on pedagogies, refiguring common conceptions of where and how rhetorical education takes place in the 21st century.

Museums can hardly avoid being rhetorical spaces. When visiting historical museums, many people assume that the displays are offering straightforward facts, and the goal is simply to improve knowledge of history. To some extent, this is true. At the same time, as museum studies scholar Stephen Weil explains, museums are largely about ideas. While it is easy to suppose that objects and artifacts displayed at museums share some sort of objective reality, this is rarely, if ever, the case. Weil urges visitors to remember that ideas and not things lie at the heart of the museum enterprise; objects and
their ideas go together, making the museum a far more rhetorical space. In other words, the space of the museum itself works to persuade visitors and offer them particular messages. So, though guests might presume that they are receiving a strictly historical education at any of the museums I study, a rhetorical education comes as part of that package.

To interpret the complex representations that occurred at my case study museums and better understand the methods of rhetorical education, I use a combination of rhetorical analysis and discourse analysis. Sonja Foss defines rhetorical analysis as “a qualitative research method that is designed for the systematic investigation and explanation of symbolic acts and artifacts for the purposes of understanding rhetorical processes” (6). Rhetorical analysis allows me to interrogate my data at a local level; I analyze the work of a specific museum staff/team (rhetors) within the constraints and affordances of their particular institution (context) and consider how this work affects visitors to the museum (audience). I am specifically concerned with what messages are being communicated about historical events, and what sort of pedagogical assumptions underlie those messages. As Foss points out, “rhetorical critics don’t study an artifact for its qualities and features alone. Rhetorical critics are interested in what an artifact teaches about the nature of rhetoric—in other words, critics engage in rhetorical criticism to make a contribution to rhetorical theory” (7). Foss’s articulation of rhetorical analysis as a method that contributes to rhetorical theory is paramount in my use of it as my primary methodology. Such a contribution is ultimately what my project aims to accomplish, with the focus on rhetorical education in particular. In my attention to the artifacts I analyze at
each museum, I consider how they are changing my own understandings of rhetoric itself and what a deeper understanding of a particular museum can then teach others about rhetorical theory. Museums prove to be especially relevant sites for such work since they use multiple modes to communicate, are constantly concerned with audience(s), negotiate and represent complex (and some might even say unrepresentable) events, and share a pedagogical imperative with rhetoric.

Though rhetorical analysis is my central methodology, I want to engage with broader questions beyond the walls of the museum and questions that carry across museums. For instance: How do American museums influence citizens’ understanding of the past? How are the stories that museums tell shaped by government officials, curators, and citizen-subjects? What role do museums play in cultivating national memory and commemoration, especially when they represent violent historic events? Why are certain events and figures represented while others are left out? As these questions indicate, I need to use a form of analysis that allows me to comment on larger institutional trends and power structures, and that is why I incorporate discourse analysis. Throughout the case study chapters, I analyze the exhibits at the museums on three interconnected levels: 1) the local (rhetorical analysis) 2) the institutional and 3) western culture. In short, I use discourse analysis to better understand the role of the institution and culture—and all the complex power relations that go along with them—in shaping rhetorical education. I can then discuss implications for museums, as well as public discourse, more broadly and interrogate existing ideological assumptions that go along with the representation of/education about historical events. The necessity of understanding the modern museum
as an institution shaped by particular power structures can be further clarified with an explanation of the history of museums and their educational practices. This history sheds light on how museums have, in some ways, always been connected to rhetorical education—sometimes because of their exclusionary practices and eventually because of their commitments to meeting the needs of increasingly diverse audiences.

**The History of Museums and Museum Education**

“As educational institutions, museums face a difficult task. They deal with a heterogeneous audience that differs widely in age, education, and cultural backgrounds. They teach permissively, that is, their visitors come when they wish, stay as long as they like, and move about freely with no ordered viewing and look at only objects that interest them, on an average, for only a few seconds. There are no instructional objectives, textbooks, grades, or exams to outline or evaluate a learning experience. Still, museums often have great impact on their visitors and stir their interests that may lead to true self education” (165).—Edward P. Alexander, Museums in Motion

Just as understandings of rhetoric and practices of rhetorical education have developed and changed since antiquity, the same can be said for the goals, displays, and educational work of museums. In classical times, museums signified as temples dedicated to the muses. The Alexandria Institution was the most famous museum in the 3rd century B.C. It housed some objects, but chiefly acted as a philosophy academy. Greek temples housed many items and artifacts, and the Romans were committed to displaying paintings and sculptures in their own institutions. Despite interest and popularity in the classical period, the museum as institution was barely kept alive in western Europe during the middle ages. Churches, cathedrals, monasteries, and palaces instead held treasures and collections rather than dedicating museums exclusively to such a job (Alexander).

In the 16th-century, “cabinets of curiosity” or “wunderkammers” became popular, and they are generally considered precursors to the museum as it is now recognized.
These cabinets, which were sometimes actual cabinets and sometimes entire rooms, were the domain of the wealthy and privileged and usually displayed natural history artifacts—skulls, jarred scientific specimens, and dead animals, for example. Works of art were sometimes displayed there, too. Though museums in their own right, the cabinets of curiosity were rarely open to the public; they were considered “playthings of princes” in this time period (Alexander). At this point in the development of museums, education was not a concern, and they were far from places that were interested in promoting any sort of civic awareness or participation. They were strictly showplaces and only open to a select and privileged few, so those visiting cabinets of curiosity likely already had access to formal settings of rhetorical education.

The museum did not begin to go public until the late 17th century. But even with this public turn, early museums were not overly concerned with education as a purpose. Instead, they were largely spaces of collection and conservation of artifacts. Any education that occurred was secondary and likely unplanned. Connected to collection was conservation work, especially with art. Conservation became increasingly important as museums went public, and the collections presumably needed to be “protected” from unruly citizens. By the 18th century, education was on the radar for many museums, though. But the audience for this education remained narrow and selective. Exhibits were initially for scholars, aesthetes, and experts, and they were not accessible to the general public. Museum education in the 18th century took place strictly through looking, as collections visually demonstrated structural principles of disciplinary knowledge. The task of museum displays was thus to transmit the “true” structure of science, history, or
art, which would enable “learning at a glance” (Hooper-Greenhill 191). In other words, it was assumed that the correct display would result in automatic knowledge, as the eyes served as a direct conduit to the mind. “Learning at a glance” would be a solitary and silent activity for great and privileged minds, so if rhetorical education did occur, it was limited and based in an individual. There was no movement toward interactivity or modeling of more collective public discourse. Moreover, museums were spaces to absorb knowledge only about content, not to be trained in civic participation. But during the 19th century, aligning with the wider rise of democracy, exhibition practices began to gradually change, and museums became more concerned with the needs of audience (Alexander; Hooper-Greenhill).

Though the democratization of museums during the 19th century is generally viewed as a positive turn, offering increased access to culture and education, it can also be viewed critically and suspiciously. Historian Tony Bennett, in *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, suggests that museums became more public because they had a vested interest in controlling the behavior of citizens. As Bennett’s title would indicate, he largely offers a historical take, though he is interested in how this affects museums in the present day. Heavily influenced by Michel Foucault, Bennett is troubled by the historical functions of museum education, which he sees as directly related to social regulation, behavioral control, and even discipline and punishment. He claims a politically-focused account of museums’ formation and early development is needed to help illuminate questions of museum policies and politics, including their educational purposes. Bennett argues that museums’ formation needs to be viewed in relation to the
development of a range of collateral cultural institutions, including outlier and disconnected institutions. To that end, Bennett sees museums, fairs, and exhibitions as a distinctive grouping. Historically, these institutions were invested in regulating the conduct of visitors, especially by controlling their physical movement, shaping them as “minds on legs” (6). Bennett investigates how the public museum exemplified the development of a new “governmental” relation to culture in which works of high culture were enlisted as forms of social management. Taking it a step further, he sees many similarities between cultural technologies like museums and the parallel reshaping of the power to punish taking place at prisons. This “governmentalization of culture” produced subtle yet lasting effects by using culture as a resource through which those exposed would progressively monitor their own thoughts and behavior (24). Exposure to culture and good taste at spaces like museums could control a variety of social ills—from drunkenness, to bad manners, to questionable morality. Bennett suggests that this history connects to debates about the modern museum and its accessibility to all sections of the population, insisting that the status of “public” museum remains questionable, even today.

Bennett’s critical analysis of museum education in the 19th century points toward how museums could be associated with rhetorical education. His research indicates that museums were invested in training visitors as citizens, though he sees this training as oppressive. While I generally argue that the rhetorical education facilitated at my case study museums is productive and positive, Bennett’s concerns about the museum as a controlling and dominating institution also manifest in my own analysis, and I regularly
interrogate how museums can balance this need for control with their interests in more equitable, conversational, and audience-selected pedagogical approaches.

Ultimately, it is American museums that have contributed most significantly to recent developments in education. In *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History of Museums*, Edward P. Alexander even compares American museums to open universities for the public. Museums developed slowly in the United States, with the first museum founded in 1773, and the U.S. not really entering the “museum mainstream” until the 1870s. The advent of the automobile played a part in American museum development and popularity since cars enabled people to travel to these sites and thus established them as desirable tourist destinations. This was especially true for historic house museums like Colonial Williamsburg. By 1900, museums were at the center of education and enlightenment in America. Docents became common to “interpret” the museums for guests. American museums have positioned education in museums as “interpretation” since the 19th century, meaning that museums teach through the use of original objects and sensory perception to experience objects, positioning these approaches as complementing “rational processes of learning through words and verbalization” (Alexander 12). This emphasis on educational functions has social implications—some museums try to reach all parts of their audience and benefit the entire community. Some museums, though, are criticized for only appealing to an educated few, often ignoring minorities. Such discontent can lead to “neighborhood museums” or community centers (Alexander).
As Alexander’s general history of American museums indicates, these spaces became increasingly aware of their educational duties in the 20th century, and this commitment to education, as well as the growing diversification of pedagogy, continues in the 21st century. Hooper-Greenhill, in her 2007 book *Museums and Education: Purpose, Pedagogy, and Performance*, acknowledges the problematic nature of museum education in the past, connecting with some of Bennett’s concerns, but she has high hopes for museums in the present day and into the future. Hooper-Greenhill views 21st century museums as what she calls the “post-museum.” Characteristics of the post-museum include: an understanding of the complex relationship between culture, community, learning, and identity that will support new approaches to audiences; the promotion of an egalitarian and just society; and a consideration of museums’ cultural, social, and ethical responsibility (1-2). She explains that the particular power of learning in museums is that they can promote creativity, build personalized learning, and help enable all learners to be successful. At various points during Hooper-Greenhill’s in-depth studies of museums, teachers visiting museums with their students note that, while there, all students “shine.” According to Hooper-Greenhill, learning in museums, at its best, is immersive, embodied, holistic, and pleasurable, which leads to learners adopting an open-minded and receptive outlook. As Hooper-Greenhill puts it, “Museums can induce a condition of ‘readiness to learn.’” Learning in museums is often talked about as “serious play,” which can provoke further readiness to learn and where learning is successful (187). This can engender a more positive self-image for learners, demonstrating how museums can serve as significant sites for learning in post-modernity. Hooper-Greenhill’s study indicates why museums prove to be such valuable sites to investigate.
rhetorical education in the 21st century. Non-traditional pedagogies, ones that are rarely possible in a classroom space, are often utilized to engage guests, and this engagement can occur through rhetorical processes—discussion, writing, multimodal composing, as well as learning from various types of rhetoric (textual, visual, spatial, etc.). Moreover, Hooper-Greenhill views the post-museum as playing an important role in creating a more just society. Arguably, one crucial aspect of working toward such a society is to educate guests about how to more effectively participate in public discussions and generally develop their civic awareness.

Certainly I see the pedagogical promise of museums in general, and especially of the museums I have selected for my case studies. This is, in part, what drew me to them as research sites in the first place. Other rhetoricians have recently turned to museums, as well, with interests in the rhetorical nature of memory, the work of public spaces in forming national identity, and the effects of complex rhetorical approaches on diverse audience members. The most extensive example of published rhetorical studies about museums is the 2010 edited collection *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*. My focus on museums as spaces of rhetorical education intervenes in this ongoing discussion. Namely, I hope to make pedagogy more central to this conversation that is occurring between the fields of museum studies (and memory studies) and rhetoric. Currently, the published rhetorical work on museums does not engage in a sustained way with pedagogical inquiries, and yet, as I have demonstrated throughout this section, the educational imperatives of both rhetoric and museums have been paramount and complex throughout history. Interrogating these educational
imperatives, especially as they connect to building civic awareness, is central to my project.

**Site Selection and Introduction to Case Study Museums**

With my intervention and theoretical and historical contexts established, I want to briefly touch on my specific research sites and, more importantly, how I selected them. This selection further informs my analysis and eventual conclusions about rhetorical education. To narrow my research sites for this project, I focus on museums established since the year 2000 that represent a historical trauma: The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center (est. 2004); The National World War I Museum (est. 2006); and The Oklahoma City Memorial Museum (est. 2001). I focus on recently established museums since they align with trends observed in museum education research that connect with my existing pedagogical interests. Namely, 21st century museums frequently align with Hooper-Greenhill’s discussion of the “post-museum” as outlined in the previous section. My case study museums all possess some of the defined characteristics of the post-museum. The interest in more complex relationships with audience, the commitment to improving society, and the accompanying understanding of the role of the museum as an institution with social responsibility are all key to understanding the work of these museums within the theoretical framework of rhetorical education, and each site espouses a mission of civic awareness and activism in addition to their historical interests.

After visiting a variety of museums, it quickly became clear that museums dealing with historical trauma were especially fraught. Representing trauma is never a simple endeavor, so these museums are tasked with additional considerations, like how to
appropriately portray violence and how to design exhibits that are respectful to those personally connected to the traumatic event. Cathy Caruth, in her introduction to the second section of the collection *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, discusses the inherent difficulty of gaining access to a traumatic past. Trauma is difficult to understand and register as a complete memory precisely because traumatic events are incomprehensible occurrences. Most scholars writing in Caruth’s collection are interested in the Holocaust as one such event, exploring how it resists narrativization, pedagogy, and traditional forms of testimony. Caruth claims that trauma does demand narration so it can be integrated into memory, but, at the same time, there are risks to that very narration, as it can oversimplify the trauma and destroy its precision. Gaining access to traumatic history, then, becomes a project of listening in new ways and accepting the reality of a history that can only be perceived in unassimilable terms (Caruth). As such, museums that aim to represent and narrativize trauma are doing difficult rhetorical work. Respect for and questions about the rhetoric of trauma inform my site selection, and each case study chapter incorporates work from the field of trauma studies to aid in my analysis.

Eventually, I narrowed my focus to exploring three formative American historical traumas: slavery, war, and terrorism. I selected sites that were geographically accessible for multiple visits and extended observation. I also wanted to focus on sites that were, as much as any museum ever is, complete. I selected sites that had been established for several years or more to create temporal distance from the design and construction of the museum. This distance was important since it allowed museum staff to better reflect on those processes and decisions. This ruled out important national sites that might be
promising for future work, such as the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington DC (expected to fully open in March 2015) and the National September 11 Memorial Museum in New York City (no opening date set). A final factor in site selection, of course, was the support and approval of museum staff members, who I worked with throughout my research and writing process, and they greatly inform this project. Their voices and insights are integrated throughout subsequent chapters. With

![Figure 1.2. The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center](image)

these considerations playing an important role in my decision, I ultimately selected and conducted research at my three case study museums. Though each museum is described
in detail in its respective chapter, I offer a brief introduction and contextualization of the sites here.

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center (Chapter Two) was built in Cincinnati on the Ohio River, the geographic barrier that separated the slave states from the free states. The museum itself is extremely modern and striking in its appearance since it is new construction (Figure 1.2). The facade is cream-colored marble juxtaposed with still-bronze copper. A wall of windows overlooks the side facing the Ohio River. Located in downtown Cincinnati, it stands in fairly stark opposition to the neighboring athletic stadiums. The museum has three floors which include six permanent exhibits, such as a historic slave pen from Kentucky, an exhibit called “Escape!” that documents the journey to freedom for one fictional slave, and “Slavery Today,” which deals with present-day human trafficking and how to stop it. Kim Robinson, President and CEO, articulates part of the mission on the museum’s website: “From their [slaves on the Underground Railroad] example of courage, cooperation and perseverance, we relate this uniquely American history to contemporary issues, inspiring everyone to take steps for freedom today” (Freedom Center).
While the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center was constructed anew to serve as a museum, the National World War I Museum (Chapter Three) in Kansas City, Missouri was designed to fill a long-standing, preexisting space (Figure 1.3). A memorial to honor the local lives in World War I was built in Kansas City in 1921, shortly after the war drew to a close. Since 1921, the Memorial Association collected artifacts but lacked the space to display the enormous and important collection. The museum opened in 2006 in what was once an empty cavern beneath the memorial, creating 80,000 square feet for exhibitions. The museum is on a single floor and circular in structure. The museum’s center is made up of a detailed, multimedia timeline of the war, and adjacent exhibits include weaponry like tanks and canons, interactive technology tables where guests can learn more about the event and participate in instructional activities, and life-size trenches, to name just a few. The mission statement

Figure 1.3. The National World War I Museum
begins as follows: “The National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial inspires thought, dialogue, and learning to make the experiences of the World War I era meaningful and relevant for present and future generations” (National World War I Museum).

Slavery and World War I are traumatic events that were spread across many diverse sites, while the Oklahoma City bombing occurred at one very specific place—the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City. That localized site of trauma became the eventual home of The Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum (Chapter Four) (Figure 1.4). Built to simultaneously commemorate the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Building and educate the public about this event, this museum opened in 2001. It was built in the Journal Record Building, which stood next to the destroyed Murrah Building. The building is nondescript and plain from the outside, though it does bear some marks from the bombing, including passionate graffiti left by first responders. Next to the museum building is the acclaimed memorial, a National Park site which is composed of a field of 168 empty chairs, one for each of the victims. The inside of the museum is designed as ten chapters that guests must navigate in order; the chapters include topics like “Background on Terrorism,” “History of the Site,” “Survivors,” and “Funerals and Mourning.” Each chapter of the museum includes multiple exhibits—some artifact-based, some technology-based, and some composed largely of photos. The mission statement is lengthy and was written jointly by the institution and members of the community. The statement that has come to most succinctly represent the work of the Memorial Museum, though, can be found at the top of its website: “We come here to
remember those who were killed, those who survived and those changed forever. May all who leave here know the impact of violence. May this memorial offer comfort, strength, peace, hope and serenity” (Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum).

![Figure 1.4. The Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum](image)

**Collecting Data at Museums**

Though I have already touched on my methodology, explaining why I use both rhetorical analysis and discourse analysis in this project, I also want to give readers a sense of how I went about collecting data to analyze in the first place. Each chapter in this dissertation is a qualitative rhetorical case study focused on one museum, though

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6At the time of writing, this is the first book-length project that uses museums as sites to conduct rhetorical research, so including this detailed discussion of methods—acknowledging both successes and challenges—strikes me as particularly necessary. I learned quite a bit from such explanations of methods from scholars in museum studies; their methodological transparency helped me make my own plans and reflect on my approaches critically. I hope my narrative in this section can play a similar role for other scholars.
some cross-site analysis does occur in each chapter, as well. To collect data, I used a variety of qualitative methods: I interviewed museum staff and guests; I observed and participated in museum exhibits and tours, photographing or video recording this work when the museum allowed it; I collected publicity materials from the museums themselves, as well as their websites, including brochures, tour booklets, and iPod tours; finally, when granted access, I visited the museum’s archives to review any materials they held about the creation of the museum—Oklahoma City in particular had a large archive of related data. I spent about a week at each site. Due to geographic accessibility and travel costs, in Oklahoma City, those days were consecutive, while at the Freedom Center and National World War I Museum, those days were non-consecutive and spread across several visits.

Interviews With Staff Members

Conducting interviews of museum staff members was the most complex and time consuming aspect of my data collection. To set up these interviews, I used the museums’ websites to establish one contact person at each museum, typically the staff member in charge of museum education. I familiarized that individual with the project and my IRB, and he/she signed a letter of consent to allow me to use the museum as a research site. That initial staff member acted as a conduit to learn about other people who might be willing to help with my project. He/she made recommendations and supplied me with contact information. As long as the recommended staff members were willing, I interviewed them during my time at the museum or via email if preferred. At each site, I

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7 Since all my case study museums allowed at least some photography, I have included in this dissertation only original photographs taken during my visits.
interviewed three to five staff members, usually in person, though I did conduct two interviews via email when the staff members preferred this approach. The interviews lasted about forty-five minutes to an hour. I recorded each interview on an audio recorder, as well as taking detailed notes while the interviewee spoke to me. Each interview used the same set of questions, which asked about the communicative and educational goals of the museum (Appendix A). When necessary, follow-up questions were asked, though I stayed with the interview script as much as I could.

I eventually coded the interview data by searching for repeating patterns and themes. I focused on data from one museum at a time, so the codes were different for each site depending on what the interviewees shared during our discussions. For instance, at the National World War I Museum, the pattern of “individual” emerged as staff emphasized the need to offer individualized, ordinary, and often overlooked stories from the war. At the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum, one code I used was “survival,” as staff members often viewed this as a primary message of the museum, and they also work extensively with survivors of the bombing.

Conducting these interviews with staff members was especially important to me as it is frequently lacking in other rhetorical analyses of museums. This inside perspective is a valuable one; understanding how those who run the museum explain their rhetorical purposes and approaches should not be overlooked. After all, I understand the museum as a rhetorical space, and these individuals are some of the primary agents that directly shape its rhetoric and pedagogy. As these interviews impressed upon me, museums are
meticulously planned and designed institutions that are diligently working to attract
diverse audiences and make the exhibits relevant to them.

*Interviews With Museum Visitors*

Once I was working with the museum staff, I asked the person in charge of
museum education if he/she could put me in touch with museum visitors to interview. I
allowed the museums to decide how they would like me to interview guests since I
wanted to be respectful of the wishes of my research sites. At each site, the museum
educators asked that I leave typed copies of my interview questions with them, which
they would then distribute themselves to visitors (Appendix B). The visitors would
participate in the interviews as discursive surveys, which would be returned to me via
email or post. If they were willing, the guests included an email address and phone
number so I could ask any follow-up questions.

Though all the museums initially agreed to let me conduct interviews in this
manner, I was not able to collect the guest interview data from all the museums. In fact,
only one museum educator was able to send me a set of guest interviews (from The
National World War I Museum). I followed up via email with both the Freedom Center
and Oklahoma City, and though both sites hoped to assist with this data collection, it
simply did not work out. This was a significant time commitment and project for the
museum staff member to undertake, so I understood why it was difficult for them to
follow through, though this was an issue I did not foresee in advance of conducting this
research. Due to this lack of data, in some chapters, I turn to online reviews of the
museums in the place of interview data. As I move forward with this project, I hope to
revisit the issue of guest interviews and conduct them myself, with the consent and aid of
the museum staff, of course. I do see this data as crucial to my work, particularly if I want
to understand whether or not the rhetorical education offered at the museum sites is
effective from an audience perspective. In the late 20th and early 21st century, audience-
based research at museums has become increasingly important as museums work to
respect the perspectives and meet the needs of their communities, both local and
widespread (Hooper-Greenhill; Karp; Gaither; Barry; Perin; Duitz). Indeed this is one of
the key overlaps between museum studies scholars and rhetoricians.

Observation and Participation at the Museums

Though the interviews provided me with important perspectives and allowed me
to develop a fuller picture of the rhetorical work of each museum, my primary method of
data collection was observation of and participation in the museum exhibits and tours. In
short, the spatial, material, visual, and textual rhetoric of the museums themselves
comprised a significant part of my data. Collecting this data, too, was more complex than
anticipated, largely because I did not have constant, ongoing access to my research sites.
I could only visit each museum so many times before I needed to write about it, and I
almost always felt I needed to add another visit, which I did not have the time or travel
funds to accommodate. Therefore, during the time I was physically present at the sites, I
put various protocols in place so I would be able to remember the museums well enough
to analyze them in detail.

First, I kept a research journal during my visits to each museum. In this
handwritten journal, I took detailed notes about everything I experienced as I partook in
museum exhibits—sounds I heard, how others reacted, what the text said, what it looked like, etc. If a tour guide was speaking, I would hurriedly write a shorthand version of what he was saying, as well as making notes about his actions or expressions. I also used the research journal as a place to reflect after a visit to a museum. I wrote down my general reactions to the museum experience and how I felt after leaving. In such reflections, I tried to negotiate the difficult space of being both a “typical” audience member and a researcher invested in certain aspects of the museum’s work. So the research journal served a dual purpose: it was a space for recording observations and critical reflection. In addition to writing down my observations, I took hundreds of photos and dozens of videos at each museum. Without this visual evidence, analyzing the exhibits would have been impossible. The photos and videos filled in the blanks when my memory (and/or my notes) failed me.

Finally, as a researcher-visitor, I approached the museum much as a typical if overly enthusiastic guest might. I tried to stick to the museum’s prescribed pathways; I participated in any tours or living history exhibits that were available on the days I visited; I watched any films that were built into the exhibits; and I “played” at all the interactive stations that the museums provided. Of course, I took detailed notes, photos, and videos during all of these museum experiences, which was ultimately what set me apart from other guests.

Publicity Materials

To collect this data, I generally grabbed any piece of paper that was available for taking at the museum. These included: brochures, self-guided tour instructions, maps,
surveys about exhibits, informational packets about contemporary activist organizations, and sheets that explained the role of visiting, non-permanent exhibitions. At times, I also purchased publicity materials that seemed relevant to my research interests. For instance, I purchased an extensive walking tour guidebook from Oklahoma City that also included a DVD about the museum. Especially since I knew I would not be able to return to that site in the near future, I realized having such detailed representations of the museum would aid in my analysis. The museums’ websites also provided publicity. At these websites, I could see how the museums described their exhibits, their missions, and interacted with a wider public by providing additional educational materials like blogs, lesson plans, and digital exhibits. Though I did not analyze any of the website material in detail, they supplied further context for each museum. In addition to my interviews with museum staff, my collection of publicity materials largely served to help me understand the missions and educational goals of the museums.

Archives

Both The National World War I Museum and The Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum have extensive archives that can be accessed with permission and collaboration with an archivist. After learning more about the archival holdings from museum staff, I knew I needed to spend some time in the archives at Oklahoma City because they held a good deal of material about the process of building the memorial and museum. (The archives at the National World War I Museum mostly consist of historical artifacts and documents, which were not at the time of the research as relevant to the project’s goals.) Due to the localized nature of the Oklahoma City bombing, and the
location of the memorial and museum on the actual site of the bombing, the process of
designing and building these structures faced additional complexities and challenges, all
of which has become part of the content of the museum. The museum staff also felt
strongly about offering me a tour of the archives so I could get a better sense of the
artifacts they held, as they frequently rotate what is displayed in the actual museum. I
spent the better part of a day in the archives there, first being toured through by the
collections manager, and then digging through their collection of documents related to
the design and building of the museum. Since they had multiple copies of most of this
material and none of it was considered rare, they let me take home several annual reports
that discussed how the museum came into being over the course of the five years
following the bombing. These documents offered me an even more detailed context for
this museum, specifically the role of the locally affected community in the original
design, as well as their ongoing involvement—an aspect of the museum I discuss in
Chapter Four.

Outline of Chapters and Guiding Arguments

Chapter Two, my first case study chapter, focuses on the National Underground
Railroad Freedom Center. In this chapter, I investigate the ways in which the
complexities of slavery are often overlooked within the Freedom Center, and I suggest
that this points toward issues with how rhetorical identification operates pedagogically.
While building on current work in rhetoric and trauma studies that problematizes
identification (Krista Ratcliffe; Marianne Hirsch; Dominick LaCapra), I argue that the
failure of identification to recognize difference and create over-identifications becomes
particularly challenging when identification is used as an educational approach. For instance, in the “Slave Pen” exhibit, visitors step inside an actual slave pen, and the audio tour then positions them as slaves, asking them to imagine what it would have been like to remain trapped in such tight quarters. Since historical museums are frequently concerned with developing the citizenship of their guests, and the Freedom Center in particular relies heavily on identification to foster a sense of critical awareness, it serves as a rich site for a discussion of the connections between identification and rhetorical education. This chapter illustrates the ethical issues that arise with current approaches to identification and proposes a productive pedagogy.

Chapter Three takes on the task of redefining rhetoric as collective, considering both the benefits and pitfalls of collectivity, using the National World War I Museum (NWWIM) as an illustrative case study. Building on 20th and 21st century rhetorical theory that discusses collectivity (Kenneth Burke; Wayne Booth; Brenda Brueggemann; Cheryl Glenn), I theorize collective rhetoric in a multi-faceted way. I propose that collective rhetoric is dialogue driven, weaves together multiple voices and perspectives, and is often multimodal and multisensory. Though I explore the tensions surrounding collective rhetoric in this chapter—the NWWIM, for instance, struggles to balance visitor interactivity with the portrayal of an institutionally accepted metanarrative—I ultimately argue that collective rhetoric has important benefits that outweigh such tensions. In particular, it can create a more comprehensive version of history, allowing for ethical and nuanced representation, especially of trauma, thus offering a form of rhetorical education that molds guests into more thoughtful citizens.
Chapter Four, my final case study, revives the canon of memory by endorsing a broader understanding of memory as pedagogical. This chapter focuses on the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum (OKCNMM). I engage recent rhetorical studies of memory (Carole Blair; Gregory Clark; Lawrence Prelli) to explain how memory teaches certain lessons and avoids others. The OKCNMM, for example, spent the first seven years of its existence acknowledging the perpetrators of the bombing only in small, dark, peripheral “investigation alcoves,” as the staff wanted to protect individuals affected by the bombing. By exploring complicated decisions like this one, this chapter aims to lay out the pedagogy of memory in a more systematic way. Specifically, I theorize the pedagogy of memory as value-driven, material, respectful, and evolving. I also suggest that memory, in its connection to civic engagement, heavily informs practices for rhetorical education.

Chapter Five, the conclusion, takes my discussion of pedagogy and rhetorical education into the academy. While my case studies focus on extracurricular rhetorical education, the conclusion considers implications for college level writing classrooms. The goal of my conclusion is to reflect on how my museum-based research has affected my own pedagogy and offer insight about how it may do the same for the philosophies and practices of others. For instance, the multimodal and multisensory pedagogical approaches of my case study museums, as well as their strong focus on developing civic discourse, are significant to consider for the design of writing assignments, the purpose of technology in composition classrooms, and the overall curricular goals of writing programs. My conclusion interrogates these implications, with attention given both to the potential benefits and the inherent challenges. In this concluding chapter, I ultimately
advocate for further and more sustained connection between the academic and public spheres, through both research and teaching.
Chapter Two: A Pedagogy for Identification: A Case Study of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center

“There is a spark within each of us, fan the flame.” –National Underground Freedom Center Motto

Introduction: Identifying to Learn?

Figure 2.1. Full View of the NURFC

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center (NURFC) was established in Cincinnati, Ohio in 2004 aiming to educate visitors about the complex work of the Underground Railroad and link those events to struggles for freedom in the present day. The building itself is new construction and continues to look bright and beautiful eight years after its opening. The modern stone and copper structure is prominently situated in
a tourist area of downtown Cincinnati between the Browns’ and Reds’ stadiums (Figures 2.1 and 2.2). Upon entering the building, guests buy their tickets and immediately head upstairs. If they choose to follow the prescribed order of this museum, they will begin their journey in the Harriet Tubman Theatre. Here, guests are introduced to the themes of the Freedom Center via a sixteen-minute film called *Suite for Freedom*. It is composed of a series of shorts that are paintings come to life, each sharing ideas about freedom, slavery, and the Underground Railroad. Actress Angela Bassett narrates the film at its beginning and end, setting a serious tone. As the film starts, Bassett declares, “Unfreedom takes many forms,” emphasizing the Freedom Center’s guiding abstract concepts of “freedom” and “unfreedom,” reminding visitors that this is not just a museum about slavery and the Underground Railroad. Rather, it is a museum about freedom and the lack of freedom more broadly, both historically and in the present day. This broad binary of freedom and unfreedom guides visitors’ journeys throughout the entire museum.
The third and final short in *Suite for Freedom* focuses solely on the Underground Railroad. This final short mimics the style of an impressionist painting, shadowy and vibrating in its animation. It begins with the images and noises of a man trying to escape: dogs bark, cornstalks rustle, and the man breathes heavily. He is soon caught in the forest by a white traveler, but as luck would have it, this traveler is an abolitionist, so he hides the escaping man in an area under his cart. Along their travels together, they see other slaves who are not so lucky chained up on the side of the dirt road. As the short concludes, the runaway slave makes it to a river and a boat. Glorious and victorious gospel music reverberates through the theatre. Suddenly, small stars light up all over the ceiling of the theatre for a grand conclusion to the entire film.

Of the three shorts that compose *Suite for Freedom*, this one most emphasizes freedom triumphing over the evils of unfreedom. Though there are moments of “will he get caught?” tension, in the end, the story is a traditional and emotional overcoming narrative—man escapes, man travels, and with the help of a generous white abolitionist, man finds his freedom. This was certainly not the fate of most people who traveled the Underground Railroad, but the film makes this inspirational and uplifting move to maintain the audience’s interest, as well as their loyalty—loyalty to a less shocking version of history with which visitors are accustomed and comfortable. Though the escaping man is clearly the protagonist, the white character in this film is also valorized, despite the fact that most white people in this time period would not have reacted so benevolently. But this is the narrative of the Underground Railroad that the majority of

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8 The first short is generally and abstractly about the value of freedom and the second is a narrative about a house slave.
visitors would have entered the museum knowing, and the Freedom Center is hesitant to challenge this too boldly or too soon. The darker realities of unfreedom, slavery, and race relations are erased as the film comes to a simplistically happy and “feel good” conclusion.

There is a clear pedagogy at work in this short film: to better learn about the Underground Railroad, museum visitors need to identify with the characters and applaud their victories. At a cursory glance, such identification seems rather harmless, and certainly it is a pervasive educational and rhetorical approach. Yet so much of the Underground Railroad is erased; there is little hint of the reality that most journeys did not meet such a heartwarming conclusion. Identification is used pedagogically in this film to teach visitors about what the Underground Railroad was like and make them feel more connected to history, but the identification also makes visitors feel happy and inspired rather than making them work through, discuss, or question the more difficult aspects of this history. As museums must maintain a certain amount of visitors to stay open, warm and fuzzy approaches like this are not uncommon; museum administrators do not want to drive visitors away with too gritty a reality. Indeed, this is an issue touched upon in each of my subsequent case study chapters. Despite this practical concern, questions must be raised about pedagogical uses of identification, as they threaten to oversimplify the very history they intend to illuminate.

In this chapter, I investigate the ways in which the complexities of slavery are overlooked within the Freedom Center, and I suggest that this points towards issues with how rhetorical identification operates pedagogically. While building on current work in rhetoric and trauma studies that problematizes identification, I consider the effects of
using identification as a teaching tool. In educational scenarios in particular, identification is often dangerously simplified, failing to recognize difference and creating over-identifications. While recognizing these problems, I also see great potential for identification to be an effective aspect of present-day rhetorical education. Since historical museums are frequently concerned with developing the citizenship of their guests, and the Freedom Center relies heavily on identification to foster a sense of critical awareness, it serves as a rich site for a discussion of the possible relationship between identification and rhetorical education. In this chapter, I examine the ethical issues that arise with current approaches to identification and propose a more productive pedagogy.

**The Site: The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center**

*History and Mission of the Research Site*

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center was established in Cincinnati, Ohio in August 2004 and has attracted nearly 900,000 visitors since then. The building consists of three linked pavilions, totaling 158,000 square feet, its exterior crafted largely from Italian marble and copper (*Freedom Center*). Beyond its aesthetic appeal, the museum’s location alone is rhetorical. It was built on the Ohio River, complete with a panoramic window staring across the river and into Kentucky (Figure 2.3). The Ohio River served as the geographic barrier separating slave states from free states, so the museum’s placement immediately draws attention to its purpose. Kim Robinson, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Freedom Center, articulates that purpose as follows:

> The exhibitions and programs of the Freedom Center celebrate freedom’s heroes, those brave men and women who came together to create a secret network
through which the enslaved could escape to freedom. From their example of courage, cooperation and perseverance, we relate this uniquely American history to contemporary issues, inspiring everyone to take steps for freedom today.

(Freedom Center)

![Picture](image.png)

**Figure 2.3.** Window Overlooking the Ohio River

Publicity materials for the Freedom Center, including brochures distributed at the museum and on its website, expand on this purpose, continually emphasizing the museum’s relevance in the present day. Pedagogical calls for awareness are woven throughout the museum’s media. In her mission statement, for instance, Robinson notes that there are “27 million people around the world currently enslaved, more people than at any other time in human history. But we believe that – through education and inspiration – we can encourage everyone to take part in the ongoing struggles for
freedom” (*Freedom Center*). As evidenced by the introductory *Suite for Freedom* film, as well as the Freedom Center’s recently updated motto displayed in my epigraph (‘‘There is a spark within each of us, fan the flame’’), the rhetoric of The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center is not wholly about the Underground Railroad, despite what the name might lead guests believe. Instead, it is a museum that asks visitors to ‘‘take part’’ in working toward freedom in the present day. Since one of the main goals of the Freedom Center is to ‘‘inspire everyone to take steps toward freedom today,’’ it has been positioned as an institution that aims to train visitors as citizens and encourage them to participate in civic discourse.

*Rhetorical and Educational Imperatives: The Museum Staff’s Perspective on Audience and Purpose*

To learn even more about the museum’s purpose, I conducted a series of interviews with staff members. I spoke with Dina Bailey, the museum’s curator, who deals with exhibitions and collections. I next interviewed Jackie Wallace and Kieli Ferguson, who are both members of the museum’s educational team and work primarily to create programming and develop materials for educators, among other responsibilities like working directly with students and visitors who come to the museum. Finally, I interviewed Richard Cooper, the Interpretive Services Manager, who is in charge of all ‘‘third-person interpretation’’ at the museum, meaning he trains anyone who leads tours at the Freedom Center, as well as develops programming for specific groups.

First, all of my interviewees have a broad understanding of who composes the museum’s audience. Bailey, the curator, emphasizes the diversity of the audience. She

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9 Wallace’s title is Education and Programs Director, and Ferguson’s title is the Education Sales Manager.
explains, “We choose different audiences based on what we’re doing. Some exhibits are directed at children, while some are more academic, for instance.” She did discuss the demographics more specifically, too: the audience for the museum largely comes from outside Cincinnati (Wallace echoes this point, as well); they are often in highly-educated family groups; there are more Caucasian visitors than African Americans; and the audience is split in terms of age, with a fair amount of young professionals visiting, as well as a middle-aged and older crowd. Young children, Bailey notes, are not as common, unless they come with school groups. Since they design instructional materials for specific groups, Wallace and Ferguson think of the museum audience as divided into these groups. Ferguson notes that most of the visitors are thirteen or over, and she also emphasizes that the museum is sensitive to the needs of families. Wallace adds that they do receive visiting groups of African Americans, and senior groups have been a recent addition. Cooper defines the audience more broadly than anyone, explaining that they aim for an audience that is “as diverse as we can get…it is really anyone who walks by, we want them to come in.”

With such a diverse audience in mind, the Freedom Center casts a similarly wide net in terms of its purposes. Bailey states, “The museum still relies heavily on its founding principles of courage, cooperation, perseverance, and freedom. So we tell a broad story, but with individual people. We balance the broad with the particular.” Ferguson, too, explains that the museum is about “conveying the key characteristics of courage, cooperation, perseverance, and freedom.” More than just these broad messages, though, Bailey claims that the “inspiring everyone to take steps toward freedom today” segment of the mission statement is currently more highlighted than ever before.
“Advocacy has become a focal point,” she acknowledges. Cooper also notes that the messages of the museum have shifted in its short lifetime, and he too sees a more recent emphasis on contemporary issues: “The messages have changed a lot. The Underground Railroad was the initial basis, and it is still the number one. But we look for other freedom stories and tie the past to the present.” Cooper even explains an interesting symbolic change that aligns with this updated purpose; the logo for the Freedom Center has been modified. While, when the museum opened in 2004, “Underground Railroad” used to be the biggest text in the logo, now “Freedom Center” is much bigger to show that the museum’s primary emphasis is the concept of freedom. Wallace also comments on the relevance of the museum, explaining, “We use our themes to work with other groups, like teen mothers. We use examples of the Underground Railroad to inspire.” But she points out that the museum certainly still values its historical purpose: “We tell the story of slavery and the Underground Railroad in way without guilt. It is about the American triumph over the institution of slavery and the courage of those who helped. We want you to take pride in who you are and the strength of your ancestors.” Overall, the purposes of the museum from the perspective of those who run it are threefold. The museum aims to deliver broad, value-driven messages, like those of perseverance and cooperation. Connected to these values, there is the purpose of inspiration, connecting the past to the present, and awareness in the present day. Finally, the museum’s historical purpose is retained—they want to educate visitors about slavery and the Underground Railroad. Bailey sums this up: “It’s about awareness, education, and advocacy. We want visitors to find something they can do today.”
When speaking with these museum professionals, the purposes of the museum all intersect with raising awareness in some way. The staff wants to reach out to various kinds of visitors and use the history of the Underground Railroad to develop more engaged citizenship; though not using the term, Bailey, Wallace, Ferguson, and Cooper view the museum as a space of rhetorical education. My interest lies in how they work to teach awareness to visitors and the ways in which this might change current understandings of the pedagogy of identification.

**Transportation ➔ Identification ➔ Awareness: Understanding and Critiquing the Formula**

*The Rhetoric of Transportation and the Move to Critical Awareness*

Though it primarily highlights an existing pedagogy of identification and some of the accompanying problems, my brief introductory example from the *Suite for Freedom* film also illustrates another key term for this chapter: *rhetoric of transportation*. After lengthy observation and interviews at the Freedom Center, I identified this rhetoric as the most pervasive throughout the museum.\(^{10}\) The rhetoric of transportation removes visitors from their realities in various ways—the transportation can be through time, geographical, emotional, or, most frequently, a combination of these approaches. The film short, for example, provides an emotional and historical transportive effect, taking visitors back in time but also removing them from the harsh reality of slavery and the Underground Railroad to create a story that is less intimidating and more inspirational. The immediate goal of the rhetoric of transportation is leading visitors to identify with

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\(^{10}\) Certainly other rhetorics are at work in this museum. However, the rhetoric of transportation is the one I noticed the most frequently and, as I will show, is the most consistently linked to identification.
people featured in the exhibit—they will root for the escaping slave and applaud the helpful abolitionist. This identification can be used to persuade visitors to understand the evils of slavery and unfreedom, and a subsequent goal emerges, too. Once visitors identify with enslaved individuals and freedom fighters, this will ideally prompt them to become more aware and involved, fighting for the cause of freedom in the present day. This is a pedagogical call for awareness—one of many at the Freedom Center—and the assumption is that strong identification will teach critical awareness about slavery, freedom, and race relations. I visualize this progression as a rhetorical and pedagogical formula: transportation → identification → awareness.

Defining Identification and the Accompanying Complexities

However, I argue that this formula can actually backfire. The increasing use of pathos-based narratives to encourage audience identification, like the ones in Suite for Freedom and throughout the Freedom Center, often results in dangerous over-identification. While identification is generally viewed as the precursor to persuasion, such over-identification can result in a simplified understanding of historical and contemporary civic issues, an especially troubling result when identification is used for pedagogical purposes, which is frequently the case at historical sites. To more effectively develop critical awareness, I work in this chapter to lay out a new pedagogy for identification, suggesting that clear and direct rhetorical education must be integrated into this formula.

In A Rhetoric of Motives, Kenneth Burke expands classical notions of persuasion by including the concept of identification as an “accessory” to rhetoric (xiv). Burke sees all persuasion as involving some element of identification, and he explains the process as
follows: “A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is identified with B. Or, he may identify himself with B, even if their interests are not joined, if he assumes they are, or is persuaded to believe so” (20). As Burke summarizes it, persuasion and identification are inherently linked because a speaker will persuade his audience through the use of identifications, drawing on them to establish a rapport. With identification, all interactions and relationships become rhetorical, from courtship, to attending church, to a doctor’s visit. In such exchanges, all parties will offer identifications to help make their points, whether it is asking about someone’s interests to win her affections, or relating to church-goers about economic hardships to improve a sermon. Though Burke acknowledges that bad or dangerous identifications can occur—he points to Hitler and the Nazis as prime examples—a main idea frequently taken away from his work is that identification leads to consubstantiality. In other words, through identification, individuals can transcend their differences and unite. In this interpretation, identification is an effective and generally positive rhetorical “accessory.”

Though Burke’s discussion of it is certainly more complex than identification leading to unity and understanding, this is the type of identification that museums and other historical sites, such as colonial reenactments, tend to utilize, and therefore it is the type of identification I interrogate in this chapter. My analysis of the Freedom Center prompts reconsideration of what might be accomplished through identification, especially when it is encouraged solely through pathos and used for educational purposes. According to Jessica Enoch, who studied Burke’s letters and a lesser known 1955 Burke essay called “Linguistic Approaches to the Problems of Education,” Burke had a lifelong interest in pedagogy and considered his trilogy (A Grammar of Motives, A Rhetoric of Motives, and
A Symbolic of Motives) as “the account of a full-blown educational theory and method” (Burke qtd. in “Becoming Symbol-Wise” 275). Moreover, Enoch demonstrates that Burke was especially concerned with education for social change; John Dewey was a great influence for him, and he paid special attention to progressive education overall (“Becoming Symbol-Wise” 277). In the Burke essay Enoch analyzes, he creates a pedagogical practice that exposes students to the complexity of rhetoric and identification, with the ultimate goal of students understanding that war is waged because “people make rhetorical choices that lead first to identification and division and then to conflict and destruction” (“Becoming Symbol-Wise” 287). Enoch’s work makes clear that the pedagogy of identification deserves further attention and exploration, particularly when it is used to foster critical awareness and action.

Complicating transportation → identification → awareness

Though cultivating awareness is an admirable goal, and one many successful contemporary museums strive toward, I want to raise some questions about the transportation → identification → awareness formula as it is utilized at the Freedom Center and more generally. Krista Ratcliffe, in Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, and Whiteness, emphasizes that cross-cultural identifications can be troubled and difficult to achieve. Ratcliffe’s main goal is to consider what makes listening so difficult, especially when listening must occur across difference. This is where identification comes into play; for Burke, identification must precede persuasion, but Ratcliffe reminds readers that identification—and thus any sort of persuasion—can be difficult to achieve when the speaker and listener are of different genders and/or races. Ratcliffe’s theory highlights the dialogic properties of identification. Although she recognizes the importance of
establishing commonalities across differences, she argues that disidentification can yield productive spaces for speakers’ rhetorical agency. Finally, Ratcliffe explains, “Rhetorical listening and its tactics may supplement agonistic rhetorical strategies by providing listening possibilities for greater understanding and, at times, more effective and perhaps more ethical rhetorical conduct” (171). The identifications engendered at the Freedom Center, though, are often overly emotional, superficial, and do not allow for any exploration of difference, which I suggest inhibits cross-cultural communication and, ultimately, critical awareness. It is questionable if the Freedom Center is participating in the most “ethical rhetorical conduct” or simply perpetuating what Ratcliffe calls “agonistic rhetorical strategies.” My study of this museum builds on Ratcliffe’s theory of rhetorical listening, considering what can make identifications more meaningful and effective, allowing for understanding by hearing both similarities and differences.

Ratcliffe is not the only scholar to expand traditional notions of identification. Scholars in trauma studies have made claims about why identification might be more complicated and troubled than is frequently acknowledged. Marianne Hirsch, in a study of Holocaust photographs, explains that certain images of the Holocaust have become “overfamiliar,” which can lead to over-appropriative identifications, making distance disappear and allowing for “too easy” access to the past. Dominick LaCapra, in Writing History, Writing Trauma, is interested in how trauma can pose specific challenges for representation and writing. Rather than identification, LaCapra calls for “empathetic unsettlement” when representing trauma. While identification can lead to appropriation of another’s trauma, as Hirsch alludes to, empathetic unsettlement respects the other and recognizes that the experience of the other is not one’s own. Further, empathetic
unsettlement involves the virtual experience through which one puts oneself in the other’s position while recognizing difference and thus resisting full identification. LaCapra’s approach rejects fetishized and totalizing narratives that deny trauma; empathetic unsettlement will not simply “harmonize” events and create uplifting narratives. Wendy Wolters, in her analysis of James Allen’s book *Without Sanctuary*, which displays African American lynched bodies, discusses how the book asks readers to bear witness to this atrocity, but then assumes that testifying about this atrocity is testifying against it. Wolters questions this and builds on Ratcliffe’s discussion of identification and difference by claiming Allen does not take into account how identity structures, like race, act on bearing witness, so victims can be reinscribed and the audience reterrorized. Burkian identification fails for Wolters because division is always preserved; there is no way to tell where the motive to identify ends and effect of division begins. Wolters also aligns with some of LaCapra’s arguments, as she claims the empathy created when looking at the photos in *Without Sanctuary* fails to extend the space of the other, but instead places the self in the position of the other—a major and problematic consequence of identifying through empathy alone.

*Developing a Relationship Between Identification and Rhetorical Education*

Building on these scholars, I analyze how the issues with identification that they discuss play out pedagogically. What happens when identification is used as a tool for teaching civic awareness? Even more, I want to build on their work and suggest a more meaningful pedagogy for identification that could work toward improving some of the problems they point out; to accomplish this, I suggest a sustained relationship between identification and rhetorical education. At the Freedom Center, over-identifications are
frequently encouraged through the transportation→identification→awareness formula, but rather than leading to the desired end result of awareness, trauma can be reinscribed, reappropriated, simplified, and minimized. Since the representation of slavery remains so fraught, these over-identifications prove to be particularly dangerous, especially since they often serve as a method to instill critical awareness in visitors. With this case study, then, I hope to add to this existing body of scholarship and encourage other rhetoricians to look more closely and critically at how identification works in educational situations. Though often used to make cross-cultural connections and promote tolerance, identification, in fact, can sometimes teach dangerous misunderstanding.

**Identification and Ignoring Difference**

*Pathos-Based Transportive Pedagogy*

Reenactors, common at many museums and other tourist sites, are one way that the Freedom Center uses history to encourage awareness in the present day. Historical reenactors perform regularly throughout the Freedom Center, facilitating the interpretation of historical events and exhibits for guests. These reenactors are perhaps the most obvious example of the rhetoric of transportation at work; they are a common inclusion at historical sites to make visitors feel like they are experiencing a different time period. Cooper, who handles the training of all the volunteer tour guides, explains that the interpretive work of the museum falls into two categories: “first-person interpretation” and “third-person interpretation.” The reenactors provide what Cooper refers to as first-person interpretation; they educate visitors by speaking from the perspective of a historical individual. When visitors listen to them, they are very much in the historical moment, transported to another time. This stands in stark contrast to what
Cooper calls the museum’s third-person interpretation, which includes docent-led tours, captions on exhibits, placards on walls that detail the history of slavery, or films that take a documentary approach—in short, the pedagogical approaches that are a bit more traditional. First-person interpretation at the Freedom Center tends to be more dramatic and grabs the attention of any guests in the vicinity. I observed guests walk away from whatever they were viewing to get closer to the reenactors, eager to watch their performances.

During one Saturday visit to the Freedom Center, I watched a reenactor tell the story of her experience as a slave girl. I saw another man orate as Martin Luther King Junior, sharing about his childhood, his rise to prominence, and invoking dialogue from his famous speeches. On a weekday visit, I observed a woman quietly telling a group of elementary school students about how she made use of various herbs while on the Underground Railroad, showing them examples of each. The educational goal here is to allow visitors, adults and children alike, to experience different time periods, such as slavery or the Civil Rights era, so the rhetoric of transportation is prominent. A person embodies history, making history concrete rather than abstract. These reenactors, as well as the commentary from staff interviewees, illustrate that the Freedom Center subscribes to a pathos-based educational approach. The pedagogical assumption is that guests will identify more, and thus learn more, if there are elements of drama, performance, and emotion embedded in their education. In an effort to combat stereotypes of museums as boring and didactic, contemporary museums frequently incorporate such approaches. Unlike museums of earlier centuries, the spaces are designed to engage people rather than just allow them to passively absorb information. Recall Eilean Hooper-Greenhill’s
explanation museum education in the 18th century. It was a pedagogy of “learning by looking” or “learning at a glance.” Eyes would take in information, and it was assumed that it was automatically learned, as the eyes were a direct conduit to the mind (191). But Hooper-Greenhill sees a “creative reimagining and reworking” of museums taking place in the 21st century, and this is illustrated at the Freedom Center (1-3). The pedagogy of the Freedom Center’s reenactors is far from the “learn by looking” approach; instead, they facilitate transportive effects.

The Necessity of Conversation

While the attempt to offer an engaging form of education is impressive, and Hooper-Greenhill would claim it is quite necessary to maintain relevance in the 21st century, Lisa Woolfork, in her book *Embodying American Slavery in Contemporary Culture*, critiques first-person interpretation at sites like Colonial Williamsburg, characterizing it under what she terms “bodily epistemology.” This is a representational strategy that “uses the body as a present-day protagonist to register the traumatic slave past” (2). Woolfork proposes that historical reenactments all have the same goal: “That knowledge about the slave past can be better acquired and understood when the learner participates bodily in a version of that past” (11). She raises important questions that get at the ethics of representing racial violence:

What are the implications of encountering a representation of a traumatic element of the slave past in the museum, a venue usually reserved for pleasure and edification? In what ways do such depictions of a traumatic past transcend, confront, or resist the commodification process necessary to produce the conventions of museum spectatorship? What is the
relationship between the black public sphere and those institutions that depict slavery through embodied performance? Who is authorized to depict the slave past? (14)

With these questions in mind, Woolfork critiques various types of reenactments that force visitors to imagine themselves into the perspective of slaves, “temporarily locating themselves in a simulated position of bondage” in an effort to develop a “more complex interpretation of the slave past” (9). In other words, reenactments in general work toward identification with a slave past in effort to educate visitors about history, and the ones at the Freedom Center also attempt to make connections to contemporary lives. For instance, the man who played Martin Luther King ended his reenactment by asking how the visitors could make a difference in the present day. The pedagogical intent is that visitors will identify with these historical characters, and then they will want to use their new knowledge and emotions to make a difference in the present day. The formula is at work: transportation→identification→awareness.

But as Woolfork indicates, these identifications are indeed troubled. The goal is for guests to hear from these reenactors and more fully understand the experience of slavery, survival on the Underground Railroad, or fighting for civil rights. In reality, as Ratcliffe addresses, cross-cultural identifications can be much more difficult to achieve; listening across difference is no simple endeavor. With these reenactments, Freedom Center visitors are asked to listen across a multitude of potential differences—historical differences, racial differences, cultural differences, gender differences—to name just a few. Yet these differences are never acknowledged or addressed by the reenactors; no questions are asked, no critical conversation takes place. Identification is oversimplified,
resulting in the erasure of difference rather than creating a productive dialogue about the very difference on which the museum’s existence is predicated. Though the Freedom Center is ostensibly a museum about race, historical and contemporary racial differences and difficulties are frequently elided or portrayed as less complex than they actually are. This is a somewhat familiar take on dealing with race relations in the 21st century, an era that some have interpreted as “post-racial.” However, when this move is made in the context of a museum, a unique and important opportunity to create a critical dialogue, or at least encourage critical thinking, is lost. Moves toward dialogue, then, would be at the heart of a productive pedagogy of identification.

Over-Identification

The Rhetoric of/about an Artifact

There are instances at the Freedom Center when dialogue is attempted, though even these attempts remain more concerned with creating identifications than critical awareness. Examples of this can be observed at one of most well-known and controversial exhibits at the Freedom Center: the slave pen. This is the museum’s largest artifact, taking up a good part of its main floor. The entire exhibit is comprised of a restored slave pen that visitors can go inside, explore, and read about the experiences slaves. The museum’s visitor’s guide describes the exhibit as follows:

Enslaved men, women, and children were kept for days—and sometimes weeks—in the slave pen…a 177-year old building discovered on a farm in

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12 Respecting the policy of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, I did not take any photographs of the exhibits. For photographs, you can visit the “exhibits” section of the museum’s website: http://www.freedomcenter.org/visit-the-center/exhibits/
Mason County, KY and donated to the Freedom Center. It honors the memory of all those who were enslaved and serves as the Freedom Center’s iconic image of the struggle for freedom.

Since there are few surviving artifacts from times of slavery, this slave pen is one of the only actual things that the museum has to share with visitors. An audio review of the slave pen exhibit on NPR’s *All Things Considered* notes that the museum has only about two-hundred artifacts, which makes the pen that much more important. This pen, which had once been used to hold slaves by Captain John Anderson during their forced westward migration, was discovered in Germantown, Kentucky, and it is identified as one of the only surviving rural slave pens (Brown). For many years, this pen was encased inside a larger tobacco barn. Though this hid the pen from public eye, it also protected it from the elements and ensured its survival (Brown). John Michael Vlach, who studies the architecture of plantation slavery, explains, “That the slave pen still exists is miraculous… Slavery used up artifacts the way it used up people” (qtd. in Brown). The presence, size, and controversy of this exhibit mean that it holds a great amount of rhetorical and pedagogical weight in the museum.

The importance of the slave pen as artifact became clear before the museum even opened its doors. According to Wallace, the slave pen itself had to be continually protected as it was deconstructed, moved, and then reconstructed and restored in preparation to be on display at the museum. Many individuals did not want this particular piece of history to be on display at all. They wanted it to remain buried, both literally and figuratively. Carl Westmoreland, the curator of the slave pen exhibit who was very involved with bringing it to the Freedom Center, even had his life threatened and
expressed concern that the pen would be vandalized during its excavation and movement (Bauer). Another controversy arose because people in Mason County, Kentucky, where the pen originally stood, wanted to keep it and use it to educate Kentuckians. Richard Jett from the Kentucky Heritage Council said, “This is an important story to tell. We just question the appropriateness of what they [the Freedom Center] are doing” (qtd. in Bauer). A final set of critics worried about how the slave pen represented the history of the enslaved. Some insist that the slave pen looks too “clean and sanitized,” taking away from the very violent and far from tidy history that took place inside it (Lackner). Others’ concerns go in the opposite direction, wondering if the slave pen would be too upsetting or disturbing for visitors to see (“Relic a Reminder”).

*Rhetorical Transportation to a Different Place and Time*

The rhetoric of transportation is heavily utilized at the slave pen, but over-identification rather than awareness is the end result. Though the appearance of the pen is certainly different than it would have been when it actually held slaves, the physical artifact in combination with other aural rhetorical techniques attempt to transport guests to a different time and place. The entire exhibit is comprised of a restored slave pen that visitors can go inside, explore, and read about the experiences slaves would have had there. This kinetic approach positions visitors as slaves themselves, entering the pen to fully experience history.

The highly trained volunteers who lead tours at the Freedom Center spend a great deal of time taking guests through the slave pen. In terms of the genre of the museum tour at the Freedom Center, Cooper emphasizes their “conversational” nature. He states, “We want to see productive conversation happen in the building, and the guides are trained to
facilitate this. We have some general themes, but we want the visitors to be able to learn what they want, so we allow for talk.” Some volunteers guide tours of visiting schoolchildren, while others lead adult groups that visit from around the Cincinnati community, as well as those who travel in to see the museum from out of town. On average, 600 K-12 students visit the museum each weekday, so these tour guides play an important role in facilitating the education of visitors (Wallace and Ferguson). Though all are trained in the same way, each tour guide has the freedom to adapt material and take her own approach, and many have distinctive oratorical styles (Cooper). Cooper explains that the exhibit guides have recently been formally trained to offer “conversational interpretation.” He describes this strategy as designed to create productive discussions while visitors are still in the museum. It is a strategy that allows visitors to define their own interests within the themes of the museum, and it also simply encourages visitors to talk more, making the tours, and the museum experience generally, a conversation rather than a lecture. There is pedagogical potential with this approach to make identification more meaningful for museum guests since differences could be examined rather than quickly glossed over. These tours could accomplish what the reenactors cannot.

Of course, actually creating this conversation and engagement while guests are in the museum is easier said than done. Cooper indicates that it is largely about rhetorical awareness on the part of the guides. He explains, “Guides need to watch where their guests want to go, listen to them, be observant, and, generally, know their audience.” Such rhetorical awareness is difficult to foster and implement, though. While efforts are being made among museum administration to make education a more rhetorical, dialogue-driven, and nuanced process, it is not always put into practice in this manner.
For example, a tour on a busy Friday morning is comprised of a group of upper-elementary school students. This particular tour guide, while accepting questions from his audience as they come up, prefers a more dramatic than conversational approach when speaking to them. As he takes his group into the slave pen exhibit, he uses his speech to put the guests in the place of the slaves who had once been stored there. “Ladies,” he intones, “you were down here.” He gestures to the lower part of the slave pen where the women would have been crammed to accomplish their daily duties. He continues, “You were down here cooking and cleaning.” This particular tour guide, though considered a third-person interpreter by Freedom Center definitions, adopts some of the techniques of first-person interpreters. He aims to transport visitors to the time of slavery, using second-person pronouns and suggesting “you” imagine “yourself” as a slave.

The guide asks the guests to position themselves as slaves, once again creating over-simplified and troubled identifications, similar to of the reenactors but even more intense since the visitors are asked to “play along.” Though this sort of tour will likely be memorable to these young visitors, as there is no denying the oratorical power of this guide, this style works against the museum’s larger goals of letting guests engage their own interests and raising civic awareness. The students do not get a chance to respond to or interact with the material or with one another. They simply absorb well-delivered and pathos-heavy information. So, while conversational interpretation, and thus interaction and dialogue, might be the goal, these processes are still difficult to put into practice, potentially stalling the efforts toward awareness that are at the heart of the Freedom Center’s educational mission.

*Rhetorical Transportation Through Technology*
Though Cooper asserts that the museum hopes for a more conversational tour, the recently released iPod tour of the museum calls this into question, as many of the same techniques used by the live guide are also used in this self-guided tour. The iPod tour furthers the experience of transportation at the slave pen. In fact, it is probably the most extreme example of this rhetorical transportation, frequently suggesting visitors imagine themselves as slaves and creating a sensory and emotional experience intended to give the “feel” of slavery. As of February 2011, the Freedom Center began offering this extensive self-directed audio-visual iPod tour, complimentary with admission to the museum. Since actual tour guides are not always available, or even desirable for some, guests can opt to individually navigate their courses through the museum using an iPod. Actually, a person does not even need to be at the museum to take this tour—it is available as a free app to download through the iTunes store. The museum’s website heralds the launch of this new addition: “Want to know more about the Underground Railroad, the faces and the people, and the continuing struggle for freedom from contemporary slavery and human trafficking? There's an App for that” (Freedom Center). With this tour, history meets technology, as people are able to listen to reenactors take on the voices of slaves and slave traders and view historical photographs and documents, all with the simple touch of a tiny screen. Switching to a more serious tone, the blurb on the website explains the new iPod tour in more detail: “Travelling through time, visitors will meet the heroes of the Underground Railroad such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Levi Coffin, and many others, and their compelling stories are told through the many voices of history” (Freedom Center). Framed as “time travel,” the goal of this tour is historical transportation, and this particular transportation is, in some ways, the most
all-encompassing, as it can accompany an individual throughout his entire museum visit—or even work for people who are not at the museum. With the iPod tour, visitors can actually “travel through time,” whether they are at the museum in Cincinnati or sitting on their couch in another part of the country. Of course, the trick here is that to experience history a very new device must be used, so history juxtaposes itself with the postmodern. But the tour does not need to acknowledge this juxtaposition; instead, the goal is to make people forget the medium of the iPod as they are transported to another time and emotional context.

As listeners are introduced to the slave pen on the iPod tour, a serious-voiced female narrator informs them, “This wood building is a slave pen.” In the background, in an effort to create an entire environment, the sounds of wind blowing and the outdoors are audible. This tour is not just about hearing a voice; it creates an entirely new setting for the listener, and this setting is far from the confines of the museum. The narrator continues, “This is a storage warehouse for human beings. It’s easy to stand and look from here, where it’s safe. But we’re going to walk inside.” At this point, a feeling of fear and trepidation is cultivated. Tension is built for going inside the museum’s most well-known exhibit. Guests are not just observers of history, as is often expected at museums. Rather they are supposed to be players in history, “travelling through time,” as the description of the iPod tour suggests. They are encouraged to be participants in this fearful and violent history; participants who might actually come into harm’s way; participants who will need to step away from “where it’s safe” to really learn something. This example, in the demand for visitors to participate and the emotional and full-body transportation created as a result of that participation, is extreme. To look is not enough.
To listen is not enough. The visitors must be transported from their realities and *experience* this history as if they were living during it. In her discussion of reenactments, Woolfork describes this sort of participatory approach as an “immersion experience.” Unlike most slavery reenactments with actors performing scenes from history, an immersion experience presumes the involvement of unprepared visitors. Woolfork points out that this is the most controversial type of reenactment, and it is frequently rejected outright; slavery should not be a tourist diversion nor can the original experience of slavery be fully replicated (11). Once again, identification appears to be the immediate goal of the rhetoric of transportation used in the tour, but such identification is certainly troubled when visitors are asked to “pretend” that they are experiencing the trauma of slavery. Over-identification is the result instead of critical, educated awareness.

The iPod tour of the slave pen does not stop just outside it. In fact, the *pathos* intensifies as visitors are encouraged to walk inside the pen. “The second you walk inside,” the narrator reminds them, “it will be 1831.” Footsteps echo on the audio tour, then chains are heard clanking and rattling, reminding guests that slaves were once stored in this pen, and were often physically restrained. The emotional assault on the senses continues: “Think of the sweat and suffering soaked into the timbers around you….first thing you notice is the smell.” From there, the narrator explains precisely where the slaves were kept and how the men and women were divided. So, part of the goal of this iPod tour is to engage the senses of guests, asking them to consider the look, smell, and, perhaps most of all, the *feel* of slavery. This sensory transportation is facilitated in an effort to create a strong identification. Though creating this feel of slavery is likely effective in moving the visitors to identify with the slaves, it is not without its problems.
As the tour asks visitors to stand in the place of slaves, the actual slaves are displaced. Similar to Hirsch’s observation about Holocaust photographs, the emotional and temporal transportation taking place makes slavery overfamiliar. While trying to effectively communicate the trauma of slavery, an over-identification is created, reducing and appropriating this trauma. The tour gives the idea that visitors are actually able to feel slavery and thus learn about it. But, of course, they cannot come close to feeling slavery, and suggesting that they would be able to do so illustrates one of my central concerns with identification as a pedagogical strategy.

Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, in their book *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums*, discuss the consequences of representing slavery in frequently dismissive and superficial ways. They provide a detailed analysis of 122 former plantations that are now presented as tourist sites (3). Eichstedt and Small are motivated by what they see as the American “social forgetting” of slavery. They suggest there is a lack of talk around the “unresolved subject” of slavery, which indicates the “power and pain” of the time period. They state, “We believe that the United States and other countries move forward more effectively when they face and deal with the atrocities that have occurred” (1). They identify “strategic rhetorics” taking place at plantation museums that manage and confine the system of slavery and the presence of those enslaved: “We argue that these rhetorics are part of a racialized regime of representation that valorizes the white elite of the preemancipation South while generally erasing or minimizing the experiences of enslaved African Americans” (2). Specifically, they identify four strategic rhetorics at work throughout these plantation museums: symbolic annihilation or erasure, which ignores slavery all together; trivialization and
deflection, which mentions African Americans or slavery, but through mechanisms that distort or minimize them; segregation and marginalization of knowledge, which includes information about the enslaved, but presents it through separate tours or displays; and, finally, relative incorporation, which discusses slavery throughout the tour, disturbing whiteness and challenging dominant themes. In their study, Eichstedt and Small found that only a few sites fell into the final category of relative incorporation, grounding their concern that slavery is not addressed enough, or in enough detail, at historic sites. Thus, they conclude their study with a call for more inclusive and socially responsible narratives. The Freedom Center’s iPod tour best fits into the strategic rhetoric of “trivialization or deflection.” Certainly slavery is not ignored here, but it is represented in a way that will distort visitor’s understanding of it. Visitors are encouraged to over-identify with the experience of slavery, which trivializes what slaves actually went through. Rather than learning about historical and racial difference and being able to discuss it with others, over-identification conflates the audience with the victims and stalls opportunities for critical reflection.

Other parts of the iPod tour surrounding the slave pen heighten this feel of slavery, intensifying the over-identification. If guests touch other commands on their tiny screens, they are able to hear historical figures speak to them, drawing them into their world. There are buttons which allow them to “hear an enslaved girl,” “hear an enslaved man,” and “hear from a slave trader.” The “enslaved girl,” in a soft and child-like voice,

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13 In 2008, E. Arnold Modlin Junior published an article building on the work of Eichstedt and Small but based only on plantation museums in North Carolina. Conducting his research nearly a decade later, he argues, “these calls for inclusion have not been fully realized, finding that slavery is often misrepresented” (265).
tells visitors, “Here we all are, in this cage. They can buy us, they can sell us, but they can never own us…Now, Rajah up there, he’s itchin’ to talk to you…press the button.” When guests follow her instructions and “hear an enslaved man,” they are first met by the clanking of irons. Then comes Rajah’s weary voice: “Twenty-four years old; might not make it to twenty-five…remember me. Tell others our story. You won’t forget us. I can tell.” He concludes with further tour instructions, like the girl did: “Anderson’s coming. The slave trader. Press the button to hear him.” The slave trader’s monologue is brief, but it goes a long way toward characterizing him. He states, “You’re thinking, ‘How could you?’ But are these really people?” He follows up this comment with an evil cackle, and then informs visitors, “You best be on your way.”

These brief audio snippets, each less than a minute, continue to transport visitors to the time of slavery, asking them to form relationships with people that lived during that time. This part of the audio tour also establishes some “characters” of slavery—the innocent girl, the over-worked, ailing man, and the maniacal and cruel slave trader. These are little more than stock characters. They are images of slavery that guests likely already have some familiarity with, so they are able to more quickly connect with them and understand them. The goal with such stock characters is to quickly engender rhetorical identifications with history. The voices of these characters work to remind visitors that, though they live in separate times, similar and good values exist in both periods. All ethical people are meant to empathize with the slaves, while they should feel disgust and anger toward the slave trader. Identification and its partner division are quickly achieved through well-delivered, pathos-driven audio clips. Visitors are encouraged to adopt an uncomplicated identification: “I’ve witnessed these people speaking. So I have felt the
effects of slavery.” But this experience is generalized and oversimplified, once again creating an over-identification that works to persuade visitors to claim an intimacy with slavery that cannot exist.

*The Move Toward Awareness*

The end of the audio tour brings the transportation→identification→awareness formula full circle. After listening to these voices, the tour makes a somewhat unexpected rhetorical move, pulling back from the “time travel” that has been taking place, but all for a planned purpose. “Look around,” the narrator demands, “Imagine them here. You can’t see them, but they’re here. The spirits of the enslaved.” At this point, the script of the tour acknowledges that these guests are indeed separate from the history. They are not actually in 1831, nor can they smell the sweat, talk to an enslaved man, or see the cramped conditions. Guests are still asked to imagine this and experience it, but now they must do so in a different and more spiritual manner. Building on this spiritual tone, the slave pen iPod tour ends with a direct call to action: “They want to know, are you going to help them, or just walk away?” This, ultimately, is what the rhetoric of transportation has been working toward. The underlying pedagogical goal of this tour, like so much of the museum, is to move visitors to be more civically aware. After experiencing the sensory, emotional, and historical transportation provided by this tour, the designers hope listeners identify enough to engage with social issues in the present day. There is an assumption that identifying with slaves, and presumably feeling sadness and anger on their behalf, can be translated into immediate civic participation; participating in history serves as an analogy (and encouragement) to participate in present-day civic issues. But
such an assumption is misplaced, as these emotions offer no guarantee of anything happening beyond the walls of the museum.

**The Pedagogical Inadequacy of the Formula**

My analysis of the reenactors, tour guides, slave pen, and iPod tour calls into question the accepted notion that identification will lead to persuasion. Instead, identification certainly leads to interest and a *pathos*-based connection, but the persuasion of visitors—in this case to make them more aware—is not observable. Even more, as Ratcliffe, Hirsch, LaCapra, Wolters, and Woolfork discuss, and my analysis confirms, the type of identification facilitated in these scenarios can cause more harm than good. But what I suggest is most important to understand about these identifications is that they fail pedagogically. The pedagogical goal of identification at the Freedom Center is to teach visitors to be better citizens by enhancing their civic awareness, but visitors’ commentaries about their experiences at the museum indicate that this goal is not reached. TripAdvisor\(^\text{14}\) is a website that allows reviewers to discuss and rate their experiences at various sites, such as museums, restaurants, and hotels. In reading reviews of the museum that guests entered after visiting the Freedom Center, an emotional connection and general enthusiasm is clear. The museum is extremely well reviewed, averaging a 4.5 out of 5 and ranking as #9 out of 63 Cincinnati-area attractions. Reviewers frequently cite the museum as “moving,” “fascinating,” and sharing “important information” about history. A review entitled “Powerfully moving and eye-opening” is representative of the majority of the reviews on the website: “The National

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\(^{14}\) As of January 24, 2012, Trip Advisor had 45 reviews for the Freedom Center. This is more reviews than any other review service, such as Yelp and Google, which is why I opted to focus on this website for my research.
Underground Railroad Freedom Center is a MUST see…there are several neat films/experiences that put you in the action…This attraction elicited a very powerful emotional response and was VERY eye-opening.” Reading this review and the many others similar to it, it is clear that visitors respond to the rhetoric of transportation at the museum—as this particular reviewer notes, the exhibits will “put you in the action.” Further, identifications are formed through this transportation; this reviewer had “a very powerful emotional response,” illustrating a strong connection to the content of the museum. The first part of the rhetorical formula holds: transportation→identification. However, the final step of awareness does not come to fruition.

Despite the generally positive and emotional responses, none of the reviews mention the Freedom Center as increasing their civic awareness or inspiring them to take action. Though guests are clearly impressed and moved during their visit, there is no indication that they will now “take steps for freedom today,” as the mission statement hopefully espouses. Two reviews do hint at a lasting education from the visit, though. One reviewer claims that there is more to be learned about slavery at the Freedom Center than in any history class and then states, “You will be surprised that an afternoon visit to a museum can change you in a way you never expected!” Another reviewer emphasizes that the visit did go beyond the doors of the museum: “We spoke at length later on that day about slavery and injustice and it was great to hear that our daughters learned so much.” These two reviews are currently the only ones that allude to the work of the museum going beyond its doors. Of course, these reviews cannot tell the whole story, but they still offer insight about the pedagogical strategies and accomplishments of the Freedom Center. After observing and analyzing the museum itself and assessing these
reviews, I view the last step of the rhetorical formula as incomplete.

Transportation→identification, but it does not definitively result in raised awareness. In fact, my analysis, as well as the reviews, indicates that the transportive efforts of the Freedom Center result primarily in emotional responses, which create problematic over-identifications and can hinder the movement to critical awareness.

**Revising the Formula: Identification + Rhetorical Education→Awareness**

*Emotional and Geographic Transportation*

The museum’s newest permanent exhibit, *Invisible: Slavery Today*, though focused on the present day, continues the rhetoric of transportation, specifically working to emotionally and geographically transport visitors. This exhibit, opened in October 2010, is “the world's first museum-quality, permanent exhibition on the subjects of modern-day slavery and human trafficking” (*Freedom Center*). It occupies 4,000 square feet on the third floor of the museum. The life experiences of five individuals are shared with visitors, and each reflects a different type of modern slavery: forced labor, bonded indenture, child slavery, sex trafficking, and domestic servitude. The exhibit explores both the causes of and responses to this exploitation.

Though *Invisible: Slavery Today* is focused on present-day topics rather than historical ones, transportation and identification remain powerful and influential, and they operate in a variety of ways. The overall design of this exhibit is rough and somewhat jarring; the website states that it is meant to conjure the feeling of a “dingy” and “unfamiliar” city (*The Freedom Center*). Even as visitors enter the exhibit, information is communicated on street signs rather than more traditional placards. A bright yellow street sign informs them, “Slavery exists around the world today…although slavery is
everywhere, it’s largely invisible.” From this point on, the transportation becomes increasingly involved, with multiple methods used to create the effect. First, the walls surrounding guests are made of wooden crates and plastic and metal containers—the likenesses of boxes that would be used to ship human beings. If the disturbing purpose of these boxes was not already clear, many of them are stamped with notes about their “contents.” For example, “contents are one child sex slave,” or “contents are one Mexican laborer.” Sometimes, the boxes offer instructions like, “Feed amphetamines and alcohol for best results.” The space of this exhibit is used to create a particular atmosphere—visitors are removed from the safe space of museum and transported to a non-specific foreign and urban area. Other aspects contribute to this atmosphere. Sounds of traffic play through overhead speakers, voices shout out and, at times, guests can even hear what sounds like a man being beaten. The aural and visual rhetoric surrounding visitors takes them to an unfamiliar and uncomfortable place. Visitors are transported, only this time the transportation is not historical; there is no time travel involved. In fact, one of the primary premises of the exhibit is that that it takes place today. Visitors are instead moved to an entirely new yet nondescript location. It is one that is likely to make them feel a bit lost, both geographically and emotionally.

Even though this exhibit looks markedly different from other parts of the museum, the rhetorical transportation is recognizable, as are the encouraged identifications. An example of this can be seen in the way the exhibit places visitors in the position of actual victims of modern-day slavery. As the exhibit begins, some large and bright signs greet the visitors, each explaining what their lives would be like if they were different kinds of slaves. The sign for child laborer explains: “You will carry heavy
bricks, six at a time, on your head. You will do this today, as you do everyday. You will be caught and beaten if you try to run.” With these signs and their ample use of the second person, visitors are supposed to imagine themselves as modern-day human slaves. Yet how can a few sentences really portray the experience that a child laborer would go through? The trauma of the situation is trivialized and minimized in an attempt to quickly emotionally engage visitors and encourage them to identify. In a similar move, and also early in the exhibit, visitors are introduced to characters that they will follow through the exhibit—Tatyana the sex slave and Helia the domestic servant, for example. These characters and more details about their stories reappear throughout “Slavery Today,” so the purpose is that visitors will get to know them and connect to their stories. A cursory identification is again demanded. Visitors are supposed to identify with these characters and then build on these identifications so they want to help them. Or, more accurately, help a version of them that exists in the “real world.” In short, similar issues with ignoring difference and over-identification exist in this modern exhibit, as well.

*The Value of Explicit Rhetorical Education*

However, in “Slavery Today,” the move toward awareness is pursued in a more sustained and meaningful manner than in previous exhibits. While with the slave pen audio tour, there is merely an *assumption* that identification will lead to awareness, this area of the museum moves beyond that and includes interactive, dialogue-building features that serve as a form of rhetorical education for guests. The exhibit uses a doorway marked with a neon “Escape” sign, and when guests walk through this door, everything about the exhibit changes. The walls are white and clean; the lighting is bright; the exhibit feels more like an art gallery than a gritty city. This part of “Slavery
Today” features what visitors can do to work against modern-day slavery. It is also the area of the museum where civic participation is the most overtly cultivated. First, the walls are marked with the words “Educate,” “Advocate,” and “Support,” which are the main, broad ideas suggested to work against forms of modern-day slavery. Underneath these headings, people and organizations are featured that have made a difference. Another wall is labeled “Modern Day Abolitionists.” Here, government organizations, community groups, and anti-slavery organizations are highlighted as possibilities for visitors to become involved with. Specific organizations like International Justice Mission, Free the Slaves, Polaris Project, and Good Weave are explained in detail, and contact information is offered so guests can follow up after their museum visit. Finally, in an effort to promote reflection and commitment to the cause, there are two computers in the middle of the room, and each allows visitors to type in different reactions and comments. One computer asks the questions, “How were we changed?” The other asks, “What will we do?” This interactive part of the exhibit, according to the signage, is where the visitors can “make a commitment.” After the typed responses are moderated, quotes from the visitors are projected onto the wall and shared with others. After being transported into this dark world of modern-day slavery, identification is made more meaningful through this final written interaction. Visitors are asked to consider what they learned and what they will do, and they are asked to commit to making a change while still in the museum, presumably since the power of the exhibit is still with them and resonating.

In terms of the formula (transportation→identification→awareness), an extra step is added in this exhibit—an important step in terms of creating a pedagogy for
identification. Rather than assuming identification automatically leads to awareness, the
process can be more effective if elements of rhetorical education are integrated.
Rhetorical education in this situation is about offering ways for visitors to participate in
civic discourse while at the museum, and encouraging them to take this discourse outside
the museum, as well. A revised version of the formula might look like this: identification
+ rhetorical education → awareness. In “Slavery Today,” guests first learn about what
other human rights groups have done to help others, and then, using the technology
provided in the exhibit, they take time to think and even write about what they can do in
the future. The rhetorical education is quite classical here—visitors learn from civic
involvement models (the featured advocacy groups) and then can try it themselves after
this “training” is complete; they reflect in writing about how they can get involved during
their visit to the museum. Observing and analyzing this exhibit demonstrates that
identification can be more effective and meaningful when rhetorical education enters the
formula.

The Trip Advisor reviews of the Freedom Center prove this further. “Slavery
Today” is one of the most frequently mentioned exhibits among reviewers; it seems to be
the one that carries the most specific resonance after guests have left the Freedom Center.
Seven reviews discuss this exhibit, and all of the comments are positive. Even more,
while many of the comments about the Freedom Center on Trip Advisor are quite
general, “Slavery Today” proves more memorable, as the reviewers cite it by name,
describe its general topic, and note what they learned. For example, one reviewer
expresses shock at discovering that “12 million children are trafficked each year.”
Another reviewer states, “There's also a great exhibit about modern day slavery--
trafficking of people and child labor. My teenagers (17 and 19) also liked this a lot, and they’re not usually too impressed with history exhibits.” These statements from reviewers indicate that the pedagogy for identification used in the “Slavery Today” exhibit is overcoming, to some extent, the previous problems the formula presents. Rather than just creating emotional over-identifications, knowledge is taken away and retained enough to be revisited in these short reviews. This level of specificity is lacking in the other reviews, illustrating that though emotional connections are present throughout the museum, it is the pedagogical identification of “Slavery Today” that stays with visitors most. There is a definite move beyond just generic emotional response and toward awareness in these reviews, demonstrating that adding rhetorical education to the formula can establish one model of a pedagogy for identification.

**Conclusion: The Role of Identification in Rhetorical Education**

A close analysis of the rhetorical approach of the National Underground Freedom Center reveals some surprising strategies at work. A dominant strategy I consistently observed through major exhibits at the museum is that of transportation. Whether it is through a film, an artifact, or even the museum’s technology, exhibits are frequently designed to remove the visitor to different time periods, geographical locations, or emotional contexts. Though the rhetoric of transportation can be exciting, particularly in its heavy use of *pathos* and encouragement of identifications, ultimately, this reliance on emotion and the simplistic identifications created do not have a lasting effect. In fact, in many instances, over-identifications are fostered, asking visitors to “feel” the trauma that the enslaved went through, and this can trivialize or appropriate the experience of slavery in a disturbing way. This proves particularly problematic when the museum’s overall
pedagogical mission toward critical awareness is considered. The museum aims to “inspire [guests] to action,” but the rhetoric of transportation largely ends up putting them in the place of the enslaved, which might create a momentary emotional connection, but it lacks the information and dialogue necessary to move toward a fuller awareness for visitors.

Though the ways in which civic involvement is encouraged in “Slavery Today” exhibit, largely through transportation and superficial identification, are questionable, the added element of rhetorical education makes the exhibit more effective than others I analyzed. More importantly, a pedagogy for identification emerges: identification + rhetorical education → awareness. Identification cannot remain solely pathos-based, as it does in so much of the Freedom Center. The over-identifications created in those scenarios tend to co-opt the experience of others and even minimize the trauma. Critical awareness following such over-identifications is unlikely. I suggest that a pedagogy for identification must be put into practice, and this pedagogy must include more direct rhetorical education, as can be observed in the “Slavery Today” exhibit. When identification is combined with aspects of civic-minded rhetorical education, its pedagogical use is more ethical and effective. Since identification has long shown itself to be a helpful “accessory” to rhetoric, further developing and utilizing this pedagogy holds great promise for rhetorical theory and practice.
Chapter Three: Toward a Collective Rhetoric: A Case Study of the National World War I Museum

Rather than holding itself forth as the authoritative or exclusive source of historical interpretation or aesthetic judgment, the museum would hope to enlist the visitor as a collaborator who might, in turn, develop his own sense of heritage, causality, connectedness, and taste—his own links to both an individual and communal past.

—Stephen Weil, Rethinking the Museum

Figure 3.1. Entrance to the NWWIM

Introduction: Defining Collective Rhetoric

A Collective Approach to History and Rhetoric
In 2004, the National World War I Museum in Kansas City, Missouri was designated by Congress as the official United States’ World War I Museum (Figure 3.1). In 2006, the museum opened its doors to the public, aiming to provide a “comprehensive interpretation” of the war and its consequences (*The National World War I Museum*). Jim Barkley, former educational coordinator at the National World War I Museum, views the space as offering “no tidy package” about the history of the Great War. He explains, “This museum shares the history of the people and not just the great men.” Barkley sees the museum as a space that embraces multiple historical narratives and perspectives; there is no “correct” version of World War I. With this claim, Barkley implies that the war is better taught through various voices so its complexity can be acknowledged.

Similarly, Barkley emphasizes that visitors shape their own knowledge about World War I. He states, “Take what interests you. There is no specified start and stop. Patrons need to figure it out themselves.” Not only is the war portrayed as historically complicated and diverse, visitors are further encouraged to cut their own paths through all the information in the museum, actively participating in creating knowledge rather than accepting a monolithic history that is handed down to them. Barkley views the museum as educating in a collective way—multiple stories and voices emerge, and guests participate in their own learning experiences. Barkley’s perspective connects to my primary purpose in this chapter. My goal is to retheorize rhetoric, which has historically been portrayed as created or controlled by an individual, as collective. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines “collective” as “Formed by [a] collection of individual persons or things.” This is how I suggest the term be understood in relation to rhetoric: various people, voices, or modes create and/or express rhetoric. I argue that a collective approach makes
rhetoric more comprehensive, nuanced, and ultimately more ethical, all of which
powerfully shape the pedagogy of rhetorical education. While acknowledging these
benefits, I also explore tensions and complications surrounding collectivity.

The Complications Embedded in Collectivity

Despite ultimately advocating for collective rhetoric, I want to begin with the
tension; tension is, after all, embedded within the very notion of collectivity. Even the
OED definition, “Formed by [a] collection of individual persons or things,” (my
emphasis) points toward this: collectivity cannot exist without the individual. Despite
Barkley’s optimistic words, parts of the museum show reservations about collectivity,
struggling to blend a collectively-formed version of history with a more institutionally-
approved narrative. For instance, one small section is dedicated solely to America’s role
in World War I. A fifteen-minute program in the museum’s open-air Horizon Theatre
explains the necessity for America to enter the war, and a framed portrait of Woodrow
Wilson adorns the wall behind viewers’ heads. The purpose of this part of the museum is
to help visitors understand why America had to enter World War I, and even the design
of the theatre contributes to that argument. Visitors watch the film from a platform that
overlooks a scene of desolation and despair; the land is destroyed, the light is dim, and
frightening noises of war quietly rage on. The film script describes the setting of the
theatre: “Faint shapes and silhouettes of a wasteland suggest the violent and explosive
scenes that have churned the land; ripped ancient trees into charred, splintered stakes;
obliterated life—human and animal; and left great gashes in the earth and the lives of
people who have survived the fury of massive slaughter only to face another day of
warfare in the trenches of World War I” (National World War I Museum). The visual
aspects of the theatre suggest that America truly had no choice but to enter this war since such violence and desolation could not be rectified without the U.S. involvement.

The content of the film itself continues with the themes of the necessity of war and the necessity of American involvement. After showing the European devastation of the war, the narrator declares, “But in the early months of 1917, few Americans can deny that war, whether the U.S. joins or not, is just over the horizon” (National World War I Museum). This line more than any other emphasizes the inevitability of the war. This war will happen with or without the involvement of the U.S., so why not participate? This foreboding line is followed by images of submarine attacks on civilian and merchant ships, as the narrator states, “Germany’s unrestricted submarine warfare resumes and begins to take its toll” (The National World War I Museum). The visual imagery paints a picture of Germany’s violent ways and the inability of other countries to stop them, so America’s presence is presumably needed. The didactic script of this film and the theatre itself make a strong argument that America had no choice but to enter the war. Throughout this short film, visitors are directly reminded of the important American values for which World War I was fought, tirelessly justifying America’s involvement. The trauma and violence of the war in Europe are only vaguely referenced here. Instead, it is mainly a display of the patriotic rhetoric of a country at war. In her exploration of European Great War memorials, Katie Trumpener notes that, “historians and writers have become critical of older public monuments and ceremonies, as chilly abstractions disconnected from lived experience and individual memory” (1096). As Trumpener emphasizes, there is a certain danger in representing war in a monolithic way, which is a common trend among World War I memorials. The American metanarrative of the war,
as depicted in this film and elsewhere in the museum, does disconnect the war from individual memory in precisely the way that Trumpener describes, offering a linear and limited perspective.

I begin this chapter by juxtaposing the words of the museum’s educational coordinator with a brief analysis of this film because they represent the larger complications surrounding collectivity as both a rhetorical approach to memory and a pedagogical strategy. Barkley emphasizes that the museum represents and teaches a “history of the people,” but the film in the Horizon Theatre focuses on the American metanarrative of World War I. How can a museum balance the desire for a collectively-formed history with the expectation of a single, linear, and instructive narrative? And what does this struggle for balance between the collective and the individual mean for rhetorical theory, particularly rhetorical education? In this case study of the National World War I Museum, I explore these questions and argue for retheorizing rhetoric itself as collective and embracing its value. Though rhetorical theory frequently portrays rhetoric as an endeavor undertaken by an individual agent, the most successful exhibits in this museum demonstrate the positive pedagogical effects of embracing a collective understanding of rhetoric.

A Multi-Faceted Theory of Collective Rhetoric

In a recent article about collective rhetoric, Tasha N. Dubriwny states, “Despite the historical recognition by rhetorical scholars that rhetoric is a public activity involving both orators and audiences, rhetorical scholarship has long focused on single texts authored by individuals. This historical focus on ‘great speeches’ elides an important point: that rhetoric is essentially a collaborative activity” (395). She then explains her own
theory of collective rhetoric:

A theory of collective rhetoric models a process of persuasion that envisions the creation of novel public vocabularies as the product of the collective articulation of multiple, overlapping individual experiences. Persuasion is in this sense not simply the altering of opinions, but rather the creation of situations in which the telling of individual experiences makes possible a reframing of one's understanding of the world. In such a theory of collective rhetoric the roles of speaker and listener, orator and audience, are collapsed to elucidate the ways in which rhetoric can be collaborative. (396)

I quote Dubriwny at length because she is one of the few scholars who explicitly defines the term collective rhetoric. Though I agree with her definition, I want to expand it and consider how rhetoric can be collective beyond “the articulation of multiple, overlapping individual processes.” Certainly this is part of how I see rhetoric as collective, but there are other aspects and connected issues that warrant exploration.

I theorize collective rhetoric in a multi-faceted way. First, collective rhetoric is a process in which multiple people participate in making meaning, so it is interactive and dialogue driven. Second, it weaves together multiple voices and perspectives to tell a story; it is polyphonic and inclusive, never settling with just one message. Finally, collective rhetoric emerges when various rhetorical modes are combined to craft a message—text, visuals, space, and more work together to communicate. In this way, collective rhetoric can be a multimodal and multisensory experience. Though I discuss the tensions surrounding collective rhetoric in this chapter—such as the struggle to balance the accepted metanarrative with a more collectively built history, full of smaller,
often ignored voices—I ultimately argue that collective rhetoric has important benefits that outweigh such tensions. In particular, collective rhetoric can create a more comprehensive version of history, allowing for more ethical and nuanced representation and education, especially of trauma. Most of all, this collective approach civically engages guests and offers a powerful form of rhetorical education.

The Site: The National World War I Museum

History and Mission of the Research Site

In December of 2006, the National World War I Museum opened its doors in Kansas City, Missouri. During its first month of operation, the museum drew more than 25,000 visitors, with lines up to one-hundred people deep during the holiday season.
(Rendina). The history of efforts to commemorate this war runs deeper in Kansas City than just the recent opening of the museum. In 1918, two weeks after the fighting ended on Europe’s western front, a group of Kansas Citians decided to create a lasting monument to all the men and women who had served in the war. A community-based fundraising drive collected the necessary money for this monument within two weeks, which was dubbed the Liberty Memorial. The site for the memorial was dedicated on November 1, 1921, and three years later a 217-foot obelisk was opened to the public. For years, the Liberty Memorial Association collected artifacts and objects from World War I. It started with posters, but other materials arrived quickly, and the collecting continues today. For decades this collection lacked a proper home in which to be displayed; the memorial itself could not hold the expanding materials (National World War I Museum). An actual museum was needed if the Association wanted the public to have a chance to see the noteworthy collection. This project that began in 1918 culminated in 2006 with the opening of the National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial. The museum expanded upon the Liberty Memorial because it was constructed in what was once an empty cavern underneath it. The memorial only had 7,000-square feet to display the collection, and the expansion created an 80,000-square foot state-of-the-art facility (Figure 3.2). Ralph Appelbaum, whose other credits include the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C., was the architect for this museum, and he notes that it is “one of the greatest collections of World War I artifacts anywhere in the world” (Rendina).

Upon the opening, critics reviewed the museum almost entirely favorably. In The New York Times, Edward Rothstein calls the museum “an imposing achievement” that “never goes too far.” Mark Yost of The Wall Street Journal applauds the historical
accuracy of the museum in its choice to maintain a more European than American focus. He further states, “The result is a compelling and comprehensive presentation that leaves visitors with a clear understanding of the forces that led to the war, the barbarism of the world's first mechanized industrial warfare, and the unresolved disputes that sowed the seeds for future conflicts, including some that are in the headlines today.” For its part, the museum maintains a seemingly simple mission: to “inspire thought, dialogue, and learning to make the experiences of the World War I era meaningful and relevant for present and future generations” (The National World War I Museum).

An Argument for Collective Rhetoric

Yet there is much more to the museum beyond this stated mission. As the reviews of Rothstein and Yost allude to, this museum tells a complicated story about the supposed “Great War.” In this case study, I focus on observing and analyzing the collective rhetorical approach used to confront the avoidable violence of World War I. The number of soldiers and civilians killed during World War I is still debatable, but most estimate that around eight or nine million soldiers were killed, while civilian deaths were even greater at around thirteen million. The manners of death were also horrific: soldiers from various countries were lost in mud at the Battle of the Somme; the British had no protection from the emerging technology of gas at the Battle of Ypres where 60,000 were promptly lost; civilian causalities were caused by both starvation and massacres (Fussell).

Examining the approach of this museum as it works to represent this complex history points to the importance of collective rhetoric and its accompanying pedagogy more broadly. Specifically, I argue that collective rhetoric allows for history to be represented more fully and trauma to be dealt with more ethically. At the National World War I
Museum, guests participate in making meaning of history, various perspectives and voices offer individualized stories of life during wartime, and multimodal exhibits allow visitors to critically consider and discuss the events of the war. Through these collective strategies, guests are taught multiple ideas, narratives, and histories about the war rather than given one limited representation of it. At the same time, some parts of the museum, like the film I discussed in this chapter’s introductory section, offer a more restricted, one-sided version of the war; the grand, patriotic historical narrative of the war is undeniably present, but smaller, often disregarded voices are a larger presence, and these voices challenge the more monolithic version of history and offer often overlooked perspectives about the trauma suffered. Beyond the importance of simply representing these multiple voices, I suggest that in making an active decision to represent history in a multi-faceted, multi-voiced manner, the collective rhetoric employed at the National World War I Museum encourages visitors to be more thoughtful, engaged citizens. As Weil suggests in my epigraph, visitors can actually be enlisted as collaborators in building a sense of the past. In this way, the work of The National World War I Museum offers pedagogical insight for productively updating rhetorical education.

Beyond the Individual Agent: Moves Toward the Collective in Rhetorical Theory

Historically, agency has been located within an individual rhetor; he can gain agency, and, subsequently, power, through the effective use of rhetoric. Aristotle’s frequently cited notion of rhetoric as “all the available means of persuasion,” while seemingly quite broad, is somewhat limited. Throughout his discussion in *Rhetoric*, he refers to the “speaker,” and all of his divisions of rhetoric—“political speaking,” “forensic speaking,” and “ceremonial oratory”—are rooted in speech (185). For Aristotle, the speaker was *one*
man orating to an audience. While the role of the audience could be viewed as more collective, this understanding of rhetoric remains fairly individualized in terms of who espouses or controls rhetoric. Quintilian, too, famously defines rhetoric as “the good man speaking well,” rooting the knowledge and ability to persuade in an individual (and a male individual at that), and the individual uses words to accomplish this persuasion. However, in 20th and 21st-century rhetorical theory, a move toward the rhetor’s agency as collective rather than individual is observable, and my work in this chapter contributes to this modern retheorization of rhetoric. Though the theorists and scholars I discuss do not use the term collective rhetoric, their work importantly defines rhetoric as collaborative and interactive.

In the late 20th century, Wayne Booth envisioned rhetoric as creating dialogue rather than one-sided arguments. His main point in *Modern Dogma and a Rhetoric of Assent* is spurred by what he views as the constant failure of protest movements, particularly those he observes on college campuses. As a way to solve this problem, Booth aims to revive confidence in rhetoric and its pertinence to all disciplines, defending it as much more than propaganda or “mere rhetoric.” In this sense, he wants to establish a new theory of rhetoric, and his proposal is more collective than classical understandings of rhetoric.

While Aristotle focuses on rhetoric as an art of persuasion, Booth calls rhetoric “the art of discovering good reasons” (xi). In other words, through rhetoric, people can figure out why they believe what they believe, or perhaps decide what they *should* believe instead. With Booth’s definition, he establishes different goals for persuasion. He does not necessarily think people need to be moved to change their actions or even their minds.
Instead, the goals are finding a space of agreement in which to establish a dialogue with others and better understand a variety of beliefs. Per Booth, the goals of rhetoric are to create a productively communicating collective.

Booth then discusses a process to achieve these goals, arguing that people first need to fully embrace this place of agreement and move away from skepticism. Problematic skepticism is characteristic of modernism which, he argues, divides man’s responses into two parts: logic-based “hard knowing” versus “self-faith” or “commitments,” based on feelings or passions (91). Booth instead advocates a multiplicity of ways of knowing; there are many logics and each mind has an individual kind of knowing. Without this modernist division, people can search for where they are together. Booth suggests a “process of systematic assent” that works from agreement and finds no good reason to doubt (104). Certainly reasonable men will disagree, but they must do so by virtue of their common problems, searching for meeting places to stand together and explore their differences. This calls into question the modern focus on “I” or the individual. Booth suggests that the formula should be about “we.” Instead of “I” trying to talk “you” into a preconceived view, “we” should engage in mutual inquiry and discovery. Booth’s conception of rhetoric is based in conversation, dialogue, and interaction. While Aristotle saw persuasion as focused on the active speaker convincing his audience, Booth approaches rhetoric as rooted in the “we,” radically shifting both the goals and processes of persuasion to theorize rhetoric as collective.

Though writing during an earlier time period and in a different political climate, Kenneth Burke shares concerns with Booth. In *A Grammar of Motives*, the epigraph “towards the purification of war” situates Burke’s work as offering insight for avoiding
wartime division. In her book *Burke, War, Words: Rhetoricizing Dramatism*, M. Elizabeth Weiser discusses Burke’s development of the term *Constitution*. By the end of *A Grammar of Motives*, Weiser explains, Burke was ready to apply the “dramatic anecdote…not for looking at human relations but for human relations itself, and the term he chose (after considering terminal, war, and peace) was Constitution” (128). Weiser sees the uppercase use of Constitution as indicating the “fundamental principles by which an organized group is made, established, and governed” (128). Moreover, Constitution is used as a representative anecdote specifically for the purification of war (Weiser 128). The emphasis on the group in Constitution, and the debate and dialogue that must occur within that group to work toward the purification of war, illustrates that Burke sees collectivity as key in modern persuasion if it is to work toward peace and civility. Weiser states:

> In sum, Burke was saying in his wartime articles and their capstone *A Grammar of Motives*, humanity constitutes reality through interrelated language choices that necessitate certain conflicts. It can manage the conflicts within the original perspective or choose new linguistic principles that allow it to look at reality differently…Constitution allows for the latter, hierarchizing the conflicting principles through verbal debate. (130)

The emphasis on “verbal debate” in Constitution is crucial in understanding rhetoric as collective; a dialogue must occur for rhetoric to serve a greater purpose, which directly connects to the first part of my theory of collective rhetoric.

Following his discussion of Constitution, Burke includes a chapter in *A Grammar of Motives* called “The Dialectic in General.” Weiser points out that Burke added this to the
Constitution section in the spring of 1945, just before the book was published and the chapter, expectedly considering the historical time period, addresses “transcending conflict” (Weiser 130-31). In this final chapter, Burke explains that the dialectic “may be thought of as voices in dialogue or roles in a play with each voice or role in its partiality contributing to the development of a whole” (qtd. in Weiser 131). In this instance, Burke proposes his own definition of collective rhetoric—voices, all partial, combine to create a whole. For Burke, this plurality is a more effective method for transcending conflict and purifying war and, as I will suggest, it allows for more comprehensive representation and education.¹⁵

The recent work of Gregory Clark and S. Michael Halloran, discussed in more detail in Chapter One, builds on Burkean concepts to look at collective rhetoric in contemporary times. In Clark and Halloran’s collaborative essay “National Park Landscapes and the Rhetorical Display of Civic Religion,” they argue that there is rhetorical power in a publically significant place. They claim diverse individuals can encounter a common place and share a connecting rhetorical experience—a Burkean identification is established at these public places. For instance, people travel to National Parks to commune with one another and feel united as Americans. They point out that national parks and monuments, particularly since the 19th century, have been designed so Americans can learn who they are as a nation; Halloran and Clark explain that the

¹⁵ I discuss Burke’s theory of identification in Chapter Two as it relates to the Freedom Center. It is worth noting here that by building identification into rhetoric’s definition, Burke recognizes rhetoric as relational—a definite move toward a more collective understanding of rhetoric. Identification also offers a specific way to accomplish Booth’s more abstract “systematic assent;” through strategic identifications, people can establish their common ground and begin a dialogue that includes various points of view.
rhetorics of display at work in national parks, such as established trails, plaques, park literature, and even the space itself, unite Americans as a “congregation” of citizens. Similar to what is suggested in Burkean identification, rhetoric unites and creates citizen collectives.

While Burke, Booth, Clark, and Halloran see value in collective rhetoric’s ability to bring people together, Brenda Brueggemann and Cheryl Glenn embrace the collective for a different reason. In Brenda Brueggmann’s book *Lend Me Your Ear: Rhetorical Constructions of Deafness*, she argues that rhetoric is a tradition that has been about “the will to speech” for too long. Assuming that rhetoric is all about speech excludes Deaf subjects, denying them rhetorical agency. Brueggemann thus argues that a space is needed for a rhetoric of listening, suggesting rhetorical theory needs to pay just as much attention to listening as it does to speaking. Brueggemann’s rhetoric of listening is, by its very nature, collective. It involves an interaction between those speaking and those listening. Even more, Brueggemann’s ultimate goal in this book is to rewrite the rhetorical tradition so it includes Deaf subjects. She explains that there are more available means of persuasion than are usually recognized, and points to American Sign Language Poetry as an example. Language and persuasion, she explains, go beyond writing and speech. Brueggemann indicates that collective rhetoric can be a way to create a more diverse, inclusive, and comprehensive rhetorical tradition.

Glenn, in *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, makes a connected argument. Glenn’s goal in this book is to claim silence as a specific rhetorical art, long underappreciated. For too long, language alone has represented a specific way of achieving humanity—speaking equals power and civilization, while silence equals nothing. But Glenn argues
for silence as meaningful; it reveals speech and enacts its own, sometimes complementary, rhetoric. Glenn works against the common assumption that silence is simply absence or erasing and imagines a framework of speech and silence in a reciprocal rather than oppositional relationship. She connects this to the idea of invitational rhetoric, which asks that each side take turns listening to one another. In other words, both sides would take turns being productively silent. Rhetors using silence will not participate in rhetorical combat and dominance. Instead, they share perceptions, understanding, and power. Rhetors can use silence to embody new ways of communicating and challenge and resist domination and hierarchy, while also disrupting it. Like Brueggemann, Glenn’s rhetoric of silence emphasizes listening and theorizes rhetoric as an interaction between multiple sides—sides that take turns speaking and thoughtfully listening. Glenn goes a step further, too, by directly discussing the good that this collective form of rhetoric can accomplish. When rhetoric is about speaking and listening, forming a collective, the rhetorical tradition can be more about sharing, and domination can be transformed. This is why Glenn views the rhetoric of silence as especially important for marginalized groups, such as women and Native Americans, her primary focus groups in this book. Collective rhetoric, as both Glenn and Brueggemann envision it, can be a powerful tool for working toward a more inclusive and ethical rhetorical tradition.

All of these scholars demonstrate, in different ways, that rhetoric is more collective than commonly acknowledged. Rhetoric is often created through a collective process of dialogue and interaction, as Booth and Burke discuss. The final product of rhetoric is frequently collective, too; as Clark and Halloran explain, it brings people together to participate in public life. Finally, benefits of collective rhetoric are indicated.
Booth, Burke, Halloran, and Clark view it as a positive uniting force, and Brueggemann and Glenn lay out how collective rhetoric holds promise for developing a more inclusive tradition. I build on these existing theories of rhetoric in this chapter, using The National World War I Museum to illustrate my own theory of collective rhetoric and show its work in action—both the benefits and the complications embedded within it.

**Returning to the Tension Within the Collective**

Rhetoric is frequently used to shape and represent memories. While collective rhetoric shapes these memories in a particular way, and I suggest there are many benefits, tensions also surround a collective approach to memory. After all, movement to the collective is what creates war in the first place. In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, while discussing identification, Burke points out that cooperative acts can come together to create a destructive act, like war. Even though bringing people together through rhetoric can be positive and productive, particular issues that arise from collectivity must also be addressed. From the very beginning of the National World War I Museum, the tension surrounding collective rhetoric and memory is present, in both form and content. I want to explore a few aspects of the museum’s entryway and opening exhibits to investigate the presence of this tension and the reasons behind it, as these early parts of the museum illustrate various conflicts in relation to collective rhetoric.
Tension #1: Remembering and Grieving as Individualized Activities

Visitors enter the museum by crossing a large and striking glass walkway that hovers above a field of poppies (Figure 3.3). There are 9,000 poppies in this field, each representing 1,000 combatant deaths for a total of nine million. This bridge and the bright orange flowers underneath it are beautiful; seeing their vastness and all they represent is an emotional experience. Visitors silently pause on the bridge and gaze at the poppies underneath. This bridge has been established in memory of fallen soldiers, and guests are asked to pay their respects to these men before engaging with any of the exhibits. For the National World War I Museum, this respectful remembering—very much a solitary activity—must precede all else. This is one of the few parts of the museum where silence pervades, likely because this is the space of the museum that most fits a traditional
memorial aesthetic. Such an aesthetic garners a quiet, thoughtful, and reflective attitude from those who view the field of poppies, a memorial in its own right. Asking guests to participate in this quiet, private remembering aligns with cultural understandings of grieving. In American culture, grief is generally understood to be individual and private. The glass bridge connects to this understanding of grieving and in doing so demonstrates the first tension surrounding collective rhetoric and memory. Certain forms of remembering, particularly those related to death, are supposed to be private and individualized. The museum grapples to balance this individual, culturally accepted approach to memory with a pedagogical desire to make remembering a more collective, collaborative process. The museum staff aims for or a collective understanding and teaching of history, but an individualized and more “respectful” memorial must also be enforced before such collectivity can begin.

*Tension #2: The Traditional Role of Direct Instruction and a Passive Audience in Education*

After visitors make their way across this bridge and into the actual exhibit area, they are quickly corralled into a small “orientation theater” where they watch a film to gain background information about World War I. The script for this film includes an introduction explaining that this “orientation” film must address the lack of knowledge—or perhaps misinformation—that visitors carry with them to the museum:

Visitors approach the Liberty Memorial Monument—and enter the Museum—with vastly different impressions of World War I. Many have no idea what years The Great War spanned. Some confuse it with World War II. Few realize it set in motion America’s place in the world over the course of the
20th century. And very few make a sharp connection between World War I and the most urgent—even volatile.scenes playing out across the globe today. But whether they fully understand why they have come here, many are drawn to the monument—and many more to the new Museum—by curiosity as well as reverence for the power and sweep of the story they sense awaits them.

(National World War I Museum)

This paragraph indicates that the museum staff partially understands its role as “fixing” current public understandings of World War I. The audience of the museum is conceived of as “confused” and having “no idea,” though they are also “curious” and “reverent.” Thus the museum must intervene and save them from their own historical ignorance. With this intervention, the film script even suggests that visitors will be able to make a “sharp connection” with present-day issues. In this pedagogical scenario, the museum bestows knowledge on an uneducated public, and the public comes to absorb this knowledge and be made more aware as citizens.

For many centuries, this visitor as receptacle of knowledge approach was common in museums. In the 21st century, this approach is less widespread as many museums adopt pedagogical techniques that encourage guests to interact with exhibits (Hooper-Greenhill). In most instances, the National World War I Museum follows this museum movement toward interactivity. In fact, this is a large aspect of the collective rhetoric at work in the space. But the orientation film illustrates a more conflicted take on the collective. A similar argument could be made about the Freedom Center’s positioning of an informational film as where visitors are “supposed” to start their museum journey.

While both the National World War I Museum and the Freedom Center are designed for
guests to participate in their own knowledge making, the more traditional museum purpose remains; guests must passively “take in” historical information. Collective rhetoric cannot exist without this direct instruction. To participate later in the museum, guests first must be heavily guided when they enter the space. The pedagogical approach of this film demonstrates that collectivity and memory are frequently mediated and shaped by institutional forces. Recall Tony Bennett’s argument about museums’ historical role as forces of social control as outlined in Chapter One. Bennett suggests that high culture was (and is) enlisted as a form of social management and residual effects of that approach challenge the general collectivity at the National World War I Museum.

**Tension #3: Collective Rhetoric vs. One “Correct” History**

A final tension to consider is the one illustrated by the introductory section of this chapter—the tension between collective rhetoric and the metanarrative. Museum studies scholar George MacDonald explains that offering diverse perspectives is a necessary move for contemporary museums. They must avoid the pitfalls of the “voice of authority” and instead present multiple voices of a pluralistic society (MacDonald 175). Though many of the museum’s exhibits adhere to MacDonald’s advice, the “voice of authority” is powerfully present too. While the plurality of history might be embraced in theory, this national museum still bears some responsibility to tell “the” story of World War I. While, as Barkley’s comments illustrate, museum staff wants to supplement and perhaps even question the metanarrative, they cannot all together ignore it. Americans’ expectations of both museums and history itself would not allow for that. Visitors might enjoy collective learning activities and engagement, yet there remains an underlying expectation that one
“correct” version of history is presented to them.

Before considering how the museum makes use of the metanarrative, it would be helpful to establish more specifically how World War I is often portrayed and perceived in the United States. In some ways, the euphemistic monikers given to this war, “The Great War” or “The War to End All Wars,” succinctly express this metanarrative. For many Americans, World War I has not received much attention or discussion in history classes. The version of this war that is commonly accepted portrays it as rather insignificant to American history, especially as compared to other wars. After all, America was only involved in the war for about a year and experienced relatively few casualties, especially compared to European countries. Though it is commonly overshadowed by other wars, history still tends to glorify American involvement in the First World War, and such has been the case since America’s initial declaration of war on Germany. In his address to Congress when America entered the war, an address which is highlighted by a display of newspapers in the museum, President Wilson claimed, “…America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured.” Often, the story of the First World War becomes exactly what Wilson set it up to be. It is a story of American victory and nationalistic pride, and this narrative of fighting for life, liberty, and justice is generally accepted. Parts of the National World War I museum undeniably portray this. Though portraying this metanarrative is unavoidable, especially for a national museum, my analysis in this chapter demonstrates that this linear, authoritative, and largely one-sided rhetorical approach is less effective pedagogically than the collective rhetoric that dominates much of the space. Visitors can take in information, but they are not asked to
engage with it or participate in making meaning of it, and they are given a limited narrative and history of the war. I want to question the ethics of representation and the education that occurs in these parts of the museum and consider what this means for rhetorical theory.

Figure 3.4. Timeline at the Center of the Museum
As visitors drift from the orientation theater to the center of the circular museum, the metanarrative looms large in the form of a lengthy timeline (Figure 3.4). This large timeline of the war features detailed descriptions of various battles. As tends to be the norm with timelines, requisite in most historical museums, the narrative is linear and limited, establishing a simplified American memory of the war. There is one story of the war, told by one powerful voice. Though this timeline shares information about various racial and cultural groups in an attempt to be more inclusive, the very existence of the timeline implies a sense of progress, organization, and an “official” version of history. Halloran, in an essay about rhetorical education at a historic battlefield, raises similar concerns about too-simple representations of history in public spaces. He asserts that Americans are constantly in search of their “heritage,” so much so that a market for “heritage tourism” now exists. But rather than allowing for a full exploration of all the nuances of American heritage, Halloran states that this “heritage phenomenon” too often “substitutes a sanitized and oversimplified fairy tale for the complexities of real history” (131). The timeline approach to the history of the First World War represents Halloran’s “heritage phenomenon.” The history represented by the timeline is neatly packaged and lacking in complexity. Battles were fought, countries entered the war, and treaties were signed, making the war appear orderly and manageable. The timeline might offer a clear and succinct overview of the war, but it is unable to properly portray the complex history and trauma of World War I and results in the silencing of other voices and stories. The timeline represents a single-voiced rhetorical approach, and the single voice “speaking” is that of the institution. As I will demonstrate, a move toward collective rhetoric can avoid some of these pitfalls, representing historical trauma in a more nuanced way.
A Theory of Collective Rhetoric

Collective Rhetoric as Dialogue and Interaction

I first define collective rhetoric as a dialogue-driven process in which multiple people participate in making meaning. A collaborative creation of knowledge occurs frequently at the National World War I Museum and can be best observed in the interactive displays. Though a historical museum, top-notch technologies and multimedia are featured throughout the space. The largest use of technology is found in two sizable interactive computer tables (Figure 3.5). These tables are part of the final areas of the museum that visitors will discover; the tables are tucked away at its center, enclosed behind the large timeline.

**Figure 3.5.** The Interactive Tables
First, visitors have a chance to involve themselves with the work of the museum and with history itself. Using a laser pen that functions as a mouse to select activities, they continue exploring history, as they have done throughout the museum, but they also create their own take on it. For example, one segment of the tables lets visitors build their own memorial. They can select different symbols to include on their monument, and the table explains the significance of each one. Visitors can even email their monument to themselves or other people. With such an activity, visitors interact with history and how it is represented. They are able to construct their own representations rather than passively accepting the metanarrative. There is no linear, cohesive narrative at the interactive tables. In its place is a history still forming, and different versions of this history can be brought into existence. Such interactive activities encourage visitors to explore history in a more personal way, and they then create their own meaning from it. By building their own memorial, visitors develop some ownership of a significant event and memorialize it as they deem appropriate. Memorializing a historical event becomes a collective endeavor since the visitor is now a part of this process. Ivan Karp, in his edited collection *Museums and Communities: Politics and Public Culture*, proposes that contemporary museums must understand their audiences in a new way. Specifically, he suggests that the audience, a passive entity, becomes a community, an active agent. Exhibits like these interactive tables are commonplace in many contemporary

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16 This is one of two design programs the table offers. A similar activity exists where visitors create World War I posters. The tables also have a more in-depth “game mode” that is a simulation of the major developments in the war—from diplomatic maneuvering to combat strategy/tactics to ending the fighting and the peace treaty. This game mode is used only for school groups or selected visitors (Casey).
museums as the participatory role of audience has been promoted by museum staff and museum studies scholars in recent years.

With this participatory culture, museums also have the potential partake in important recuperative work, allowing guests to better understand historical trauma and violence. More specifically, museums, both theoretically and practically, can demonstrate what it means to respectfully witness trauma and even allow visitors to partake in this process. Shoshana Felman, in an essay about teaching with Holocaust narratives, defines witnessing as “transgressing the confines of an isolated space to speak to and for others” (15-17). James Hatley, in his work about witnessing and the Holocaust, adds a demand for involvement in witnessing: “By witness is meant a mode of responding to another’s plight that exceeds an epistemological determination and becomes ethical involvement…The witness refuses to forget the weight of [the] blow, or the depth of the wound it inflicts” (3). As both Felman and Hatley point toward, bearing witness involves learning about an event, understanding it and connecting to it, and then moving toward educating others about it as a way to pay respect and take action. The build-your-own-memorial activity serves as a high-tech example of how witnessing can occur within the walls of a museum. Due to the layout of the museum, guests have already learned about the violence and suffering that occurred during the war—they have been witnesses to it throughout the museum. Implied in this structure is the idea that this part of witnessing must first take place before visitors can “speak for others” or move toward “ethical involvement.” Then, the digital work created by guests on these interactive tables pays homage to those who were a part of the First World War, and their creations also educate others about the war since they can share them through email. This is a way to learn
about trauma, connect and interact with historical events, and even educate others about what has occurred. Collective rhetoric, in its interactive nature, facilitates meaningful witnessing.

Beyond the technology, the tables are interactive in another way. During the activities, guests dialogue with one another. I never observed a visitor participating in the build-your-own-memorial activity by herself. Like so much that occurs at the museum, this activity happens with a partner or even in a small group. I observed visitors discussing the choices of what symbols to include and instructing one another about where to place these symbols on their digital memorial. Visitors collaborate to remember the First World War and craft a rhetorical artifact, unsettling individualized notions of rhetoric. The dialogue that occurs with this activity can also be a step toward working through trauma. Connected to his concept of “empathetic unsettlement” (explained in Chapter Two), Dominick LaCapra explains “working through trauma” as establishing a relationship to the past that recognizes a difference from the past; this allows a person to develop critical judgment and reinvestment in life, possibly becoming a political or ethical agent (144). These interactive tables are designed to help visitors establish a relationship with the past but, unlike what is frequently observable at the Freedom Center, they avoid fostering too close an identification with it, keeping visitors interested in history but also aware of their present moment. Additionally, the activities taking place at the tables craft thoughtful interactions and dialogue about war which allow visitors to further process and work through trauma. Though representing trauma is often fraught, collective rhetoric allows this process to be more meaningful and ethical. Visitors connect with the past as they build their memorials, but it is an activity that also
maintains a distance and respects difference. Visitors stay in the present day as they build memorials; they are not asked to “go back in time” or “pretend they are soldiers,” engaging and emotional techniques that are frequently utilized in museum education, as seen at the Freedom Center. Instead, guests at the National World War I Museum are just citizens who, through interactive activities and dialogue with others, work to better understand a traumatic historical event. As LaCapra alludes to when he suggests that working through trauma presents possibilities for people to become political agents, this is a scene of rhetorical education. There is potential for visitors to take this historical information and use it to work for change in their own moment—through the thoughtful creation of a rhetorical artifact; the dialogue that occurs during the process of digital memorial building; and guests’ ability to share their work with friends outside of the museum via email.

*Collective Rhetoric as Multiple Voices and Multiple Messages*

Collective rhetoric is not only present in the dialogue and interaction of museum visitors. The way that exhibits are designed speaks to this as well, since many of them feature different voices and stories of the war. This connects with the second part of my theory of collective rhetoric: multiple voices and perspectives are woven together to tell a story; collective rhetoric never settles with just one message. Ernst van Alphen, in an essay about the “unrepresentability of the Holocaust” discusses the inability of survivors to express or narrate their experience. Van Alphen proposes that the problem is not necessarily the nature of an event like the Holocaust, but rather the split between the living of an event and the available forms of representation for such an event (25-27). In other words, survivors lack terms or narrative frameworks to represent this trauma.
Rather than trying to force the traumatic narrative of World War I into a particular framework—a framework that would ultimately fail to support it—the museum utilizes collective rhetoric to represent the war in diverse and frequently non-narrative ways. These exhibits demonstrate that history is written by multiple voices and in multiple forms, a strategy that challenges the metanarrative and offers a more complex representation of World War I.

One example of this is the museum’s Audio Alcoves, which are small, enclosed booths where visitors can listen to historical voices that comment on war. The booths are large enough to hold up to four visitors, and the visitors use a screen to select the voices they wish to hear. The booths are clear, enabling visitors to see out and into the rest of the museum, but they are soundproof, so they provide some escape from the majority of the busy space. The voices come from speakers within the booth, so no headphones are necessary. Listening to these stories thus becomes a collective experience, as well. Some of the voices featured are well known ones like Booker T. Washington, while others are voices of soldiers or volunteers. All of these voices are actual recordings from the time period. The OED definition of collectivity is worth revisiting here: “Formed by [a] collection of individual persons or things.” In the Audio Alcoves, the collective is literally composed of individuals. Though I suggest that one of the prime tensions within collective rhetoric is between individual and collection, this exhibit demonstrates how this tension can be productively balanced. In the Audio Alcoves, individual and often ordinary voices are privileged, and these individual voices work together to create their own collective version of the history of the Great War. Though modern museums are sometimes criticized for portraying too many messages, leading to a confusing “choose
your own adventure” sort of experience for visitors, this is an example of how individual narratives can be privileged but still effectively cohere and offer a clear and meaningful picture of a historical event. The use of collective rhetoric makes this nuanced pedagogy possible.

The multiple stories in the Audio Alcoves, as well as other exhibits, often challenge the grand historical narrative and raise important questions about the value of war. Some note the hardships faced during war, while others directly question the purpose of war. The Audio Alcoves, then, serve as another space of witnessing. The exhibit is designed to speak for others who can no longer speak for themselves, telling stories that might otherwise go unheard or unknown. In turn, taking in these many different stories pushes viewers to be more thoughtful about their visit, reconsidering their knowledge of World War I, or even of war more generally. At the Audio Alcoves, one easy story is not handed to those who listen. They must consider multiple perspectives and ideas about the war since the events are not pushed into an ill-fitting narrative framework. As Susan Crane emphasizes in her introduction to the book *Museums and Memory*, “the museum as archive is a resource that has the potential to foster myriad random encounters with the objects of knowledge rather than the singular linear narratives that tend to be formed from it” (4). These “myriad random encounters” fostered by contemporary museums are part of a collective rhetoric. Visitors encounter multiple voices so a more collectively built history takes shape instead of the linear metanarrative, once again allowing for a more nuanced and thoughtful portrayal of historical trauma. People are also encouraged to piece together their own understanding of history; they must synthesize information rather than accept one “correct” version.
Finally, in listening to these multiple voices and forming their own ideas about war, visitors are also being rhetorically educated.

Showing how aspects of my theory of collective rhetoric can work in combination, the museum’s portrait wall brings together both the multiple voices of history and the interaction of visitors. At a wall that seems at first glance mundane, decorated with traditional portraits, as visitors get closer, they realize that these portraits are digital and constantly changing. Similar to the Audio Alcoves, only these portraits are visual rather than sound-driven, individual stories of soldiers and volunteers from the war are privileged here. On a large digital frame, visitors use a touch screen to scan through different portraits featuring ordinary people who were involved in the war and read their stories. They use a small touch screen attached to a pedestal to control the exhibit, while a large version of the portrait appears on the wall in front of them. The story about the individual is included only on the small touch screen box, while the space on the wall is reserved strictly for showing a large black and white photo. The visitor controlling the touch screen stands directly across from the portrait, staring into the face of the person she is reading about. The emphasis of the portrait wall is once again on individual stories, but these individual stories merge to show history as collectively created. While the metanarrative exists, the portrait wall shows that other histories exist, as well. One voice is never enough; instead a polyphony arises. History is more diverse and thorough when communicated in this way, demonstrating the benefits of collective rhetoric. The portrait wall also has an interactive element, much like the tables. Visitors get to select which stories they want to read, and they control which portraits are projected on to the wall of the museum. Constance Perin, in her essay “The Communicative Circle: Museums as
Communities,” suggests that conventional conceptions of museum audiences fail to acknowledge that communication goes two ways between viewers and exhibitions. Perin expresses concern that visitors too often find that their turn in the “communicative circle” never comes up. Of course, there is no guarantee that visitors will understand an exhibit just as the designer encouraged, so visitors play a large role in making the messages of the museum, too. Considering Perin’s claims, it is vital that museums offer visitors some control over their learning. Ideally, guests should make choices about what is important to them, participating in their own processes of meaning making. Pedagogically, collective rhetoric allows for this sort of choice and participation while also offering an experience that is meaningful and fluid rather than disjointed or disconnected. In other words, the individualized voices throughout the museum, which could arguably become overwhelming, centralize in a way that still allows for effective learning—visitors to this museum leave with a strong sense of the stakes and effects of World War I, but they also leave with a personal connection to particular issues and ideas that they defined for themselves.

Collective Rhetoric as Multimodal

The final piece of my theory proposes that collective rhetoric emerges when various modes are effectively combined to craft a message—text, visuals, audio, and space work together to communicate and educate. Collective rhetoric can manifest as a multimodal and multisensory experience, going far beyond rhetoric’s traditional rooting in words. Certainly multimodal rhetoric has emerged in my discussions of other exhibits, like the interactive tables and the portrait wall, but I want to explore the contribution of the multimodal to collectivity in more depth. As Cathy Caruth explains in the
introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, there is no single way to listen to traumatic experiences and histories (ix). In fact, trauma itself unsettles experience and communication and forces people to rethink their notions of these concepts (Caruth 4). The National World War I Museum embraces the idea of no single way of listening, instead using various methods to communicate trauma and represent it to an audience. Other scholars echo Caruth’s ideas, emphasizing that trauma needs to be represented and communicated in a variety of modes. Nancy K. Miller, in her article on memory and the Vietnam War, focuses on an iconic image from the Vietnam War and the national Vietnam War Memorial in D.C. She suggests they each do different work, the photo mediating traumatic memory and the memorial shaping traumatic memory. Miller asks: where and how will memory of war remain alive? The image or the monument? In film or in stone? She suggests that these are perhaps false oppositions—we need both the image and the monument (275). At the National World I Museum, visitors move around, listen to voices and noises, and see the physical landscape of World War I. The manner in which these sensory experiences work together in exhibits at the National World War I museum creates a unique and engaging collective rhetoric. While each rhetorical piece could operate alone, working as a collective allows for a fuller picture of history to develop.
Nothing is better known about World War I than trench warfare, and the museum does not shy away from educating visitors about that particularly brutal aspect of World War I. In the portrayal of trenches, the multisensory rhetorical approach is stronger than anywhere else in the museum. The outermost edge of the circular museum is lined with life-sized trenches like those that soldiers would have spent much of their time in (Figure 3.6). Visitors see life-size recreations of the trenches; peer into these trenches through eye-level holes provided in their walls; touch their rough edges; hear recorded voices and noises playing from unseen speakers above them. In short, visitors learn about this difficult part of military life in a variety of ways. Rhetorically speaking, history and trauma are communicated in many different modes.

To give a more detailed sense of the multisensory immersion that occurs, I focus on the auditory aspects of this exhibit, which operate synecdochically to represent World
War I. Visitors can hear not only the voices of soldiers, but the sounds of combat are included too. There are explosions and screams, all the more terrifying because it is impossible to tell where they are coming from, which is precisely what soldiers would have experienced. A voiceover shares the emotional trauma of one French soldier, as written in his diary: “Our blinded, wounded, crawling, and shouting soldiers kept falling on top of us and died splashing us with their blood. It was living hell.” There are also the seemingly more harmless but equally destructive and eerie trench noises like mice chewing and water dripping. Every second is tense and uncomfortable in the trenches, and this display symbolically portrays that sensation.

While the Slave Pen at the Freedom Center asks guests to step into the shoes of slave and implies that visitors can “feel” the trauma and violence of the experience, the trenches make clear the difference between the guests and the soldiers. Despite their haunting nature, these trenches are actually quite subtle. There are no dead bodies in them or any disturbing photographs to see. Though the senses of visitors are immersed, they are not made to feel like they are in actual trenches. These trenches are clearly manufactured—the actual experience of trench warfare cannot be recreated, so this exhibit does not attempt that. Instead, the sensory rhetoric in the trenches is used as synecdoche; it stands in to represent the violence and terror that would have been a daily part of many soldiers’ experiences during World War I. By collectively combining multimodal techniques in this exhibit, visitors are engaged and interested in the history, but trauma is not recreated, as happens at some historical sites. The identifications at the National World War I Museum avoid over-familiarity, aligning with LaCapra’s explanation of working through trauma since visitors still respect their difference from
the past. As evidenced by the Freedom Center, museums often ask visitors to “play” at history—they must “pretend” to be participating in a traumatic historical event, for instance. Though these experiences are often memorable, recent theories of identification suggest they have the potential to displace victims and oversimplify trauma (Ratcliffe; LaCapra; Hirsch). Through the use of collective rhetoric, education about violent history, while detailed and personal, can remain ethical. The nuanced pedagogical effects of multimodality demonstrate a promising direction for rhetorical education, as well. Digital media engages citizens as a medium for communication (as both consumers and producers) and offers new possibilities for civic engagement.

**Conclusion: The Role of Collective Rhetoric in Rhetorical Education**

In my theory, I argue that collective rhetoric can be understood as participatory, inclusive of multiple voices and narratives, and multimodal. These aspects of collective rhetoric hold promise for making representation and education more inclusive and nuanced. More voices are heard, more stories are told, and these narratives have the power to reach a wider audience. There are many pedagogical implications of collective rhetoric, but there are a few I want to highlight. First, the value of collaboration and interaction cannot be underestimated. Collective rhetoric allows collaboration to happen easily and in a variety of ways; such collaboration leads toward dialogue that can extend into the public sphere. The build-your-own-memorial activity at the National World War I Museum provides one example of this. Second, the most popular exhibits in the museum balance the tensions between the individual and the collective. From this, I suggest that citizens must be given choices about what and how they learn, allowing for individuality, but this must happen in a way that also works toward a coherent, unified
message. The Audio Alcoves show how this can occur as visitors select what they want to hear from among many voices, but they still understand how these individual voices craft a larger picture of the war as an event that affected many people, both well-known and ordinary, across the globe. Finally, collective rhetoric inherently brings multiple modes to teaching, as illustrated by the museum’s display of the trenches. Citizens need options for ways to participate in public discourse—text, visuals, and audio, to name just a few. Offering multiple modes for people to communicate and learn appeals to diverse ways of thinking, potentially getting more people involved with important civic issues.

More specifically, these conclusions point toward what the pedagogy of rhetorical education can look like in the 21st century. I view this as one of the most promising pedagogical possibilities for collective rhetoric, and I turn now to interviews with museum guests to investigate this further. As discussed in my introduction, I interviewed Jim Barkley, the museum’s former educational coordinator, and with Barkley’s help, I interviewed five guests who were among a small group of adults visiting from a local community college. A theme that reoccurred throughout these interviews was the museum as “experience.” When asked how the museum compared to learning about the war in school Arianna states, “It can’t be compared. This was an experience. In a [school] book, I just read information.” Al explains it more metaphorically: “It’s like giving color to a black and white photo.” Dee focuses on the sensory experience: “There is no comparison, except to say the museum is more visual than reading a textbook in school or going to the library.” In their responses, these guests suggest that a visit to the National World War I Museum provides an involved, participatory type of learning; a type of learning that involves many different approaches and appeals to diverse learners. Such
learning, as I have discussed in this chapter, is largely facilitated by collective rhetoric. Further, the collective rhetoric employed at the National World War I Museum provides an example of how rhetorical education can be invigorated in the present day. Through interactive exhibits, using multiple voices, and multimodality, this museum facilitates thoughtful dialogue among its guests. My interviews indicate that visitors left the museum with more than just historical knowledge. In many of their responses, there is an emphasis on how the visit raised civic awareness or made the guest consider present-day issues. Al comments, “It [my visit] causes me to think of today’s Middle East…those that fail to heed the lessons of history are condemned to repeat them.” Lori reflects, “Too bad we don’t learn that war does not always solve problems. Men have been repeating the scenario [of World War I], but we haven’t learned yet.” The experience this museum provides proves to be one that encourages guests to be more involved in their own historical moment—there is a sense that the collectivity engendered within the walls of the museum will go beyond them because visitors have observed and practiced rhetorical skills that will allow them to more easily take part in public discussions on self-selected issues. In short, museum education becomes rhetorical education, and guests become more thoughtful citizens.
Chapter Four: Expanding the Canon of Memory: A Case Study of the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum

“...offer them [visitors] assurance that the world holds far more good than bad.”

– Oklahoma City Memorial Mission Statement, 1996

Introduction: Pedagogical Remembering and Forgetting

The Pedagogy of Memory

For many years after the Oklahoma City bombing, a domestic terrorist attack in 1995 that destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building and killed 168 people, no one in Oklahoma City wanted to talk about the perpetrators. The name Timothy McVeigh in particular was not frequently uttered. Helen Stiefmiller, the Collections Manager at the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum (OKCNMM), explains that the museum included very little mention of the perpetrators upon its opening in 2001, largely out of respect for this local preference. Stiefmiller states, “Initially, people wanted no mention of them [McVeigh and his accomplice Terry Nichols], so we eventually had to push that they must be acknowledged in some way.” The compromise between the museum and the community resulted in information about McVeigh and Nichols being included in walled-in and off-to-the-side alcoves that guests could choose to confront or avoid. Lynn Roller, Director of Education and Research at the museum, notes that areas of the museum
focused on McVeigh and Nichols were originally “not in the spotlight,” but since time has passed, interest in their story has increased. They are no longer completely banned from the local dialogue, which has resulted in more developed exhibits about them, but it took many years to get to that point. Kari Watkins, Executive Director of the OKCNMM, justifies the museum’s original decision to put information about the perpetrators “off to the side”: “People love the justice side of this story, but they have to choose to confront it…the first generation of survivors deserves some protection.” Stiefmiller echoes this call for protection. She asserts, “Time plays a factor in healing among victims and affects who our constituents are…this will allow us to explore this part of the story [the perpetrators, the investigation, and their trial] more down the road.”

The thoughtful way in which the OKCNMM staff explains their rhetorical choices for the museum immediately illustrates that memory itself is pedagogical. In the staff’s decision to make the parts of the museum that focus on McVeigh and Nichols optional for visitors, certain aspects of this historical event are deemed more integral and appropriate for the education of the public. At the same time, by minimizing the presence of the perpetrators in the museum, there is more room to focus on the positive, heartening aspects of tragedy—namely, overcoming it.

In the introduction to their edited collection, *Between Hope and Despair: Pedagogy and the Remembrance of Historical Trauma*, Roger I. Simon, Sharon

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17 The museum was updated in 2008 after the trials of McVeigh and Nichols were complete. At that point, museum staff added a large and more centralized exhibit that included substantial coverage of the perpetrators. Stiefmiller explains that, before the trials, in addition to considering the sensitivities of the local audience for the museum, there were also legal limits placed on what the museum could portray about these men, so the update was necessary as it allowed for integration of evidence from the investigation into the exhibits. Additionally, with the passage of time, the museum staff felt more comfortable addressing this aspect of the bombing that was once avoided, and she indicated that more could be included in the future.
Rosenberg, and Claudia Eppert state, “In binding remembrance and pedagogy, we are suggesting that all formations of memory carry implicit and/or explicit assumptions about what is to be remembered, how, by whom, for whom, and with what potential effects” (2). Building on this binding of remembrance and pedagogy, I raise the following questions: How is memory hierarchized? Who deserves to be remembered? And who gets to participate in designing that memory? What stories should be told? And how much (or little) should those stories be controlled by institutional forces? In this chapter, my aim is to revive memory as a canon of rhetoric by systematically laying out what I call a pedagogy of memory. Specifically, this emerging pedagogy of memory is value-driven, thoughtfully utilizing material rhetoric, respectful of personal connections to an event, and constantly evolving. I also suggest how the pedagogy of memory, in its frequent commitment to civic engagement, can inform practices for rhetorical education.

Forgetting as Pedagogical Avoidance

The presence—or lack of presence—of McVeigh and Nichols serves as an initial illustration of the complex and often heavily controlled pedagogy of memory. The design of the OKCNMM both confronts and avoids their memory; it is a space that remembers and forgets. The original design of the museum placed any information about these men in three alcoves labeled “Investigation Story”; for seven years of the museum’s existence, these alcoves were the only parts of the museum that addressed the memory of the perpetrators. The alcoves are entitled “The First Hours,” “The First Days,” and “The First Year.” While the rest of the museum is laid out in such a way that visitors must walk through all of it in a linear and prescribed manner, these alcoves are optional. They are
tucked away, inconspicuous, and barely noticeable. If guests wish to skip them—forget them, perhaps—it would not affect their understanding of the rest of the museum.

The alcoves themselves are small and dark, further minimizing their presence. They feature photos of McVeigh and Nichols, as well as textual panels explaining how the investigation proceeded. Compared to other parts of the museum, these areas are less interactive and less personal. Instead of the approachable, engaging storytelling that is the trademark of the OKCNMM, the tone of the information found in these displays is largely informative, direct, and heavily legal. In “The First Hours” alcove, for instance, a panel reads, “Police smell ammonium nitrate. This is a crime scene. Officials cordon off a 20-block perimeter with yellow tape and mark potential evidence with the same tape. At the end of the investigation, 450 tons of debris will be examined.” Short sentences dominate the text and the details shared are straightforward and lacking in emotion; colors are stated and numbers are given, but little else is addressed. This stands in stark contrast to the emotional and personal nature of the majority of the museum—a space that makes ample use of the stories of victims and survivors, as well as heart wrenching displays of pedestrian objects, like coffee cups and children’s toys, that were removed from the debris. The rhetoric of these alcoves, though, favors logos and makes visitors feel like they are reading a police report. In fact, the text throughout the investigation stories makes these small alcoves feel as if they were designed by the police themselves, enhancing the official tone. The location, design, and content of the “Investigation Story” alcoves presents a clear message: these areas are not necessary for museum guests. They are off the beaten path within the museum, and the displays in the alcoves are not as
immediately engaging as adjacent ones. Put simply, certain memories of the bombing are better off avoided.

This approach is understandable and even necessary as it respects the wishes of those most affected by the bombing (survivors, family members, etc.). At the same time, there is larger cultural significance in terms of what this means for how museums educate the public about traumatic events. When remembering and representing trauma, it is often more comfortable and socially acceptable to educate people about the “feel good” aspects of a tragedy. In the case of Oklahoma City, the “feel good” aspects translate into an intensified focus on what can be learned from the victims’ lives and the helpful, supportive response to the bombing. Similar takes on trauma are observable at various points in the Freedom Center’s focus on freedom and overcoming slavery and the National World War I Museum’s privileging of individual narratives. All of these museums are dealing with “difficult” histories and find ways to negotiate those histories so visitors can leave with some sense of hope and inspiration rather than complete despair. They also must rely more on “feel good” aspects of their respective historical traumas because, of course, they want visitors to come in the first place, and museums that gain reputations for being “depressing” will not attract the same numbers. Though McVeigh and Nichols are inarguably an important part of the history of the Oklahoma City bombing, addressing them in much detail is thought to glorify their actions and disrespect the victims. The OKCNMM’s struggle to educate the public about a particularly painful part of the bombing memory begins to show the complicated nature of the pedagogy of memory that I will address throughout this chapter.
The Site: The Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum

Figure 4.1. The Entrance to the OKCNMM

History and Mission of the Research Site

On the morning of April 19, 1995, the Alfred P. Murrah building was the target of the Oklahoma City bombing. A truck bomb exploded in front of the building, so powerful that it damaged buildings blocks away. The bombing killed 168 people; 19 of the deaths were children under the age of six. 680 more people were injured. At the time it occurred, it was the worst terrorist attack in U.S. history. Following an investigation, the

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18 The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines terrorism as “the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.” McVeigh and Nichols were politically and socially motivated in this attack; they opposed gun control and endorsed a militia movement. In particular, they were motivated by the Waco Siege, when a botched attempt to execute a search warrant resulted in the shooting and burning deaths of 76 Branch Davidians by the FBI. The siege lasted from February 28 to April 19 in 1993. McVeigh and Nichols even planned their attack to coincide with the anniversary of the Waco Siege. The first “chapter” of the museum is entitled “Background on Terrorism,” and the exhibits within put the bombing in a larger context of terrorism in the United States. The OKCNMM is clearly
surviving structure of the Murrah Building was demolished on May 23, 1995. The entire 3.3 acre site eventually became home to the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum (Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum). The outdoor symbolic Memorial was dedicated on April 19, 2000, the fifth anniversary of the bombing, and the Memorial Museum was dedicated on Presidents’ Day, February 19, 2001 (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). Since this site combines a museum and a memorial, it serves as both an educational space for the general public and an explicitly commemorative space for the victims and survivors of the Oklahoma City bombing. Accordingly, the OKCNMM emphasizes that its “top two priorities are remembrance and education” (Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum). These priorities point to why the OKCNMM is a particularly relevant site for an exploration of the pedagogy of memory.

invested in this emphasis on terrorism, perhaps because it makes the city’s ability to rebuild and help one another after the event that much more impressive and inspiring to guests.
The museum’s copyrighted mission statement, prominent on its website and in other publicity materials, furthers this message for visitors: “We come here to remember those who were killed, those who survived, and those changed forever. May all who leave here know the impact of violence. May this memorial offer comfort, peace, strength, hope, and serenity” (Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum). Though this featured mission statement is largely dedicated to the act of remembering and, by association, the memorial, the sub-heading on the website illustrates that remembering is a decidedly more multifaceted act: “The Memorial and Museum are dedicated to educating visitors about the impact of violence, informing about events surrounding the bombing, and inspiring hope and healing through lessons learned by those affected” (Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum). In short, especially by focusing on the “lessons learned,” it is implied that remembering this trauma is educational. In fact, the
state of Oklahoma has recently formalized the educational remembrance of the bombing. Brooke Hessler, in a recent article about her decade long service-learning partnership with OKCNMM, explains that the state mandated in 2010 that students learn about the bombing as part of Oklahoma, U.S. and World History courses. Hessler states, “To live in Oklahoma is to know this story and, to a great extent, the OKCNMM is where or how you learn it” (26). More generally, memory, by its very nature, is pedagogical—by selecting what is remembered and deciding how that memory is represented, citizens are taught lessons about what is most important in history and what can be forgotten. This chapter aims to lay out the pedagogy of memory in a more systematic way. I argue that developing a broader understanding of memory as pedagogical reinvigorates this frequently overlooked canon of rhetoric by making memory integral to rhetorical education.

Figure 4.3. The Field of Empty Chairs Composing Most of the Memorial
Subtle Versus Directive Approaches: Explicating an Initial Pedagogy of Memory

Though the Oklahoma City Memorial, which is free to the public and strikingly composed of a field of symbolic empty chairs (Figure 4.3), receives the most attention from both press and tourists, the museum is impressive in its own right. It is housed in the Journal Record Building, which stood next to the Murrah Building (Figure 4.4). The Journal Record Building still bears scars from the bombing and its aftermath: spray painted on the side of the building is a message from one of the rescue groups: “Team 5. 4-19-95. We search for the truth. We seek justice. The courts require it. The victims cry for it. And GOD demands it!” (Figure 4.5). This message has been preserved and, by its position in between them, it is part of both the museum and the memorial. Visitors to the museum see this message before they see anything else, and it immediately alerts them to several themes that will recur on their visit: 1) they are at the physical site where the
bombing occurred; 2) this attack involved and devastated good and real people; 3) their visit will be largely focused on respectfully remembering victims; and 4) through memory, they are also learning life lessons about concepts like truth and justice. Further focus is given to the proximity of the Journal Record Building to the bombing because one of the museum’s exhibits is a destroyed area of the building that has been preserved. The spray painted message and the exhibited building destruction remind visitors that this is not just a museum. Unlike the Freedom Center or the National World War I Museum, the OKCNMM is on the actual site of disaster and loss. I suggest that even the decision to build the museum at the site of the bombing points toward memory pedagogy—at the OKCNMM, it is a placed-based pedagogy. In other words, proximity to the event is a key factor in how the OKCNMM teaches guests. To stand on this hallowed ground immediately communicates a different message about how trauma should be remembered, as there is a need to be respectful of the location itself while learning about this event. Implied by place-based pedagogy is the idea that just by being there, guests remember the event differently and better learn about the bombing by inhabiting the site it occurred. Guests will presumably be so moved by the physical site of the bombing that the emotional and value-laden lessons promoted throughout the museum—lessons about how remembering this trauma can teach them about overcoming, survival, and helping others—will be more readily accepted.
Like the location, the design of the museum itself is also thoughtful, and heavily rhetorical. Once inside the museum, guests will guide themselves through ten chronological chapters that address aspects of the bombing. The first few chapters explain historical and political context and what was happening around the site before the bombing occurred, offering background on terrorism, the history of the Murrah Building, and recreating a hearing that was taking place when the bomb exploded. The middle chapters explicate various parts of the bombing itself, sharing about the first hours afterwards, survivor experiences during the bombing, and the world’s reaction, among other topics. Finally, the last few chapters deal with the aftermath of the event, particularly how the funerals and mourning affected the community and how Oklahoma City rebuilt and recovered. While being at the site itself provides one avenue for remembering, which is a more subtle pedagogy, I view the highly structured chronological design of the museum as a more directive pedagogical approach to walk
visitors through the many facets of this event. A place-based pedagogy is combined with more heavy-handed instruction, focusing on particular details of the bombing and representing them in a chronological way.

This ongoing opposition between subtlety and direction is observable throughout the pedagogy of memory. In this chapter, I explicate an initial pedagogy, one I hope others will build upon, and I consider the embedded conflicts within it. First, epideictic rhetoric—by which I mean rhetoric that praises and blames—is central to the pedagogy of memory, as values are promoted and denied through acts of remembrance. Though such values can build toward civic engagement, the frequently didactic nature of value-driven education can also suppress choices and voices. Second, material rhetoric frequently shapes the pedagogy of memory. Artifacts and objects, often in isolation from any alphabetic text, are used to communicate particular messages, ideas, and values. Thoughtfully utilized material rhetoric as a pedagogical strategy has the potential to offer a more nuanced and non-narrative representation of memory, undercutting linear and influential metanarratives and also suggesting new avenues for public dialogue. Finally, the pedagogy of memory must be respectful and evolving. Specifically, those who are closest to a historic trauma must somehow be offered a role in educating others about it; an institution cannot claim ownership of memory when it has affected many individuals. This chapter explores each of these aspects of memory in detail, and I further argue that understanding memory pedagogically can contribute to both reviving it as a canon and improving rhetorical education.

**Rhetorical Takes on Memory**
Discussions of memory emerge in various ways in the field of rhetoric and beyond it. In this chapter, I bring together some of this varied scholarship on memory. I pull from the fields of memory studies and trauma studies; discuss memory as it connects to notions of rhetorical collectivity that were outlined in the previous chapter; and encourage the expansion of classical conceptions of the canon of memory within rhetorical theory.

In the article “The Future of Forgetting: Rhetoric, Memory, Affect,” Jeff Pruchnic and Kim Lacey state, “Of the five traditional canons of rhetoric…memory has by far suffered the largest scholarly decline over the intervening centuries” (472). Ramus famously reduced the canons of rhetoric to style and delivery, relegating memory, which was regarded as a “treasure-house of the ideas” in Rhetorica Ad Herennium, to the status of simple memorization. This trend continued through the following centuries, and memory was most frequently configured as a collection of mnemonic devices. In 20th century scholarship, memory is largely treated as a historical interest, illustrating the “scholarly decline” surrounding this canon (Pruchnic and Lacey 472-74). Pruchnic and Lacey ultimately argue for an expanded understanding of rhetorical memory, akin to the ancient Greek concept of Mnemosyne in which “memory was consistently invoked to both assay the divides and bridges between human interiority and cultural exteriority as well as to delineate the spiritual or intellectual capacities of humans from their affective and biological facilities” (474). They see value in this expansion of memory as it allows for better understanding of the present-day interactions between subjectivity, sociality, and persuasion (474). I answer Pruchnic’s and Lacey’s call for an expansion of memory,
though I want to move in a different direction and suggest that rhetoricians should approach the canon as central to rhetorical education in a decidedly modern way. Though memorization of texts was classically part of regimes of rhetorical education, I want to expand memory’s relevance in the 21st century by investigating how it provides the basis for civic discourse and engagement.

Memory as the Basis for Rhetorical Processes

Though Pruchnic and Lacey claim that memory has been overlooked in contemporary rhetorical theory, and I agree that it has received little direct attention, I also see glimmers of memory in the work of major theorists and critics. Memory implicitly yet powerfully shapes rhetorical theory in the 20th and 21st centuries. In *A Rhetoric of Motives* Kenneth Burke explains that belonging is a specialized rhetorical activity that makes one participate in a specific social or economic class (28). I view Burke’s conception of rhetorical belonging as making a connection to memory and how scholars today might refigure the canon in their work. This sense of belonging, and the larger connected act of identification, will likely be, at least in part, the work of memory. It is often common memories—of nation, of group, of class, of family—that allow for identification and then belonging to occur. Memory is far from its technical, mnemonic roots as it provides content and experience on which to base Burkean identification. Identifications will almost always draw from some common pool of memories—be it references to a place, an event within a family, or a nationally significant memory, like a war, an election, or, in Oklahoma City, a traumatic act of terrorism. This also points to one way memory can contribute to rhetorical education; it can provide a base for civic awareness, engagement, and dialogue. Burke claims that wherever there is persuasion,
there is rhetoric, and wherever there is persuasion, there is meaning. I would add that wherever there is meaning, there is also memory. Through identification, which draws heavily on memory, citizens move toward consubstantiality. However, since identification exists, so must division. Cooperative acts can come together to create a destructive act, like war. But it is not hopeless, as “men of good will” can break sinister identifications. Throughout his large body of work, one of Burke’s main goals is encouraging people to use rhetoric to create a sense of “good will,” leading to positive identifications and breaking the negative ones. This, too, involves memory in an important way. Especially in Burke’s use of the example of the Nazis, it is clear that negative identifications can play a role in creating traumatic memory.

Wayne Booth’s theory of the rhetorical “process of systematic assent” (104), reviewed in Chapter Three, suggests that people must start a dialogue from where they agree, and they have no good reason to doubt. I suggest that Booth’s proposed spaces of agreement (or disagreement) are oftentimes based on memory. The role of memory especially stands out in Booth’s work because nearly all of his examples relate to history—war is a common problem for Booth, one that we can all work to eradicate, and our assent about this common problem is based on memories of past wars. Though wars can cause debates in terms of the necessity, among other things, most “reasonable people” (to use Booth’s term) can agree that war is unpleasant and unfortunate. For Booth, memory as a canon might be aligned with something in the realm of invention. He believes Americans draw from a set of common memories when they use rhetoric; their collective memories, about the hardships of war and otherwise, act as commonplaces or topoi for rhetorical plans, so memory is refigured as linked to invention.
The Rhetoric of Memory: Creation, Mediation, and Display

While Booth and Burke only hint at issues of memory, recent work by Carole Blair, Gregory Clark, and S. Michael Halloran directly addresses how rhetoric creates, displays, and mediates various kinds of memory. Blair’s 2006 essay “Communication as Collective Memory” theorizes how memory in general, and collective memory in particular, are integral to communication. The concept of collective memory is generally traced back to Maurice Hawlbachs, a French sociologist who wrote the book *Collective Memory* in 1950. In this book, Hawlbachs argues that there is memory outside of the individual; groups within a society create their own frameworks for memory, and an individual’s understanding of the past is thus situated in and influenced by this larger group-based memory and consciousness. He defines collective memory as a social process shaped by groups of people, large and small, and distinct from history, which aims for a more universal and objective truth. Scholars in various disciplines have built on Hawlbachs definition of collective memory throughout the late 20th and early 21st century. In fact, it is now fairly commonplace to understand memory as socially constructed by communities, and this is precisely how Blair situates her essay. Blair describes the memory techniques of Greeks and Romans, who established complex systems of memorization so they could speak without using notes. Ancient public

19 Pierre Nora, a French historian, is also an important figure in what is commonly called the scholarly “memory boom” in the late 20th and early 21st century scholarship. He is well known for his comprehensive, multi-volume study of national memory in France, entitled *Les Lieux de Memoire*. (Frequently translated as *Sites of Memory*.) In the 1989 article, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,” Nora explains that modern “sites of memory,” artifacts or places that attempt to “crystallize” memory, exist because there are no longer “real environments of memory.” Nora is concerned that what he perceives as “real” collective memory, firmly based in actual societies, cultures, and groups of people, is under “conquest” and “eradicated” by sites of memory, which tend to force memory into a neater, more organized, and less complex “history.”
speakers were instructed to associate ideas they wished to recall with specific geographic images (physical landscape, buildings, etc.) so they could remember ideas concretely and in sequence. This particular practice fell into disuse as memory aids, such as the printing press, teleprompters, and other technology, emerged, but Blair explains that there is renewed interest in how communities build memory, which Blair views as a process of collective memory, aligning with Hawlbach’s original definition. My research shows museums as clearly invested in shaping collective memory, and this renewed interest in collective memory in the field of rhetoric and throughout the humanities makes developing an awareness of pedagogy that much more necessary—scholars and teachers need to consider the ways memory is communicative and instructive about historical events and culture.

In some ways, Blair’s essay begins to show the pedagogical aspects of memory, though she does not call them that. Specifically, she articulates six ways that communication can be said to function as collective memory, and two of them in particular connect with pedagogy. First, she explains that communication depends on “material support and technologies” to send messages—that might be pen and paper, a computer, or a piece of art, to name a few. These material aspects of communication shape collective memory by including certain ideas/events and leaving out others. At the same time, since communication often depends on material support, only certain messages are preserved, and others are lost. Directly related to the notion of materiality are the power struggles within communication. In culture generally, and specifically at historical museums like those I study, there is competition over how to represent the past.
Blair’s discussion of the material aspects of communication, as well as her observations about how power is intertwined with communication and memory, directly shape my own arguments about the pedagogy of memory.

Illustrating some of Blair’s points about how communication is connected to collective memory, Clark and Halloran examine the rhetorical function of well-known national historical sites. In the essay “National Park Landscapes and the Rhetorical Display of a Civic Religion,” co-authored by Clark and Halloran, they point out that national parks and monuments, particularly since the 19th century, have been designed so Americans can learn who they are as a nation; Halloran and Clark explain that the rhetorics of display at work in national parks, such as established trails, plaques, park literature, and even the space itself, unite Americans as a “congregation” of citizens. They conclude by directly connecting this discussion to collective memory and epideictic rhetoric. They cite Barbie Zelizer, who asserts that “collective memory is usable” because it is “always a means to something else” having to do with the present social order (153). In this way, collective memory can act as epideictic because it asserts value commitments in the interest of strengthening adherence to those values. The role of the epideictic in the pedagogy of memory is paramount, and it is observable in nearly every exhibit at the OKCNMM, which I will discuss throughout this chapter.

Clark’s extended and related work in Rhetorical Landscapes makes this connection to the epideictic even stronger, as he argues that Burkean identification occurs powerfully through experiences as well as words. Clark discusses American places that are significant to national history and memory, reading each through the lens of Burke’s
work. For instance, New York City becomes emblematic of Burke’s “scene” since many Americans visit and then aim to make themselves over in a New York image. Yellowstone is explained as a “place of transcendence,” since Americans come together in a place where none of them live, transcending their individual differences and uniting as a collective. Memory is reinvigorated here, as all the places both Clark and Halloran discuss are significant memorial sites in some form, and it is due to their significance in citizens’ memories that differences are potentially overlooked (or at least temporarily put aside), and collective memories are created.

**What Does A Pedagogy of Memory Add to Rhetorical Theory?**

Though the work of these rhetorical theorists makes headway into expanding memory and renewing its usefulness for the 21st century, this scholarship can also easily be criticized as overly general and somewhat romanticized. Blair, Halloran, and Clark do not thoroughly discuss the cultural assumptions implicit in collective memory or consider how difference is celebrated and/or elided in such presentations of the collective. I hope to get at these difficult issues by, as Simon, Rosenberg, and Eppert suggest, “binding remembrance and pedagogy.” Through the lens of pedagogy, then, I can interrogate memory more critically. Recall my guiding questions from the chapter’s introduction: How is memory hierarchized? Who deserves to be remembered? And who gets to participate in designing that memory? What stories should be told? And how much (or little) should those stories be controlled by institutional forces? My study of the OKCNMM examines particular moves made to educate people about what and how to remember. Paying attention to these moves illuminates how certain parts of history become more integral and accepted in collective memory while other aspects are
neglected or pushed aside. At the same time, since collective memory is frequently linked to the development of citizenship, and as my previous chapters have indicated this is particularly true at history museums, laying out a beginning pedagogy of memory offers ways to make rhetorical education relevant for citizens while pointing toward problems with certain approaches, assumptions, and ideologies.

The Pedagogy of Memory and Epideictic Rhetoric: Values, Control, and Response

Teaching Values Through Memory

Figure 4.6. Entering the Children’s Area

A place in museums when pedagogy is often the most obvious, and arguably heavy handed, are the sections dedicated to the younger audience members. The OKCNMM has a substantial area designed for children (Figure 4.6). Roller, Director of Education and Research, explains that in terms of visiting school groups, the museum is recommended for grades five and up, and middle schoolers are probably at the “best
Along those lines, a book published by OKCNMM entitled *A Museum Walking Tour* states: “Because many of the atrocities documented in the main section of the Museum might be considered inappropriate for young children, this [children’s] area is set aside for them.” In fact, as soon as plans emerged for designing the museum, creating a children’s area was on the agenda precisely so the needs of the youngest audience members could be met. Nineteen infants and children were killed in the bombing, most of them from the daycare in the Murrah Building. The committee who designed the Memorial Museum felt strongly that the memory of these children needed to be honored at the museum and memorial. As explained in *A Museum Walking Tour*, “The brutality of the criminals and the innocence of their victims caught the attention of the world. For that reason, a special section of the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum is dedicated to children.”

Beyond honoring the memory of these young victims, there was a desire for the museum to connect with and educate even the youngest guests. The Memorial Mission Statement, adopted on March 26, 1996, states: “The Memorial Complex should have a component designed to meet kids on ‘their level,’ physically and cognitively. The component should help children learn and feel something they can carry with them as they grow and should offer them assurance that the world holds far more good than bad” (my emphasis). This final piece of the mission statement demonstrates memory’s strong connection to epideictic rhetoric. Lawrence Prelli claims in his introduction to the *Rhetorics of Display* collection, that rhetorics of public memory, like those discussed in the work of Clark, Halloran, and Blair, are also inherently epideictic. Rhetorics of public memory—in films, speeches, memorials, or museums—are about remembrance and
forgetting and thus manifest assumptions about what is worth remembering; what deserves praise or condemnation and acknowledgement or disparagement. This is observable in my introductory discussion of how the OKCNMM has avoided representing the perpetrators of the bombing. The placement of the “Investigation Story” alcoves, as well as their *logos*-driven and text-heavy rhetoric, communicate to guests that the perpetrators are not an aspect of history that is worth remembering in much detail. Assumptions about what is “worth remembering”—and the values connected—are even more explicit in the Children’s Area. Prelli emphasizes that at any historical or memorial site particular values are claimed and espoused while others are rejected. In short, memory is never equitable and is always hierarchized, a characteristic that powerfully affects pedagogy.

Cynthia Sheard, in her article “The Public Value of Epideictic Rhetoric,” explains more explicitly how the epideictic can and indeed *should* influence pedagogy, particularly as it relates to public participation and discourse. Overall, Sheard argues for reclaiming epideictic rhetoric, long dismissed as “mere rhetoric,” as civically necessary and powerful. She states:

Although epideictic rhetoric can (the rhetoric we usually associate with ceremony and ritual) can seem “artificial,” “contrived,” or “irrelevant” (Atkins 629)—in short “empty rhetoric”—when viewed from afar…it can be an instrument for addressing public and private “dis-ease,” discomfort with the status quo. Our students at all levels of literacy development need
to be taught to appreciate epideictic rhetoric, to understand the ways it invokes shared values as a basis for promoting a vision of what could be…we ought to be teaching them [students] to appreciate the relationships between words and deeds. One place we might begin is the ways in which such relationships exist in epideictic rhetoric. (766-67)

Sheard articulates here that epideictic rhetoric, though dismissed by many rhetoricians throughout history, can actually be integral to rhetorical education. It can help people understand and even unite around shared values and ideas. Even more, it can move from words to actions—that is, it can go from “mere rhetoric” to making a change in the world. Certainly well-known speeches by orators like Martin Luther King can be pointed to as examples. And, arguably, so can the epideictic rhetorical work taking place at museums like the OKCNMM. This is where I see this aspect of the pedagogy of memory (epideictic rhetoric) as promising for rhetorical education in general. But I also want to address the ways in which epideictic rhetoric can be institutionally controlled, as well as aligning with more “positive” values while avoiding those that are considered more “difficult” or “negative.” In summary, I suggest that epideictic is an integral part of the pedagogy of memory and holds promise for rhetorical education, but there are complications to the epideictic as it relates to civic participation; while Sheard’s endorsement of epideictic rhetoric and its “public value” is largely glowing, I view it with a bit more caution and analyze its use in shades of grey.

According to the Mission Statement cited above, in the Children’s Area, remembering the bombing is associated with promoting positive, optimistic values; namely, the Children’s Area paints a version of the bombing itself and the future that is
full of helpful people and general kindness among humans. The Mission Statement asserts that children will “learn” and “feel something,” which will ultimately teach them about the good in the world, even if it is not precisely clear how such value lessons will be transmitted. Though certainly it is easy to question or criticize the idealistic nature of the Mission Statement, that is not my goal in sharing it. Instead, I want to focus on the embedded and pervasive notion that to remember is to learn—to learn heartening, hopeful values in this particular example. My interviews with museum staff members illustrate that these value-laden pedagogical goals remain every bit as present at the OKCNMM today as they were in 1996. When discussing the messages of the museum, Roller explains that they want to encourage kids in to make good choices. She sees the museum as promoting “personal responsibility” and “treat[ing] one another with respect.” She emphasizes, “There was violence in this event, yes, but there was also help.” Though the values and lessons that Roller points to—responsibility, respect, helping others—are all common ones to teach children, I also see undeniable danger in highlighting these “feel good” aspects of the bombing while essentially ignoring some of more difficult to communicate and understand parts. This is epideictic rhetoric at work promoting “good” values in association with the bombing. Even more, the intense institutional control over the memory of the bombing becomes clear and raises further questions. In focusing on the Children’s Area of the museum, I argue that the pedagogy of memory is value-laden and moral driven, and I discuss how this aspect of pedagogy is both productive and problematic.

Institutional Control of Memory and Lessons Learned
Figure 4.7. Instructions for Experiencing the Children’s Area

The introductory placard of the Children’s Area immediately illustrates the didactic nature of this particular section (Figure 4.7). After laying out the Memorial Mission Statement, the placard lists what children can do in this area:

Hey Kids!

- Read the big book “A Day to Remember”
- Watch the video about police, fire, doctor, and teacher helpers
- Touch a computer screen to learn about the meaning of the Memorial grounds
- See the pennies donated by children around the country

When you leave, know that there are many more good people than bad people around you.

You are important to the success of our Mission on the Coldwater City Federal Memorial.
After laying out this suggested method for navigating the Children’s Area, the placard emphasizes what children should learn, as well: “When you leave, know that there are many more good people than bad people around you.” From the introductory signage alone, it is understood that The Children’s Area will primarily focus on positive aspects of the bombing, like the help received from near and far and the beautiful Memorial that eventually emerged. This focus is appropriate, of course, as this part of the museum is designed to meet the needs of very young visitors; it would be difficult for children to understand the violence and trauma wrought by the bomb in a cognitively appropriate way. At the same time, the directive quality of it—the fact that a sign instructs children about how they should experience the museum, in terms of both the order and the lessons learned—indicates that the pedagogy of memory in this space is heavily controlled. Children are not supposed to decide what they should do or how they should feel.

Memory is without a doubt important for children but, at the same time, memory must be controlled and presented in a very specific way so that the proper, appropriate lessons are learned. While freedom and choice is often touted in today’s museums, memory remains highly controlled. This heavy-handed direction manifests in many museums and not just in areas for children. A similar tension is observable at The National World War I Museum, where collective rhetorical strategies are abundant, but the metanarrative looms large. Or at the Freedom Center, where an audio-visual tour forcefully demands guests immerse themselves in the daily life of a slave to learn about the historical realities of slavery. At the OKCNMM, guests, especially such young ones, cannot be entirely trusted.
to leave with the “right” perspective, so when epideictic rhetoric is used, guests’
experience of it is guided with a heavy hand. Though I view memory’s connection to
particular values and lessons as presenting an exciting opportunity for modernizing
rhetorical education since people are exposed to opportunities that can lead them to civic
engagement, a struggle within this pedagogical approach is the level of control exerted
over individuals. People can certainly engage with new issues and ideas, but only the
ones selected and molded by the institution.

Figure 4.8. *A Day to Remember* Children’s Book

As is hinted at in the introductory placard, since the experience of what children
remember is controlled, so are the values and lessons they learn from this memory. The
placard reminds them of the “good people” overpowering the “bad people” in the world,
and this is a theme that continues throughout the Children’s Area and much of the
museum. For instance, one of beginning activities involves reading a large children’s book about the bombing entitled *A Day to Remember* (Figure 4.8). The pages of the book are about three-feet long and two-feet across, and they are made of a sturdy, thick plastic, durable and friendly for tiny hands. Even turning these solid pages, so different from a typical book, can be an exciting and engaging task for children. To further their engagement, the pages of the book are full of colorful pictures that illustrate the bombing and its aftermath, including pages about building the memorial. Finally, certain words in the book are also accompanied by pictures; for example, next to the word “truck,” there is a small picture of a yellow truck, similar to the one that held the bomb. These pictures allow young children to participate in reading the book even if they have not yet learned how to read alphabetic text. The obvious goal of this book is to make these young visitors more familiar with the Oklahoma City Bombing, an event that happened well before they were born, and they are familiarized in a decidedly child-friendly way. Though one goal to communicate this basic historical information—what would be commonly considered “the facts”—epideictic rhetoric also shapes the pedagogy of memory in this book to provide a value-based education.

*Teaching Good Memories and Marginalizing the “Bad”*
In *A Day to Remember*, memory of the bombing, and how Oklahoma City recovered, are linked to positive values, and remembering itself is assumed to be an act of self-improvement and education. In other words, through memory, young visitors can become better citizens. For example, page five of the book depicts the actual bombing (Figure 4.9). The Murrah Building is destroyed and smoking, cars are smashed, and small fires pop up in various places. In the middle of this chaos, though, there is a very special tree.\(^{20}\) The text on page five reads: “Other buildings near the Murrah Building were also damaged. Windows were broken, and walls fell down. Glass was everywhere. Cars parked near the building were on fire. Right in the middle of the burning cars there was a tree that did not fall down. The tree was badly burned, but it stood—**it SURVIVED!**”

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\(^{20}\) The “Survivor Tree” has a powerful presence at the OKCNMM, referenced in various exhibits and promotional materials. It is also part of the Memorial. Memorial tours meet under this tree and learn its story and significance.
Though this page does offer basic information about the bombing itself, those details are limited; the building is named, and the rest of the details are non-specific and could be about nearly any destructive event. It is assumed that children should not know more than the most basic information, and perhaps their parents will not want them to. The embrace of the epideictic as part of the pedagogy of memory, particularly as it promotes positive life lessons and values, also illustrates a cultural avoidance of the unpleasant and less easily digestible aspects of a traumatic event. Museums struggle to engage topics like violence and death in a sustained way because they have concerns that this may only depress visitors and deter them from coming at all. Such concern is not misplaced since American culture generally evades or minimizes such difficult topics in educational, as well as social, scenarios. At the OKCNMM, starting a dialogue about the very real loss and violence of this event and what it can mean for children as they become adults is shunned in favor of emphasizing the survival and growth of Oklahoma City—important lessons, to be sure, but ones that largely avoid complexity.

The avoidance of complexity that sometimes accompanies epideictic rhetoric can hinder the pedagogy of memory. Rather than spending much time exploring or encouraging a dialogue about the event itself, the general values people should take away are emphasized instead. Epideictic rhetoric subsumes historical facts. In this case, children should learn just a small amount about the bombing so they understand that hope continues to grow (literally) in dire circumstances. Rather than “dwelling” on the tragedy, epideictic rhetoric is adopted, as the tree is celebrated and praised. The epideictic becomes an easy substitution for a more detailed and difficult exploration of the causes of
the bombing, the lives that were lost, and what a tragedy like this one means for the future of the country. While the connection to values and morals could prove promising for the future of rhetorical education since the development of citizenship is encouraged, there is a real danger of losing track of history and shutting down potentially productive dialogue before it can even begin. A historical event can easily become just an excuse to train people about how they should see the world. So, not only does the centrality of epideictic rhetoric in the pedagogy of memory pose risks in terms of institutional control, there is the additional risk of simplifying the event itself into nothing more than a few catchy, positive words and further marginalizing the discussion of taboo topics, like death, in American culture. Possibilities for dialogue about difficult topics are dismissed in favor of a heavy-handed, value-driven education. The way that memory is taught in the Children’s Area at the OKCNMM is a variation of the way that slavery is overlooked at the Underground Railroad Freedom Center. Just as the introductory film at that museum focuses on the abstract ideas of “freedom” and “unfreedom,” the Children’s Area is most concerned with the young guests taking away “the moral of the story,” which is, as articulated in the museum’s mission statement: “the world holds far more good than bad.”
Beyond just the page that focuses on the Survivor Tree, the majority of this book focuses on the good that can arise from a tragedy; the trauma itself is elided to offer a hopeful perspective about overcoming and growth, just as the tree illustrates. In fact, the book concludes with pages about the memorial, emphasizing the beautiful re-building that has taken place after the bombing (Figure 4.10). Thus, through memory, children can learn about the importance of survival, overcoming, and hope, to name just few key values emphasized. Of course, these are the museum’s versions of such values, which further complicates the pedagogy. The versions of survival, overcoming, and hope purported demand visitors pull themselves up by their bootstraps in even the toughest of times. If Oklahoma City “survived” and “overcame” a tragedy as severe as the bombing,
then what can possibly limit visitors in their own lives? A very precise notion of
goodness emerges through the epideictic rhetoric present at the OKCNMM, and a
standard of morality is thrust on the public, asking them to live up to this standard in their
personal lives, as well. An institutional terministic screen influences the pedagogy of
memory. Even in the seemingly neutral lessons taught to children about commonly
accepted “good” values, institutional biases about morality control what is taught and
how it is taught.

*Adding Interaction and Response to the Pedagogy of Memory*

![Figure 4.11. Drawing Station](image)

Once children have learned about the bombing, largely through understanding the
positive values that can be extrapolated from the tragedy, another pedagogical memory
move reveals itself. A concluding station in the Children’s Area is called “Drawing from
What We Feel” (Figures 4.11 and 4.12). The background of this area is a blue crayon, and there is a small desk and chair for a child to sit in as he draws on a computer. Children use the mouse and keyboard to draw a simple picture, and then they have the opportunity to email it to themselves. Surrounding this computer station are other pieces of art by children. Some are depictions of the bombing, but most are positive images like suns, flowers, and outlined hands (representing helping hands); others still are letters. In a child’s handwriting, one reads: “Dear Children, I hope you feel better from the bomb!!!” This activity is similar to the “Build a Memorial” activity at the National World War One Museum, though simpler in its design and use of technology. A notable difference at this exhibit, though, is that it encourages individual rather than collective exploration of the historical event. While the tables at the National World War One Museum are massive and allow for multiple people to work together, this station is meant for one child to express herself. There is one chair, one small screen, one keyboard, and one mouse. Though guests are interacting with the historical knowledge they have formed in the Children’s Area, they are not interacting with one another or starting a dialogue. The interactive pedagogy in this exhibit is somewhat limited since the focus is more on self-expression as a way of learning and less on dialogue. Despite this limited version of interaction, a powerful pedagogical suggestion remains: to remember, one must also respond. Visitors are asked to interact with a historical event and put their own mark on it. Another pedagogical aspect of memory, then, is that it demands participation and response. For memory to operate in such a way that learning occurs, the expectation is that individuals interact with the subject of the memory. The turn toward response and interaction here moves away from the control exerted in other parts of The Children’s
Area. Though memory is still strongly connected to values—the images surrounding the
art station echo the museum’s brand of overcoming, hope, and help—the young guests
now have a choice about how they want to remember the event and represent the lessons
that go along with it. This element of choice and interaction in the pedagogy of memory
is key for updating rhetorical education; citizens must choose which issues or ideas they
want to engage, and they must be asked to respond to them rather than just passively
learn about them. Despite the power of self-expression, particularly for children, I also
suggest that the most effective pedagogy of memory must move from the individually-
situated notions of participation to more interactive, dialogue-based ones.

![Featured Artwork at the Drawing Station](image)

**Figure 4.12.** Featured Artwork at the Drawing Station

**The Pedagogy of Memory as Material: The Use of Objects and Photos to Disrupt
Narrative Structure**
“Respecting” Memory through Learning by Example

One of the most powerful sections of the OKCNMM is the Gallery of Honor. The website describes this area as “breathtaking.” In terms of the design, it breaks from the rest of the museum because once guests enter the space, they no longer feel like they are in a museum at all. While the rest of the museum is filled with text, video, audio, artifacts, and photos, this area is sparse by comparison. It is a round room; the floor is made of smooth black granite; the lighting is soft; and the walls are painted a muted brown tone. There is a grey bench in the center of the gallery, designed in such a way that it is connected to the ceiling above and the floor below and allows visitors to take in the entire space while sitting on it. Clear boxes cover the walls, and no other décor is present. There are 168 boxes; one for each of the victims. Inside each box is a photograph of the victim along with a representative personal object. Victims’ families donated the photos and the objects. Underneath the boxes are bronze plaques that list all the victims’ names. Those engraved plaques are the only words that are part of the actual exhibit. It is a largely silent space as visitors sit on the bench and take it all in or walk around the room and peer in the boxes, studying the photos and objects.

Visually, this gallery is comparable to a mausoleum. The clear are boxes are reminiscent of ones that display urns, and the bronze plaques listing names of the victims are similar to those used on many memorials. The bench is a place for visitors to sit and reflect on this loss and pay their respects, while the muted wall and floor colors paired with soft lighting keep the attention focused on the visual display for each victim. The

21 The sacred feeling cultivated in this space made me reluctant to take photos, so there are none included in this section. On the OKCNMM website, you can find a video tour of this gallery.
tone created is one of reverence and respect for those lost. In sum, within the museum, this is the space most like a memorial. The placard that introduces the room furthers this memorial purpose. It reads, in bold capital letters, “We come here to remember those who were killed.” These words emphasize the central purpose of the room: remembering. This simple sentence is also the first line of the OKCNMM’s mission statement, highlighting its importance. The centrality of memory in the Gallery of Honor at first makes the educational purpose of this room less obvious than the Children’s Area. However, the pedagogy of memory continues even in this space that appears removed from educational imperatives. The paragraphs beneath the bold headline on the introductory placard go more in depth about the methods and purpose of this gallery, and they indicate the underlying pedagogy:

Every person who was killed leaves behind family and friends who remember the uniqueness of their loved one. It is that individuality this gallery hopes to recognize. The artifact in each case—chosen by the family—provides a sense of the lives of their loved ones. It is a gallery of hobbies and passions, hopes and dreams. It is a gallery of everyday people and extraordinary loss. It is a gallery of honor.

From these words, a secondary purpose of this gallery emerges: learning by the simultaneously ordinary and unique examples of those who were lost.

Throughout the museum, visitors have read, heard, and seen the victims’ stories. In this Gallery of Honor, these individuals are now held up as examples to learn from. To remember them is also to learn from the lives they lived—the lives that were cut short.
For instance, Pamela Argos’s story is told in bits and pieces throughout the museum, as so many of the victims’ stories are. You can look her up on computer stations located at various places in the museum that are designed share victims’ stories, and some of her personal belongings, like her “trademark” black hat, are part of exhibits. Argo was a data entry specialist at Presbyterian Hospital, and she was at the Murrah Building that morning for a 9:00 appointment at the Social Security Administration. She is described in museum media, both at the museum and on their website, as “full of life.” Specifically, she delivered meals to homebound people, volunteered with charities like the AIDS Foundation and Feed the Children, and had recently planted 75 gladiola bulbs in her yard. Her individualistic sense of style is also exhibited: her love of black hats, of which she owned many, is mentioned multiple times in exhibits about victims, as is the fact that she favored red lipstick. In addition to one her hats being displayed at a different point in the museum, a tube of red lipstick is the artifact displayed alongside her photo in the Gallery of Honor. Her photograph is a rather glamorous one in which she, unsurprisingly, wears both a stylish black hat and a red shade of lipstick. The various rhetoric surrounding Argo’s life portrays her as a vibrant, dedicated woman. A woman who worked hard in her career, enjoyed her time with family, and helped others through her charitable spirit. She is also represented as a paragon of individuality, embracing a fun, quirky style. Such representation of a victim is without a doubt idealistic, but this is common in rhetoric surrounding deceased individuals, particularly those who died young and tragically. To represent a victim in a manner that is somehow less positive would be considered disrespectful and dismissive.
By representing Argo in this idealized yet generic way—by selecting these particular characteristics of her personality and aspects of her life as the ones to remember—the museum suggests that these are virtues worth emulating. Epideictic rhetoric is still powerfully employed in this gallery and in a more classical way than in the Children’s Area since the overarching goal is to pay homage to the victims of the tragedy. Moreover, their lives are seen as models and used to promote particular lessons in how to live one’s life. Most of these lessons, as seen in Argo’s case, demonstrate that the victim “lived his/her life to the fullest” and was generally a “good” person. Embedded in these virtuous life lessons is a request: since the victims of the bombing can no longer live their active, fulfilling lives, the visitors must. Though focused on individual stories and characteristics rather than operating metaphorically, the message in this gallery is not unlike the one that visitors will take away from the Survivor’s Tree. They learn they must work to overcome tragedy and hardship in their own lives. In fact, this is part and parcel of properly and fully remembering the victims of the bombing.

**Materiality Enhances Memory**

There is new twist to the epideictic rhetoric and the accompanying pedagogy used in the Gallery of Honor, though. By simply displaying a photograph and a family-selected representative object, this gallery demonstrates the power of pedestrian objects. Through material rhetoric, the tragedy is made to feel more real and relatable to visitors. Specifically, this gallery reminds them that the victims had families, worked jobs, and had hobbies. Pam Argo wore red lipstick and black hats, information that makes her both unique and utterly normal. The rhetorical effect of the pedestrian nature of this gallery is
that visitors receive the message that this could have been anyone—including themselves or their loved ones. The use of material rhetoric to communicate the ordinary, everyday nature of trauma is an increasingly popular and powerful method of remembrance and education in history museums. When the trauma is too much (too many lives lost, too senseless, etc.) to cognitively process, using everyday objects or artifacts to communicate the enormity of it is a common pedagogical approach. A famous example is the National Holocaust Museum in D.C., where a massive pile of shoes, among other pedestrian object displays, represents the incomprehensible loss of lives. Such material rhetoric suggests that to remember and learn about a historical event fully, people must understand more than just the “big picture.” They must see these individualized, real, and ordinary pieces of the experience. Representation needs to go beyond just the textual narrative of a person’s life; seeing an object and/or photo is assumed to increase the educational engagement and understanding. For the OKCNMM, it is through personal belongings and photos that guests are best able to understand who the victims “really” were, albeit in a limited fashion.

The strong role of material rhetoric in the pedagogy of memory is, in a way, quite predictable since museums originated as sites that collect artifacts. However, in historian Steven Conn’s recent book Do Museums Still Need Objects?, he observes that objects have become less and less prominent in museums over the course of 20th century and into the 21st. He explains, “Certainly by the second quarter of the 20th century at least, that faith in the ability of objects to communicate meaning easily and transparently had eroded further. By the 1920s and 30s increasing numbers of museums were adding educational programming to their activities and hiring educational specialists to provide it
to the public. The objects needed help” (25-26). Conn generally observes a “disappearance of objects” and a “rise of other kinds of activities (educational, recreational, commercial)” in modern museums (26). While there are clearly many “other kinds of activities” taking place within the OKCNMM to accompany the objects, the Gallery of Honor speaks to the power that objects still hold in museums, which has implications for rhetorical education more broadly. Blair’s work is once again key to consider in relation to the role of artifacts and objects since she theorizes rhetoric in a way that centralizes materiality. In “Contemporary U.S. Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric’s Materiality,” Blair suggests that materiality is just as integral to rhetoric’s definition as elements of setting or context. She turns to memorials, explaining that they are unquestionably rhetorical, though not spoken or written; their existence as typically permanent structures built from durable materials makes them more rhetorical, at least in terms of their sustainability, than books, films, art, etc. Because a memorial has a constant material presence, it cannot be put away or fall silent like a text or oral speech. Memorials thus prove revealing for an inquiry into rhetoric’s materiality, and Blair argues that it is this materiality that should be at the core of any definition of rhetoric.

Despite Conn’s explanation of the disappearance of objects from museums, I argue that, especially in cooperation with other educational approaches and rhetorical forms throughout a museum, objects can still serve as a productive, challenging, and thoughtful part of museum education.

I thus view materiality as central to the pedagogy of memory. What can be gleaned from The Gallery of Honor is how material rhetoric can disrupt the narrative and linear structure of history and offer new possibilities for communication and interaction.
among citizens. These personal belongings and photos are not linked to one another nor given any sort of context beyond what the introductory placard to the gallery provides. Yet the boxes combined create powerful, disjointed, non-narratives that offer a sense of history as complex and messy, tragic yet ordinary. Such non-linearity and juxtapositions are productive content in that they push visitors to engage with structures of communication that are less familiar and often harder to make sense of. These forms of rhetoric require substantial intellectual work and engagement from the audience—they must decide what the objects mean and how they fit (or do not fit) into the larger narrative structure and value commitments of the museum. By challenging visitors to understand a less familiar narrative structure, as well as asking them to engage with modes of communication that are non-alphabetic, the OKCNMM is also modeling a modernized approach to rhetorical education for the 21st century. Visitors learn about templates and modes of discourse that have relevancy far beyond their museum visit.

**The Pedagogy of Memory as Respectful and Evolving: The Roles of Survivors, Responders, and Family Members**

*Collaboration to Build and Teach Memory*

The OKCNMM stands out from the other museums I’ve discussed in this dissertation because the exhibits actually share information about the process of creating both the memorial and the museum. Hinted at by the book in the Children’s Area, the planning and eventual opening of both the outdoor symbolic memorial and the museum itself are very much viewed as part of what visitors need to learn about at the OKCNMM. An entire chapter of the museum, as well as smaller exhibits throughout, are focused on
how the city recovered after the bombing; a large part of that recovery is the building of
the memorial and the museum, a process that the Oklahoma City community was
inextricably involved in. Hessler, in her article about her ongoing service-learning
partnership with the museum, emphasizes the local nature of this national site:

To understand the museum’s ties to civic identity, one must appreciate its
intimate relationship with Oklahoma City, a community catapulted into
the international spotlight and deeply conscious of its role as an exemplar
for responding to and documenting domestic terrorism in the United
States. These were citizens in mourning determined to tell their story, their
way…The museum’s narrative is an affirmation of the city’s collective
purpose, resilience, and values. (25)

Arguably, the museum’s value lessons that I have discussed throughout this chapter—
those of hope, courage, survival, and overcoming hardship, to name just a few—could
not be fully learned without the museum addressing the memorialization and museum-
building process, and the role the community played—and still plays—in the existence of
the site.

The process of creating the memorial and museum came up in nearly all of the
interviews I conducted with staff, demonstrating its centrality to the work of the
OKCNMM. Roller, Director of Education and Research, explains, “Creating the
morial [and museum] was a collaborative process. It was inclusive of all parties—
families, survivors, and responders.” The opinions of these parties were taken into
account as they decided what to include in the museum and how to display it. For
instance, Roller points to the off-to-the-side “Investigation Alcoves” discussed in the
opening of this chapter as a piece of the museum influenced by the opinions of these outside parties. Steiffmiller, Collections Manager, explains that these “outside parties” have a specific name: the “Conscience Committee.” Apparent just from the name, this committee is meant to help the OKCNMM stay connected to the individuals who were involved in this tragedy, as they can most effectively serve as an institutional “conscience.” This committee is chaired by a staff member, but it is otherwise composed of survivors, family members, and emergency responders. If a questionable exhibit is planned, such as the parts of the museum that featured McVeigh, it is always first run by the Conscience Committee for reactions and suggestions. As Steiffmiller views it, “We decide the content, but they help with the spin.” The OKCNMM website outlines the role of the Conscience Committee as follows:

This committee works as a recommending body on behalf of our family members, survivors and rescue workers. The concept for this team of representatives was patterned after a similar committee at the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC. The Conscience Committee helps in the planning of anniversary events, gives valuable input for upcoming projects and provides a perspective from those who have such an important emotional investment in the programs and mission of the Memorial and Museum. The committee includes four family members, six survivors and three first responders.
These comments from staff members, as well as the OKCNMM’s official statement on the Conscience Committee, point to the collaborative nature of memory pedagogy. Implied by the existence of such a committee is that the bombing cannot be remembered and represented by only one person or organization. Instead, multiple people with different connections to the event must get involved. An institutionally designed take on the event is not enough; the perspectives of those personally affected must be taken into consideration. Through an institutional and community collaboration, memory is constructed and then taught to the public in a very different way than it would be if the museum operated without this partnership, namely through first-person stories, insight, and design advice. The Conscience Committee not only illustrates the value of collaboration, it also shows that remembering should be a respectful and evolving process. In other words, memory must be mediated and co-constructed by the community, and that process is one that will need to be revisited and revised throughout a museum’s existence. In the current moment, eighteen years since the bombing occurred, the OKCNMM constantly seeks involvement from those affected by the event, whether it be volunteering for the Committee or by asking them to speak as part of the “The First Person: Stories of Hope” series, where survivors, responders, and family members, to name just a few groups, come to share their stories with the public. Through this involvement, the voices of those directly affected by the bombing are given credence and respect at the OKCNMM. Even more, those affected remain involved even all these years later; it is a way for them to personally remember, work through their own emotions, and educate others. The museum understands that these voices and stories are constantly evolving, so it continues to give them a space to speak and be heard.
The Ownership of Memory and the Benefits of Community Involvement

The existence of the Conscience Committee and the “First Person” speaker series, as well as my interviewees’ emphasis on the importance of the ongoing involvement of those affected by the bombing, points to perhaps the most complicated aspect of the pedagogy of memory: ownership. The work of the OKCNMM indicates that you cannot remember without the input and support of those connected to the traumatic events (survivors, family members, emergency responders, etc.). To tell this story without them, or in a way that they object to, would be unethical. Certainly not all museums align with this approach, though in a postmodern age where more thought is given to the ethics of representation and speaking for others, it is increasingly common. In Edward Barry Gaither’s essay “‘Hey That's Mine!’: Thoughts on Museums and American Pluralism,” he suggests that museums need advocates from the local community to help them with their design and exhibits. Gaither focuses on African-American museums and suggests that both the museum and the community benefit if a member of the community can act as an “informal historian.” In this partnership, the museum and the community member work together to portray a “shared heritage” in a respectful way. Gaither claims, “Serving one’s community means designing programs that are tailored to its needs and that anticipate future requirements and demands” (63). The OKCNMM makes use of community members in precisely this way, to both meet the current needs of Oklahoma City and look toward the future. In short, involvement of the community connected to a particular event is crucial in to the development of an ethical pedagogy of memory.
The recent nature of this traumatic event also sets this museum apart from the others I have discussed. The last living WWI veteran died in 2012 (at 110), and survivors from the Underground Railroad era are long passed away. Even more, the local nature of the OKCNMM—it is the only one of these museums with a centralized site of trauma, and it is located on that very site—means that Oklahoma Citians have easy access, as well as a strong desire, to be involved. The OKCNMM, though, had to make an active decision about how to include people affiliated with the bombing in their design and construction process, as well as in their educational programming once the museum opened. To build and run the museum without those who are most closely connected to the event would indicate that the institution owns and controls the memory of the bombing; it would build a sense of memory as disconnected to those who lived through it. Not only would this alienate survivors and responders, it would be a flawed pedagogical approach. Linda Alcoff explains a version of this very issue in “The Problem of Speaking for Others”:

I would stress that the practice of speaking for others is often born of a desire for mastery, to privilege oneself as the one who more correctly understands the truth about another’s situation or as one who can champion a just cause and thus achieve glory and praise. And the effect of the practice of speaking for others is often, though not always, erasure and a reinscription of sexual, national, and other kinds of hierarchies. (29)

If the pedagogy of memory is to avoid the hierarchies that Alcoff warns against, the people that most need to be involved in the interpretation of an event are those who
have personal connections to it. The necessity of this involvement nuances the idea of collectivity when it comes to memory and rhetorical education more broadly—while many voices must come together to tell a story (or many stories), certain voices should be much louder than others.

**Conclusion: The Possibilities of Memory for Rhetorical Education**

Approaching memory from a pedagogical standpoint offers one way for this canon to regain relevance in the present day. Though memory was a part of rhetorical education in classical times, a 21st-century approach to memory expands the pedagogy far beyond the memorization of texts. In their article calling for an expansion of memory, Pruchnic and Lacey state: “We will also suggest that contemporary rhetorical memory is similarly bound up with broader questions of persuasion (how we are persuaded or motivated to adopt particular beliefs or perform certain actions), ethics (who we ‘are’ and the communities we are a part of), and politics (how we are implicated in or integrated into large processes of social power)” (475). This case study of the OKCNMM offers insights on all these workings of memory—the connection to beliefs, the ethics of memory as it is situated within a community, and the politics of how and what to remember. These aspects of memory, of course, also point back to its inherently pedagogical nature, and my goal in this chapter has been to make aspects of this pedagogy more transparent. The pedagogy of memory I outline is intertwined with epideictic rhetoric, so it frequently works to teach values and larger life lessons. While this link to epideictic rhetoric sometimes means the pedagogy of memory is overly controlled and heavy handed, material rhetoric can help offset such control by offering a
variety of connected yet disparate artifacts that people must, to some extent, interpret for themselves. Finally, the pedagogy of memory is respectful of community and the complicated issues that surround ownership of memories. This is a difficult balance to strike, but modern museums like the OKCNMM provide thoughtful models.

While memory is expanded as a canon, another possibility emerges for rhetorical theory. Memory plays a central role in rhetorical education and offers new directions for that process. This discussion of the OKCNMM and the pedagogy of memory that manifests there illustrate both positive directions and challenges for rhetorical education. First, when memory is central to rhetorical education, people are able to clearly see possibilities for involvement and civic engagement. For instance, in remembering the Oklahoma City bombing and educating the public about it, many people are able to get involved with this cause; there are chances to speak, offer workshops, and serve on committees for members of the general public. With memory as the starting point, local public is able to participate in the civic sphere in a productive and fulfilling way. At the same time, though these opportunities for involvement are promising, they must not be over-controlled or directed by institutional forces. Rhetorical education should ideally teach people various ways to get involved in their communities, but there must then be room for freedom of choice and individual decision about this involvement. The pedagogy of the OKCNMM is the most effective when visitors are guided but also allowed room and flexibility, such as the drawing table in the Children’s Exhibit or in the sparse, non-directed design of the Gallery of Honor. Accompanying these possibilities, material rhetoric affects rhetorical education as it demands that people familiarize
themselves with alternative patterns and modes of communication—what can be added to
the word? How do certain objects communicate in ways that words cannot? In an
increasingly multimodal society, these are questions citizens must consider for their own
participation in public dialogue and discourse.
Chapter Five: From the Museum to the Classroom: Conclusions, Implications, and Directions for Future Research

Overview of Dissertation: Drawing Attention to the Ongoing Tensions and Complexities When Discussing Museums and Rhetorical Education

This project has explored extracurricular spaces of rhetorical education. Specifically, I have worked to theorize rhetoric itself and rhetorical pedagogies through analysis of the strategies and educational approaches of contemporary historical museums. Ultimately, through my research at these museums, I suggest new ways to understand rhetorical education in the 21st century. Chapter Two proposes a new pedagogy for identification, investigating existing problems with identification like the erasure of difference and the simplification of trauma. Ultimately, I call for the incorporation of explicit rhetorical education alongside of identification. If individuals are asked emotionally identify to better understand another person’s position, space for reflective and perhaps critical dialogue, be it written or aloud, can make the identification more productive and overcome some of the initial challenges. In Chapter Three, I offer a theory of collective rhetoric, moving away from classical individualized theories. I theorize collective rhetoric as interactive, polyphonic, and multimodal, and while I discuss the challenges embedded within notions of the collective, I argue for the benefits
of collective rhetoric outweighing these challenges. Namely, collective rhetoric can provide more comprehensive representation and offers increased opportunities for rhetorical education. Finally, in Chapter Four, I reinvigorate memory as a canon of rhetoric by outlining a pedagogy of memory, exploring the role of values and morals, materiality, and respect for local communities as key aspects of this emerging pedagogy.

Of course, as I hope my individual chapters demonstrate, these theories are not as simple and straightforward as they appear in this brief summary. I thus want to take a moment as I conclude to voice the complexities and complications that arise when discussing museums and rhetorical education. I will bring my three research sites together in this discussion and highlight the tensions that I grappled with as I completed my research and writing. In many ways, these are tensions that were not even clear to me until I had come to a phase of (relative) completion on this project; only in studying and writing about each site individually could I begin to see, understand, and articulate these complexities through a brief cross-site analysis. I plan to develop this comparative analysis in a more in-depth manner as I move forward with this project. At this point, a discussion of these tensions mainly raises more (large, complex, and perhaps unanswerable) questions.

Pedagogy of Indoctrination vs. Pedagogy of Subtlety

Throughout each of my case study museums, there are exhibits that encourage visitor self-selection and promote flexibility and choice in learning, while other places in the museums seem to call for one “right” version of a narrative or one “better” way of learning. For example, The Children’s Area at the OKCNMM pushes guests in a certain
direction, tells them what they should know and believe, and imposes a standardized value system and accompanying understanding of goodness. The Gallery of Honor, while still aiming to teach particular lessons about how to act, encourages guests guide themselves and draw their own conclusions. There is a loose structure, but the visitors have more control over their education. At the National World War I Museum, the same tension is present when the timeline—very dominant at the museum’s center—is juxtaposed with polyphonic exhibits like the Audio Alcoves, where visitors select different stories to hear about the war, or the Portrait Gallery, where they can read through more individualized narratives and explore digital portraits of ordinary soldiers and citizens. The Freedom Center works to maintain an uplifting and inspiring narrative about overcoming slavery throughout the museum, though the “Slavery Today” exhibit adopts a slightly different approach by asking visitors to consider various activist organizations and allowing them to choose how they might be able to help. In “Slavery Today,” visitors are allowed a form of choice and flexibility that is less encouraged when learning about historical slavery.

The different approaches discussed in these examples illustrate two common ideologies in American education—what I call a pedagogy of indoctrination and a pedagogy of subtlety. Sometimes it is necessary to “indoctrinate” learners with particular facts or ideas and be highly controlling of their education, while other times it is more appropriate to let learners make their own decisions and shape their own knowledge. Some teachers are boldly committed to one pedagogy or the other, while most teachers tend to blend the two, whether or not they realize they are doing this. In both formal and
informal educational scenarios across the nation, these pedagogies play out. There is an ongoing struggle between how much to *tell* learners and how much to let learners *figure out* themselves. This struggle plays out in debates about the purpose and place of lecturing in the classroom, as well as in discussions about how teachers should situate their personal and political commitments when working with students, to name just two scenarios. This raises two central questions: How do we reconcile competing ideologies of subtlety and indoctrination in our classrooms? How can we mediate our own pedagogical commitments in an effort to find more complex ways to talk, write, and participate, both in the classroom and beyond it?

*Interaction and Dialogue*

An off-shoot of this discussion of competing pedagogies of indoctrination and subtlety is the tension surrounding notions of interaction and dialogue as they play out in the space of museums and beyond. Specifically, at my case study museums, though a commitment to dialogue and interaction is almost constantly espoused in museum literature and from museum staff, there are certainly times when these commitments simply cannot come to fruition. What my case study museums begin to indicate is that interaction and dialogue are indeed crucial and necessary aspects of rhetorical education, but there are times when the existence of interaction or dialogue are impossibilities, and other times when they fail or are not received as intended.

The Freedom Center provides perhaps the best example of the complexity surrounding interaction and dialogue. First, recall that Richard Cooper, Interpretive Services Manager at the Freedom Center, explains that the museum is moving toward
“conversational interpretation,” allowing for more dialogue within the walls of the museum. He views guided tours as one key place for more “conversation” to take place, and volunteer guides are being trained in this method. Yet the guides I observed at the museum, as well as the majority of major exhibits there, are not particularly interactive or dialogue-encouraging. A tension emerges between an interest in dialogue as the “right” thing to do at a modern museum (indeed it is part of how Hooper-Greenhill explains the “post-museum”) versus the museum’s interest in telling the story of the Underground Railroad in a very specific way—a “way without guilt,” as Educational Director Jackie Wallace explains and in a way that will “inspire guests to action,” as the mission statement proclaims. The Freedom Center illustrates that museums are often interested in moving toward dialogue-based and interactive methods of education, but institutions still feel pressure to present history in ways that will appeal to guests or appease financial contributors; there are so many stakeholders in the work of museums, and dialogue is sometimes at odds with what those stakeholders envision. Offering guests an “inspiring” take on “overcoming” slavery can be easier to swallow than asking them to talk to tour guides and one another about the difficult realities of slavery and how those realities resonate in the present day. Museum staff knows dialogue is necessary, especially if they hope guests are leaving with increased civic awareness, but they also know that dialogue is hard; it takes work to facilitate it and participate in it, and many guests might not be open to such work. Certainly this struggle for productive dialogue and interaction is a constant problem in the wider public sphere, as well, so it makes sense for it to manifest in the microcosm of museums.
There are other points in my case study museums when dialogue does occur, but it is ineffective. Dialogue and interaction—with history itself and with other people—is a necessary goal, to be sure, but sometimes it fails, no matter how hard the museum staff tries to make it work. For instance, some of what I find most admirable and impressive about the National World War I Museum’s use of collective rhetoric, and dialogue is central to my own theory in Chapter Three, does not always lead to the desired results. For some visitors, activities like the “Build Your Own Memorial” on the interactive table are nothing more than a novelty; they end up playing a video game of sorts in the space of the museum, and the fun, unique technology becomes the topic of interest rather than talking about what it means to memorialize and represent history. In short, museums only have so much control over how their attempts to create dialogue will be received by guests. There is never a guarantee that guests will receive the exhibits precisely as they were intended. The same can be said about how the dialogue that might occur inside the museum can be taken outside its walls. Another example that raises different issues occurs at the OKCNMM in the Children’s Area. The “Draw What You Feel” station does give young visitors a chance to participate and interact with history, their first chance to really do so in that area of the museum. The goal is for children to establish a dialogue with the event itself, solidifying their own understanding of it, and perhaps even communicate with other children—those who have drawn something at the station previously, or those that were affected by the bombing. One of the pieces of art surrounding the station states: “I hope you feel better from the bomb,” directly “speaking” to bombing victims. But dialogue falls somewhat flat at this drawing station, as it is ultimately a very individualized attempt at creating a conversation. There is one
chair, one screen, one keyboard. The station does allow for reflection, an important step on the way toward dialogue, but since the activity itself is so clearly designed for one person, the dialogue established is limited.

Considering the limited amount of control museums have in how guests experience their attempts at dialogue and interaction, as well as the ways in which museum stakeholders might sometimes have restricted notions of dialogue and interaction, I am left with a few central questions: What are the goals of establishing dialogue and interaction as forms of learning? What defines effective and productive dialogue, both within the walls of institutions of learning and beyond them? When attempts at dialogue fail, stall, or are restricted, what is the next step in providing a sound rhetorical education?

_Appeals to Emotions_

A final tension that presented itself at each of my case study museums was the use of _pathos_ or emotional appeals as a strategy to instill critical awareness. That is to say that, at these museums, emotion is a key part of rhetorical education—something I had not anticipated. At all of my case study museums, emotion is an integrated and dominant aspect of educating people about their respective historic events and how these events connect to the present day. Considering that these are museums that represent historic traumas, a heavy reliance on emotion as an educational approach, as well as emotion as a _result_ of education, is perhaps not surprising. Yet I was surprised, and it raised questions and new directions for research for me.
The ways in which museums use emotion are wide ranging. For instance, the OKCNMM is heavily invested in emotion through its use of epideictic rhetoric. They are committed to helping guests feel “good” about the bombing and understanding how the community worked together to “overcome” this tragedy. So those emotions are one primary goal of the work of the museum, though exhibits often must strategically appeal to other emotions to meet that goal. The Gallery of Honor, for instance, in its traditional memorial aesthetic, is somber and sad, but it also aims to offer further inspiration by using the victims as examples of “living life to the fullest.” Immediately we see a tension arise between an emotional goal (inspiration), and the emotional appeals needed to get guests to that place (somber victim narratives). A similar trend is discussed in depth in Chapter Two, my case study of the Freedom Center. The museum wants to “inspire guests to action,” and one major way they accomplish that is by asking guests to “feel” and “experience” the pain of slavery through the pervasive rhetoric of transportation. There is an assumption that an emotional experience within the walls of the museum will help raise the civic awareness of guests and potentially encourage them to action with present day issues. The National World War I Museum focused heavily on individual and ordinary narratives to communicate the story of the Great War. Though guests are separated from the soldiers and citizens by nearly a century, there is certainly an emotional identification and reaction fostered—these historic individuals are not so different from a run-of-the-mill museum visitor. Personal connections with individuals in history are encouraged as a way to help guests feel more invested in World War I. Other exhibits, like the glass bridge over the field of poppies, ask guests to assume a role of
quiet, contemplative remembering and reflection, an emotional experience of a different sort as the lives lost are memorialized.

My initial instinct was to view the heavy use of *pathos* in these museums as somewhat manipulative, or at least pandering to visitors in an effort to make them return for subsequent museum trips. I found myself quickly disapproving of *pathos* as such a dominant piece of rhetorical education, feeling like it was unethical at points. I do not necessarily think my initial reaction was entirely off base, but as I conclude my research and consider the larger commitments of my project, I believe the role of emotion in rhetorical education is much more complex than I allowed for. In particular, I see this immediate turn to emotion as a dominant trend in public discourse, as well, specifically during traumatic events, like the recent bombing at the Boston Marathon. After that event, there was a surge of interest in the heroic stories of rescue, and a proliferation of the touching “Look for the helpers” quote from Fred Rogers,\(^\text{22}\) across many social media and news websites. While I see such positive, emotional stories and themes as necessary in times of trauma, I also wonder—and this is the same question I ask about museums—if the reliance on *pathos* can sometimes stall the ability to have a more critical dialogue about the complexities of difficult events. Ultimately, I am left with these questions:

What does it mean to rely heavily on *pathos* to educate the public about an event or issue? What are the effects when intense emotional discourse surrounds a particular

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\(^{22}\) The full and newly popularized quote from Fred Rogers, which often appears on a smiling photo of Mr. Rogers, sometimes one where a small child is touching his cheeks: “When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’ To this day, especially in times of ‘disaster,’ I remember my mother’s words and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers – so many caring people in this world.” Despite its recent popularity and relevance, it is a statement that dates back at least thirty years.
topic? Does *pathos* help or hinder the process of rhetorical education? Or, more likely, how does it both help and hinder? When is *pathos* ethical and/or unethical?

**Connections to the Writing and Rhetoric Classroom: Direct Pedagogical Implications Arising from Museum-Based Research**

I have developed these rhetorical and pedagogical theories, as well as interrogated the tensions embedded within them, because my central goal is to offer interventions into the current state of public discourse. To come back to Wayne Booth, whose words began this dissertation: “Passionate partisans cannot seem to find convincing ways of talking about their beliefs” (xi). More broadly, Booth explains that goal of rhetoric is finding a space of agreement in which to establish a dialogue with others and better understand a variety of beliefs. I have been immensely influenced by this understanding of rhetoric in my research, teaching, and daily life. But I frequently observe—in my own behavior as well as that of friends, family, students, and the public more broadly—constant struggles to find places of agreement. There remains a pervasive refusal to listen to and engage with beliefs that are radically different from one’s own. 23 Discourse then takes a turn for the agonistic and non-productive, or people simply fall back on the old refrain, “We’ll agree to disagree.” However, I argue that by researching and proposing modernized theories of rhetorical education, as I have done throughout this project, we can move closer to a more civil version of public discourse, allowing “passionate partisans” to “speak convincingly” about what they believe, resulting in new approaches to talking and

23 Some recent, well-known examples of what I view as non-productive public discourse that influenced this project include Rush Limbaugh’s commentary about Sandra Fluke, declaring her a “slut” on national radio (February 2012); and the often passionate and loud—but rarely involving much thoughtful listening—debate surrounding gun control after the Sandy Hook shooting in December 2012.
writing about divisive topics. Part of this effort to improve public discourse, though, needs to happen in the classroom, and especially the writing classroom since it is the space in the university where training in rhetoric and language happens the most overtly.

As John Duffy explains in “Virtuous Arguments”:

In fact, there is a well-organized, systematic, and dedicated effort taking place each day to promote an ethical public discourse grounded in the virtues of honesty, accountability, and generosity. The site of this effort is largely hidden from public view, taking place in the classrooms of universities and colleges across the United States. Even in academe, the movement for an ethical public discourse is largely overlooked. Indeed, it has been historically underfunded, inadequately staffed, and generally marginalized. I refer, of course, to first-year composition, the introductory writing course required at many public and private institutions.

Though I appreciate and agree with Duffy’s advocacy for the value of first-year writing, I aim to enhance the “ethical” work of composition courses by infusing them with pedagogies from the public sphere. As a teacher and scholar, I work to break down the division between the academy and the public and am committed to uniting and moving between these spheres. To conclude this project, then, I want to turn more specifically toward how my research and the theories I have proposed can affect curricular practices. That is, I want to discuss the ways that this research has influenced my own philosophies and approaches as a teacher of rhetoric and writing. I argue that increased attention to extracurricular practices of rhetorical education can allow for critical reflection about, as
well as invigoration of, classroom pedagogies. I echo the question Jessica Enoch asks in her research about the rhetorical education offered by an online activist group: “What are the rhetorical practices and pedagogies that enable this group’s form of civic engagement and how might its work prompt us to reconsider our perceptions of rhetorical education inside the classroom?”(167). The diverse work of museums, spaces that are not aligned with traditional understandings or norms of rhetorical education, can share with scholars and teachers of rhetoric and writing innovative pedagogical perspectives and practices. I draw four specific and interrelated implications from my research that I will discuss in this chapter: 1) investment in the writing classroom as a space of rhetorical education; 2) composition as curation; 3) memory and museums as sites for student research and analysis; and 4) new directions for service-learning in composition classes.

Implication #1: Investment in the Writing Classroom as a Space of Rhetorical Education

I start with this implication because it is the largest classroom implication of my research. In fact, in some ways, it subsumes the implications that will follow. Each of my case study museums was involved with raising visitor awareness and civic engagement in the present day. At the Freedom Center, this was most explicit in the Slavery Today exhibit, which linked learning about historical slavery to working to stop human trafficking in the present day. The push toward civic awareness was present in historical exhibits, too, such as the iPod tour at the slave pen suggesting that guests needed to do something to help those enslaved there. Recall these rather haunting words from the tour: “They want to know, are you going to help them, or just walk away?” The National World War I Museum, though strictly historical in the focus of its exhibits, is constantly
modeling and teaching guests ways to get involved in public discourse. For example, the museum fosters meaningful moments of dialogue between guests and asks them to compose memorials and propaganda on the interactive tables. At the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum, guests are offered civic lessons about responsibility and involvement as they learn about how the city recovered from the bombing. The local population is even given opportunities to collaboratively participate in museum design and education. Exhibits and initiatives like the ones I have briefly outlined here are some of the most successful aspects of each of these museums, and it is indeed the museums’ commitment to relevance in the present day that helps them maintain the interest of guests and remain relatively well attended.

As I studied the encouragement of civic engagement that occurred at my case study museums, it renewed my interest in designing writing courses that were explicitly concerned with rhetorical education. Granted, since composition courses are typically teaching students rhetorical skills, most of them can be broadly understood as doing the work of rhetorical education. But I am interested specifically in renewing a pedagogical commitment to preparing students as public participants. Writing courses can effectively be designed with outcomes beyond the academic in mind. Strong and diverse arguments have been made in Composition Studies for public writing to become a more integrated piece of curricula—whether that be through digital media, writing editorials, service-learning, or even incorporating personal narratives (Weisser; Wells; Burns; Goodman; Danielewicz).
Based on my research for this project, I now envision and overtly position the writing classroom as a space of rhetorical education. In other words, I prepare students to participate in public discussions beyond the walls of my classroom. In many of my courses, I design the assignment sequence so students move from academic writing to public composition. In my sections of first year writing, students write an analytical academic essay and then re-envision their argument and present it as a multi-genre project to an audience of their choice. For example, one student wrote a persuasive rhetorical analysis of Ohio State’s new student union, arguing that it served as a space for unification and community, not just food and fun. He then designed a multi-genre project directed at incoming students explaining the unifying features of the Ohio Union through an interview with Union staff members, a brochure, and an advertisement.

This assignment encouraged students to rethink their academic arguments for a public audience, helping them realize that what we discuss inside the classroom has applicability beyond its walls. A further goal was for students to develop a more complex understanding of their rhetorical situations, asking themselves why certain genres are more effective for a selected audience. Students also learned multimodal compositional skills that will prove useful throughout their time in college and beyond. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, students made a connection between the academy and the public; as scholars and researchers, it was also their responsibility to participate in outreach and intervene in local public discourse. They positioned themselves as informed citizen-scholars, with important, informed arguments to make in the public sphere.

While writing assignments, as well as my responses to them, are at the center of any course I teach, my day-to-day pedagogy also fosters civic participation. I plan class
sessions so students interact with one another and discuss their ideas, giving each other feedback and differing perspectives. My case study museums provided innovative models for collaborative pedagogy, as well—the interactive tables at the National World War One Museum, for instance, pushed me to think about how composing as a group rather than an individual could encourage students to consider language use in a new way, benefitting from a collaboratively built knowledge, as well as a new, complex, and inherently recursive writing process. Negotiating group discussions and writing with peers—expressing their views while also respectfully listening to the views of others—is a crucial rhetorical skill. The collaborative work that occurs in my classroom is carefully planned and explained, both verbally and in writing. In one course, for instance, I developed a reading and writing project that spanned two weeks. Based around their interests and my recommendations, students selected a memoir written by a disabled author. They formed small reading groups, and each student played a daily role in the group—discussion leader, note-taker, etc. Groups set their own reading schedules, and they spent several class periods meeting with their groups to discuss the memoir and complete related daily activities that I assigned. This memoir unit culminated in composing, as a group, a detailed review of the book. To facilitate this, I taught them about approaches to collaborative authorship, including exposing them to technologies like Google Docs, which allow for simultaneous composing. In evaluations and conversations with me, students often noted that this was a challenging part of the course, both keeping up with the reading and writing, as well as negotiating the group dynamics. Ultimately, though, most students emphasized that they learned a great deal from the experience. Similar to the strongest exhibits I observed at my case study museums, my
pedagogy emphasizes collaboration and interactivity. Not only does this pedagogy challenge students, putting their learning in their hands, it also fosters communication skills that are necessary for participation in important public discussions.

**Implication #2: Composition as Curation**

My research at museums not only reshaped my understanding of rhetorical theory, it changed my understanding of what it means to compose and, accordingly, how I discussed composition with my students. As each of my case study museums demonstrates, and this is thoroughly examined in Composition Studies scholarship, composition is rarely based in text alone (Faigley; George; Journet et al; C. Selfe; C. Selfe and Hawisher; Wysocki et al; Palmeri). At museums, multimedia composition comes to life and surrounds visitors. Museums provide some of the best evidence that composition is frequently so much than textual. Material artifacts, videos, static visuals, audio, and space itself work together to compose exhibits. The Gallery of Honor at the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum is a strong example of this. It is a meaningful and persuasive exhibit composed entirely of photographs and material artifacts; very little text is used.

This aspect of my research has allowed me to think about—and begin to articulate to students—an understanding of *composition as an act of curation*. Composing can be productively framed and explained as a curatorial project; it involves collecting, consideration of audience, design, revision, and the inclusion of various forms of media, to touch on just a few similarities between the processes. Since museums are generally familiar cultural touchstones for students, to discuss composition as curation, or to
explain the work they are creating as exhibits, makes the composing process, as well as the final product, more accessible.

In a recent intermediate writing course, I asked students to create digital research exhibits. For this particular assignment, I asked them to use Prezi, free online presentation software that allows for easy incorporation of text, video, visuals, and audio. Since the beginning of my college-level teaching career, I have favored concluding classes with student presentations of research. But in this class I made a conscious choice to move away from the language of “research presentation” when assigning the “digital research exhibit.” My goals were largely the same as they had been with research presentations: I wanted students to be able to share their research findings with one another, reflect on the process and what they learned in the class, and be able to engage in a productive dialogue about their research and writing with others. The digital exhibit proved an excellent way to accomplish these outcomes, and it also aligned with my previously discussed commitment to asking students to translate their academic research into a more public genre. In other words, this project also furthered my efforts toward making the writing class a place of rhetorical education.

One new—or perhaps just more explicit—outcome for the research exhibit (versus the standard research presentation) involved a requirement to make the research “interesting and engaging for a public audience,” like a standard group of museum visitors. This idea of cultivating interest and engagement when presenting research was one area where I frequently noticed standard student presentations falling short; their research was indeed interesting, but they struggled to design a presentation that translated
this interest. Students frequently seemed trapped by the conventions of academic presentations that they had learned or observed in previous classes. I discovered that framing students’ presentational work as something they might see on a museum visit encouraged them to envision and communicate their research in new and exciting ways. Generally, I found students relied much less (if at all) on simply reading written text; they meaningfully incorporated multimedia elements like video and audio clips; and they made significant efforts to engage audience members with questions and discussions. These were moves I saw far less when I assigned traditional research presentations, and it was heartening to see one-sided presentations become conversations between students in the class. Explicitly framing the composition of this research presentation in Prezi as a form of curation resulted in some of the most engaging, thoughtful, and intelligent work I have seen students compose and share. I am eager to see how understanding and framing composition as curation will affect my pedagogy in the future.

Implication #3: Memory and Museums as Sites for Student Research and Analysis

Though I had previously avoided thematic approaches to teaching composition, my museum-based research prompted me to consider the benefits of a course designed around “sites of memory” (memorials, museums, archives, personal artifacts like a scrapbook or yearbook, etc.). Since my research has fundamentally changed my own understandings of rhetoric, composition, communication, and pedagogy, it made sense to me that conducting similar research projects could have positive effects on my students. I hypothesized that studying sites of memory would offer an especially interesting and accessible avenue for discussing difficult rhetorical and compositional concepts, and I
designed an intermediate writing course entitled “Spaces, Places, and Memory” to test this hypothesis.

Through telling stories, attending family reunions, watching historical films or TV shows, scrapbooking, writing in diaries, visiting museums, signing yearbooks, joining “In Memoriam” groups on Facebook, or participating in “memorial” athletic events, students constantly compose private and public memories. Pierre Nora, when writing about national memory in France, calls such artifacts and practices “sites of memory.” Though Nora uses this term critically, it is a useful way to access memory for students and ask them to consider how it applies to their contemporary lives. Rarely do people have an opportunity to consider how and why they remember certain places, people, and events; in other words, they tend to overlook the rhetoric of memory—it is often naturalized to the point of transparency. A primary goal for the course, then, was to offer students a chance to investigate and analyze the ways they remember, commemorate, and memorialize, both in their own lives and in the public sphere, while also exploring how public and personal memories can overlap and interact.

We spent time in the course reading about and discussing the controversial and complicated nature of sites of memory. I pointed toward the ongoing controversy over memorializing September 11, 2001 as one central example. The construction of the memorial at the World Trade Center site has been stalled numerous times due to questions and concerns over how such a tragedy can be appropriately remembered. We also looked to the National Baseball Hall of Fame where debates about who should be inducted remain heated, and the onset of the “steroid era” makes these decisions more controversial than ever. Memory in personal lives is similarly fraught. For example,
students contemplated why they were so compelled to keep (and remember) certain photos, letters, and gifts, while they might desperately want to get rid of (and forget) others.

In terms of research and writing, I asked students identify stories, spaces, artifacts, and practices of memory that were meaningful and interesting to them. We focused on texts we read for the class (scholarly articles about museums and memorials, as well as a graphic memoir about the Holocaust), and we also explored the OSU campus, the Columbus community, works of art, films, websites, and even our own closets and attics. In this way, students were positioned as experts in their own right and came into the class with helpful existing knowledge. We investigated how these various sites of memory make and reflect particular arguments and ideological perspectives, using both textual and visual rhetoric. Through this process, we entered important academic and public conversations. The central writing assignment in this course asked that students select, research, and analyze a local site of memory—something they had ongoing access to and interest in. To effectively complete this assignment, students learned about and used qualitative research methods like observation, interviews, and surveys, as well as developing strong rhetorical analysis skills.

Questions that were at the heart of the course, in both discussion and students writing, included:

- What is the rhetoric of memory—both textually and visually?
- How do we remember personal experiences—like relationships or “big” life events?
• How might that compare with how we remember, commemorate, and memorialize public history—like wars or presidents?

• In what ways are “memory” and “history” similar? How are they different? Do they connect and inform one another? Work against one another?

• Why do we make such an effort to remember and create artifacts of these memories, particularly when the events are traumatic, sad, or disturbing?

• What role does memory play in informing our identities?

• How might “sites of memory” actively create or silence particular histories?

• In what ways does media—like movies, television, websites, or books—inform (or misinform) public memory?

There were definite benefits to designing a writing class that focused on exploring memory. Perhaps most importantly, we were able to interrogate the complex rhetorical negotiations that take place at any site of memory. In this way, researching sites of memory made rhetoric itself easier for students to understand—they could see it, touch it, watch its effect on audiences, and observe how it sometimes had unintended effects. Another benefit was simply the way this course and the main writing assignment asked students to participate in research practices that were frequently unfamiliar. Students came to understand that research involves much more than searching for secondary sources on library databases and claimed identities as qualitative researchers contributing new knowledge to existing scholarly discussions. Finally, this approach to a composition class asked students to engage with their community—frequently a new and unknown
community for students early in their academic careers. This allowed the course to remain invested in rhetorical education and developing students as citizens.

**Implication #4: A New Direction for Service-Learning in the Composition Classroom?**

Going hand-in-hand with my commitment to rhetorical education and encouraging students to engage with their communities, and motivated further by my success in the “Places, Spaces and Memories” course, I am increasingly interested in designing a writing course in partnership with a local museum. This is not only an implication of my current research, it is also the next direction for my project, though it was beyond the scope of what I could accomplish with this dissertation. Service-learning has long been an interest for—and a hotly debated topic within—Composition Studies (Adler-Kassner et al; Deans; Bacon; Cushman). While service-learning is typically envisioned as partnering with service-based community organizations like literacy centers or schools, creating partnerships with museums has received little attention or research in the field. I suggest that such partnerships can be beneficial to student writers, teachers of writing, and the museums, eschewing some of the typical problems with power dynamics that can arise in service-learning scenarios, which have been well documented in existing scholarship. For instance, university students would not be positioned as saviors of disadvantaged youth. Instead, they would be meaningfully contributing to a public institution, potentially completing assignments that enhance exhibit design, labeling of artifacts, organization of archives, designing museum education materials, or creating publicity materials for the museum, to name just a few directions the work could take. If museum staff is receptive to partnering with an
instructor for designing and implementing a service-learning course, this would be the primary ethical consideration.

Recent articles by John Pedro Schwartz and H. Brooke Hessler provide models for what such courses could look like. In “Object Lessons: Teaching Multiliteracies through the Museum,” Schwartz advocates “a museum-based pedagogy.” He explains, “Museum-based pedagogy, as I envision it, does not posit yet another specialized form of literacy—‘museum literacy’—that we must teach. Rather, it uses the museum as a means for teaching the five literacies that are rapidly becoming central to our curriculum: verbal, visual, technological, social and critical” (29). Schwartz relies on recent research in literacy studies while also incorporating significant research in museum studies/museology to effectively theorize his pedagogy. From this theoretical framework, Schwartz moves on to discuss a specific example of museum pedagogy, detailing his experience teaching a sophomore writing class at the Texas State History Museum in Austin, Texas. He describes the class as taking place in two stages. During the first stages, the students read statements in museum theory, and they “evaluated the rhetorical situation of the museum” (38). From this analytical move, students progressed to stage two, where they worked in groups to create an interactive multimedia project and essay where they redesigned or recreated exhibits from the Texas State History Museum.

Hessler’s essay, “Identification as Civic Literacy in Digital Museum Projects: A Case Study of the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum,” is based on her ten-year partnership with the OKCNMM. She discusses how her students—introductory composition through graduate students in a visual rhetoric class enrolled in her courses
Hessler is particularly interested in the “blurred” rhetorical roles her students must assume in participating in such compositional work. As they design their project, they come to “see themselves within the museum’s stories,” both emotionally and quite literally, as most of their photos are attached to the exhibits they design, and thus become part of the permanent text of the museum (24). Hessler explains, too, how she came to establish a partnership with the museum, her motivations for designing service-learning courses with the museums, and how she has created and revised her assignments. Her article, similar to Schwartz’s, points to the diverse ways museums can function as writing classrooms and allow for engaging forms of composing. As I move forward with this project, I aim to continue research on museum-based service-learning, offering new pedagogical approaches and models for teachers and scholars. I also want to more deeply explore some of challenges that will undoubtedly arise with service-learning at museums—from negotiations with the institution, to considering the needs of the community(ies) surrounding museum, and teaching students how to be respectful of the space and mission of the institution, among others.

Conclusion: Connecting the Public and the Academy

The theories of rhetorical education I have developed while exploring museums have undoubtedly influenced and fundamentally changed my pedagogy as a teacher of rhetoric and composition. While my guiding research commitment has been working toward the improvement of civic discourse, part of that improvement must happen in partnership with the academy—a place where students can and should interrogate what it
means to be a responsible citizen and public participant. As I have proposed in this chapter, one academic space where such interrogation can happen particularly well is the writing classroom. Through my research as museums, my investment in the writing classroom as a space to develop both academic and public writing skills has been invigorated; I have reconsidered composition as a form of curation and exhibit design and began discussing it with my students in new ways; I am experimenting with designing composition courses that use sites of memory, such as museums, as places for original student research and analysis; and I am looking toward designing service-learning sections of writing classes in partnership with local museums. In short, the educational work at these public institutions has reshaped my philosophy and approaches inside the classroom, and I am hopeful this research can do the same for others, or that it encourages scholars to undertake similar projects at public institutions.

The research I have done here, and what I will do in the future, is one step building a stronger bridge between the public and the academy. These are two spheres that must work together in a more integrated and sustained manner. Research in the field of Rhetoric and Composition, and the resulting influence on classroom practices, are necessary moves to further connect academic and public life. Museums are just one example of public sites for research that can lead to pedagogical reflection and innovation. By integrating the academy and the public through research and pedagogy, there is great potential for improved dialogue and discussions—more ethical use of rhetoric and language—among citizens.
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Appendix A: Interview Questions for Museum Staff Members

- Who do you envision as the audience for this museum?

- How do you go about designing particular exhibits?

- What can you tell me about the overall design decisions of the museum? How was this layout decided upon? What was the big vision/idea for how the space is used?

- In your own words, what are the primary messages this museum works to communicate?

- What strategies are used throughout the museum to communicate these messages?

- How are such strategies decided upon? Why are such a variety used?

- How do you decide if these strategies are effective or not?

- How do you deal with the representing some of the more violent and traumatic aspects of this history?

- What are the educational goals of this museum?

- How are these goals achieved, both through the museum itself/the exhibits and educational programs?

- How do you plan and facilitate museum education?

- How do you decide if the educational strategies and programs of the museums are effective or not?

- Do you have any other comments you would like to share?
Appendix B: Interview Questions for Museum Guests

- How much did you know about this historical subject before you came to the museum?
- How did the museum change, enhance, or otherwise affect your knowledge?
- What was your favorite part of the visit today? Can you explain why you enjoyed it?
- What was your least favorite part of the visit today? Why?
- What are some stories or narratives that you will take away with you from your museum visit?
- What sort of more general messages/themes/ideas will take away from this museum visit?
- In what ways were these stories and messages communicated to you? (For example: Visually? Through text? Performances? Interactive displays?) Were these communicative methods effective?
- Describe your reaction to the layout and design of the museum and its exhibitions.
- How did you feel about how violence was represented in this museum?
- Describe how you feel this museum educated you today. What educational strategies did you see put into practice? Were they effective?
- How did this museum education compare to that which you have received in school/academic settings? (Like a classroom, library, reading a textbook, etc.)
- Do you have any other comments you would like to share about your experience at this museum?