

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY Sacramento

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**Enriching Representation: Finding the Voice and Perspective of Children in  
California History Museums**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the  
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy  
in History

by

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June 2014

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by

Tory Dawn Swim Inloes

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*Orangevale, California*. Coauthored with Paul J. P. Sandul. Images of America Series. San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2006.

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## ABSTRACT

### Enriching Representation: Finding the Voice and Perspective of Children in California History Museums

by

Tory Dawn Swim Inloes

This dissertation explores how California history museums represent the history of children and childhood. This work is inspired by earlier studies in the fields of anthropology, sociology, museum studies, and public history that question and analyze the underrepresentation or misrepresentation of groups, such as women and ethnic minorities, in US museums. How US museums represent children and their history has yet to receive scholarly attention.

This dissertation contributes to filling this gap in the literature and bases its conclusions on a state-wide survey of more than 200 California museums, interviews with 110 museum professionals or volunteers, site visits to 40 museums, and in-depth field research at 10 museums. I argue that too often the experiences, stories, and contributions of children are overlooked, absent, or marginalized in California history museums. When representations of children's history do emerge, they often reflect ideals rather than realities, universalize the historical experience of childhood, and, in the process, romanticize the past. This dissertation acknowledges obstacles that get in the way of richer representation and offers potential solutions.

During my study it became clear that multiple meanings of children's history are at work in the California museum community: the history *of* children, history *for*

children, and history *by* children. This dissertation examines each in turn and demonstrates how conceptions of children, many with deep historical roots, influence not only museum exhibitions but also programming for children. Central to this dissertation is the study of history *by* children at the Pasadena Museum of History, which provides middle-school students the opportunity to teach history as docents to younger children. Drawing upon my three years of participant observation at this site and interviews with forty middle-school students, I contend that inviting children to participate, create, and co-produce in museum spaces improves children's attitudes towards museums, enriches representation, and brings to light perspectives that may otherwise remain marginalized.

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## Chapter I Introduction

In an attempt to engage local kindergartners, one Southern California museum integrates Mem Fox's 1985 children's book *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* into its school tour presentations.<sup>1</sup> This book is the story of young Wilfred who lives next to a convalescent home and enjoys visiting with its residents. He enjoys the company of Miss Nancy Alison Delacourt Cooper but learns that Miss Nancy has lost her memory. After learning from other residents what constitutes a "memory," he goes about collecting objects that represent his memories and shares them with Miss Nancy. Through this kind gesture, Miss Nancy begins to remember her own memories.

Educators at this museum proceed to ask children what they might put in their own memory basket before explaining that the museum is like "one big memory basket" for the city. A tour of this museum's galleries, however, reveals that the memory of children as historical subjects and how they have participated in the local society are incidental to this memory basket.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with a Southern California museum educator, October 26, 2009; Mem Fox, *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge* (La Jolla, CA: Kane/Miller Book Publishers, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> This observation is based on multiple visits between 2008 and 2009 and a follow-up visit on September 11, 2013. As of that date, the permanent exhibit did not spotlight individual children—beyond naming children of prominent, local leaders—or provide the history of the city from the perspective of a child. Children are talked about in terms more fully explored in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, such as, a nameless identifier or subgroup (a nameless child victim in a natural disaster; the number of children within prominent families), or when a leading community member's

This dissertation will examine why California museum professionals who, as demonstrated above, carefully plan programs to engage and excite children about history, often fail to recognize children as important historical subjects in their own right.<sup>3</sup> Museums are not the only places where children's impact as historical participants has been underestimated. Over the past thirty years a growing number of historians have been critical of the lack of attention to children in historical scholarship, and their attention to this subject has advanced the field. Publications increasingly pay attention to the role that race, class, and gender play in shaping children's lives, and use children as a lens through which to study society at large. The field has further professionalized with the establishment of The Society for the History of Children and Youth in 2001 and the debut of a peer-reviewed journal in 2008. But despite these gains, the history of childhood and children has not yet achieved integration into general history in a way comparable to that of other fields such as women's history.

The integration of race, class, and gender perspectives into existing museum exhibits has a long and unfinished history of its own. Following on the social history and civil rights movements, public historians have worked to revamp museum interpretation to include the experiences of minorities,<sup>4</sup> women, and the working-

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childhood is referenced (such as, an adult's profession being the manifestation of a childhood goal).

<sup>3</sup> For the intent of this study, children are defined as infants to age eighteen.

<sup>4</sup> Although children are statistically not considered a minority, this dissertation considers children as a minority group sociologically because of their place and lack

class.<sup>5</sup> While the history of children has expanded along with the new social history, its place in history museums has yet to reach its full potential.

This dissertation examines how museum personnel understand and integrate the history of children and childhood into California history museums, to whom such histories are presented, and the role that present-day children play as visitors and, at times, volunteers. Like other representation studies, this dissertation examines the patterns among stories that make it to the top as well as the obstacles that obstruct the representation of children's history at California history museums. Since present-day children are so often the intended audience for historical narratives on children, this dissertation explores the experiences of numerous, California children and how they participate in or respond to museum programming. At its core, this dissertation is an exercise in the study of shared authority in its overview of how some California

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of power in American society's social system. "Minorities," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed November 24, 2009, available at <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/532730/segregation>.

<sup>5</sup> Notable works chronicling such efforts include: Barbara Melosh and Christina Simmons, "Exhibiting Women's History," in *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public*, ed. Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986): 203-221; Barbara Melosh, "Speaking of Women: Museums' Representation of Women's History" in *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989): 183-214; James Oliver Horton and Spencer R. Crew, "Afro-Americans and Museums: Towards a Policy of Inclusion," in *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989): 215-236; Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002); Gaynor Kavanagh, *Making Histories in Museums* (New York: Leicester University Press, 1996); Laura Peers, *Playing Ourselves: Interpreting Native Histories at Historic Reconstructions* (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2007).

museum educators share authority with present-day children by including children as participants in junior docent programs, living history programs, or the exhibit process, and how some California curators and exhibit designers share authority with children from the past by exhibiting the voices, perspectives, and images of children.

This dissertation contributes to and builds upon monographs in the fields of anthropology, history, and sociology that have examined the way in which childhood and children have been valued and conceptualized differently over time.<sup>6</sup> While this study draws upon familiar methods, that of qualitative research methods and ethnographic fieldwork, unique to this study is the vantage point—that of museum interpretation and education—from which the dialogue is engaged. Also, unique is its consideration of children both of the past and of the present within its analysis. Throughout my research with present-day children, I have learned how children see museums in unconventional and meaningful ways. Central to my dissertation is my

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<sup>6</sup> Beginning in the late-eighteenth century, adults began to understand the nature of children differently than before and as a result “societal attitudes toward children” began to shift and have continued to change, Brenda J. Allen, *Difference Matters: Communicating Social Identity*, 2nd ed. (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc., 2011), 167. Historians, sociologists, and anthropologists have all contributed to a fuller understanding of childhood as a conception and children as agents of change whose experiences vary due to economic, political, societal, familial, geographic, and temporal variances. Significant works within this literature include, but are not limited to: Viviana Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2004); David F. Lancy, *The Anthropology of Childhood: Cherubs, Chattel, Changelings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); William Corsaro, *The Sociology of Childhood* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge, 1997).

featuring of children's perspectives, voices, and stories to convey their distinctive view of museums.

### **Purpose of the Study**

A majority of California history museum exhibitions say little regarding the historical role of children. Furthermore, the museum design process excludes the participation of present-day children. Yet museum educational departments pour intense energy and focus into building attractive and competitive programs for an audience they view as primary: the modern-day child visitor. Why this disconnect?

The intent of this dissertation is twofold. First, I hope to raise awareness among museum professionals and volunteers that a museum's narrative and interpretation is incomplete when the diverse histories of children are missing. The academic study of children and youth has yet to impact California museums in ways comparable to that of other fields, such as the new western history.<sup>7</sup> Second, that my examples may encourage history museums to share authority in the telling of history by involving children in the creation of museum programming, interpretation, or exhibits.

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<sup>7</sup> In his article, "Beyond the Academy: Making the New Western History Matter in Local Communities," Gregory E. Smoak argues "perhaps the most tangible impact of the new western history on public history can be found in museums across the West. Since the 1990s many museums have revamped their exhibits to reflect a more inclusive and critical interpretation of the region's past." See Gregory E. Smoak, "Beyond the Academy: Making the New Western History Matter in Local Communities," *The Public Historian* 31, no. 4 (2009): 86.

Histories within museums are not often co-produced by children, meaning, the historical perspectives of children are excluded and the potential for present-day participation by children as volunteers and stakeholders is undeveloped. This is not the first work to critique the histories produced and presented within the museum; several substantial monographs produced since 2002 have similarly explored marginalized narratives at historic sites and house museums and directly influenced the research design, methodology, and questions guiding this project.<sup>8</sup> My dissertation's audience, however, is much broader, and its topic—childhood—has the potential to bridge the often separate worlds of educators, curators, and academic historians through its analysis of how museum programs for children of today shed light on both present-day and past conceptions of childhood.

Too often the perspectives and experiences of children from the past are absent from museum exhibitions or generalized, romanticized, and/or segregated (when reserved only for child-centered programming). Museum exhibitions often fail to take into consideration the diversity that has always existed within American childhood. Often, the histories of childhood, that are presented, are limited to dualistic comparisons of boys to girls, or rich to poor, or are romanticized—

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<sup>8</sup> Books include, but are not limited to: Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002); Laura Peers, *Playing Ourselves: Interpreting Native Histories at Historic Reconstructions* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007); Jennifer Pustz, *Voices from the Back Stairs: Interpreting Servants' Lives at Historical House Museums* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

suggesting that childhood equaled toys, loving parents, education, and leisure, for example, or that childhood was once a time of responsibility, contribution to the family economy, and hard work as opposed to the easy, electronically supplemented lifestyle that children (according to some museum professionals) experience today. Each of these approaches undermines the reality of childhood as children lived and experienced it historically, shaped by their own identities.

In recent decades, there has been a remarkable growth of historical scholarship exploring the ways that race, class, and gender have shaped the experience of being a child in American society over time, as well as promoting the agency of children in various contexts, such as consumption, education, parent-child relations, and peer culture. Recent literature has revealed a long history of competing conceptions of childhood and demonstrated that there is no single history of childhood, as childhood is experienced individually and affected by various historical circumstances.

Despite the proliferation of literature which has addressed the sacralization of children, little has been written on how this sentimentalization of childhood has affected museum displays.<sup>9</sup> This dissertation will advance the literature that has been

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<sup>9</sup> Works analyzing museum representations of childhood include: Sharon Roberts, "Minor Concerns: Representations of Children and Childhood in British Museums," *Museum and Society* 4, no. 3 (November 2006): 152-165; Brian W. Shepherd, "Making Children's Histories" in *Making Histories in Museums*, ed. Gaynor Kavanagh (New York: Leicester University Press, 1996): 258-269; S. Maultby, "Childhood and Museums: Exploring the Issues Surrounding the Current Representation of Childhood in Museums," (MA dissertation, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 2001); Sharon Roberts, "Childhood Material Culture and Museum Representations," (PhD Thesis, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2006);

written on the subject by seeking to comprehensively analyze how children's history is represented in California history museums and identify the underlining presence of the sacred child ideal in many of those representations. Chapter 2 explores the ways in which children's history is talked about in California history museums, identifies patterns that emerge in the representation of children's history, and argues that the individual stories of children that make it to the top at times parallel—and at other times diverge—from those of adults.

This project builds onto the pre-existing literature focused on conceptions of childhood by studying what the histories presented reveal about modern conceptions of childhood and how modern-day children respond to—and affect—these representations. These questions, and my proposed answers, encourage deeper dialogue within both the academic and museum community regarding why the modern-day child is so valued as a museum visitor while children of the past are often silenced or marginalized in museum displays. Choices such as these—to establish esteemed child-centered programming while failing to fully integrate the history of children into museum interpretation—influence the ability of visiting children to explore diverse pasts and adversely affect museum experiences for adults and children.

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R.F. Law, "Representations of Childhood in Museums," (MA dissertation, University of Leicester, 1994).



## **Disciplinary Approach**

My training as a public historian, work experience as a museum curator, and volunteer experience as a museum educator each affect my approach to studying how the history of children and childhood is talked about in California history museums, as well as how present-day children participate as visitors and volunteers. As a public historian, my research focuses on studying how the history of children and childhood is presented in California history museums. As a museum curator and former volunteer museum educator, I am aware of the limited resources under which museums struggle to exist. On some days, just being open and accessible to the public can feel like an accomplishment. Staff shortages, cut funding, and limited collections can affect the quality and depth of exhibits as well as how often they are revamped. My training and experience as a public historian shapes my belief that museums can improve how they tell the history of children; my volunteer and work experience within museums keeps me grounded in the many competing, interpretive demands that small staff face as I make recommendations at the conclusion of this dissertation.

The work of historians in the public has a long history of its own and the study of such work and the field of public history itself have continued to professionalize and expand since the 1970s. While recent works such as Ian Tyrrell's *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890-1970* contend that historians have long worked in the public and have had a vested interest to make

meaningful connections with those outside of the academy, as an organized field or constituency public history originated during the 1970s in response to a shortage of academic teaching jobs.<sup>10</sup> The field further professionalized with the inauguration of a peer-reviewed academic journal, *The Public Historian*, in 1978 and the founding of the National Council on Public History in 1980 “to encourage a broader interest in history and to bring together those people, institutions, agencies, businesses, and academic programs associated with the field of history.”<sup>11</sup> Academic training options for those interested in public history has substantially grown since the 1970s. As of 2014, there are more than one hundred graduate programs that have registered themselves in the NCPH sponsored “Guide to Public History Programs.”<sup>12</sup> Twenty-eight year earlier, the guide listed fifty-seven graduate public history programs.<sup>13</sup>

While subfields in public history such as archives, museums, oral history, and historic preservation have tended to dominate graduate coursework, growing fields such as memory and commemoration, digital history, and built environment or

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<sup>10</sup> Ian Tyrrell, *Historians in Public: The Practice of American History, 1890-1970* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005); Jill Liddington, “What is Public History? Publics and Their Pasts, Meanings and Practices,” *Oral History*, 30, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 83-93.

<sup>11</sup>“Who We Are,” National Council on Public History, accessed February 5, 2010, [http://ncph.org/cms/?page\\_id=91](http://ncph.org/cms/?page_id=91).

<sup>12</sup>“Guide to Public History Programs,” National Council on Public History, accessed March 9, 2014, <http://ncph.org/cms/education/graduate-and-undergraduate/guide-to-public-history-programs/>.

<sup>13</sup> Constance B. Schulz, “Becoming a Public Historian and the Challenge of Redefinition,” p. 31 in James B. Gardner and Peter S. LaPaglia, editors, *Public History: Essays from the Field* (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 2004).

landscape studies have truly come into their own and have expanded the breadth and scope of public history. Underscoring each subfield is the acknowledged attempt to share authority with the public in the preservation and presentation of history, whether that be through engaging the public in exhibit design, soliciting the input of community members in how their neighborhood is preserved, or recording and relying on the experience and memories of individuals in the crafting of oral history.

Museums and how they represent the past have played a central role in public history study and scholarship. Just as the Enlightenment shaped how adults perceived children (a topic discussed in Chapter 2), the Enlightenment also shaped the course of museum development. “The modern museum,” writes J. Mordaunt Crook, “is a product of Renaissance humanism, eighteenth-century enlightenment and nineteenth-century democracy.”<sup>14</sup> Several scholars note the shift that occurred between the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as museums, which had generally been private institutions showcasing impressive collections to the elite, began to open to the public in the late eighteenth century. Thus the purposes of exhibition changed. “The public museum as we know it,” George Hein contends, “—the display of objects for the edification and entertainment of the public—is a product of the eighteenth century...Museums developed approximately parallel with the advent of the nation-

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<sup>14</sup> As quoted in Edward Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Function of Museums* (Nashville: American Association of State and Local History, 1979), 8.

state in response to recognition that the welfare of citizens was the responsibility of government.”<sup>15</sup>

Professor of Cultural Studies Tony Bennett attributes these changes to the rise of government as a civilizing force. In his view, the museum became “useful for governing,” a place where the exhibited culture might “be used to regulate the field of social behaviour in endowing individuals with new capacities for self-monitoring and self-regulation.”<sup>16</sup> As the museum became a public space, exhibits moved to the forefront of museum technique.<sup>17</sup> Objects were displayed to build particular cultural identities including those related to the nation-state, and curators chose those objects thought likely to educate and civilize the public. Exhibitionary practices changed and museums democratized education, paralleling other progressive movements, such as the public school movement, of the late-nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup>

One of the defining features of public history—that of shared authority—has continued to gain significance since the 1990s when literature in the field of oral

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<sup>15</sup> George E. Hein, *Learning in the Museum* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 19-20.

<sup>17</sup> Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 10.

<sup>18</sup> Hein, *Learning in the Museum*, 3-4; The democratization of education at the museum did not necessarily transition smoothly throughout the nineteenth century for all museums: “One common, retrospective criticism of museums as educational institutions,” writes Hein, “is that nineteenth-century museums were torn between their educational goals and a more elitist, exclusive tradition. Proponents of this argument cite the limited access and restrictive practices (dress codes, concern about entry of the ‘masses,’ etc.) of early museums” see Hein, *Learning in Museums*, 5-6.

history first broached the subject.<sup>19</sup> The *Journal of Museum Education* devoted an entire issue to the topic of “shared authority.” Within this issue, Guest Editor Dr. Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello, director of the American Studies program at Salem State University, explains the important place of “shared authority” in museum spaces:

Operating from a position of shared authority requires that we consider ourselves first and foremost as both educators and learners. We must recognize that we always and already share authority, for we do not have all the answers—or even all the questions. And we need, perhaps more than anything to be open to engaging in acts of translation in which we seek to understand fully another’s voice and perspective and demystify the language that we and others use to talk about what we do.<sup>20</sup>

This issue of *Journal of Museum Education* includes eleven articles which collectively share ways that a number of museums (predominantly art-focused) have made partnerships and collaboration more effective and meaningful for the publics they serve. These case studies demonstrate how efforts to involve underrepresented publics enrich the museum experience, diversify museum membership, and sustain museums as institutions.

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<sup>19</sup> See Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990); Other significant works include: Catherine M. Lewis, *The Changing Face of Public History: The Chicago Historical Society and the Transformation of an American Museum* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005); Bill Adair, Benjamin Fiene, and Laura Koloski, editors, *Letting Go?: Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World* (Philadelphia, PA: Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello, “Shared Authority: The Key to Museum Education as Social Change,” *The Journal of Museum Education* 38, no. 2 (July 2013): 122.

While recent museum visitor literature such as this reflects mounting attention by museum professionals to the sharing of authority in their effort to maintain relevance, the execution of shared authority rarely extends to children and their inclusion in the creation of exhibitions, execution of programming, or development of collections.<sup>21</sup> Notwithstanding this, children remain a prized public and often the most polished programming or exhibits are made with the child visitor kept in mind.

My dissertation questions the “decentralization of authority,” a trend that gained steam beginning in the late 1960s within museums, by exploring how California history museums do, or do not, share authority with children.<sup>22</sup> Through

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<sup>21</sup> Within *The Journal of Museum Education*, teenagers are a key category with three of the articles dealing directly with how to engage teenagers. The articles, however, pull predominantly from literature written by adults (see Shaw and Krug below), highlight adult-led initiatives with teenagers as the served audience (see Krug, et al), or refer to predominantly adult-mitigated data (see Striepe) rather than incorporating substantial data from youth. As Susan E. Striepe writes as one of her key understandings towards the conclusion of her article, “Further research is recommended to find out from the teenagers themselves what type of programs would appeal to them”(214). See Susan E. Striepe, “How Some Art Museums Can Appeal to Teenagers,” *The Journal of Museum Education* 38, no. 2 (July 2013): 207-217; Ashley Shaw and Don Krug, “Heritage Meets Social Media: Designing a Virtual Museum Space for Young People,” *The Journal of Museum Education* 38, no. 2 (July 2013): 239-252; Gabriel Gomez, Gerri Spinella, Victor Salvo, and Owen Keehnen, “The Legacy Project: Connecting Museum Advocacy to Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) Role Models,” *The Journal of Museum Education* 38, no. 2 (July 2013): 193-206.

<sup>22</sup> For a thorough discussion of how the role of sharing authority has changed over time in the museum realm, see Catherine M. Lewis, *The Changing Face of Public History: The Chicago Historical Society and the Transformation of an American Museum* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 200), 1-10.

examining the representation of children's culture in historical exhibitions and programming as well as the present-day participation of children in California history museums, this dissertation concludes that authority is not shared with children to the same extent as it is shared with adults. While children have not been forgotten in museums' move towards becoming interactive and participatory, child perspectives and voices are largely absent from the historical narrative in museum exhibitions, and the involvement of children in museum design or operations is the exception rather than the rule.<sup>23</sup> This study highlights the exceptions and concludes with a reflection on best practices for representing children's history within exhibits and reaching out to present-day children as consumers and creators of museum interpretation.

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<sup>23</sup> The importance of identity, inclusion, participation, and co-production to museums or heritage sites visits has received notable, academic attention. Studies include: John H. Falk and Lynn Dierking, *Learning from Museums: Visitor Experiences and the Making and Meaning* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2000); John H. Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience* (Walnut Creek: LeftCoast Press, 2009), Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and their Visitors* (London: Routledge, 1994); Scott G. Paris, "How Can Museums Attract Visitors in the Twenty-first Century?" in *Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Hugh H. Genoways (Lanham: Altamira, 2006): 255-266; Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum* (Santa Cruz, CA: Museum, 2010); and Susie Wilkening and James Chung, *Life Stages of the Museum Visitor: Building Engagement Over a Lifetime* (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 2009); Nikolas Glover, "Co-produced Histories: Mapping the Uses and Narratives of History in the Tourist Age," *The Public Historian* 30, no. 1 (February 2008): 105-124.

## Need for the Study

Does museum interpretation really matter? What trust does the public place in museums? An Indiana University study conducted by David Thelen and Roy Rosenzweig in the 1990s revealed that museums have significant weight as cultural authorities. The public trusts and esteems museums even more than the classroom.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, according to the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) there are “approximately 850 million visits each year to American museums, more than the attendance for all major league sporting events and theme parks combined (471 million)” and “museums receive more than 90 million visits each year from students in school groups.”<sup>25</sup>

Despite a poor economy, attendance numbers at some museums are rising, while others feel the effects of cut funding or declining attendance. In 2011, the AAM reported on the economy’s effect on US museums:

most American museums served more visitors in 2011 than the year before. For three years in a row, museums have expanded their service to the American people despite economic stress. More than half of museums in the ACME survey (53%) reported gains of attendance in 2011, in some cases gains of 20% or more. Just 29% reported declining attendance.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 21.

<sup>25</sup> “Museum Facts,” American Alliance of Museums, accessed December 14, 2012, [www.aam-us.org/about-museums/facts](http://www.aam-us.org/about-museums/facts).

<sup>26</sup> American Association of Museums, *Museums and the American Economy in 2011: A Report from the American Association of Museums*, April 2012, p.2, accessed December 20, 2012, <http://www.aam-us.org/docs/research/acme12-final.pdf?sfvrsn=0>. The American Association is now known as the American Alliance of Museums.



While instances of attendance growth, leveling, or decline can be cited attendance by adults to a “park, monument, building, or neighborhood for historic or design value” has decreased by about 13% over the course of thirty years according to surveys sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts.<sup>27</sup>

While many museums have had to look for ways to reinvent themselves to maintain or revive attendance, museums have also had to come to terms with the fact that not all segments of the population are making their way to the museum equally.<sup>28</sup> For example, during the summer of 2004, the Smithsonian Office of Policy and Analysis conducted a survey of museum visitors to advance its goal to “provide visitors with opportunities to discover, be inspired, learn, contemplate, celebrate, have fun, socialize, and much more.”<sup>29</sup> This study found that 74 percent of museum visitors were non-Latino white visitors (compared with 82 percent in 1994) and

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<sup>27</sup> Jennifer L. Novak-Leonard and Alan S. Brown, WolfBrown, *Beyond Attendance: A Multi-Modal Understanding of Arts Participation*, Research Report #54 (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2011), 37, available at <http://arts.gov/sites/default/files/2008-SPPA-BeyondAttendance.pdf>; National Endowment for the Arts, *How a Nation Engages with Art: Highlights from the 2012 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*, NEA Research Report #57 (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2013), 22, available at <http://arts.gov/sites/default/files/highlights-from-2012-SPPA.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Olson, “Looking for Ways to Groom Repeat Visitors,” *The New York Times*, March 20, 2013.

<sup>29</sup> Smithsonian Office of Policy and Analysis, *Results of the 2004 Smithsonian-wide Survey of Museum Visitors* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2004), 1, available at <http://www.si.edu/content/opanda/docs/Rpts2004/04.10.Visitors2004.Final.pdf>. The survey results reflect attendance to the fourteen different museums which made up the Smithsonian at the time.

ethnic composition varied significantly by individual museum (for example, 40 percent of museum visitors to the National Museum of African American Arts identified themselves as African American/Black).<sup>30</sup>

According to one recent study, history museums are not resonating with non-white populations when compared to art, science, and children's museums.<sup>31</sup> Reach Advisors, a research firm "focused serving community-driven enterprises, including a number of America's largest and most innovative museum organizations," developed a survey in 2010 "designed to capture the responses of museum-going adults" and with the help of 103 museums spread across 5 different countries, Reach Advisors compiled more than 40,000 responses from "museum-going households."<sup>32</sup> Within this study, Reach Advisors found that history museums and historic sites have the least ethnic diversity among its visitors with "95% [of respondents] identifying as white, and only 12% identifying as a minority."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 1, 2, 8, 9.

<sup>31</sup> Reach Advisors, "Who's Coming to Your Museum? Demographics by Museum Type," *Museum Audience Insight* (blog), April 21, 2010, [http://reachadvisors.typepad.com/museum\\_audience\\_insight/2010/04/whos-coming-to-your-museum-demographics-by-museum-type.html](http://reachadvisors.typepad.com/museum_audience_insight/2010/04/whos-coming-to-your-museum-demographics-by-museum-type.html). Contributors to Reach Advisors' blog include James Chung, Sally Johnstone, and Susie Wilkening.

<sup>32</sup> Reach Advisors, "Biography," *Museum Audience Insight* (blog), <http://reachadvisors.typepad.com/about.html>; Reach Advisors, "So What is This Big Survey All About Anyway?" *Museum Audience Insight* (blog), March 30, 2010, [http://reachadvisors.typepad.com/museum\\_audience\\_insight/2010/03/so-what-is-this-big-survey-all-about-anyway.html](http://reachadvisors.typepad.com/museum_audience_insight/2010/03/so-what-is-this-big-survey-all-about-anyway.html).

<sup>33</sup> Reach Advisors, "Who's Coming to Your Museum? Demographics by Museum Type," *Museum Audience Insight* (blog), April 21, 2010,

Issues of race, class, gender, and age *must* be included within museum exhibitions if they are to resonate with the public that visits them and attract new visitors. In a society that reports children as representing 24 percent of the population and even larger percentages of the museum-going population, museums should accurately reflect the history of this segment of the population.<sup>34</sup>

In his book, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*, John H. Falk refers to a ten-year demographic study of attendance at the Smithsonian Institution and shared its report that children (excluding school groups) constituted 30 percent of the Smithsonian visitors.<sup>35</sup> In the seminal work, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, Tony Bennett suggests that there have been, “two distinctive political demands that have been generated in relation to the modern museum: the demand that there should be parity of representation for all groups and cultures within the collecting, exhibition and conservation activities of museums, and the demand that the members of all social groups should have equal practical as well theoretical rights of access to museums.”<sup>36</sup> While child-centered programming, museum-school partnerships, and outreach programs for schoolchildren provide

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[http://reachadvisors.typepad.com/museum\\_audience\\_insight/2010/04/whos-coming-to-your-museum-demographics-by-museum-type.html](http://reachadvisors.typepad.com/museum_audience_insight/2010/04/whos-coming-to-your-museum-demographics-by-museum-type.html).

<sup>34</sup> Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2013), 3, available at [http://www.childstats.gov/pdf/ac2013/ac\\_13.pdf](http://www.childstats.gov/pdf/ac2013/ac_13.pdf). ; Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*, 28.

<sup>35</sup> Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*, 28.

<sup>36</sup> Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, 9.

evidence that museums are providing equal “rights of access to museums” for children, the lack of children’s presence in the particular stories or overarching narrative that museums provide suggests that museums have yet to modernize in the way Bennett charts.

I first realized the impact of omission as a front-line interpreter. I was accompanying a tour led by Hunter, a thirteen-year-old male docent with sandy blonde hair. As we finished an educational component on Victorian dress and prepared to move to the next station, I overheard a third-grade student ask Hunter, “was there such a thing as poor?” The question resonated with me immediately as the exhibit, at that time, provided little evidence that any population other than one that could afford to buy oil paintings or objects made of gold, silk, ivory, and other fine materials existed; a maid’s uniform which could have served as a visual cue that there were less wealthy populations co-existing with the rich had been switched out for an elegant embroidered and embellished coat three months prior.<sup>37</sup> After this experience, I wondered how often a child leaves a museum either perplexed at the lack of information about children or persuaded that children matter little when it comes to history or society.

The omission of children from present-day museum operations, and the lack of children’s history in museum interpretation can perpetuate misconceptions regarding the role of children as agents in history. The missing perspectives of

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<sup>37</sup> Field notes from tour with Hunter [Pseud], April 22, 2011. All names of child participants have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

children in history museums also convey a message, perhaps unintentionally, that the opinions and viewpoints of children matter little, and that the actions of children have little historical consequence as, according to Eilean Hooper-Greenhill “the gaps and omissions in speech reveal values, opinions, assumptions and attitudes.”<sup>38</sup>

And, perhaps most importantly, the history of adults cannot be fully captured unless the history of children is understood. In a 1997 article, Patricia West wrote about the underutilization of women’s history in house museums, specifically at National Park Service sites, and convincingly discussed the impact such interpretive choices make overall: “People wanting insight into the lives of American patriarchs could use house museums to grasp one of the truisms of women’s history—that men’s lives, public and private, cannot be fully understood without reference to women, be they mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, servants, or slaves.”<sup>39</sup>

One clear example of how children affect adults can be found in Enid Schildkrout’s “Age and Gender in Hausa Society: Socio-Economic Roles of Children in Urban Kano” which demonstrates how children in one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, the Hausa, are instrumental in defining sex roles, and in essence *adult roles*, in a society which separates women from the public sphere through institution of *purdah* after marriage and within a society where men and women are separated in

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<sup>38</sup> Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and Their Visitors*, 115.

<sup>39</sup> Patricia West, "Interpreting Women's History at Male-Focused House Museums," *CRM* 20, no. 3 (1997), 8.

“all non-sexual activities.”<sup>40</sup> Because children in Hausa society, generally before the age of twelve, can walk freely into each other’s home without invitation and can enter public space, children make the institution of *purdah*, which limits a married woman’s mobility outside of the home, possible. For example, women are free to earn extra income, yet it is the children who take their goods to the market to sell. Women’s ability to gain income, therefore, rests on the particular construction of childhood. Children can act as their mother’s eyes and ears as they slink in and out of others’ homes, sometimes unnoticed, and acquire information. For boys, this is the only time that they will share space with women in non-sexual activities, so it becomes a period of learning. Schildkrout’s analysis of the Hausa Society thus shows how the gendered expectations of women are supported by a particular construction of childhood; children are free to go where women are not.

Schildkrout’s study demonstrates how, in the Hausa society, “children...are crucial in social structural terms: the social, economic and political definition of adult roles, particularly those based on gender, cannot be understood without taking account of the roles of children.”<sup>41</sup> Children are essential as they can carry on tasks that require them to cross the separation of spheres and childhood is constructed to mirror future gender roles while supporting the existing gender expectations under the institution of *purdah*. Just as Schildkrout charts the socio-economic roles of

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<sup>40</sup> Enid Schildkrout, “Age and Gender in Hausa Society: Socio-Economic Roles of Children in Urban Kano” *Childhood: A Global Journal of Child Research* 9, no. 3 (2002): 362.

<sup>41</sup> Schildkrout, “Age and Gender in Hausa Society,” 365.

children in Hausa Society, scholars in the United States have demonstrated how children have affected society, law, and culture.<sup>42</sup>

Museums often give most, if not all, attention to the adult agents in history. Even works on the history of children and childhood as produced by academics, at times, preference adults, competing conceptions of childhood forwarded by adults, or other initiatives related to children spearheaded by adults compared to that of children themselves. For example, despite gains in the field of children's history, historian Steven Mintz argues that even among these publications there is room for growth. "Even in the books that purport to be about children," he writes, "there is a tendency to foreground adults. Much more has been written about parenting practices, representations and ideologies of childhood, reform movements, and adult-run institutions than about children's emotion, perceptions, or the intricacies of

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<sup>42</sup> Works include, but are not limited to: Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2004); Lisa Jacobson's *Raising Consumers: Children and the American Mass Market in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Henry Jenkins, editor, *The Children's Culture Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Mary E. Odem, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Elliott West and Paula Petrik, *Small Worlds: Children and Adolescents in America, 1850-1950* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1992); Miriam Forman-Brunell and Leslie Paris, editors, *The Girls' History and Culture Reader: The Nineteenth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011); Miriam Forman-Brunell and Leslie Paris, editors, *The Girls' History and Culture Reader: The Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

growing up.”<sup>43</sup> As Mintz argues, these histories continuously underscore all events in American history:

childhood is inextricably linked to larger historical developments. The colonists’ acute sensitivity to tyranny was rooted, at least partly, in childhood experiences of servitude and apprenticeship. The revolt against patriarchy that preceded and fueled the American Revolution was played out in many small shops, on farms, and in individual households, much as the generational conflicts of the 1960s were often enacted in intra-family tensions.<sup>44</sup>

The lack of clarity regarding the role of children in history can affect present-day children’s overall opinion of history. While conducting research for a book on young social activists, author Philip Hoose interviewed Sarah Rosen, a young girl who enacted a protest against her teacher’s decision to exclude girls from participating in a reenactment of the Constitutional Convention of 1787 in an effort to maintain historical accuracy. In her interview with Hoose she shared, “We’re not taught about younger people who have made a difference. Studying history almost makes you feel like you’re not a real person.”<sup>45</sup> As I spoke with Grace, one of the junior docents that participated in my study, about her love for historical fiction, she attributed its focus on sharing stories about “girls” that were individualistic and intimate enough that she could relate:

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<sup>43</sup> Steven Mintz, “The True History From Below: The Significance of Children’s History,” *Historically Speaking* 7, no. 1 (Sept/Oct 2005): 2.

<sup>44</sup> Mintz, “The True History From Below,” 5.

<sup>45</sup> Phillip Hoose, *We Were There, Too! Young People in U.S. History* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), vi. Hoose interviewed Rosen for the book, *It’s Our World Too!: Stories of Young People Who are Making a Difference*.



I like it that the girls may be one hundred, two hundred, three hundred years ago, but in a lot of ways they're still like me. They still worry about how they look and they still worry about whether boys like them and they're still worrying about like the same things even though times are so different. Maybe they're moving along the Pioneer [trail] and they're losing one of their sisters, or whatever it is, but they're still like me. So, that's pretty cool.<sup>46</sup>

And while there are many ways that children are the same no matter how much time has passed, there are multiple ways that their experiences, or impact, vary. Children, as a group, market, or as individuals, affect the world today through a variety of roles. For example, they affect industry with their purchasing power and “play a crucial role in today’s economy. According to some estimates, children spend or influence the spending of up to \$500 billion annually.”<sup>47</sup>

Due to the Internet and rise of social media, children’s visibility in contemporary society has only increased. Social media tools such as *YouTube*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, and *Facebook* allow children to post and share videos to promote themselves and construct an online identity. Whether giving tutorials, sharing their talents, or filming tours of their bedrooms, these youths affect consumer culture

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<sup>46</sup> Grace [pseud.], interview with author, Pasadena Museum of History, 25 April 2012. All junior docent interviews were audio recorded and conducted in confidentiality to comply with human subject research standards and, as promised to junior docents, names have been withheld. A pseudonym has been created for each junior docent. Interviews were transcribed by me and quotes have been lightly edited for readability. All quotations taken from interviews conducted by myself within this dissertation have been lightly edited for readability, aligning with guidelines found in Baylor University Institute for Oral History’s *Style Guide: A Quick Reference for Editing Oral History Transcripts* (2013). Thus, false starts and some feedback words have been omitted with discretion.

<sup>47</sup> Lisa Jacobson, editor. *Children and Consumer Culture in American Society: A Historical Handbook and Guide* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008), xiii.

through their videos and, sometimes, garner enough attention to help catapult them to celebrity status. For example, Grammy-nominee singer Justin Bieber first uploaded footage of himself in 2007 at the age of twelve as a way to share his performing with family and friends. This choice led to his discovery: “I put my singing videos from the competition on *YouTube* so that my friends and family could watch them,” he writes on his website, “But it turned out that other people liked them and they started subscribing to them. That’s how my manager found me. He saw me on You Tube and contacted my family and now I’m signed!”<sup>48</sup>

In addition to shaping the economy, youth continue to affect policy, law, and human rights. Take, for example, twelve-year-old Craig Kielburger who founded *Free the Children* in 1995 after learning about the murder of Iqbal Masih, an escaped twelve-year-old child laborer in Pakistan. Feeling that the voice of children was missing from the speeches he made on behalf of his organization, Kielburger made a seven-week sojourn to South Asia to speak with working children, capture their voices, and bring that perspective to his organization. As he later wrote in the 1998 preface to his book *Free the Children*, “I knew that if we were to help child labourers, we needed to learn from the children themselves.”<sup>49</sup> Kielburger identifies the uniqueness of children’s’ perspectives:

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<sup>48</sup> Justin Bieber official website, “About,” <http://www.justinbiebermusic.com/#/about> (accessed February 27, 2013; specific page no longer available).

<sup>49</sup> Craig Kielburger, *Free the Children* (Toronto, Ontario: Me to We Books, 2010), 9. First published in 1998 by Harper Collins.

Children are not simply empty vessels to be filled. They are people with ideas, talents, opinions, and dreams. Children believe they can fly, that there is nothing to stop their dreams from coming true...Because we are young, full of ideals, full of dreams, we are not afraid of taking an idea that to some seems impossible and striving to make it a reality. Because children are dreamers, they are unstoppable. Because they are idealists, they always have faith in a better tomorrow.<sup>50</sup>

One reviewer wrote, "It never occurred to Craig that his age should prevent him from helping children around the globe. In fact, his youth is exactly what made him feel both qualified and obligated to do so. And although he still meets adults who have no interest in hearing children's voices, he continues to believe in the power of children to change the world."<sup>51</sup>

The ability of children to initiate change or to exercise agency has a historical trajectory as well. Take for example the central role of children to the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and the pivotal role black youth, such as Claudette Colvin, Ruby Bridges, and Melba Beals, played in initiating change through challenging discrimination and insisting on integration. But, too often, the role of children is considered peripheral to the histories presented (in both academic texts and museum exhibitions), incidental to events that happened at a particular site, or just "one small

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<sup>50</sup> As quoted in Melissa Hartman, "Children Speaking for Children," *ImaGiNe: Opportunities and Resources for Academically Talented Youth*, Volume 6, No. 4 (March/April 1999): 11.

<sup>51</sup> Hartman, "Children Speaking for Children," 11.

part of a more compelling story,” as one staff member at a New York colonial house museum shared in my pilot study.<sup>52</sup>

The misrepresentation of cultures and individuals in American history has been criticized and attacked both within and outside the museum community, including on the most public and popular of American stages. For example, in 1973 Oscar nominee, and would-be winner for that year, Marlon Brando sent an American Indian, Sacheen Littlefeather, to decline acceptance of the Oscar award for his performance in the film *The Godfather*. Littlefeather, of Apache Indian descent and president of the National Native American Affirmative Image Committee, explained to a crowd that was divided by boos and cheers that Brando could not accept the award due to the “treatment of American Indians today by the film industry...and on television and movie reruns, and also with recent happenings at Wounded Knee.”<sup>53</sup>

As Brando later explained on June 12, 1973 on *The Dick Cavett* show:

I don’t think that people generally realize what the Motion Picture industry has done to the American Indian, as a matter of fact, all ethnic groups, uh, all minorities, all nonwhites. And, people just simply don’t realize, they just took it for granted that that’s the way people are going to be presented and these clichés were just going to be perpetuated.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Extract from survey created by the author, Representation of Children in Historic House Museums dealing with Pre-1800 History survey, received spring 2009, survey #5, pg. 5, question no. 32.

<sup>53</sup> Sacheen Littlefeather acceptance speech, Academy Awards Acceptance Speeches, Research & Preservation, Resources & Databases, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences website, accessed 8 March 2014, <http://aaspeechesdb.oscars.org/link/045-1/>.

<sup>54</sup> “Marlon Brando Interview 1973 (Part 1 of 6),” YouTube video, 10:01, from an interview on *The Dick Cavett Show* televised by CBS on June 12, 1973, posted by “gulleyjimson,” Aug 2, 2008, accessed March 8, 2014,

Brando proceeded to discuss what he saw as the consequences of misrepresentation:

And people actually don't realize how deeply, uh, these people are injured by seeing themselves represented, not so much the adults but they're already inured to that kind of pain and pressure, but, uh, children—Indian children seeing Indians represented as savage, as ugly, as nasty, vicious, treacherous, uh, drunken, uh, they grow up only with a negative image of themselves and it lasts a lifetime.<sup>55</sup>

In just this same way, museum misrepresentation or exclusion of children's historical contributions narrow visitors' understanding of history overall, compromise their complete understanding of how adults have experienced historical events, and overlook the significance of age as a historical category of analysis.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, failing to question how adults and children experience historical events differently perpetuates a misconception that children and adults experience events in the same way. Brenda J. Allen, author of *Difference Matters*, explains the importance of recognizing difference in the search for equality:

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<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAPDQ5MILxE>; "Marlon Brando Interview 1973 (2/6)," YouTube video, 10:01, from an interview on *The Dick Cavett Show* televised by CBS on June 12, 1973, posted by "gulleyjimson," Aug 2, 2008, accessed March 8, 2014, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNd9FhfBFcY>.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> See Mary Jo Maynes, "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis: History, Agency, and Narratives of Childhood," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 114-124; Steven Mintz, "Reflections on Age as a Category of Historical Analysis," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 91-94; Leslie Paris, "Through the Looking Glass: Age, Stages, and Historical Analysis," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 106-113.

Some people believe that difference does *not* matter because they think our society has solved problems of inequalities and injustices. However, research repeatedly reveals that differences in social identity continue to matter in the United States. To challenge ideologies (belief systems) that perpetuate inequalities and injustices, we have to acknowledge that difference matters.<sup>57</sup>

And while “difference matters,” there is no one uniform definition of difference. The “difference” of childhood and the, at times, fight to promote or preserve different and competing conceptions of childhood has a long history that will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 2.

And yet, recognizing difference is new to museum interpretation. In 2008, the American Alliance of Museums<sup>58</sup> published *National Standards & Best Practices for U.S. Museums*. The association lists “characteristics for excellence for U.S. museums” which include points focusing on the importance of understanding the needs of being inclusive to and understanding of diverse audiences.<sup>59</sup> The publication provides examples as to how museums can attempt to meet these needs and engage a “broad variety of users”:

For example, a historic house museum that focuses solely on the business and political accomplishments of its well-off Caucasian, male owner may be missing aspects of interpretation that would engage the attention of other audiences—the story of the women who managed the household, or the servants or slaves who made this lifestyle possible. Railroad enthusiasts may focus primarily on technological achievements, when there are broader

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<sup>57</sup> Allen, *Difference Matters*, 183.

<sup>58</sup> At the time known as The American Association of Museums.

<sup>59</sup> The American Association of Museums (AAM) with commentary by Elizabeth E. Merritt, *National Standards & Best Practice for U.S. Museums* (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 2008): 15-16.

stories to be told about economics, migration and social and geographic mobility to name a few.<sup>60</sup>

While it is becoming expected to include voices that vary and differ by race, class, or gender in historic presentations, the inclusion of voices that are different by age continues to lag behind in museum interpretation.

In a society concerned with child welfare, safety, and protection, the history of children and childhood within museum presentations is often reduced to symbols of childhood while ignoring the long and complicated histories behind such ideals. Furthermore, within my interviews with museum personnel and volunteers, distinguishing children of the past from children of the present proved difficult on a few occasions. Despite my attempts to switch “children’s history” for the “history of children” or the “history of growing up” within my vocabulary, a couple of interviewees still remained grounded in the present with their focus planted on modern children.

If academics need to work on moving the history of children and childhood beyond adult-driven narratives, museums have to start by acknowledging that children have any history at all and that childhood is neither universal nor static. The confusion of some museum educators to understand what I meant by “the history of children and childhood” in our interviews is illustrated in the following conversation I had with one museum educator who had coordinated programs for school children

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 60.

for twenty-two years. At first she struggled to understand my meaning, but, given time, she almost cannot stop in answering the question.

Inloes: Do children learn about the history of children and childhood in the various programs?

Museum Educator (ME): Do they learn about what?

Inloes: Sure, the history of children [pause] and childhood.

ME: [pause] I'm not sure I understand.

Inloes: Sure, um, do they learn about, um-

ME: [interjects] Like if they're a fifth grader do they learn about what a fifth grader would be like over 150 years ago?

Inloes: Yes.

ME: Yeah, they do by going into the school, and they had to help at home with the chores and then when they go, you know, like the Chumash that there was no doctor it was a Shaman and then the hospitals, you know, I mean things that they can't really comprehend.

Inloes: Yeah.

ME: And making biscuits, I mean how many kids today make biscuits?

Inloes: Yeah, uh-huh.

ME: You know, or, uh, you know hit the rugs, or wash the clothes, or, in the adobe, you know, they learn so many things about the Spanish Era but, you know, they have no clue. So it's kind of neat that they can kind of relate to some of this when they hear it all, and then with the hands-on it helps.<sup>61</sup>

This exchange is representative of the multiple conversations I held where the museum professional or survey respondent appeared unsure of my meaning when I used "the history of children and childhood." While some conversations suggested an unfamiliarity with children's history, other conversations depicted children as being static and immune to historical change, an idea captured in the opening lines of a children's book sold at a small Southern California museum's gift shop:

Kids are kids; always have been. If you take two modern-day 9 year olds and plunk them in a rocky creek next to a tall pine forest on a breezy Spring afternoon, they'll do the same thing two 9 year olds from 1858 would have

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<sup>61</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with author, May 12, 2012.



done. They'll take off their shoes and wade in the cold water, looking under rocks for crawdads. When their feet have turned to ice, they'll warm up in the sun with a mud pie picnic.<sup>62</sup>

The concept that children are predictable in their reaction to the surrounding environment, or static in terms of responsibilities and interests, echoed throughout my research. As one California State Park interpretive specialist wrote in response to my query regarding what schoolchildren learn during their visit about the history of children and childhood:

Chumash children did the same things all children do – they played with each other and helped their parents. Boys and girls assisted their parents with whatever work they (the parents) were assigned at the mission and in that way became apprenticed in learning to plant crops, manage animals and cooking for the mission population. They had more chores and less time to play in their daily lives. But they did have dolls, toys and games to play.”<sup>63</sup>

While this quote starts out universalizing the meaning of being a “child,” the description of childhood for Chumash children substantiates its very uniqueness, as well as the effect of environment, race, and class on their experience. Often, museum interpreters turn to universalizing concepts that overshadow the diverse realities that have shaped the fabric of American childhoods and miss opportunities to tease out varying historical experiences even when describing variation such as the above example.

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<sup>62</sup> Barbara Swell, *Children at the Hearth: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Cooking, Manners & Games* (np: Native Ground Music, Inc., 1999), 2.

<sup>63</sup> Written Response to Survey Follow-up Questions, Survey Respondent #16, received February 2, 2010.

The oversimplification of the constant factors that connect childhood “then” and now—and the “then” is rarely defined clearly—or teaching that children in the past had harder lives than children of the present, further misrepresents and universalizes the history of childhood. And yet, perhaps the sometimes inseparable correlation between children in the past and children of the present is what makes the study of children and their history in museums so exciting. Within Chapter 2, this dissertation will suggest that not only are children often spoken of in universal terms, but ideals of childhood—which started to take root in the late-eighteenth century—are often chosen over historical realities when it comes to museum exhibitions.

### **Research Approach and Methodology**

The research objective for this dissertation is to start a dialogue questioning the representation of children’s history in California history museums. I entered this project wanting to know which stories about children made it to the top in the museum setting, and exited this project with an advanced understanding of how authority is shared with present-day child volunteers and visitors, as well as the narratives and stories of children from the past. I devised a research approach which allowed me to bring both breadth and depth to this study as I surveyed hundreds of museums, spoke with scores of museum personnel, while immersing myself in a select number of research sites. Primary to my approach was a concern for confidentiality to the participants, comparison between sites, and contextualization in the broader museum literature and institutions outside of the state.

A qualitative-research project, this dissertation is based on a statewide survey which yielded a 70 percent return rate and more than 200 survey responses, 152 oral interviews (149 of which are audio recorded, and 42 of which are with children), participant observation at one museums for more than three years, archival research, and site visits to forty California museums.<sup>64</sup> Relying on my training as a public historian, I bring present-day museum professionals, volunteers, and visitors to the center of my research and analysis to enable fuller consideration of their voices and the issues they raise.<sup>65</sup>

### **Participant Observation and Human Subject Research**

This dissertation includes Human Subject research both in my interviews of adult museum personnel and volunteers, as well as my participation in the Pasadena Museum of History junior docent program. My research design and practice adheres

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<sup>64</sup> For this project, I interviewed 152 individuals (90 by phone and 62 in person). Of the interviews conducted, 149 were recorded with a digital voice recorder. For the three interviews that were not audio recorded, I transcribed the interview as we spoke. The quality of two of the audio-recorded interviews was significantly compromised due to an equipment malfunction; as a result, one of these interviews was conducted a second time. Notes were taken during each of the interviews, and 75 interviews (49 percent) have been transcribed by me. These audio recordings will remain in my possession to ensure complete confidentiality.

<sup>65</sup> The following work was central in the crafting of my research design: John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2009).

to professional standards for Human Subject research as monitored by the Office of Research at the University of California, Santa Barbara.<sup>66</sup>

To comply with Human Subject professional standards, all the names of children within this dissertation have been changed to protect their identity. Out of respect for the California museum community and its interconnectedness, quotes taken from oral interviews are often left anonymous to respect these individuals who graciously gave both time and trust in their willingness to speak openly about their workplaces. Quoted material taken from oral interviews which is identified by name has been reviewed and approved by the interviewee.

I conducted participant observation with minors from October to the following June for three years at the Pasadena Museum of History and in the process shadowed more than 100 junior docent-led tours and spent over 260 hours at this museum. As David M. Fetterman defines it, “Participant observation is immersion in a culture. Ideally, the ethnographer lives and works in the community for 6 months to a year or more, learning the language and seeing patterns of behavior over time. Long-term residence helps the researcher internalize the basic beliefs, fear, hopes,

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<sup>66</sup> For my study of the representation of children’s history and the development of educational programming in California museums through the surveying and interviewing of museum professionals, volunteers, and educators, I received Human Subjects Exemption from the Office of Research at the University of California Santa Barbara on December 18, 2009 (Human Subjects Protocol 09-662). My Junior Docent Program Research (which includes the study of minors) received approval on September 22, 2010 (Human Subjects Protocol Submission ID 10-552). I renewed my Junior Docent Program Research Human Subjects Protocol on September 22, 2011 (Human Subjects Protocol Submission ID 11-554), and August 16, 2012 (Human Subjects Protocol Submission ID 12-590).

and expectations of the people under study.”<sup>67</sup> For my time at the Pasadena Museum of History, I immersed myself as a volunteer senior docent accompanying junior docents on their tours. In addition to interviewing forty teenage participants, I attended volunteer events, special programming, and interviewed eight adult volunteers and three staff members.

During the first year of my participant observation, I closely followed the advice and adhered to the guidelines provided in *Knowing Children: Participant Observation with Minors* (1988) by being cautious not to come across as an authoritative figure to the children, and to avoid offering advice, correction, or discipline in my role as a senior docent unless help was sought by the children. I also recorded notes, writing vigorously while on site and writing them out later as recommended by Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw’s *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (1995).<sup>68</sup> That first year I typed 439 pages of single-spaced-typed notes and came away with an in-depth understanding of the program.

During years two and three of my participant observation, I slowly transitioned to immersing myself more fully in the program, being less concerned about whether the children saw me as an authority figure and focusing less on documenting everything so I would not miss opportunities to react and connect. I got

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<sup>67</sup> David M. Fetterman, *Ethnography: Step-by-Step*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2010), 37.

<sup>68</sup> Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).

to know the children who participated better by being more of a mentor than an observer. While I continued to audio record and take notes, I did so at a reduced level. Still, I attended as many tours and continued to conduct exit interviews with junior docents.

### **Archival Research and Fieldwork**

While one sizable element of my research depended on full immersion at one museum, I also allotted time to visit other museums throughout the state. I chose sites representative of the breadth of California history museums in terms of size, location (serving a rural or urban population), resources, longevity, and mission.<sup>69</sup> I weave examples from these visits into each of my chapters.

This dissertation also includes a level of archival research and exhaustive secondary research in the study and application of pertinent theories, relevant debates, and influential studies. I conducted a level of archival research at a number of the California museums which are the focus of this dissertation.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Over the course of my research, I have visited forty museums in the following counties: Los Angeles (8), El Dorado (6), Sacramento (5), Orange (4), San Diego (5), Alameda (2), San Joaquin (2), Santa Barbara (2), Ventura (2), Amador (1), Inyo (1), Napa (1), and Riverside (1).

<sup>70</sup> Many museums have yet to prepare their institutional records in a way that is accessible to the public; therefore, my research at each of these institutions occurred at a different level depending on accessibility and availability of staff: Oakland Museum of California; Pasadena Museum of History; Stagecoach Inn (Newbury Park, CA), and the Tallac Historic Site (South Lake Tahoe, CA), as well as the New-York Historical Society (New York, New York).

## Surveying California Museums

Fundamental to this study are the responses I received to a survey I distributed among California Museums between the summer of 2009 and 2011.<sup>71</sup> I distributed a four-page survey to at least 339 institutions connected with the operation of history museums, historical societies, state park districts, historic houses, or national park historic sites over a twenty-two-month period.<sup>72</sup> Inspired by the use of a survey by Jennifer Christine Mach Pustz in her dissertation examining the representation of domestic servants in house museums, I chose to use a survey as a way to start a dialogue among the California museum community on the representation of children's history within California history museums, and conducted follow-up phone interviews with approximately 30 percent of survey respondents.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> A detailed survey methodology and copy of the survey is provided in Appendix A and B. The survey was reviewed in 2008 by Dr. Lisa Jacobson, professor, cultural historian, and author of *Raising Consumers: Children and the American Mass Market in the Early Twentieth Century* (Columbia University Press, 2004) and Dr. Anne Petersen, Associate Director of Historical Resources at the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation. Professor Jacobson provided essential guidance regarding the wording of questions and the defining of terms, while Anne Petersen brought insightful suggestions concerning the formatting and distributing of the survey to ensure a high response rate.

<sup>72</sup> As I spoke with survey respondents during follow-up interviews, it came to my knowledge that some survey respondents passed on my survey to contacts and colleagues at other institutions, which makes it impossible to know the exact amount of museums my survey reached.

<sup>73</sup> See Jennifer Christine Mach Pustz, "The Servant Problem: Historic House Museums and Social History" (PhD diss., The University of Iowa, 2004). My selection of interviewees was predicated on multiple variables, including but not limited to: the willingness of survey respondents to participate further (I did not

In an earlier project related to the research of this dissertation, I mailed a pilot survey to fifty-one house museums with an interpretive period pre-dating 1801 in New York, Virginia, and Massachusetts. This study, which yielded a 65 percent response rate, allowed me the opportunity to test hypotheses, questions, and the strength of each survey question. After receiving thirty-three completed surveys from this East coast pilot study, I rewrote my survey in the attempt to eliminate questions that resulted in confusion, misunderstanding, or apathy on the part of the survey respondent.<sup>74</sup>

In August 2009 I began distributing a revised survey asking California museums questions pertaining to their operations, the representation of children's history in their exhibits, collections, and programming, as well as the education of present-day children at their site. The California institutions I surveyed varied in their size, region, governance, budget, attendance, staff, and accreditation status. To ensure a diversified pool of respondents, I built an institutional contact list pulling from a variety of sources: history museums accredited through the American Alliance of

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contact those who left Question 31 blank; see Appendix B); the ability to get in contact with interested survey respondents; and, my own prioritization of survey respondents whose survey suggested that representations of children's history did manifest at their respective site.

<sup>74</sup> Survey respondents were not asked to provide any demographic information on their institution aside from addressing a few questions on staffing and attendance. Initially, the survey asked more questions related to museum operations; however, I received guidance to eliminate these questions as much of that data can be found online, the addition of those questions lengthened an already questionably lengthy survey, and questions pertaining to operating budgets or staff and volunteer diversity might intimidate museums—especially small and local museums—and inhibit their participation.



Museums (AAM); house museums listed in the *Directory of Historic House Museums in the United States*<sup>75</sup>; all California State Park districts; history-focused institutional members of the California Association of Museums (CAM); children's museums; and museums that resulted by way of referral or personal choice.

In total, I received 238 survey responses, representing an approximate return rate of 70 percent and reflecting the geographic diversity of the state (see Figure 1). Six responses were discounted as outliers; therefore, 232 surveys were deemed suitable for analysis and all ratios pulled from my survey data reflect this selection of 232 total survey responses.<sup>76</sup> According to CAM, during the time of my survey there were approximately 1,400 museums in California and of that amount approximately 45 percent (630) were history-related, including history museums, historical societies, historic sites, and historic homes.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Patricia Chambers Walker and Thomas Graham, *Directory of Historic House Museums in the United States* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2000).

<sup>76</sup> Six surveys were discounted as outliers for the following reasons: one survey respondent phoned in partial, select answers; two surveys came from sites that turned out to be non-collecting, contemporary art galleries; one survey came from a research facility that does not offer public programming or exhibitions; and, one site had three different staff members submit a survey (I compiled these answers into one survey).

<sup>77</sup> My survey was distributed between 2009 and 2011. The *2010 California Museums Financial and Salary Survey* reports 44 percent of the 1,400 museums to be history related. The *2012 California Museums Financial and Salary Survey* reports 47.1 percent to be history-related.

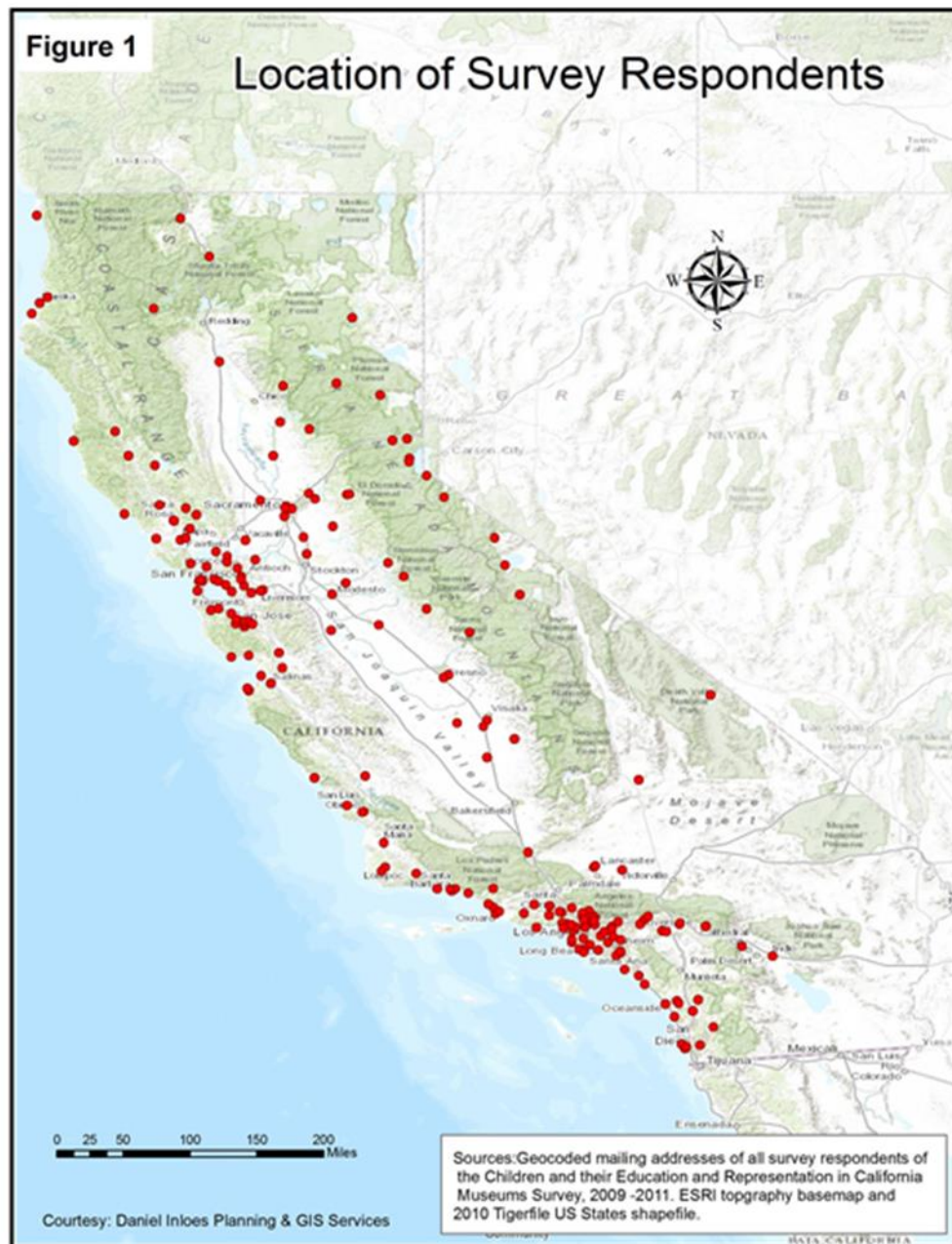


Figure 1: Within this geographic representation, each dot represents the survey respondent, not an individual museum. Many survey respondents operate multiple museums (for example, survey respondents operating state park districts or nonprofit organizations were responsible for several house museums). Each dot represents the location of the survey respondent's mailing address. Museum(s) for which the survey respondent answered are thus within a geographic radius of that dot. Map courtesy of Daniel Inloes Planning & GIS Services.

My survey responses reflect diverse governance and museum type. Survey responses came from institutions operating under various governing structures in the public, nonprofit, and private sectors. Museum governance is not always straightforward or easy to understand as often museums operate under partnerships between these different sectors. My survey responses also reflect a variety of museum types, including but not limited to: historic house museums, history museums, children's museums, natural history museums, art museums, and state parks. Survey participants reflect the complexity and breadth of California museums as I received responses from institutions scattered throughout fifty-three counties that operate in the private and public sector, and at the federal, state, or local level.<sup>78</sup>

### **Limitations of a Survey**

The purpose of my survey was to start a dialogue with California museums that would lead to further research on my end, additional conversations with museum professionals and volunteers, and extensive field research. I circulated a survey to learn about the place of children's history in California museums and to identify how museums understand the issue of children. Throughout I was aware that a survey was not an infallible research tool. While the survey provided quantitative data, I consider it a qualitative instrument as follow-up interviews demonstrated the multiple ways

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<sup>78</sup> The ten counties from which I received the most surveys include: Los Angeles (32 surveys); San Diego (18 surveys); Orange (14 surveys); Sacramento (14 surveys); Alameda (11 surveys); Santa Clara (10 surveys); Santa Barbara (9 surveys); Ventura (9 surveys); Contra Costa (8 surveys); and San Bernardino (7 surveys).

questions could be interpreted. From the nuances that emerged, however, I learned more about how survey respondents thought of and classified children's history, as well as the limitations of my own understanding of the topic in the early stages of my research.

Both the process of writing a survey and then making sense of the responses that are collected are subject to a level of error as there are several factors that cannot be controlled, such as, the interpretation of questions, the thoroughness of survey completion, or, the return rate of surveys. Although differing opinions exist, a return rate between 50 and 75 percent appears to be acceptable in literature on research methods with "research methods textbooks...argu[ing] strongly for securing a high rate of return as a means of minimizing nonresponsive bias."<sup>79</sup> With a 70 percent return rate, the representativeness of my survey is quite high, although there still exists a level of nonresponsive bias. Mark A. Hager, Sarah Wilson, Thomas H. Pollack, and Patrick Michael-Rooney define nonresponsive bias as follows:

For almost any survey project, a proportion of selected cases will choose not to participate. If the cases that respond to the survey are somehow different from the cases that do not respond, error is introduced into the sample. If the differences are severe, the bias can compromise a researcher's ability to make valid claims about the population of interest.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Mark A. Hager, Sarah Wilson, Thomas H. Pollak, and Patrick Michael-Rooney, "Response Rates for Mail Surveys of Nonprofit Organizations: A Review and Empirical Test," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (June 2003): 254.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

In my attempt to get museums to respond by way of follow-up emails and phone calls, I did learn why seventeen *nonrespondents* chose not to participate. The most common reason some institutions chose not to participate was they simply felt the survey was not applicable to them (this occurred in seven instances).

As one Los Angeles area museum staffer wrote, “While we provide programming and educational spaces for children, the majority of the questions in your survey are not applicable to the collection....”<sup>81</sup> Another wrote, “Thank you for your interest in the [...] Museum for your doctoral study. Unfortunately, I do not believe that the history represented in the [...] Museum directly relates to your topic of study.”<sup>82</sup> Or, as one California State Park Sector Superintendent put it, “The museums in this district do not deal directly with children’s history.”<sup>83</sup> Having sought out children’s museums in the third phase of my survey mailing in an attempt to find any exhibits that focused on the historical contributions of children, I did receive comments from two children’s museums saying that the survey was not applicable. As one children’s museum in San Joaquin County wrote, “Unfortunately, this survey does not apply to the content or mission of our site. We do not explore history in our exhibits. We are a hands on, play based museum.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Name withheld, email to author, May 20, 2010.

<sup>82</sup> Name withheld, email to author, September 29, 2009.

<sup>83</sup> Name withheld, email to author, October 2, 2009.

<sup>84</sup> Name withheld, email to author, July 12, 2010.

It should be noted that while some museum staff chose not to participate based on an assessment that the survey was not applicable to the content of the museum or museum mission, a portion of the museums that did participate submitted surveys leaving blank pages, providing scarce answers, or writing “not applicable” throughout.

Some respondents wrote notes on the surveys they returned explaining why they were hesitant to participate. One Butte county museum staffer described his institution as “small,” and only open two weekends per month due to a “lack of attendants for the library and docents for the museum.” The staffer explained: “We did not return your first survey because we did not think we had any information of value.”<sup>85</sup> Another museum, this time located in Santa Clara County, wrote apologetically:

I'm afraid our small museum cannot add much to your research. We are very small, no longer have an executive director to lead us and very little of our collection is directed towards children. We do have one outreach program called the "Traveling Trunk" where volunteers take old household items from the early farms in our area, to 3rd grade classes. Sorry we couldn't be of more help.<sup>86</sup>

A San Mateo County museum described the small nature of its locale: a town with a population of 1,700 where the children attend school in a neighboring city.

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<sup>85</sup> Extract from Children and their Representation and Education in California museum survey, survey #207, received August 23, 2010.

<sup>86</sup> Extract from Children and their Representation and Education in California museum survey, survey #117, received June 27, 2010.

“As per your request,” the president of the board wrote, “we have filled out your survey. I do not feel that our museum is applicable to your studies as we are an historical museum and not one that focuses on children. We do have children of all ages visiting with parents and teachers but not daily or many of them.”<sup>87</sup> Thus, some museums chose to opt out while others *did* proceed to participate, even though they faced similar circumstances.

Three museums expressed that they were in a state of transition and that timing was an issue. For one museum, its stewardship had recently changed. For another, respondents felt they had limited programming at the moment, while in another the staffer felt that they were just starting to put together an education committee and offered little representation of children in their 25,000 square foot exhibit space.

Three museums clarified that they were not currently open to the public and three museums cited a lack of resources or staff time as the reason for their inability to participate. As one executive director wrote:

we’re installing a new show, just finished a major fundraiser Sunday, just submitted our photos and images for an Arcadia history book – all while our collections manager has been out of the country for 3 weeks on family leave...a long way to say we don’t really have the staff time available to participate. Your survey is lengthy and much does not apply to what we do here.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Extract from a Children and their Representation and Education in California museum survey, survey #102, received June 5, 2010.

<sup>88</sup> Name withheld, email to author, September 29, 2009.

A different executive director also explained that size and limited resources acted as obstacles to completing the survey. “Thanks for contacting us,” he wrote, “unfortunately we annually receive many similar inquiries. Because we are a tiny non-profit enterprise with limited resources, we are [*sic*] do not have the personnel to respond to these types of inquiries.”<sup>89</sup>

The 238 surveys I received, though often representing multiple museums (as in the case of state park districts), represent but a fraction of the total number of museums throughout the state and predominantly reflect history museums. That said, Rosenzweig and Thelen’s *The Presence of the Past* demonstrates how a compelling argument about society at large can be made based on the sample of a relative few. Rosenzweig and Thelen draw conclusions on “how, when, and why Americans pursue the past” based on 1,453 phone interviews and supported by more than \$200,000 in grant and endowment funds.<sup>90</sup> Despite the limitations of the survey method, I collected valuable information regarding the presence (or absence) of children’s history in museum exhibitions, collections, and programming across twenty-first century California.

My survey findings underpin the main arguments expressed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 which examine the production of children’s histories in California museums. My survey revealed that often the history of children and childhood is

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<sup>89</sup> Name withheld, email to author, January 3, 2011.

<sup>90</sup> Rosenzweig and Thelen, *The Presence of the Past*, 6, 19.



presented in ways that fail to reflect the academic histories of childhood written by and for adults, the history of children and childhood is often reserved for child-centered audiences, and the histories presented are rarely unmitigated by adults. Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 will address each of these observations in turn.

## **Definitions**

While touring Preston Castle—a former reform institution that focused on rehabilitating boys between 1894 and 1960—a tourist on the same docent-led tour took notice of my note taking.<sup>91</sup> Due to our being on a docent-led tour, I tried to quickly satisfy his curiosity by explaining concisely that I study museums in my dissertation. He then asked with a hint of confusion if “this,” referring to Preston Castle, was considered a museum. Drawing upon the definition of a house museum provided by Walker and Graham, I said that it would probably be considered a type of house museum as it was a place where people lived.<sup>92</sup>

That exchange, albeit brief, preoccupied me for the remainder of the tour as I pondered how a historic building requiring admission, offering guided tours, and reserving space for a gift shop and the display of artifacts in glass cases could fail to

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<sup>91</sup> Field notes, Preston Castle, Ione, California, Saturday, October 1, 2011, p. 1, in possession of the author.

<sup>92</sup> Within their directory of house museums, Walker and Graham define house museum, for the purpose of their directory, as “an historic house that is currently exhibited and interpreted as a dwelling place.” See Patricia Chambers Walker and Thomas Graham, *Directory of Historic House Museums in the United States* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000), ix.

meet one visitor's definition of a museum. My exposure to definitions of museums that varied from my own did not stop there.

About six months later I sat with seventh-grader Grace, a junior docent at the Pasadena Museum of History. Grace came to the interview dressed in her private school uniform and ready to talk; her interview remains one of the lengthiest junior docent interviews I held at forty-two minutes. When I asked Grace if she had any favorite museums her response, again, illustrated a different perspective in the defining of a museum space:

I went to a pioneer museum when I was younger in Sacramento. There was, like, this really cool museum where it was the Donner party, and it talked about the Donner party and how they got lost, and it was, like, a mini fort and stuff, and I found that cool even though it wasn't, like, a real museum. It was still really cool and museum-like.<sup>93</sup>

When I asked Grace to further explain her comment that the museum in Sacramento "wasn't quite a real museum," she explained how it was "like a replica of the fort that the Donner party would have come to," and that it was "an interactive way to show it" that had "less pictures and portraits and stuff."<sup>94</sup>

Keeping the true reason we were there, to discuss the junior docent program at the Pasadena Museum of History, I asked Grace to think about the Fenyes Mansion, a house museum that she toured third graders through, and asked, "if you had to describe it to someone, or to a friend, would you describe it as a museum, or is

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<sup>93</sup> Grace [pseud.], interview.

<sup>94</sup> Grace [pseud.], interview.

there another word you would use to describe it?” To this, Grace concluded, “It’s sort of like the walls of a regular museum are just plain, but the walls of this museum are history. So it’s like history containing the history, I guess, is how I would explain it.”<sup>95</sup>

As these exchanges demonstrate, the word “museum” conjures up different meanings to each of us. These meanings are in part based on our previous experience with museums. For example, a field trip for seven-year-old Quinn, a third grader of African and Mexican descent, broadened his understanding of museums to be more inclusive than the adult patron I met at Preston Castle. When I spoke with Quinn after his tour of the Pasadena Museum of History, I asked if he had been to other museums. To this he replied, “Um, there’s a museum across the street called the Gamble House, and it’s a house and a museum at the same time.”<sup>96</sup>

In addition to age, our understanding of museums is also affected by identifiers such as race, class, educational background, and gender. As Gordon Fyfe and Max Ross contend, “museum visiting is a social practice which varies between groups in terms of their underlying dispositions to look.”<sup>97</sup> Just as those identifiers shape our museum visit, they shape our perception of museums.

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<sup>95</sup> Grace [pseud.], interview.

<sup>96</sup> Quinn [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, December 16, 2012.

<sup>97</sup> Gordon Fyfe and Max Ross, “Decoding the visitor’s gaze: rethinking museum visiting,” *Theorizing Museums*, ed. Sharon Macdonald and Gordon Fyfe (2005; rep., Oxford: Blackwell Publishers / The Sociological Review, 1996):127-150.

Take for example Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel's study of how the French public understood art museums in the 1960s. Between January and June of 1965 they held 250 "in-depth" interviews at the museums of Compiègne, Dreux, Lille, and in the Jeu de Paume.<sup>98</sup> In response to the question, "Among the public places listed below, which one, as far as you are concerned, does the museum remind you of most and least: church, library, classroom, department store, waiting hall. Why?" While each of the three pools of respondents (identified as working classes, middle classes, and upper classes) chose "church" as the place that most reminded them of a museum, the answers within each social strata varied.

For example, while none of the manual workers answered that a museum reminded them of a department store or entrance hall in a public building, 4 percent of middle class and 4.5 percent of upper class visitors did. And while an overwhelming majority of working-class respondents answered "church" as the place that a museum reminds them of the most (at 66 percent), of the upper classes about half that amount, 30.5 percent answered church.<sup>99</sup> While museum professionals have continuously defined and redefined museum spaces, it is important to understand a large spectrum exists concerning the public's perception and expectation of museums.

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<sup>98</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel with Dominique Schnapper, *The Love of Art*, trans. Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 118.

<sup>99</sup> Bourdieu and Darbel, 151.

Within the profession, the museum has been defined in numerous terms and ways and its purpose and role has changed over time.<sup>100</sup> In G. Ellis Burcaw's *Introduction to Museum Work*, he lists more than a dozen definitions of museums and concludes:

While the names and definitions you have been given in this chapter are precise and well-established, it has to be recognized that museums and similar institutions are created for the public, and the public's perception of an institution may differ from that of the staff that is managing it. Names carry connotations and are chosen to convey messages to particular audiences.<sup>101</sup>

Burcaw goes on to cite a "children's activity center" which "calls itself a Children's Museum for the prestige of the name even though it has no collections, no curators, and no intention of performing basic museum functions." On the other hand, he cites

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<sup>100</sup> Seminal works that explore the changing nature of museums include, but are not limited to: Edward P. Alexander and Mary Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*, 2nd edition (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2008); Marjorie Schwarzer, *Riches, Rivals & Radicals: 100 Years of Museums in America* (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 2006); Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998); Michael M. Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1992); Hugh H. Genoways and Mary Anne Andrei, editors, *Museum Origins: Readings in Early Museum History & Philosophy* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2008); Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995); Gary Kulik, "Designing the Past: History-Museum Exhibitions from Peale to the Present," in *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989): 3 - 37.

<sup>101</sup> G. Ellis Burcaw, *Introduction to Museum Work*, 3rd ed. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1997), 21.

an “excellent” museum that prefers the title “cultural center” as they felt that sounds less “academic,” or “elite.”<sup>102</sup>

While the actual existence of a building, the presence of a collection, or the qualifications of staff are some of the points debated in the defining a museum, funding and function can also serve as points of differentiation. In 2008, the AAM stated: “We may have to live with the fact that ‘museum’ as a concept is the intersection of many complex categories, resulting in an organization that people can identify intuitively but that cannot be neatly packaged in a definition.”<sup>103</sup> AAM takes an inclusive approach in their defining of museums:

the universe of American museums, from our point of view, includes the small cadre of for-profit museums, together with the vast majority of nonprofit; non-collections-based museums as well as the traditional collecting institutions; organizations that care for living collections (zoos, botanic gardens, aquariums); as well as the museums of art, history and science.<sup>104</sup>

For this study, I embrace a broad definition as survey respondents embody the variety that exists among present-day museums, such as self-proclaimed museums that only maintain a virtual presence or have no permanent collection, a trend that gained

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<sup>102</sup> Burcaw, *Introduction to Museum Work*, 21.

<sup>103</sup> The American Association of Museums with commentary by Elizabeth Merritt, *National Standards & Best Practices for U.S. Museums*, 3.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

salience in the late-twentieth century.<sup>105</sup> In terms of my survey participants, one survey respondent falls within this broadest definition as it exists only virtually.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This dissertation does not provide an exhaustive history of California museums nor can it be comprehensive about the role of children in California museums and how that has undoubtedly changed over time. There is serious need for both a history of California museums and a history of child involvement in these museums to be written. This dissertation focuses on studying the particular historical content presented to museum audiences and invites others to join in studying, and sharing, the contribution of children to California's history.

Second, while this dissertation captures the voices of forty-three present-day children by way of interview and hundreds of child visitors by way of archival research (such as thank-you letters written by children to museum personnel), I wish the evidence of children's perceptions was even more present as not to replicate the very critique I make. I would have preferred to have spoken to scores of visiting children who came to the Pasadena Museum of History, or any of the museums I studied. But to collect data on children I am required to obtain parent permission and

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<sup>105</sup> According to a report published by The American Association of Museums, "Currently, 10 percent of museums identify themselves as not owning or using collections," Elizabeth E. Merritt, ed., *2006 Museum Financial Information* (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 2006) as cited in The American Association of Museums, *National Standards & Best Practice for U.S. Museums*, 2-3.

many schools arrived with only a teacher and perhaps a couple of chaperones. Thus, to comply with the International Research Bureau, as monitored by UCSB's Office of Research, I could not capture as many voices as I would have liked.

Third, within any study there is always the struggle to balance breadth with depth. Many of the studies I have cited chose either to focus solely on one site, or to draw conclusions from surveying a large number of sites at a cursory level (for example, within Eichstedt and Small's study of Plantation Museums they do not cite interviews with staff at the museums they assess). The duration and depth to which I studied museums resulted in my realization that museums are living organizations that change daily. Observations from one day's visit may be countered or challenged by observations from a different day.

My experience at one northern California museum illustrates this point. After my first visit to this Victorian lakeside resort, which lasted several hours, I was ready to conclude that the museum focused solely on the white, male founders of the area with the stories of women, children, ethnic minorities, and servants pushed to the periphery. Overall, I concluded, as is perhaps too often the case, social history had failed to arrive at this institution except for the dedication of one room to the experiences of local American Indians.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> One of the pivotal works exploring the arrival of social history to a site long after its founding as a museum (in this case, Colonial Williamsburg in the 1970s) is that of Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).



The inaccurate and uninformed conclusions I drew based on a single visit—yet comparable to the average length of a tourist visit—were soon turned on their head. Once I began to talk with museum staff, I soon learned that the site had an extensive, multi-room exhibit focusing on the changing role of women within the area. But it had been closed to the public due to a lack of personnel to guard the collections in the exhibit. Furthermore, as I participated in special programming on repeat visits, I found that I learned quite a bit about the history of children associated with the property in innovative ways.

As my involvement with this site continued over the course of three years, I watched as a servant's tour, focusing on the history of the property from the perspective of the domestic servants, was added to the site's repertoire (complete with a bibliography that cited sources influential to my own work). In time, I learned that a site's interpretive range is never fully realized by an outsider and never stagnant. For that reason, I chose to build my observations on conversations with California museum personnel and volunteers who intimately know their collections, exhibitions, and programming rather than site visits across the state, although I did visit nearly forty museums over the course of my research.

Therefore, this study is limited by the nature of what I am studying. My assessment of the Pasadena Museum of History, where I spent time weekly on a routine basis during the school year, is much more rich, full, and thorough than the conclusions drawn for museums that I visited once as if an average visitor. That said, while my view of many museums is limited and framed by the circumstances of my

visit and the date at which it occurred, those visits are more similar to the average visitor's than repetitive and in-depth visits and provide valuable insight to my overall assessment of California museums.

### **Organization of the Study**

Chapter 2 examines results from the survey I circulated among California museums and explores the nuances of “children’s history” that became apparent during my study: the history of childhood written by adults for adults (literature produced by the academy); the history of children and childhood presented in California museums to all audiences; and history presented for children in California museums. After investigating the multiple meanings of “children’s history” and how those do and do not play out in California history museums, the chapter turns to analyzing the histories of children that do emerge in California museums and contends that patterns of representation both align, and diverge, from the representation of adults in museums. Museum exhibitions often overlook the historical contributions of children, romanticize childhood, and ignore the role of race, class, and gender in shaping childhood experiences. Often, conceptions of children and ideals of childhood are presented rather than individual histories of children and the diverse realities of childhood.

Chapter 3 narrows its focus to the audience which most often learns about the history of children at museums—children themselves. This chapter explores the various California players that navigate, negotiate, and contemplate the presentation

and meaning of children's history in programs designed for elementary school audiences at California museums. This chapter studies how those players affect the presentation of history and contends that the enduring ideal of children as innocent not only influences when histories of individual children make their way into museum exhibition (as argued in Chapter 2), but also shapes the way that stories are told, or censored, to present-day child audiences.

Chapter 4 is an ethnographic study of one Southern California museum's attempt to share authority with local seventh and eighth grade students. This chapter explores how the Pasadena Museum of History (PMH) has been bringing children's perspectives, through the use of junior docents, to museum operations since 1987. Central to this chapter are the voices of forty present-day children as they reflect on the experience of volunteering at the PMH. This chapter assesses the experience and contribution of child volunteers and captures their perspectives and insights, something that has yet to be done in the twenty-seven-year history of this program. These interviews reflect the fresh perspective junior docents bring to museum programming, and reveal that for many junior docents their evaluation of the program's success hinged on the opportunity to lead and exert authority. This chapter argues that the inclusion of children as co-producers of knowledge at museum sites not only brings fresh perspectives and unearths voices that might otherwise be silenced or marginalized, but it improves children's attitudes towards museums.

As this dissertation is a public history project, it ends with recommendations and suggestions with the audience of museum professionals and volunteers in mind. A

critique of both *Domesticating History* and *Representations of Slavery*—which examine the processes and politics at work in history museums—is that they provide little by way of how to counter insufficient museum narratives. Chapter 5 turns to examples and models throughout the state and country to suggest ways in which museum professionals can more accurately represent children’s history and include present-day children in the creation of museum interpretation, collections, and exhibit design.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> See Craig Hadley, review of *Representations of Slavery*, by Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *The Public Historian* 26, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 69-71; Marla R. Miller, review of *Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America’s House Museums*, by Patricia West, *The Public Historian* 22, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 68-71.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Children's History: Multiple Meanings and Stories that Rise to the Top**

In the spring of 2012 I sat down with Melanie, a newly turned fourteen-year-old and eighth-grade graduate of a public school in Pasadena, California. Melanie had just finished participating in the PMH junior docent program and was chosen as the only youth speaker at the program's graduation. As she expressed in her graduation speech, "I decided to volunteer [in] Jr. Docents because I love history, and I thought this would be a great learning experience."<sup>108</sup> In the speech she discussed how, although unnerving at first, time proved that the program had prepared her to lead tours, equipped her with reliable mentors, and resulted in her feeling "eager to volunteer at museums and participate in activities like this in the future."<sup>109</sup>

Two days after graduation, I sat down with Melanie<sup>110</sup> and spoke with her for thirty minutes about her experience in the program and listened to her reflect on

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<sup>108</sup> Speech given at Junior Docent 2011-2012 Class Graduation, Pasadena Museum of History, June 12, 2012, in author's possession. Melanie provided me with a copy of her graduation speech and this quote is extracted from her written speech. Grammar and spelling have been left unaltered.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> My interview with Melanie occurred after I gave an eight-minute speech at graduation. During this speech, on June 13, 2012, I argued that "one of the goals of it [my dissertation] is to really try and increase the ways in which, and the level to which, the history of children and childhood is spoken about in museums" and proceeded to speak about the importance of recording children's perspectives, alluding to my oral interview effort with the junior docents I had initiated each spring at the museum since 2011. The level to which my speech influenced how Melanie reflected on her experience two days later is uncertain.

giving one-hour tours to local third-grade students. During our interview, I asked about her interactions with museums prior to volunteering at the PMH, where she led tours through the history galleries. She replied, “Well, I’d like to say they were fun, but sometimes they were boring. As a kid, it’s not really fun, like, just being brought around by an adult and listening to lectures. And I think that’s why I kind of liked junior docents because the children get a kid’s perspective on it and that’s really interesting.”<sup>111</sup>

Academics have yet to write on the missing presence of a “kid perspective” in US museums, either in terms of the rare participation of children in actual museum operations as members, volunteers, and stakeholders (the focus of Chapter 4) or the invisibility of children in museum exhibit content.

While Melanie first identified the missing perspective of kids in the operation of museums, later within the interview she spoke about how she shifted her tour from focusing on Eva Scott Fenyes, the woman who, with her husband, built the mansion in 1906 in her mid-fifties, to Babsie Curtin Paloheimo, who came with her mother to live on her grandmother’s estate as a nine- or ten-year-old girl after her father died in 1908. When I asked her “what influenced your switching over from talking about Eva to Babsie?” Melanie explained how she felt Babsie was “a background character” that the children could relate to:

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<sup>111</sup> Melanie [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 14, 2012.

We don't talk much about her in the museum. We talk about the grownups, and Eva, and her husband, and what they would do. And Babsie was a child through all this. So I kind of wanted to pull her out and show the kids, you know, "this is a child your age" or "this is a child just a little bit older than you doing this back then." So that's what kind of influenced me to bring her out.<sup>112</sup>

Grace, a seventh-grade Caucasian student at a private Catholic school sat down with me on April 25, 2012 after having given a tour earlier in the day and with one tour remaining in the program. Grace was an enthusiastic junior docent who would make present-day connections during her tours more often than many of the other junior docents. For example, when talking about how people lived before electricity, she reminded the visiting third graders of the recent wind storm that had left Pasadena disheveled and some residents without power for days.<sup>113</sup> To explain a monocle and its use, she referred them to Disney's *Cinderella*. To help the children contextualize the Victor Victrola she referred to it as the "grandfather of the CD player."<sup>114</sup>

In our interview, Grace referred to literature and history as her "two all-time favorite subjects," and said she enjoyed reading historical fiction because "I'm still learning all the history and stuff, but it's sort of about a girl my age or a boy my age

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<sup>112</sup> Melanie [pseud.], interview, June 14, 2012.

<sup>113</sup> Associated Press, "Violent Wind Storm Leaves Path of Destruction," December 2, 2011, [www.foxnews.com/2011/12/02/ciolent-wind-storm-leaves-path-destruction/print](http://www.foxnews.com/2011/12/02/ciolent-wind-storm-leaves-path-destruction/print) (accessed 27 February 2013; article no longer available online).

<sup>114</sup> Grace [pseud.], interview, April 25, 2012.

which really sort of gets me excited about the time, and then I'm really excited to go on and read more.”<sup>115</sup>

During our exit interview, which ran nearly forty-three minutes long, Grace initiated thoughts on the importance of a child's perspective to the museum experience at the PMH by speaking on the importance of talking about the history of children to child visitors. Her interest in the child perspective was not an anomaly in my discussions with junior docents.

During interviews, I asked seventh and eighth grade junior docents if they felt there was anyone in Pasadena history, the family, or associated with the property that they would have liked to learn more about, or any perspective they thought missing. I received a variety of answers to this question.<sup>116</sup> The most common answer was Babsie. As Jared, an eighth-grader boy of Mexican descent, expressed, “I think I should have learned more about Babsie because we didn't really learn much about her,” or as another eighth grader, Elizabeth, stated, “It just doesn't seem fair that everything's about Eva and there's almost nothing about Babsie.”<sup>117</sup> While others mentioned Eva's husbands, Eva's parents, the servants, the architect, neighbors, or

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<sup>115</sup> Grace [pseud.], interview, April 25, 2012.

<sup>116</sup> The way in which I asked junior docents to reflect and give an assessment on the perspectives incorporated into the museum tour, or the level of inclusivity they felt it reached, changed over time as I constantly evaluated how terms I used in my questions were received and understood by these young teenagers.

<sup>117</sup> Jared [pseudo.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 17, 2011; Elizabeth [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 1, 2012.



friends, Babsie and the great-grandchildren (the fourth generation to live in the house) were consistently in the top three answers.

Grace was one of the junior docents to mention Babsie. For Grace, as for Melanie, the story of Babsie brought a level of relevance to child visitors, more so than the story of her grandmother Eva Scott Fenyes, who built and lived in the house seasonally from age fifty-eight to eighty:

We learned a lot about Mrs. Fenyes, but I think the kids maybe might be interested if they learned more about like what Babsie did. Like, did Babsie have a governess? Did she go to school? What kind of games did she play? What [kind] of clothes did she wear? Did she listen to music? Like, that kind of stuff would maybe add to it because you could focus on when Babsie was their age and they could get a lot out of that and they could maybe remember that more than, *oh, some lady, oh she played four instruments, great, lovely, how does that apply to me?*<sup>118</sup>

Later within our interview, Grace identified the importance of perspective to museum interpretation: “Because if you’re looking at a museum through an adult’s perspective when you’re a child, it’s not the same thing as looking at it through a child’s perspective.”<sup>119</sup> When asked to explain how a child’s perspective is different, Grace argued that children can sense emotion better than adults, an outgrowth of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century invention of childhood:

I feel like adults, maybe they look at things, I don’t know, like children’s books have more of a lighthearted approach on it and they maybe see things differently just in general, like, they might notice something that an adult wouldn’t notice. Sometimes the adults, they’re focusing on facts, like, the hard facts, like the dates and what the painting’s made out of and all that, but sometimes, maybe, they overlook the emotions, or how Babsie felt, or stuff

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<sup>118</sup> Grace [pseud.], interview, April 25, 2012.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

like that. Sometimes I feel like kids are able to do that better than adults are.<sup>120</sup>

While I will explore this junior docent program in depth in a later chapter, the present chapter takes up the multiple meanings of “children’s history” that these young museum docents raise. The multifaceted approach of my study was developed to explore comprehensively the ways in which children and their histories are represented (or not) across a range of history museums in California. In my conversations with museum staff and volunteers, I soon learned that the rubric of “children’s history” which animated my study actually encompasses several discrete entities. These include, the history of childhood (often told by and for adults, such as the literature produced within the academy); historical information about children of the past (which I found is often reserved for child-centered programming rather than woven into the general museum fabric); and the actual presentation of historical materials to present-day child visitors. This chapter takes each of these concepts in turn before exploring which histories of children rise to the top in California history museums.

First, I look at literature on the social history of children and childhood, exploring some of the ways in which historians have tackled this topic, trying to bring the experiences of children in the past into our interpretations of that past. Within the academic field of “children’s history,” however, the stories of children

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<sup>120</sup> Grace [pseud.], interview, April 25, 2012.

and childhood are often told from the vantage point of adults, and conceptions of childhood are recovered more often than children's reactions to and negotiations with those concepts. Therefore, this chapter argues that "children's history" comprises far more than the "history of childhood" that emerged in the wake of mid-century theorizing by scholars such as historian Philippe Ariès and psychologist Erik H. Erikson.<sup>121</sup> Children of the past had many histories, exhibited agency, and often participated in events which many museums consider central to their interpretive mission. Yet, almost all of these histories remain invisible in museum presentations. Furthermore, despite the many conceptions of childhood that have competed over time, the belief of children as innocent persists and is most frequently exhibited in museums.

Second, I look at the different ways in which respondents interpret the phrase "children's history" as presented to them on my initial survey instrument, and use this as an avenue to explore these dual meanings as they emerged within my survey of museum practice. While the ambiguity in the survey protocol was inadvertent (and unfortunate), it led me to explore more deeply the problem of children, their historical roles, and their roles as present-day consumers of history in follow-up interviews with respondents. From my survey, I learned that some respondents understood "children's history" to mean the history *of* children, while others took it to mean history *for* children. While this chapter will introduce the two interpretations

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<sup>121</sup> See Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Vintage Books, 1962); Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: Norton, 1950).

that emerged and provide a comprehensive look at ways in which histories of children surface in California history museums, Chapter 3 will more fully investigate the ways in which history is presented to children in child-centered programming. Next, this chapter moves to the field as it explores how the history of children and childhood plays out in actual California history museum exhibitions. Within my more than five years of researching this topic, I have charted commonalities between detailed histories of children that emerge in museum spaces (representations that go beyond the generic nod to childhood with the display of a school photo or abandoned toy). These patterns are at times similar to those guiding the representation of adults (such as being notable, or, connected to a significant museum collection) but also diverge (such as the role that adult volunteers play in the retelling of their childhood, or, the symbolic use of the innocent child in museums devoted to the memorialization of injustice and discrimination). It is to this ideal, that of the sacred child, which I next turn as this dissertation argues the sacred child ideal prevails in museum exhibition and education; the belief in children as innocent and pure and the desire to protect that belief limits which histories are presented in museum spaces and lends to the child victim receiving disproportionate attention in displays exhibiting injustice.

My discussion of museum interpretation also assesses the responding institutions within a larger picture of museums in California in the period after the recession of 2008. I argue that my sample is fairly representative of a larger whole, and that the particular issues facing my respondents (mainly inadequate staffing and

resources) make it unlikely that there will be any major reappraisal of the place of children's history within these institutions. The present chapter makes the case, then, that "children's history" is neither universal in its historical trajectory nor in the California museum profession's understanding of it.

### **US Children's History and the Academy**

In a 2005 article, Steven Mintz, one of the leading experts on the history of children, wrote about the absence of children in historical literature:

Children are the last group of Americans to have a history of their own. We may scoff at the Victorian notion that children should be seen but not heard, but children are notable in history books primarily for their absence. There is a disturbing tendency within our profession to dismiss the history of childhood as sentimental, atheoretical, and peripheral to the dynamics of historical change.<sup>122</sup>

Further in the article, Mintz argues that seminal events such as colonization, the Civil War, industrialization, immigration, and the Civil Rights movement "take on fresh meaning when viewed through the vantage point of children" and that "major themes in American history—the growth of bureaucratic institutions, the rise of a consumer culture, the elaboration of a welfare state, the triumph of the therapeutic, and the expansion of conceptions of rights—are especially visible in the lives of children."<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Mintz, "The True History From Below," 2.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 2.

The serious study of children's history by American historians was largely inspired by Philippe Ariès' groundbreaking invention of childhood as an analytic category. Ariès asserted that childhood is a modern, social construct having developed between the sixteenth and eighteenth century.<sup>124</sup> Once it was recognized as a historical construction, childhood—like other social institutions—came to be seen as subject to change over time.

Since the mid-twentieth century, the development of children's history as a field of study has coincided with and benefitted from the maturation of several disciplinary fields within and outside the historical profession. While developmental psychology, psychohistory, and sociology provided tools and frameworks early on, the fields of social history, cultural history, family history, feminist studies, and educational history have each been instrumental in moving children to the center of historical attention so that children, not just childhood, received academic attention.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> See Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Vintage Books, 1962).

<sup>125</sup> The academic study of children's history has a rich, dynamic history of its own that cannot be adequately replicated within the confines of this dissertation. For a more thorough discussion on the development of children's history as a field, and the many disciplines and theorists which impacted its development, see: Miriam Forman-Brunell, series foreword to, *Children and Consumer Culture in American Society: A Historical Handbook and Guide* edited by Lisa Jacobson (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008): ix-xii; Hugh Cunningham, "Review Essay: Histories of Childhood," *American Historical Review* 103, no. 4 (October 1998): 1195-1208; N. Ray Hiner and Joseph M. Hawes, editors *Growing Up in America: Children in Historical Perspective* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985); Harvey J. Graff, "Interdisciplinary Explorations in the History of Children, Adolescents, and Youth—for the Past, Present, and Future," *The Journal of American History* 85, no. 4 (March

One of the most prevalent themes to preoccupy historians of children and childhood has been identifying and understanding adult conceptions of childhood. Crucial to the study of conceptions of childhood and how they change over time is, first, an awareness that multiple conceptions often co-exist at any one time for stakeholders (such as parents, children, lawmakers, and manufacturers) to negotiate between. For example, Sigmund Freud's early twentieth-century assertions on the innate sexuality of children deviated from the ideal of the asexual, child redeemer who acts as a moral compass to the society surrounding him or her.<sup>126</sup> Adults have conceived of childhood in different and often conflicting ways not only in response to changing economic, political and social forces but also, at times, as an "alibi and a conduit for larger issues."<sup>127</sup>

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1999): 1538-1547; C. John Sommerville, "Bibliographic Note: Toward a History of Childhood and Youth," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 3, no. 2 (Autumn 1972): 439-447; Hugh Cunningham, "Introduction—The Historiography of Childhood," p. 1-18 in *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500* (New York: Longman, 1995).

<sup>126</sup> The portrayal of children in *Lord of the Flies* (1954) also contradicts some conceptions of childhood as it depicts children, who, when left to their own devices, "descend into the stone-age barbarism of idol worship, hunting, and ritual killing" as quoted in John Cleverley and D.C. Phillips, *Visions of Childhood: Influential Models from Locke to Spock* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1987), 28.

<sup>127</sup> Lynn Spigel, "Seducing the Innocent: Childhood and Television in Postwar America," in *The Children's Culture Reader* edited by Henry Jenkins, 129. Notable works demonstrating how childhood has been constructed, and contested, over time include: Lisa Jacobson's *Raising Consumers: Children and the American Mass Market in the Early Twentieth Century*; Leslie Paris, *Children's Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp*; Gail Schmunk Murray, *American Children's Literature and the Construction of Childhood*; Henry Jenkins, editor, *The Children's Culture Reader*; Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*; Gary

Second, conceptions of childhood commonly remain an ideal rather than a reality and, consequently, downplay the diversity of children's lives. For example, while American childhood during the 1950s with its attributes of stay-at-home moms, permissiveness, and protection may "represent the ideal of a child-centered society," for many 1950s children the reality of their childhood was far from this ideal. As Mintz forewarns in the study of childhood during the 1950s, "in the face of nostalgia, we need to recall that the stereotypical 1950s childhood was confined to a minority of children, and that it was a product of a constellation of circumstances unlikely ever to return."<sup>128</sup>

Third, methods by which anxious parents cope may appear strikingly similar although the underlying cause for anxiety differs. For example, while Puritan parents may have hurried their children through childhood out of a concern for moral and spiritual well-being, parents of the late-1970s and early-1980s, according to David Elkind, hurried their children through childhood in response to the stress of daily life. In his text *The Hurried Child: Growing Up too Fast Too Soon*, Elkind contends that parents hurry their children through childhood to counteract, and cope with, a demanding, unrelenting society:

Today's child has become the unwilling, unintended victim of overwhelming stress—the stress born of rapid, bewildering social change and constantly rising expectations. The contemporary parent dwells in a pressure-cooker of competing demands, transitions, role changes, personal and professional uncertainties, over which he or she exerts slight direction. We seek release

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Cross, *The Cute and the Cool: Wondrous Innocence and Modern American Children's Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>128</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 308.



from stress whenever we can, and usually the one sure ambit of our control is the home. Here, if nowhere else, we enjoy the fact (or illusion) of playing a determining role. If child-rearing necessarily entails stress, then by hurrying children to grow up, or by treating them as adults, we hope to remove a portion of our burden of worry and anxiety and to enlist our children's aid in carrying life's load.<sup>129</sup>

In each of these cases, parents respond to stress and worry—though resonating from a different source—by hurrying children along. Conceptions of childhood often reveal more about the anxieties, desires, and hopes of adults than the reality children lived. Multiple conceptions often co-exist as potential solutions for anxious adults. Of the many conceptions and ideals that have waxed and waned in US history, adults have fought relentlessly to protect the “sacred child ideal,” to which I next turn, even to the extent of “purg[ing] ourselves of the young who do not fit that ideal.”<sup>130</sup>

Sociologist Viviana Zelizer was among the first scholars to chart the shift in children's economic and emotional value within American society between the 1870s and 1930s. Utilizing the rising price of adoption, children's life insurance rates, and wrongful death compensation as evidence of rising sentimentality towards children towards the end of the nineteenth century, Zelizer argues that the “expulsion of children from the ‘cash nexus’ at the turn of the past century, although clearly shaped by profound changes in the economic, occupational, and family structures,

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<sup>129</sup> David Elkind, *The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2001), 3. Citations are to the Perseus edition.

<sup>130</sup> Cross, *The Cute and the Cool*, 10.

was also part of a cultural process of ‘sacralization’ of children’s lives.”<sup>131</sup> Zelizer uses sacralization “in the sense of objects being invested with sentimental or religious meaning.”<sup>132</sup> As children became more economically “useless” to the family amidst shifts in capitalism, restrictive labor laws and compulsory education, the child emerged as more sentimentally “valued” or even “priceless” by the 1930s.<sup>133</sup>

Historians Karin Calvert and Steven Mintz argue that the value placed on middle- and upper-class children began to change long before Zelizer’s periodization during the late eighteenth century in response to a shifting understanding of human development during the Enlightenment. Earlier religious beliefs concerning the animalism of children, the taint of original sin, and children’s lowly place in the great chain of being were supplanted by ideas from the Enlightenment. These new eighteenth-century notions suggested individuals were born with a morally clear slate and thus were malleable, shapeable, and teachable.<sup>134</sup> As a result, childhood changed from a “precarious” state to a time of preparation for adulthood. The restructuring of middle-class familial roles in the new republic further encouraged the specific role of mothers in their children’s lives as “the stability of the new republic depended on a

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<sup>131</sup> Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child*, 11.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-15.

<sup>134</sup> Karin Calvert, *Children in the House: The Material Culture of Early Childhood, 1600-1900* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 24-26; 55-61.

virtuous citizenry.”<sup>135</sup> Concerned over the fate and success of the new republic, adults emphasized the education of children and imbued the role of mother with heightened responsibilities to nurture, educate, and protect the future citizens of the nation.<sup>136</sup>

During the nineteenth century, economic and social transformations brought on by industrialization further canonized the child as sacred and childhood as a protective period of prolonged dependency.<sup>137</sup> This romantic view of childhood continued to be reinforced throughout the nineteenth century. The ideology of separate spheres – much studied for its effects on women— reinforced the sanctity of childhood and a vision of childhood that “encouraged the notion that children needed to be sheltered from adult realities, such as death, profanity, and sexuality, in order to preserve their childish innocence.”<sup>138</sup> Historians have documented how toys, interior design, clothing, and furniture designed for the nineteenth-century middle class reflect this cultural shift in defining childhood.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 55.

<sup>136</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 71; Schmunk Murray, *American Children's Literature and the Construction of Childhood*, xvi, 23.

<sup>137</sup> Calvert, *Children in the House*, 24-26; 55-61; Mintz, *Huck's*, xvi, 23, 55, 76.

<sup>138</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 76.

<sup>139</sup> See Calvert, *Children in the House* and Marta Gutman and Ning de Coninck-Smith, editors, *Designing Modern Childhoods: History, Space, and the Material Culture of Children* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

Changes not only occurred within the home but also in public spaces as “the demarcation of public places for children began with the provision of new institutions for them, mainly primary schools.”<sup>140</sup> Playgrounds, orphanages, schools, and summer camps are all examples of nineteenth-century creations that provided spaces to help children attain a “good childhood.”<sup>141</sup>

Initially, achieving the ideal of the sacred child construct remained feasible for those of the middle to upper-classes.<sup>142</sup> “During the nineteenth century,” writes Mintz, “only a small minority of children experienced the middle-class ideal of maturation taking place gradually in carefully calibrated steps, within institutions segregated from adult society. The vast majority of families living in urban working-class neighborhoods, in mills and mining towns, and in the rural northeast, South, Midwest, and Far West continued to rely heavily on children’s labor and earnings.”<sup>143</sup>

For many families, the wages children earned were central to the family economy.<sup>144</sup> The affluence of the industrial revolution increased the ability of middle-class parents to create a “sheltered childhood” for their children, while

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<sup>140</sup> Gutman and De Coninck-Smith, *Designing Modern Childhood*, 4.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Mintz, *Huck’s Raft*, 76.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 136.

industrial expansion “increased [working-class and immigrant] parents’ dependence on child labor.”<sup>145</sup> The efforts of “child-savers” to extend the sacred childhood ideal to working-class and immigrant children gained steam during the nineteenth century in response to expanding industrialization, mounting commercialization, and the democratization of leisure.

Just as “child-savers” would differ over time in how they thought to best protect children (whether through proscriptive or instructive measures), throughout the twentieth century groups—behavioral scientists, educators, summer camp leaders, mass marketers, parents, and children—would take part in debating the boundaries and role of childhood.<sup>146</sup> If middle-class Americans sought to protect their children against rising industrialism and urbanism in the early to mid nineteenth century, then late-nineteenth-century adults sought to protect children from a rising culture of commercialism, cheap amusements, and leisure.<sup>147</sup> For example, child-

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<sup>145</sup> Mintz, *Huck’s Raft*, 152.

<sup>146</sup> Mintz, *Huck’s Raft*, 154-199; Paul Ringel, “Reforming the Delinquent Child Consumer: Institutional Responses to Children’s Consumption from the Late Nineteenth Century to the Present,” in *Children and consumer Culture in American Society: A Historical Handbook and Guide*, ed. Lisa Jacobson (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2008): 43-62; Leslie Paris, *Children’s Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Lisa Jacobson, *Raising Consumers: Children and the American Mass Market in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); Henry Jenkins, editor, *The Children’s Culture Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

<sup>147</sup> See: Viviana Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1985); Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-Of-The-Century New York* (Philadelphia:

centered marketing developed by the end of the nineteenth century amidst rising consumerism, as well as child-centered approaches to urban design and institutional development.<sup>148</sup> The rise of behavioral science and child-centered marketing during the 1890s reinforced the ideology of the sacralized child. “Institutional collaborators,” such as reformers, psychologists, and sociologists helped to promote the sale of child-centered products, while, in turn, a new locale, the department store, became a venue in which reformers and behavioral scientists could teach about nutrition and child development.<sup>149</sup>

The search for the “good childhood” not only influenced the toys and furniture that parents purchased, but it initiated new institutions, such as the American summer camp, an institution that developed in response to rising urbanization, increasing immigration, daunting technology, mounting commercialization, and an evolving understanding of childhood.<sup>150</sup> “Summer camps,” writes historian Leslie Paris, “helped to consolidate the notion of childhood

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Temple University Press, 1986); Steven Mintz, *Huck’s Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2004).

<sup>148</sup> See Lisa Jacobson, *Raising Consumers: Children and the American Mass Market in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004) and Marta Gutman and Ning De Conick-Smith, editors, *Designing Modern Childhoods: History, Space, and Material Culture of Children* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 2008).

<sup>149</sup> See William Leach, “Child-World in the Promised Land,” in *The Mythmaking Frame of Mind: Social Imagination and American Culture*, ed. James Gilbert, Amy Gilman, Donald M. Scott, and Joan W. Scott (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993): 209-238.

<sup>150</sup> Paris, *Children’s Nature*, 7, 8, 25-30.

as a time apart, at once protected and playful, which required age-appropriate, adult-monitored leisure in the company of select peers.”<sup>151</sup> Again, the outfitting of children, the socialization of children, and a new concern to protect children from a growing culture of commercialization and leisure were each results of children becoming “emotionally priceless.”<sup>152</sup>

How adults conceived of childhood continued to change throughout the twentieth century amidst a growing consumer culture, new literature on childrearing, and commercialization targeted towards children through new mediums of advertising. Although it can be traced back to progressivism, the rise of more permissive conceptions of child rearing, such as the sensual child, were reactions to some of these changes, as well as to a growing distaste for authoritarianism after World War II.<sup>153</sup>

Strands of the “innocent child” resurfaced during the Cold War as parents both sought to protect their children and longed, themselves, to return to the freedom of childhood. The ability of parents to provide an idyllic childhood became complicated, however, as shifts in the economy required both parents to work, and a

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<sup>151</sup> Paris, *Children's Nature*, 2.

<sup>152</sup> Paris, *Children's Nature*, 6; Paris asserts, “As their economic worth declined, children of all kinds came to become, in the words of scholar Viviana Zelizer, emotionally ‘priceless.’ Their attendance at summer camps was one measure of these gains,” 6.

<sup>153</sup> Jenkins, *The Children's Culture Reader*, 20-21.

rising divorce rate left many children without parental supervision.<sup>154</sup> During this period, children's literature began to reflect a new conception: "Firmly steeped in contemporary therapy and self-help philosophies, adults believed the children had the inner resources to handle emotional pain; they believed that some suffering would prove helpful in adulthood. In this construction, children are neither sinful nor innocent but survivors."<sup>155</sup> From the Cold War forward, military defeat, presidential distrust, economic uncertainty, rising mass media, and evolving gender and familial roles have continued to fuel parental anxiety and debates on how to best equip children for such stressors.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Jenkins, *The Children's Culture Reader*, 22.

<sup>155</sup> Schmunk Murray, *American Children's Literature and the Construction of Childhood*, xix.

<sup>156</sup> For a discussion of shifting conceptions of childhood in the twentieth century see: Paula S. Fass and Michael Grossberg, editors, *Reinventing Childhood After World War II* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004); Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Gary Cross, *The Cute and the Cool: Wondrous Innocence and Modern American Children's Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Kriste Lindenmeyer, *The Greatest Generation Grows Up: American Childhood in the 1930s* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2008); Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, revised and updated edition (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1988, 1999).



## Exhibiting the History of Children

Museum representations of childhood often overlook the social construct of childhood, how resulting conceptions of childhood interact, diverge, parallel, co-exist, and evolve to cope with current events, and how such conceptions contrast to the reality of many children's lives. My research suggests that museum exhibits that include the history of children disproportionately reflect a "romantic vision of childhood," a legacy and limitation of the sacralization of childhood.<sup>157</sup>

In museum exhibitions, extensions of a protected childhood—such as education, family, and play—merit representation while realities that disrupt or undermine this ideal—such as abuse, discrimination, delinquent behavior, and ill treatment by adults—do not. Highlighting the image of the sacred child in museum presentation has two significant consequences. First, it silences other conceptions of childhood that were influential in their day, such as that of the "useful childhood" which "was based on the premise that all family members, including children, should contribute to a family's support."<sup>158</sup> Second, it undermines the reality of childhood as children lived and experienced it historically, shaped by their own particular historical contexts.

Subsequently, children are often overlooked or absent in museum exhibitions except in instances where the purity and innocence of children can be leveraged to

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<sup>157</sup> Mintz, *Huck's Raft*, 77.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

evoke an emotional response from the visitors. Often, in these cases, the experiences of children disproportionately outweigh those of adults.

### **Children's History and California Museums**

To explore the representation of children's history in California museums, I circulated a survey between the summer of 2009 and 2011 to initiate a dialogue among California museum personnel to learn how they conceptualize children's history, and, its representation at their respective museums. My use of the term "children's history," though similar in structure to that of women's history, was interpreted in two distinct ways. Follow-up interviews revealed that some museum professionals interpreted my use of "children's history" and my use of the term "representation" to imply that my survey was asking after the measures taken by museums to take children into consideration when crafting exhibits or programs. Others understood my intended meaning and understood "children's history" to mean the history of children. After describing the conditions under which responding institutions operate this chapter will examine how both interpretations of "children's history" play out in California history museums.

### **Characteristics of my Sampling of California Museums**

Throughout my survey, I attempted to access individuals involved with the production of knowledge at California museums that interpret history. For a variety of reasons explained earlier, I accepted a snowball sampling that resulted in

individuals from diverse backgrounds completing my survey. I encouraged museum personnel to work collectively on the survey, as my questions often crossed departmental boundaries. Twenty-eight surveys were filled out by multiple people (12 percent). Those who filled out the survey held a variety of positions, including: executive director, board member, volunteer, manager, interpreter, educator, curator, collection manager, and others involved with administration, development, and public programming.

The survey asked museums to select the type that best represented their institution (see Figure 2). As with any question in the survey, survey respondents were able to select more than one answer and for every question there was at least one respondent who chose not to answer. With 175 of my respondents having identified their museum as a historic house or site and/or a history museum, my survey respondents represent approximately 28 percent of history-related museums in the state. Eighty-one percent of the institutions that participated were founded since the 1960s (see Figure 3). A 1999 report prepared for the CAM found that “half the museums in California came into existence after 1967. At least one in five (20%) was founded in the 1960s. Almost the same number, 19% and 18% respectively, were founded in the 70’s and 80’s.”<sup>159</sup> Of the participants in my survey, 25 percent were founded since the 1990s.

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<sup>159</sup> *About California Museums, Fiscal 1997/1998*, a report prepared for California Association of Museums, 1999, p. 8, accessed 1 March 2014, available at [http://www.calmuseums.org/\\_data/n\\_0001/resources/live/AboutCaliforniaMuseums\\_1999.pdf](http://www.calmuseums.org/_data/n_0001/resources/live/AboutCaliforniaMuseums_1999.pdf)

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**Figure 2**

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**Question 5** from Children and their Education and  
Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "Which best describes the museum(s) your institution operates?" In the table below, I have given the total number of museums that correspond to the various options provided, as well as identified the number of respondents that left the question blank or marked it not applicable. Each survey respondent could select multiple definitions. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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Type of Institution	Number of Respondents
General Museum	17
History Museum	102
Historic House / Site	107
Culturally Specific Museum	29
Maritime	5
Military	4
Other*	48
Left Blank	0
Not Applicable	0

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\*Popular answers included art museums/galleries (10), children's museums (6), natural history museums (4), or gardens/nature learning centers (3).

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**Figure 3**

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**Question 24** from Children and their Education and Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "When did your museum open to the public?" An open-ended question, this question yielded a variety of answers. Below, I have grouped responses by decade and listed them below, as well as identified how many respondents left this question blank or marked it not applicable. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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Date Museum Opened	Number of Respondents
1880s	1
1890s	1
1900s	1
1910s	2
1920s	3
1930s	7
1940s	8
1950s	11
1960s	37
1970s	47
1980s	46
1990s	33
2000s	24
Left Blank	10
Marked Not Applicable*	1

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\* This particular respondent is an online museum.

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The more recent founding of these museums affects not only their institutional history and approach but also the scope and breadth of their collections.

While California museums are unique in operating with less institutional longevity and history, they are shaped by challenges, such as limited resources and staff that impact museums across the country and which have only worsened since the Great Recession, which began in late 2007.<sup>160</sup> According to the CAM, which has been collecting data<sup>161</sup> pertinent to the function and operation of museums for more than twenty-five years, in 2008 “museums employ a median of 17.6 full time equivalent (FTE) staff members per institution,” and in 2010 “museums employ a median of 10 full time equivalent (FTE) staff members per institution.”<sup>162</sup> Within each survey, they found a correlation between the budget of the institution and the number of employees.

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<sup>160</sup> Chris Isidore, “It’s Official: Recession since Dec. ’07,” *CNN Money*, December 1, 2008, <http://money.cnn.com/2008/12/01/news/economy/recession/>.

<sup>161</sup> Information from published studies by the California Association of Museums has been reproduced with the written consent of Celeste DeWald, Executive Director, California Associations of Museums, email to author, March 11, 2014.

<sup>162</sup> CAM solicits museums of all types (such as science centers, zoos, natural history museums, and art museums) for membership, their findings are likely affected by a broader spectrum of museums than my history focused research; California Association of Museums, *2008 California Museums Financial and Salary Survey: A Report from the California Association of Museums* and *2010 California Museums Financial and Salary Survey: A report from the California Association of Museums*. In 2008, survey results were based on 197 completed surveys with a response rate of 12.7 percent. In 2010, survey results were based on 145 surveys with a response rate of 10.4 percent.

Within my survey, 10 percent of respondents reported five or fewer full-time employees while 61 percent of survey respondents have five or fewer paid staff members (including part and full time) at their institution. In fact, 21 percent rely solely on volunteer support (see Figure 4). In 2012, the CAM found that 14.2 percent of museums do not have any paid staff and 40 percent employ the full-time equivalent of one to five employees.<sup>163</sup>

Many survey respondents referenced the effect of the economy on their ability to function. For example, one Central Coast museum volunteer reported that her museum had shifted from having a paid employee to none at all due to the economic downturn: “Now, about three years ago [2007], we had an employee who quit and due to the economy and the dropping income we decided as a group here to take on the directorship ourselves, and so I’m currently also the director of the museum and president of the museum board.”<sup>164</sup>

According to the AAM, “Nearly 40% of museums experienced a decline in total revenues in 2011, compared to 53% that experienced reduced revenues in 2010

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<sup>163</sup> California Association of Museums, “Size of California Museum Workforce,” Museum Personnel Data, *2012 California Museums Financial and Salary Survey: A Report from the California Association of Museums*.

<sup>164</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #95, October 5, 2010.

**Figure 4**

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**Question 3** from Children and their Education and Representation in  
California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "How many paid staff members does your institution have?" Below, I have given the number of survey respondents that correspond to the number or range of total paid staff, as well as identified how many respondents left this question blank. The definition I'm using for total paid staff is the number of all staff members that receive remuneration regardless of number of hours worked. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Total Paid Staff</b>	<b>Number of Institutions</b>
0	48
1	21
2	31
3	19
4	12
5-9	43
10-19	28
20-29	6
30-39	7
40-49	3
50-59	1
60-69	4
70-79	1
80-89	0
90-99	2
100 and above	2
Left Blank	4
Not Applicable	0

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which means that many museums have experienced compounded years of shrinking revenues since the start of the economic downturn in 2008).”<sup>165</sup>

While many museums rely on volunteers, finding volunteers is becoming increasingly difficult as the economy forces adults to work past the traditional retirement age; in addition, many of the retirees are highly skilled and, as a report by AAM identified, “don’t want to come in to stuff envelopes and chat. They want to feel that their volunteer work is meaningful.”<sup>166</sup> I interviewed a sixty-five-year-old Orange County volunteer curator who has been actively involved at his institution for thirty-five years; he reported a bleak future for his institution, which relies solely on volunteer labor:

As we look around our Board of Trustees, uh, we have one twenty-four-year-old and everybody else is over fifty-five. The twenty-four-year-old is a history major working on a Master’s degree who works as our archivist in the capacity of a volunteer. That’s pretty scary because we’re looking for the future in the volunteers that we have and there isn’t one. [...] what’s going to become of these institutions as a result of nobody caring to come into the organizations? We understand that we are—by not having sufficient manpower to do Twitter and Facebook—that we are limiting our scope as far as being able to recruit from that generation but the truth is the generation isn’t interested because they didn’t found it.<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> American Association of Museums, *Museums and the American Economy in 2011: A Report from the American Association of Museums*, accessed December 20, 2012, p. 2-3, <http://www.aam-us.org/docs/research/acme12-final.pdf?sfvrsn=0>.

<sup>166</sup> American Association of Museums, *TrendsWatch 2012: Museums and the Pulse of the Future Report*, 2012, p. 17, available at [http://www.aam-us.org/docs/center-for-the-future-of-museums/2012\\_trends\\_watch\\_final.pdf?sfvrsn=0](http://www.aam-us.org/docs/center-for-the-future-of-museums/2012_trends_watch_final.pdf?sfvrsn=0).

<sup>167</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #100, September 30, 2010.

Despite a poor economy, short staffing, and reliance on volunteers, most museums reported substantial figures when it comes to annual attendance (see Figure 5).

According to my survey respondents, the average attendance to their museums was 39,099.37 visitors. The most frequent answer, the mode, was 2,000 visitors and the median, annual attendance was 9,000.<sup>168</sup> For 2012, the CAM reported a median, annual attendance of 15,055 to California museums.<sup>169</sup>

In December 2009, Elizabeth Merritt, director for the Center for the Future of Museums, participated as a guest on “Museums in Recession: Forum” on KQED Public Media for Northern California. When asked to give a “state of the state report on museums across the country” Merritt asserted that museum closure was “relatively rare” (the program had started by announcing some museums “are closing their doors” due to the poor economy). She referenced a John Hopkins Listening

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<sup>168</sup> While 208 surveys responded to this question with numeric answers, only 206 were considered in developing the mode and median. One State Historic Park district reported an annual attendance of 4 to 7 million which reflects attendance to the large retail, service context it sits within. The other museum is an online museum that hosts temporary exhibits irregularly. Both museums were considered outliers and were not included in these calculations.

<sup>169</sup> California Association of Museums, “Attendance,” California Museums Profile, *2012 California Museums Financial and Salary Survey: A Report from the California Association of Museums*.

**Figure 5**

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**Question 6** from Children and their Education and Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question:

"What is the annual attendance to your museum(s)?"

Below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to a particular range of annual museum attendance, as well as identified respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. I have also noted any outliers. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Total Annual Attendance</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
500 or fewer	8
501 - 1,000	11
1,001 - 5,000	60
5,001 - 10,000	35
10,001 - 20,000	30
20,001 - 30,000	14
30,001 - 40,000	5
40,001 - 50,000	6
50,001 - 60,000	4
60,001 - 70,000	4
70,001 - 80,000	4
80,001 - 90,000	1
90,001 - 100,000	6
100,001 - 200,000	8
200,001 - 300,000	5
300,001 - 400,000	2
400,001 - 500,000	2
500,001 - 600,000	0
600,001 - 700,000	1
Left Blank	22
Outliers	2
Not Applicable	2

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While 208 surveys answered this question, only 206 were considered in the chart above as two were determined to be outliers: a state park in a retail, service context that receives 4 to 7 million visitors per year and an online museum that irregularly hosts temporary exhibits.

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Post Project survey, however, that “showed that one third of museums are cutting back on staff.”<sup>170</sup> In light of the economic downturn, attendance remained an optimistic point for Merritt:

The good news is, that, as people are experiencing economic stress in their own lives, they're using museums increasingly as places of respite and retreat, so we're actually seeing a phenomenon where many museums have increased visitation. Though unfortunately that doesn't always translate into increased funding since so many museums have free admissions and even if they do have admissions, that's a very small percentage of the funds that keep them open.<sup>171</sup>

The host, Scott Shafer, asked Merritt “to what extent are the problems and the issues that are facing museums being caused by the downturn?” She identified the effect of the economy on museums’ investment income, government funding to museums, as well as the financial consequences of decreased attendance for institutions that rely on that income.<sup>172</sup>

Museum educators have fought to maintain programming for schoolchildren despite economic difficulties for both museums and the public education system. The AAM also reported, “Museums adopted a variety of budget-saving measures in 2011...but one area where they did not cut back was education. Instead, education was a priority in 2011, with 88% of museums in the survey maintaining (55%) or

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<sup>170</sup> “Museums in Recession: Forum,” KQED Forum, host Scott Shafer, KQED Public Media for Northern California, December 29, 2009. Panelists include: Elizabeth Merritt, Lori Fogarty, Gregory Rodriguez, Jim DeMersman.

<sup>171</sup> “Museums in Recession,” KQED Forum.

<sup>172</sup> “Museums in Recession,” KQED Forum.

increasing (33%) the amount of resources devoted to K-12 students and their teachers (among museums that track resources specifically devoted to this purpose).”<sup>173</sup> According to the CAM 2012 survey, “California museums across the state collectively serve 2.465 million schoolchildren per year, with 1.74 million visiting the museum. California museums serve the equivalent of 39.6 percent of California’s public and private school population each year.”<sup>174</sup>

Still, despite prioritizing education or making accommodations, some museums struggle to keep the same level of school visits as they once did, “We have had fewer classes in the last few years,” a naturalist at a historic house museum in Alameda County explained, “their fees had increased and the economy has taken a dive... at the height of doing these programs, we were doing probably eight programs a year for an average of five classes per program. At one point most third graders in [location withheld] were coming out to this program. We're down to now where we may do four or five programs per year.”<sup>175</sup>

Evidence of the economic downturn’s effect upon California museums is scattered throughout newspaper headlines addressing all that Merritt outlined: staff

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<sup>173</sup> American Association of Museums, *Museums and the American Economy in 2011: A Report from the American Association of Museums*, accessed December 20, 2012, p. 2, available at <http://www.aam-us.org/docs/research/acme12-final.pdf?sfvrsn=0>.

<sup>174</sup> California Association of Museums, “K-12 Schoolchildren served,” California Museum Profile, *2012 California Museums Financial and Salary Survey: A Report from the California Association of Museums*.

<sup>175</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #13, December 18, 2009.

cuts,<sup>176</sup> budget cuts,<sup>177</sup> decreasing incomes, and loss of city financial support,<sup>178</sup> museum closures,<sup>179</sup> and dropping attendance.<sup>180</sup> Furthermore, polls focusing on the impact of the economic downturn and facilitated by the CAM to its membership in the fall of 2008 and winter of 2009 “indicated that most museums...are having to cut both administrative and programmatic expenses. Many museums are facing reductions in government funding and declining donations, while others are more concerned with maintaining their programs or caring for the collections with their current staffing levels.”<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> “Banning: Budget cuts hit historic Gilman Ranch,” *The Press-Enterprise*, July 17, 2011; “LACMA cuts hours and employees,” *Los Angeles Times* June 28, 2012.

<sup>177</sup> “California’s next budget casualty – 70 state parks on governor’s closure list,” *San Jose Mercury News*, May 13, 2011.

<sup>178</sup> “Vallejo Museum seeks funds to pay its bills,” *Vallejo Times Herald*, December 24, 2010; “Government Money Woes Hit the Local Museums,” *The New York Times*, December 2, 2010; “Peralta Adobe plans fundraiser to keep operating,” *San Francisco Gate*, November 26, 2012.

<sup>179</sup> “Claremont Museum of Art to close doors on Dec. 27,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 22, 2009; “The Fresno Metropolitan Museum of Art & Sciences closes its doors,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 12, 2010.

<sup>180</sup> “NEA report shows declining attendance in arts events nationwide,” *Los Angeles Times* December 10, 2009; “Plenty of Museums in valley, but few visitors,” *The Modesto Bee*, August 16, 2012; “Attendance at L.A. museums lags behind,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 2011.

<sup>181</sup> California Association of Museums, Monthly Museum Poll Recap, “August Museum Poll Recap: What is your museum most worried about?” accessed February 26, 2014, available at <http://www.calmuseums.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewpages&pageid=569>.

Such financial constraints affect California museums' ability, at times, to revamp interpretation or integrate the latest museum education trends or technological advancements. A climate of uncertainty, staff turnovers, anxiety, and financial strain paints an unlikely picture that the quality of interpretation found within museum exhibitions has received the attention it could within a stronger economy, or that it will in the near future. That being said, continuing attendance to these museums and the public's reliance on their credibility demand that museums apply whatever resources they can to revamping interpretation.

### **The History of Children and Childhood in California Museums**

The purpose of circulating my survey was to gather information concerning the representation of children's history in California history museums.<sup>182</sup> This chapter explores patterns and trends that surfaced in my survey, how museum professionals and volunteers conceptualize children's history (and its dual meaning), and to whom (and how) themes of children's history emerge.

My survey revealed that the history of children and childhood ranks as a low interpretive priority for California history museums. Within my survey, the second-to-last question asked: "On a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high), please rate the centrality of children's history to interpretation at your site." To this question, 64 percent of respondents selected between a 0 and 2.5 to represent the centrality of children's history at their site (see Figure 6).

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<sup>182</sup> At the top of my survey, I defined children as infants to age eighteen.

**Figure 6**

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**Question 29** from Children and their Education and Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "On a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high), please rate the centrality of children's history to interpretation at your site?" In the table below, I have listed the total number of respondents that correspond to the various options given, as well as acknowledged how many survey respondents left this question blank and noted any outliers. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Centrality of Children's History Rubric</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
0	3
1 to 1.5	83
2 to 2.5	62
3 to 3.5	54
4	14
5	5
Outliers	5
Left Blank	6

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For this question, five surveys answered in a non-numerical way (such as specifying they only interpret the story of one child, or, that they are "low"). Such answers could not be quantified and were considered outliers.

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In a separate and earlier study—a survey of fifty-three colonial house museums in Virginia, New York, and Massachusetts that I introduced in Chapter 1—my results for this question were strikingly similar. Of the thirty-seven surveys I received in early 2009, 70 percent ranked the centrality of children’s history at their house museum as being 2.5 or lower with only one survey reporting a “5” and three museums reporting in the “4” range.

One of my motivations in using a paper survey rather than an internet polling website was to provide the opportunity for survey respondents to write additional comments on the survey or edit the existing language. I encouraged them to “please select the best answer or multiple answers where appropriate.” Often, survey respondents modified or explained their answer by writing additional notes. For example, one Los Angeles Museum survey respondent that chose a “2” to represent the centrality of children’s history to his or her site added, “as family’s children were 13 and 16 when home was completed. No grandchildren.”<sup>183</sup> One respondent from a State Park District did not choose a number, but noted, “Varies from one location to another. Generally lower in the range.”<sup>184</sup>

My follow-up interviews revealed that audience, location, museum type, and museum mission all affect the level to which children’s history is included within the

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<sup>183</sup> Extract from a Children and their Representation and Education in California museum survey, respondent #98, received June 4, 2010.

<sup>184</sup> Extract from a Children and their Representation and Education in California museum survey, respondent #85, received October 19, 2009.

museum experience. Furthermore, limited collections, time, staff, space, and money were identified as issues that influence the inclusion of children's history in museum interpretation. In Question 30 on my survey, I asked museums "if children are not represented at your site, what are some of the reasons?" (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7**

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**Question 30** from Children and their Education and Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "If children are not represented at your site, what are some reasons?" In the table below, I have listed the total number of museums that correspond to the various options given, as well as identified the number of respondents that left the question blank or marked it not applicable. Respondents were invited to select all answers that applied. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Reason Children are not Represented</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Limited historical information	36
Limited material culture	27
Lack of interest from visitors	6
A future goal not yet implemented	36
Other	33
Left Blank	127
Not Applicable	16

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A number of survey respondents noted that they felt the question did not apply, or, that their answer related to the under-representation of children rather than the absence of representation. Reasons why respondents chose "other" as an answer ranged from lack of skilled volunteers to relevance of subject matter, lack of space, or higher interpretive priorities.

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Survey respondents were able to choose more than one answer to this question and many did so; many also chose not to answer this question, perhaps because they felt children *are* represented at their site. While limited historical information and “a future goal not yet implemented,” tied as the most common reason behind the lack of children’s representation, some of the answers respondents listed under “other” echoed comments made during interviews: that history is not “applicable to type of museum;” it’s not an “interpretive priority;” it’s “not necessarily our mission/vision;” or “children/children’s culture is not a focus of this collection.”<sup>185</sup>

Others focused on citing obstacles that get in the way of more inclusive interpretation, such as, lack of manpower, space, resources, money, and skilled volunteers. With scarce resources and competing interpretive goals, museum volunteers and professionals struggle, at times, to keep up with updating missing or outdated information. When I asked one volunteer, museum director in Contra Costa, if general visitors “learn about children’s history or the history of childhood?” she referenced a room devoted to schools that were built in the city over time but clarified that beyond that, limited manpower and competing goals interfere with additional interpretation existing:

There’s no specific childhood history presented. It may be an area that we’d like to delve a little bit more into especially with the children’s tours, but right

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<sup>185</sup> Extract from Children and their Representation and Education in California Museums survey, survey #222, received June 1, 2010; Extract from Children and their Representation and Education in California Museums survey, survey #69, received September 30, 2009; Extract from Children and their Representation and Education in California Museums survey, survey #165, received October 18, 2010; Extract from Children and their Representation and Education in California Museums survey, survey #128, received July 3, 2010.

now, it's a matter of numbers and volunteers, um, and numbers of hours available to do additional displays and additional works. Right now we have a newer volunteer, he's an intern from one of the state colleges, and he's attempting to complete the Indian display which, uh, he's building, um, a grain storage and things of that sort to kind of enhance the [room name withheld] room, but it's really a problem of time and, um, hours in the day....it's just a matter of limited workforce to put programs together.<sup>186</sup>

To further tease out what survey respondents took into consideration when rating their site, as well as to identify when my questions were interpreted differently than I intended, I conducted follow-up interviews with seventy-two survey respondents.

Within these interviews, I spoke with twenty-six survey respondents about this particular question. I learned during my follow-up interviews that my use of the word “centrality” confused some survey respondents. After reminding an archivist in a Tulare county museum that she had ranked her institution at a “3” and asking her to explain what she took into consideration when choosing that number, she responded “Okay, centrality, in other words, um, oh golly, I probably knew what you meant then, but right now I can’t think of it. Centrality, mean[ing] the location?”<sup>187</sup>

While the use of the term “centrality” proved confusing for some survey respondents, the use of “children’s history,” as previously noted, resulted in at least two interpretations among survey respondents. At times, survey respondents interpreted “children’s history” to mean history *for* children, while at others they

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<sup>186</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #65, January 12, 2010.

<sup>187</sup> Name withheld, telephone Interview with the author, survey respondent #118, October 11, 2010.

interpreted it to mean the history *of* children. For most sites, the history *of* children was less visible than history *for* children. As one archivist at a Walnut Creek house museum explained when I asked her to explain what she took into consideration when choosing a “1” for her site,

Well, I keep thinking that you wanted children to be the actual residents of the house and in that way it would be a 1. If we’re talking about the children’s history program then it would be a 5.”

When I asked her to answer if visitors are learning about the history of children who lived in the house or grew up in the house,” she responded, “No, see we didn’t have any children that grew up in the house.”<sup>188</sup>

For some staffers who ranked their site with a low number, the lack of children’s historical presence factored into their answers. As one program coordinator at a historic courthouse museum explained:

...it’s not like a house museum where there were children that grew up there...the courthouse was a place where adults went and worked and were tried and so it’s just, as I said, I try to do things to get it so kids can understand it, they can relate to it, so they understand what the justice system is about, but we don’t necessarily interpret children because they weren’t there, I guess, is the best way to describe it. Yeah, at least, I mean if they were there, we just don’t have those stories.<sup>189</sup>

The only story this particular site has recovered is that of a young boy who accompanied his parents who spent a lot of time at the courthouse transcribing

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<sup>188</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #91, July 27, 2010.

<sup>189</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #94, October 15, 2010.

documents as his father was a court reporter (and his mother helped with the transcribing). The boy continued to visit the courthouse as a teenager and later worked as a court recorder himself.<sup>190</sup>

While some museums cited the absence of children in their institution's history, others responded that the history and role of children is not an interpretive priority in comparison to other themes at their site. As one Los Angeles museum explained, "Well, it is part of the story; it is not a central part of the story. Um, I would say higher on the scale would be issues of diversity, democracy, kind of bigger picture stories, or concepts." She further clarified, "like in our mission statement and in our thinking about the institution, the first thing that comes to mind is not children's history despite being a part of the story."<sup>191</sup>

Another Southern California museum also listed "museum mission" as cause for the history of children ranking lower as an interpretive priority:

Well, if you were to make a list of what's the primary purpose of this museum and work your way down, um, and let's say you were to pick ten things, um, I think kids and the experience of people in the past, including children, would make the list, but it would be towards the bottom of the list. If you were to go to the top of the list you would, you know, the most important thing, frankly, from our point of view is [site specific history] and from that, you know, the central things that are interesting from that point of view have to do with transportation, communication, and banking.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Name withheld to provide confidentiality of the museum's survey results.

<sup>191</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #119, October 21, 2010.

<sup>192</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #127, November 29, 2010.

The curator-supervisor continued to note that, being trained as a historian, he was aware of the importance of historic context and the inclusion of social history, and, much like the survey respondents who argue for children not existing at their particular house museum or courthouse, he argues that for the interpretive period of their museum—the 1850s—children “didn’t play a very big role.”<sup>193</sup>

A trained historian and director of education, who demonstrated familiarity with the children’s history literature introduced at the start of this chapter during our interview, pointed to museum mission and the power of the California state curriculum standards within his reason for why the history of children and childhood is not included further:

You raise an interesting point. I don’t know how familiar you are with the historiography of the West, but, Elliot West, who is a really renowned historian, wrote an excellent book on childhood in the west but in truth that’s not sort of one of the major things that we do here. It’s something we do as part of other things, but it’s surely not one of the major focuses of the museum.<sup>194</sup>

This director of education went on to explain that he didn’t “see a lot of child’s history in the social science content standards,” and went on to explain, “It is sort of unfortunate that we live and die by the standards, but sadly that is the world we

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #5, December 17, 2009.

inhabit.”<sup>195</sup> State content standards and their nonnegotiable role in justifying public school field trips will be more fully explored in Chapter 3 as I examine the players that shape and negotiate child-centered programming for children.

Just as these survey respondents linked their museum’s mission to the priority of children’s history at the site, two respondents associated a minimal presence of children’s history to the type of their respective institutions. In explaining what she took into consideration when ranking her site, one programs coordinator at a Sacramento-area history museum echoed several themes raised by other museums, such as the history of children being just part of a larger story, while also identifying the influence and role of museum type:

Well we don't view ourselves as a children's museum, and I think if we were a children's museum we would have an actual exhibit about children and the role that they play in our history and because we don't have an actual full exhibit that actually answers that question is why I scored us a 1. We do have elements. We do have evidence of children in history. We do have toys and artifacts that definitely showcase that children were here in that time period, but we do not have anything that specifically, other than the [program title withheld] program, educates people about what childhood was like all around in Sacramento and that's, I assume because that's not the theme of this museum. If we were a children's museum, I think it would better adequately answer that question.<sup>196</sup>

Other survey respondents referred to children’s history as “peripheral” or “incidental” to the story their museum tells. When I followed-up with one Southern

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #101, October 20, 2010.



California Interpretive Specialist for State Parks, to ask if the average visitor, including adults and families, would learn about the history of children or childhood, she responded:

The history of children isn't really, like, something that's too emphasized. I mean kind of in the periphery, a little bit. In the periphery there's a lot of historic images of kids on skimboards and people as teenagers dancing to the victrola, you know, and that kind of thing. We don't have any programs that are, like, the history of kids at [name of state park] or anything like that.<sup>197</sup>

A Los Angeles county curator with a bachelor's degree in classics and art history and a Master's degree in archaeology explained how children's history fit into the two museums under his stewardship and, like the State Park Interpretive Specialist, chose to describe its visibility as peripheral:

it's presented as a part of the larger social, cultural, and family history of the City of [location name withheld] and the [location name withheld] valley. We don't have a lot of text or a lot of objects on display that I feel deal specifically with children and childhood, especially in a historical context. We sometimes bring in that information in order to talk about another point, but it's more peripheral than central to our interpretation.<sup>198</sup>

When I asked one Marin County museum staffer if adult and child visitors touring the museum on their own would leave "having learned something about children's history or gaining a sense of children's history in the area," she noted that the

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<sup>197</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #19, January 29, 2010.

<sup>198</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #134, January 6, 2011.

average, unguided visitor may miss information on the history of children and childhood:

it is mostly included in our docent materials, so they may not come away with that as the primary focus. There is limited space in the galleries that does have little panels on that but knowing how much people actually read panels, because it's not a central focus of the exhibitions, I would say probably not, but again we do have artifacts here and there that would illustrate what children were wearing or baby blankets and those types of things so that people can get some semblance of it. But I'd say the astute visitor would walk away with a sense of it, but the average visitor may not.<sup>199</sup>

One Central Coast museum coordinator explained the role that perspective played in her selecting a "2" to represent the centrality of children's history to interpretation at her site:

I selected that because when we are designing exhibits, telling the story of whatever it is from the apple industry to the dairy industry around here, telling it from the viewpoint or of children is not the frame of reference that we use in developing exhibits. I'm just trying to figure if there's some other way that I can phrase that or frame that, but I don't think so. A child's view of, or what a child's role in something is, is not the frame of reference that I have when we're putting together exhibits.<sup>200</sup>

For some museums, the centrality of children's history is site or building dependent. While explaining her rating of the interpretation of children's history as a "5" at her site, one historical society founder distinguished the level of children's history that might be expected at the two different locations the historical society

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<sup>199</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #67, December 18, 2009.

<sup>200</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #124, November 10, 2010.

operates. Whereas the history of children appears peripheral at one, at the other it's central:

In the [...] house, we're dealing primarily with the history of the City and so, yes, we will show them what a little girl might wear at the time that the [...] house was built, at the time that [town] was getting started, and we'll talk about the history of the City, but it's pretty static. But, at [...], everything centers on the child. So, that's why I put a 5 there because they step into the role of a child in history, and the life of a child in history.<sup>201</sup>

While some institutions operating multiple buildings or sites noted the role that location plays in the level of children's history presented, others noted the important role of audience. One Central Coast respondent noted on her survey, "In general, I'd rate both at about a 2, but when children are present, for example with a school tour, then each site could rate as high at [*sic*] a 4."<sup>202</sup> When I later interviewed the Director of Education who completed this survey, I asked "what might be some of the reasons that children learn more about children's history than adults?" She, like several other respondents in my study, cited the incorporation of children's history as a way to engage visiting children:

I think children's history is presented more to children because it's a way of capturing their attention, and it's something that they can relate to where the adults have been through a variety of phases of their life [laugh], and it's not the only way of grabbing their attention. I think for kids it's a way of captivating them and getting them to think about, "oh, if I lived here I wouldn't be able to go to school." Chances are, if you were the average *soldado* child you wouldn't, I mean you might have a little bit, it's not very likely that you would have a full

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<sup>201</sup> Name withheld, interview with the author, survey respondent #136, January 13, 2011.

<sup>202</sup> Extract from a Children and their Representation and Education in California museum survey, respondent #7, received August 13, 2009.

education and you would be either echoing your mother as she was fixing, cooking or cleaning the your home or if you were a boy you would be doing this, that, and the other, and I think it's a way of capturing their attention and getting them to think about what you're saying whereas the adults don't necessarily need that draw. And I think adults can see the larger issues a bit better than a third grader.<sup>203</sup>

The audience dependency of discussions on the history of children and childhood resounded throughout my research. While images, inferences, or direct references to children may very well exist in museum spaces intended for the general public, often the richest interpretations are reserved for child-centered programming and audiences.

Museum professionals and volunteers in my research demonstrated awareness that children identify better with museum programming when they learn about other children. As one Director of Education and Public Programs explained, "Connecting kids with their own contemporaries in a different time period in history is very engaging I think. It's not just learning about important people, it's learning about somebody like me. I think people make that kind of personal connection, um, learning about, kind of, everyday people."<sup>204</sup> Perhaps for this reason the strongest presence of "children's history" that I found in California museums was history prepared and presented *for* children.

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<sup>203</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #7, February 10, 2010.

<sup>204</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent # 103, October 28, 2010.

While children's history may be a low interpretive priority for many California history museums, there are instances (outside of the countless examples present in child-centered programming) where children are included in representations of the past. Within my survey, five of the thirty questions asked about how the history of children is discussed within museum interpretation. I learned that the history of children is generally spoken about in themes, such as education and family, that *could* align with the sacralization of childhood and speak to childhood ideals. For example, in Question 20, I asked, "If applicable, within which themes do you discuss the history and role of children?" (see Figure 8). To this question respondents were allowed to select all themes that they felt applied to their site. Everyday life (74 percent), family life (67 percent), and education (51 percent) were the most commonly selected themes within this question.

Responses to other survey questions suggest that museum representations of children's history lean to certain discussions and themes, primarily those dealing with the family unit. For example, while family life was the second most-selected response Question 20, survey respondents also answered that children are most often represented at their site as "family members" in Question 21, and the history of children is most often explored through the discussion of parent/child relations in Question 23 (see Figure 9).<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> For Question 21 it should be noted that "How are children represented at your site (please select all that apply)?" could have been interpreted by respondents as referring to present-day children although the question is sandwiched between questions that more directly communicate the purpose of this line of questions: to tease out how the history of children is represented at their site (see Appendix B).

**Figure 8**

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**Question 20** from Children and their Education and Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "If applicable, within which themes do you discuss the history and role of children?" In the table below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to the various options given in the survey, as well as identified the number of respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. Respondents were encouraged to select all applicable answers. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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Theme	Number of Respondents
Captivity / Slavery	15
Economy	32
Education	118
Everyday life	171
Family life	156
Politics	13
Religion	23
War	14
Other*	25
Left Blank	20
Not Applicable	15

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\*Additional themes included, but were not limited to, leisure, literacy, ranching, immigration/ethnicity, art, boarding schools/genocide, farming, cultural differences, Native American life, role of the single individual, then and now, crisis, crime, labor, and travel.

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**Figure 9**

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**Question 23** from Children and their Education and Representation in California  
Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "Does your site explore the history of children through any of these historical questions / discussions (please select all that apply)?" Below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to the various options given in the survey, as well as identified the number of respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. Respondents were invited to select all applicable answers. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Historical Question / Discussion within which Museums Explore Children's History</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Parent / child relations	81
The history of childhood	30
The role of gender in shaping childhood experiences	57
The role of ethnicity in shaping childhood experiences	43
The role of class in shaping childhood experience	40
The influence of children on society	16
Other*	24
Wrote "No" or "None"	14
Left Blank	66
Not Applicable	18

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The twenty-four survey respondents who selected "other" wrote varied answers with the most common being child labor, which was added four times. Other examples include "troubled youths, ward of the state," "child's life on the trail and in frontier society," and "traveling companion for adult family member." One survey wrote, "the role of political events in shaping childhood experiences (example: Mexican-American War)" while another wrote "the role of the environment in shaping childhood experiences."

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While such themes as family life and education could buttress the sacred child ideal, on the other hand, these themes could also facilitate and frame diverse discussions of childhood. While my survey helped me identify relevant themes and trends, it was my visits to California history museums, discussions with California museum professionals and volunteers, and attendance to museum programming that truly shed light on the interpretive tools used in the telling of children's history and how representations of children's history play out in California history museums.

### **Tools of Interpretation and Children's History**

In representing the history of children, what tools do museum professionals use? While analyzing one particular survey that I received during my study, I was struck by a comment a survey respondent added to the back of her survey. In addition to attributing the delay of her response to being an all-volunteer organization, she explained how "the interpretation of children is incidental."<sup>206</sup> This comment immediately struck me as it seemed to parallel so much of the research I had already conducted in its summation of children's history presentation. The broader context within which this quotation exists, further expresses how the history of children and childhood unfolds at this site.

We are an all-volunteer organization. Our Museum's Focus is on one of the first women doctors in our county. The House Museum was her home and medical office. The interpretation of children is incidental- the doctor had 2 children who lived with her from the late 19th to early 20th century. They are

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<sup>206</sup> Extract from a Children and their Representation and Education in California museum survey, respondent #203, received June 14, 2010.



mentioned during tours, and their photos are displayed. One bedroom is devoted to a display of vintage children's furniture and toys. We are available for school tours, but these are requested infrequently. School tours focus on the doctor and life in the 19th century. Her children are mentioned only as part of the family unit.<sup>207</sup>

This quote, which reflects interpretation as of June of 2010, encapsulates several trends found within my study of California museums: Not only are the stories of children often thought incidental (evident in the survey respondents' low ranking of children's history to overall interpretation at their site) and the themes within which they are discussed limited to family life or education, but museums often use similar objects when they display children's history.

During my visit to this site,<sup>208</sup> I did not hear mention of children beyond the following facts which either provide direct reference and inference: the doctor delivered babies (and that some people come to the museum saying they were delivered by her), her first husband had been accused of performing an abortion, she had two daughters of her own who would at times sleep in the attic when their rooms were needed for patients, and that when she remarried three additional children moved into the house. Consistent with the 2010 survey, visual cues of children and childhood consisted of photographs on the walls, a small dress of perhaps a teenager

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid. Please note that capitalization and grammar are presented here as they were within the survey.

<sup>208</sup> Open to the general public less than forty hours each year, this museum provides a visual tour online through which you can view each of the rooms. In addition to viewing the virtual tour, I also visited the site on August 3, 2013 to assess if interpretation had changed since I received a survey from this house museum in 2010.

or young woman in one of the daughter's rooms, and a room (the housekeeper's room) decorated with vintage toys, clothing, books, and furniture pertinent to children.

Commonly, the history of children and childhood is presented by way of material culture favoring middle-to-upper class childhoods as in the case of this house museum.<sup>209</sup> The reliance on these objects to represent children, however, delivers a false sense of perspective. While these objects send familiar, cultural cues that a child would have used this space (or at least used that object), they often reveal more about adults than children. Toys, clothes, and furniture (each manufactured and typically purchased by adults) reflect the mores of adults (manufactures, marketers, and consumers). Such objects *can* speak to a child's universe of play and shed light on the actual children who played with such toys *if* children are involved in documenting the relevance, pertinence, and place of toys in their lives and such perspectives are highlighted in museum exhibitions; the possibility of involving children in museum collecting initiatives is a main point of Chapter 5.

In a museum setting the mitigation of child-related objects by adults is even more striking as adults almost always operate collecting, curating, and educating within

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<sup>209</sup> In a 2006 article by Sharon Roberts, she found a similar trend in her study of British museums as the dominant version of childhood represented was one of a nostalgic, Edwardian middle-class childhood. Roberts argues that the underrepresentation of childhood was first noticed in 1988 by the Social History Curators Group (SHCG) as articles appearing in their annual journal, *Social History in Museums*, critiqued the state of the field and "museums were accused of displaying an unreal, one-sided history that was largely reliant on nostalgia, and the conclusion was reached that the prevailing representation of children/childhood in

museum spaces. While these objects represent some element of children's history, the presence of these objects often imbues museum collecting ideology (which bears its own rich history) more than the perspective of children, as well as past adults' child rearing attempts or subscription to conceptions of childhood ideals.

The importance of material culture to museums in the representation of children's history became clear through my survey and follow-up interviews. Within question #16 of my survey, I asked: "How is children's history interpreted at your site (please select all that apply)?" I provided four answers from which survey respondents could choose (see Figure 10).

Ten survey respondents either did not answer, wrote not applicable next to the question, or wrote a comment in lieu of circling a response. Survey respondents were invited to circle as many responses as they found appropriate. About 19 percent of respondents circled D, "their history/experiences are not interpreted at our site," suggesting that a significant percentage of museums recognize that children's history (which could be either interpreted as history *of* children or history *for* children) is not part of their interpretive thrust.

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British museums was, at that moment, 'an inevitable middle class Edwardian nursery, amply filled with toys and dolls.' See Roberts, "Minor Concerns," 157.

**Figure 10**

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**Question 16** from Children and their Education and Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "How is children's history interpreted at your site (please select all that apply)?" In the table below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to the answers provided in the survey, as well as identified the number of respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. Survey respondents were invited to select all applicable answers. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Mediums for Interpretation of Children's History</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Through material culture (such as toys, utensils, clothes, etc)	168
Through their own voices (excerpts from diaries)	42
Through the viewpoint of others (their parents, their teachers, etc)	77
Their history/experiences are not interpreted at our site.	44
Left Blank	8
Not Applicable	2

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My survey revealed that children's history is most often interpreted through material culture and through the perspective of others. To tease out the types of material culture California history museums have pertaining to children's history, in Question 19 I asked "Please select the types of archival or material culture objects your institution has if applicable," and provided a list of objects for survey respondents to choose from (see Figure 11). Twenty-eight survey respondents left this question blank or wrote not applicable. Toys, clothes, furniture, literature/magazines, and utensils were the top five answers.

**Figure 11**

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**Question 19** from Children and their Education and  
Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "Please select the types of archival or material culture objects your institution has if applicable?" In the table below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to the various options given in the survey, as well as identified the number of respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. Survey respondents were invited to select all answers that apply. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Types of Objects</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Toys	164
Clothes	144
Utensils	82
Furniture	119
Literature / magazines	100
Diaries / Letters (written by children)	51
Other*	64
Left Blank	15
Not Applicable	13

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\*The most common object added by survey respondents was photos (27 surveys). Other objects survey respondents added included, but were not limited to: paintings, school books, tools, scrapbooks, videos, school records, oral histories, and cultural items.

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The second most common way that respondents reported the interpretation of children's history at their site was through the viewpoints of others. Historian Peter N. Stearns observes, "... a disproportionate amount of what passes for the history of childhood still not only involves adult filters but also really turns out, on examination, to be mainly centered on what adults were doing or saying about this or that aspect of children's lives, including, of course, what they were doing in areas such as law and policy."<sup>210</sup> As Brian Shepherd has argued, the "custodial role" of adults which pertains to childhood, extends to museum representations of childhood as well: "The very concept of childhood is one constructed by adults rather than by the children who are obliged to inhabit the physical, intellectual and emotional space fashioned for them by custodial adults."<sup>211</sup> Ultimately, finding the unmitigated child perspective in museum spaces is difficult and, perhaps, impossible as museums are designed and operated by adults.

As museum professionals and volunteers plan exhibitions, they are often left with few objects or sources that have not been influenced by adults. For example, one survey respondent pointed towards the adult role in the creation of toys. When I asked a curator at a museum focused on the history of toys and dolls to explain her

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<sup>210</sup> Peter N. Stearns, "Challenges in the History of Childhood," *Journal for the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 1 (2008), 36.

<sup>211</sup> Brian W. Shepherd, "Making Children's Histories," in *Making Histories in Museums* edited by Gaynor Kavanagh (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), 262.

ranking the centrality of children's history as a "3" on a scale from one to five, she responded:

Well, I think part of it is who makes the toys, who designs the toys and who buys the toys. Children's history is definitely part of that, but I think what it really says more about is adult history so that's why I picked the middle basically because the thought is that toys would not exist without children but that's not really true because I think some of the most toy rich periods in history or in different countries, the toys have been for adults. So, I think it says more about adult history than children.<sup>212</sup>

Another survey respondent cited the role that the production of material culture played in the exclusion of children's history at her site; she chose a "1" to represent the centrality of children's history to interpretation at her museum. Within her interview, she argued that her museum collection's focus on fine art, made by adults, resulted in interpretation focusing on adults rather than children:

I put it pretty low because, I mean, we're not focusing on children, um, history, I mean we're looking at cultural history being an art museum and we're looking at the people who are making that kind of culture, I mean, who are the people who are producing the texts that we're using whether they be ceramic vases or paintings or so on, and the fact is those people are adults and they're the only people who are really speaking in this collection. Unless children start making fine art [*laugh*], it will probably stay that way. That's why I put it so low, and I didn't mean it to be a value judgment but that's the reality of it. Art tends to be produced by adults, or art that is collected by museums, made by adults.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey #110, October 21, 2010.

<sup>213</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with author, survey respondent #128, November 24, 2010.

Not only do the toys and furniture on display teach visitors about adult craftsmanship, marketing, and values, they represent what museum professionals choose to collect and exhibit.<sup>214</sup>

As already alluded to, in the context of a museum it is primarily adults who donate to museums (although I will examine a noteworthy example to the contrary in Chapter 5) and adults who decide which objects belong in a museum collection or on the exhibit floor. My interview with a Sacramento-area public programs director illustrates this point as she considered museum curators as an example of “through the viewpoint of others.” When I asked her to expand on her answer to Question 16 “How is children’s history interpreted at your site (please select all that apply)?” she explained:

Well I think the material culture is just simply a lot of the items that we do have. Again we have a lot of toys and we also have a lot of the religious items and then we also have again some of the sports paraphernalia as well and in terms of being seen through others, what I meant by that is all of these exhibits were done by a curator who was not necessarily of that era who was not necessarily of that culture and so we are presenting something that is not our own.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Within her article, “Collecting kids’ stuff: in search of the history of childhood in New Zealand museums,” Lynette Townsend demonstrates “that collections are shaped by the historical context within which they were created, whether at the level of social discourse or the activities of individual people. This is evident in the types of childhood objects collected and in the changing way these objects are valued by the museum.” Lynette Townsend, “Collecting kids’ stuff: in search of the history of childhood in New Zealand museums,” *Tuhing* 23 (2012): 39-51.

<sup>215</sup> Telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #101.



Another museum volunteer considered the role of museum volunteers when she selected “through the viewpoint of others” as they operate each of the stations that children rotate through.<sup>216</sup>

For some survey respondents, their selection of “through the viewpoint of others” reflected their use of writings, by others, to describe the activities of children. For example, one Mendocino County Museum shared “whenever we can we have a lot of journals and letters and whenever anybody had written anything about daily life or what their kids were doing, we pull those excerpts out so when we do have a class visiting or something we can use those quotes to help kids make a connection to what they're looking at.”<sup>217</sup> A Monterey county museum’s staff gleans from a diary written by teachers who taught at the school house they now interpret.<sup>218</sup>

In explaining how children’s history is presented through the perspective of others, one Los Angeles educator explained how the museum exhibits information on a female librarian, Mrs. Breed, who corresponded with interned Japanese American children, as well as a teenager (high school student Ralph Lazo) of Mexican descent who went to the internment camp with his Japanese friends. In her explanation she explained, “that's one of the more, kind of, well-known stories that we like to tell in terms of someone who was a friend, a neighbor, who went with

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<sup>216</sup> Telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #124.

<sup>217</sup> Extract from a Children and their Representation and Education in California museum survey, respondent #119, received June 5, 2010.

<sup>218</sup> Extract from a Children and their Representation and Education in California museum survey, respondent #106, received October 27, 2010.

them, and, so those are some of the voices of people who didn't live the experience as a Japanese American but are still a part of that story.”<sup>219</sup>

Eighteen percent of surveys noted that they interpret children's history through the voices and words of children. One Los Angeles School Programs Coordinator noted that their exhibit has letters on display written by children interned in Japanese Internment camps. Each letter, she explains, are “like a journal of their experience” and thus serve as a “reflection of the young experience in camp.”<sup>220</sup> Another museum also pointed to letters written by a twelve-year-old girl, May Woolsey, while one survey referred to “adult oral histories re[garding] childhood memories.”<sup>221</sup>

During my interviews, several participants commented on the important role of memory to the interpretation of children at their site. For example, one Los Angeles Schools Program Coordinator explained the seminal role of volunteers' memories to interpretation at their site and the “telling of the Japanese-American story”:

we do have some docents who lived the history that is on display in the galleries and so that first-person voice is always something that has been very

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<sup>219</sup> Museum survey, respondent #119.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Extract from a Children and their Representation and Education in California museum survey, respondent #147, received June 9, 2010; Extract from a Child and their Representation and Education in California museum survey, respondent #164, three surveys were received from this institution between July 27, 2010 and November 1, 2010 by different staff members, and I compiled their answers and took the most expansive answers.

much valued here at the museum and it's something that we are very aware of as something that is disappearing and so we are working to record those stories, and, you know, just capture them.<sup>222</sup>

Within my research I soon realized that children's history is not only captured with the integration of oral history research, but that oral histories, and the childhood memories they contain, are not uncommon interpretive tools, especially in the case of house museums or the delivery of traumatic history, such as, the Holocaust, Japanese internment, or the Mormon Extermination Order.

### **Stories that rise to the top**

As I visited approximately forty museums throughout the state, I looked for examples where the experience of individual stories of children made it to the top. I found examples, but the examples often continued to fall victim to restraints previously introduced in this chapter, meaning, little was incorporated from the perspective of the child and a broader historical analysis was rarely applied. The example within which I found the most thorough exploration of children's history typically occurred at exhibits or sites dealing with presenting the history of trauma, a topic that will be taken up later in this chapter.

Other examples I found of individual children's stories emerging included instances where the owner of an object on display was referenced (such as Patty Reed's doll at Sutter's Fort), the child grows up to be famous (such as Ronald

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<sup>222</sup> Museum survey respondent #119.

Reagan at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum), or the child does something notable as a child (and this could range from Hollywood starlets to juvenile delinquents). The resulting interpretations of these individuals, and their lives as children, still remain cursory at best.

For example, at The California Museum, visitors learn about Paul Buzzo, a youth whose writing to his congressman resulted in an act being passed regarding litter. In a short audio clip, that visitors can listen to via a tabletop jukebox in a replica diner, visitors overhear a recreated dialogue between a mother and son. In response to her son's claim that "kids can't write new laws," the mother goes on to explain the origins of the *Paul Buzzo Act*, an act "suggested by an eleven-year-old boy." The mom goes on to explain that in the 1960s smoking was more prevalent and "a kid like Paul Buzzo would see people around town tossing cigarettes on the sidewalk or onto someone's lawn. Paul thought this might cause fires."<sup>223</sup> The mother explains to her son how Paul wrote his congressmen and kids can in fact spur change. Through this scripted dialogue visitors learn a powerful message. The way in which the story is presented (by the blind selection of a jukebox tab) keeps this story hidden. The use of a re-enacted script conveys a message of empowerment to children, but, once again, leaves quite a bit to inference in terms of children's history.

I came across a number of instances where adult memories of childhood impacted museum interpretation during my study and noticed two predominant

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<sup>223</sup> Field notes, April 17, 2013, The California Museum, Sacramento, CA.

trends. First, a number of museum professionals turn to oral histories (and subsequently childhood memories) as they make interpretive decisions at their site. Second, I found an undeniable correlation between the subject matter of persecution and the heightened representation of children. Museums or exhibits focused on telling traumatic history often incorporate volunteers with relevant childhood memories into their mainstream programming for children. At these sites, as will be later explored, children are used as symbols to communicate the irrationality of the events that transpired. The commoditization of children's experiences to sell history plays into, and upholds, the sacred child ideal, a concept of childhood that this chapter has previously proved a powerful force in museum interpretation.

Especially in regards to house museums and historic sites, a number of cases exist where even if a child who once visited or lived at the site is not spoken about specifically, the perspective of that child, recalled as an adult, shapes the placement of objects, the stories that are told, and often the overall recreation of museum space. Take for example, Rancho Los Cerritos Historic Site, a house museum in Long Beach, California, which interprets the various owners that lived in a 1844 two-story Adobe built by John Temple. While the museum's interpretation covers multiple layers of history, as the house served as a dwelling from the 1840s through the 1940s, the focus of the furnishing plans, tours, and interpretation concentrates on the 1870s.

At this site, childhood memories influence the furnishing of the house as museum staff draw upon the memoir of Sarah Bixby Smith and letters written by her

sister Anne Bixby Chamberlain to the site's first curator William Evans between July 1957 and December 1960. Within *Adobe Days*, Smith reflects on her 1878 visit to Rancho Los Cerritos at the age of seven. First published as an article in 1920 in the *Annual Publications of the Historical Society of Southern California*, Smith's memoir inspires school programming (the fourth-grade program is titled *Adobe Days Revisited*), directs furnishing plans, and informs docent tours. For example, the parlor has been recreated to match that described in the book:

The parlor was a small square room with one window to the court and one to the front veranda. The walls were covered with a light flowered paper, and on them hung four steel engravings of the "Voyage of Life," and the familiar picture of Lincoln and his son Tad. A large walnut book-case occupied one side of the room. Its' drawers at the base were filled with blocks and toys for the downstairs delectation of the succession of babies in the home. A Franklin stove in one corner kept us snug and warm when the ocean chill crept inland. The furniture was covered with a maroon leather, a set exactly like the one in the office at San Justo....At the table in the center of the room father and Uncle Jotham spent many a long evening over interminable series of cribbage....<sup>224</sup>

A visit to the recreated parlor demonstrates just how many of these details have been incorporated. When Sarah's brother Llewellyn Bixby Sr. remodeled the house in 1930, the interior underwent significant changes including the parlor that Smith recalls. As part of the remodel, the ceiling and interior walls of the parlor and an adjoining bedroom were removed to convert the two rooms into a spacious, modern living room with a high ceiling and balcony. Today, in the museum's effort to return the majority of interpretation to the 1870s, the parlor has been restored to

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<sup>224</sup> Sarah Bixby Smith, *Adobe Days* (1931; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 67-68.

match the 1878 description by young, seven-year-old Sarah Bixby. For example, a faux wall and ceiling have been constructed to return the parlor to its original size, the walls have been covered in wallpaper matching Sarah's description, furniture has been reupholstered with maroon leather, puzzles and toys have been added to the bottom drawer of the large bookcase, lithographs of Thomas Cole's *Voyage of Life* have been hung on the wall, and a cribbage board, appearing to be in mid-play, rests on the center table.

Sarah's text and adult memories of childhood inform not only the furnishing of Rancho Los Cerritos but interpretation at the site. Within the docent training manual, room guides are provided to remind docents of themes, objectives, questions, objects, and observations relevant to the room, as well as how to transition out of the room. Towards the bottom of many of these sheets there is a section titled, "*Adobe Days* stories to integrate." For example, the guide for the dining room provides docents in training annotated stories or knowledge from *Adobe Days* pertinent to this particular space: "Harry and George frequently ate with the ranch hands. The girls in the family were never permitted to join them, as that was not considered proper for girls! [*Adobe Days*, page 66.]; Story of the Chinese peddler who brought vegetables for the ranch, as well as news of the Chinese community for Ying. [*Adobe Days*, page 65]; Mrs. Bixby and the installation of the cast iron cook stove. [*Adobe Days*, pages 64-65]."<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> "Room Guide: Dining Room," Rancho Los Cerritos Docent Manual, Revised February 2004.

The reliance, and trust, in Smith's narrative was not an anomaly within my research. Within my study I came across several rooms in historic houses or exhibitions that had been either based on a child's account or influenced by an adult's memory of childhood. A number of sites turn to adult memories of childhood to inform interpretation, and a number of museum personnel acknowledged the weaknesses of childhood memories, or oral history overall within their interviews.

Two museum professionals not only spoke of the role of oral histories at their site, but also of the bias one must take into account when working with such sources. For example, a site director in El Dorado County described how her museum attempts to corroborate the oral histories that were gathered in the late 1980s and early 1990s as the site professionalized:

The resources that were left were people in their fifties, sixties, seventies, and they were children at the time [of living at or visiting the site], so a lot of our knowledge of the site comes through the eyes of children, but they were told to us when they were fifties, and sixties, and seventies. So, it's really interesting. We try to then correlate a lot of oral histories with pictures that we've gathered and kind of compare, say, cousin stories against one another and you know oral histories have their limitations and so we've done as best we can to make sure that everything that's seen through a child's eyes are, is as factual as possible.<sup>226</sup>

In speaking of the use of oral histories at his state park, a Kern county interpreter described how oral histories capture children's history and exude child perspectives which, at times, fail to correspond or resonate with other sources of the times due to the perspective from which they come:

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<sup>226</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #14, December 15, 2009.



It's kind of a two-edge sword. It's great information, but a lot of it is from the perspective of a young person or a child, and so distances are longer [laughs], buildings are taller, that type of thing. And so many racial interactions which for locals are maybe a little bit more rosy than they've actually been because I've noticed from the interviews with people that were very young, they never talk about that, but the ones that were older, they were middle aged, or, I shouldn't say middle aged, but they were professional age or, you know, in their thirties, their forties, uh, their perspective is a little bit different. Still, not as bad as other places in the country that were experiencing Jim Crow laws but not as rosy as some of the kids were probably relating—and that trend has only recently popped out to me after reading enough of it—because most of the interviews take place with the people who are in their, you know, anywhere from seventy to ninety years old, so their perspectives have changed a bit, but the memories are based on basically that narrow window of about ten years when the town was really in its heyday.<sup>227</sup>

Adult memories of childhood not only provide historical information for museum interpretation, but they also guide preservation and restoration of historic house museums. At one El Dorado County house museum, the memory of a descendant, who spent time in the estate around the age of five, has driven interpretation for three of the rooms visitors see on the tour: the office, entryway, and dining room. While the director is indebted to donations made by this descendent, as well as her input, she is very aware of the role that memory plays in shaping this descendant's perspective of how the house was decorated. Over time, the director has become less trusting of this descendant's memories:

She's in her late eighties now and [...] she is kind of remembering the twenties and thirties but truthfully I don't know whether or not her memory is still that spot on [laughs]. I think she's gotten to a point where she's trying to make people happy and she's trying to remember things and not in any malicious way, she's not trying to fabricate things or anything but just, she doesn't really

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<sup>227</sup> Extract from a Children and their Representation and Education in California museum survey, respondent #17, received December 16, 2009.

remember and she's just trying to, kind of, make things up to fill the spaces at this point. I don't remember what my house looked like when I was ten, twelve, how can she?<sup>228</sup>

And there has been cause for concern as the descendent has changed her mind three times regarding the interpretation of the entry way for the house. In the most recent iteration, museum staff and volunteers altered the rooms “in favor of a different interpretation that she now remembers” from black lacquer furniture in the “Oriental theme” to “mission style furniture.”<sup>229</sup> Throughout my study, I learned of several instances where the oral histories of past residents have informed interpretation, both in terms of the historical information presented and the way in which material culture is presented.

One of the best examples to illustrate this point is that of Dr. Helen Henry Smith and her role at Vikingsholm, an estate which sits on the shore of Emerald Bay in South Lake Tahoe and is part of the Emerald Bay State Park. A summer guest to this estate as a child and a former Park Ranger, Smith has been instrumental in the preservation and interpretation of the Vikingsholm estate since 1969.

As visitors enter the two-story log cabin Emerald Bay State Park Visitor Center, which sits adjacent to Vikingsholm, they immediately see a staircase leading upstairs and, at its base, a black and white cut-out of an oversized image of Helen

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<sup>228</sup> Name withheld, staff member at Museum B, interview with the author, August 2, 2010.

<sup>229</sup> Name withheld, staff member at Museum B, interview with the author, June 27, 2012.

and a dog. Immediately upon entering, the visual image of Helen is impressed on visitors, even prior to learning about Lora Knight who built the house. To the left of the staircase is a large traveling trunk which sits open, displaying a child's pink dress in the left compartment, and drawers in the right compartment that may be pulled out. Atop the trunk is a didactic which reads, "What would Helen Bring? Look inside the trunk and discover what young Helen Henry might have packed for her summer stays at Vikingsholm during the 1930's [*sic*]." <sup>230</sup>

As visitors continue to move counter-clockwise through the small room they encounter a wall, opposite of the door they entered, which highlights the contributions of Helen Henry Smith. Beneath the exhibit title *Helen Henry Smith: a Woman of Vision and Tenacity*, several photographs of Helen Henry Smith as a child at Vikingsholm and from her career as a state park interpreter are mounted to the wall. By way of two framed didactics, visitors learn that Smith spent "the first 14 years of her childhood as a summer guest of Mrs. Lora J. Knight" and once she was old enough to stay by herself she would sleep in the pink room and choose the "bed closest to the window," a fact brought up on the house tour.

The exhibit chronicles Smith's return to Vikingsholm in 1969 after having grown up, married, and having children of her own. That year, she started her career as a seasonal tour guide and historian and "broke many professional barriers as the first woman employee in a uniformed position in this region of California State

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<sup>230</sup> Exhibit didactic, Visitor Center, Emerald Bay State Park, based on field visit August 20, 2011.

Parks.”<sup>231</sup> After acknowledging several contributions Smith has made to the preservation of Vikingsholm, including her fundraising efforts, the didactic concludes with gratitude for Smith’s memories: “We salute Helen Henry Smith for turning her childhood memories into a legacy for future generations.”<sup>232</sup>

Throughout the rest of the exhibition, visitors learn about the creator of Vikingsholm Lora Knight, recreational improvements she funded for the area, architect Lennart Palme, the Scandinavian architecture of the home, the construction of Vikingsholm, and those who staffed and cared for the home (which numbered about fifteen). Prior to entering the gift shop, visitors may sit on wooden benches and watch *Vikingsholm: The Legacy of Lora Knight & Helen Smith* (2009), a sixty-minute documentary produced by the Sierra State Parks Foundation in cooperation with California State Parks. This documentary traces the history of Vikingsholm, the role of Lora Knight in its creation, and the role of Helen Smith in its preservation. Thus, both at the start and conclusion of the tour, the importance of Helen Henry Smith, her dedication and involvement, is highlighted.

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<sup>231</sup> Exhibit didactic, Visitor Center, Emerald Bay State Park, based on field visit August 20, 2011. In 2009, Smith “received the California State Park Rangers Association Honorary Ranger Award for her service as a tour guide and for establishing a nonprofit foundation that has raised more than \$2 million for restoration of the landmark,” Mark S. Bacon, “Tour Guide Use to Summer at Vikingsholm,” *SFGATE.com*, July 19, 2009.

<sup>232</sup> Exhibit didactic, Vikingsholm Visitor Center, Emerald Bay State Park, based on field visit August 20, 2011.

Perhaps less noticeable to the everyday visitor that comes to Vikingsholm is the impact of Smith's memories on interpretative choices at Vikingsholm. While Smith's involvement continues perhaps most transparently through her participation in special events where she talks about Vikingsholm, leads tours, and answers questions, behind the scenes her memories have long influenced interpretation of the site. Thus, much of the way in which rooms are interpreted is based on perspectives of a child as remembered by an adult.

When I asked Interpretation and Volunteer Program Manager Heidi Doyle if the childhood memories of Helen Henry Smith had affected the content of the tour or the way that artifacts are placed throughout the house, she replied, "Absolutely. When somebody will move something from table A to table B and Helen says that's not how it went; we move it back. So, we take advantage of the fact that we have somebody who lived at Vikingsholm as a child who has excellent memory and she's our firsthand. She's our go-to person. We go to her for the artifact placement."<sup>233</sup> Doyle also acknowledged how the reminiscences of Helen, such as which room and bed she slept in, creates meaningful points of connection for guests, "those kinds of stories," she shared, "those recollections because of Helen that we have improves our connection with the public who takes the tours."<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Heidi Doyle, Interpretation and Volunteer Program Manager, California State Parks, Lake Tahoe/Sierra North Sectors, phone interview with author, July 23, 2012.

<sup>234</sup> Doyle, phone interview with the author, July 23, 2012.

When I asked Helen Henry Smith if she felt her “memories of visiting Vikingsholm as a child [have] influenced any of the interpretive decisions made at Vikingsholm,” she confirmed that her vivid memories have played an important role in providing information for both tours and the booklet she authored on Vikingsholm. Smith also noted how, during the 1970s, she was able to corroborate her memories with those of former guests and staff.<sup>235</sup>

Within my research I also came in contact with a number of volunteers who draw from their own childhood experiences as they tell present-day children about the past. For example, when I asked one retired teacher, who helped found a living history ranch in San Joaquin Valley, if she had conducted research on children she replied: “Well, do you remember I said we’re all teachers? Taking child psychology courses [*laughs and uses indiscernible phrase*] I’m a counselor, so I also have that background. Well among us all, we’re pretty sure we know what it was like to be a child. And then on top of it, we have all these wonderful people in the society whose parents were this kind of child.”<sup>236</sup> Another volunteer who serves as the director of a historical society acknowledged, “I lived through it,” when I asked how she came to know topics relevant to children’s history at her site. I heard this sentiment echoed again by educators at a Central Coast museum when one day I casually asked how they learned material for the late-nineteenth-century school lesson.

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<sup>235</sup> Email correspondence with author, August 22, 2012.

<sup>236</sup> Name withheld, phone interview with the author, 13 January 2011.

A number of programs provide a forum for adults to share childhood memories regarding the past. For example, Helen Henry Smith gives occasional tours and special programs at Vikingsholm in South Lake Tahoe; Richard Gonzales gives occasional tours at Preston Castle drawing from his eight-month stay at the Preston School of Industry as a fifteen-year-old youth convicted of stealing a car.<sup>237</sup> Most commonly, sites dedicated to the memorialization of traumatic events in history, such as the Holocaust and Japanese-American internment, incorporate survivors into their public programming. Although such memories may be subject to distortion or retroactive bias, museums often emphasize, appreciate, and utilize the perspective and authenticity such memory-based exchanges bring.<sup>238</sup>

Both the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust and The Museum of Tolerance (also located in Los Angeles) regularly host holocaust survivor talks.<sup>239</sup> At The Museum of Tolerance, “for over three decades, Holocaust survivors have

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<sup>237</sup> “Meet Richard Gonzales,” *Preston Communicator* 5, issue 1 (Spring 2011): 5.

<sup>238</sup> For example, in his study of memory, Daniel L. Schacter contends that while “memory for emotional trauma is frequently more accurate than memory for ordinary events,” there is room for distortion as these memories are often subject to [as Lenore Terr argues] ‘perceptual errors that occur at the time of the event, caused by the stress of the shocking episode’ and are often subject to retroactive bias. See Daniel L. Schacter, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind, and the Past* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 205-206.

<sup>239</sup> The scheduling of these programs is quite frequent. For example, during the week of October 28, 2013 three “Holocaust Survivor Speaker” events were listed on the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust calendar. This program is described as, “Holocaust Survivors share about their wartime experience. Holocaust Survivor Talks last forty-five minutes to an hour, and end with a question and answer session with the Survivor.” See “Events,” Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, accessed October 28, 2013, available at [www.lamoth.org/news--events/events/](http://www.lamoth.org/news--events/events/).

volunteered their time...to speak about their painful experiences during World War II.” According to The Museum of Tolerance, “over 40,000 visitors per year meet a Holocaust Survivor” and “these survivors have been the most effective ambassadors of memory, hope and tolerance for our museum and their decision and courage serve as a testament to the vibrancy and tenacity of Jewish life.”<sup>240</sup> The Museum of Tolerance sponsors a Holocaust survivor lecture daily as well as integrates such talks into school programming and broadcasts through video conferencing.

Sites exploring the history of Japanese-American internment also rely on adults with relevant childhood memories. For example, at The California Museum in Sacramento, the school program, *Time of Remembrance*, is centered around the topic of Japanese-American internment during World War II and includes the present-day participation of former internees. Within this program, students are afforded the opportunity to “explore citizenship, constitutionality and the concept of redress as they are led through a tour of the Museum’s *Uprooted! Japanese Americans During WWII*.”<sup>241</sup> While speaking with one of the staff involved with this program, I learned of its use of volunteers who had “lived through it” and could share their childhood memories:

Our most popular program is our *Time of Remembrance* program which is about the Japanese American internment during World War II, and that's just

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<sup>240</sup> “Hear a Holocaust Survivor,” The Museum of Tolerance, accessed October 28, 2013, [www.museumoftolerance.com/site/c.tmL6KfNVLtH/b.4866121/X.Um5ig\\_msh8E](http://www.museumoftolerance.com/site/c.tmL6KfNVLtH/b.4866121/X.Um5ig_msh8E).

<sup>241</sup> “Time of Remembrance,” The California Museum, accessed October 28, 2013, [www.californiamuseum.org/overview/time-remembrance](http://www.californiamuseum.org/overview/time-remembrance).



a really special program because the volunteers who present it are actually former internees so the kids are not only learning about the internment and World War II, but they're also hearing these personal stories from people who actually lived through it and then they're also learning about what it means to be active in government, civic participation, and their constitutional rights and things like that. So, that's a different program that really hits a lot of different levels and it's also very special just because the people who are leading the program.<sup>242</sup>

Other sites dealing with Japanese-American internment, such as the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) and the Manzanar National Historic Site (MNHS) regularly include adults who “lived through it” in the production of knowledge at their respective institutions, whether through former internee docents or referencing oral histories that have been collected over time. For example, at the JANM, visitors have the opportunity to tour with “docents who have first-hand experience with the American concentration camps.”<sup>243</sup> Those unable to tour with a former internee may access oral histories online through the JANM website and “listen to the stories of Nikkei from around the world through life history video interviews.”<sup>244</sup>

At MNHS, a site devoted to the interpretation of the Manzanar War Relocation Center, approximately fifteen to twenty docents who spent time at the

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<sup>242</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #15, March 3, 2010.

<sup>243</sup> “Frequently Asked Questions,” Japanese American National Museum, accessed October 28, 2013, [www.janm.org/visit/groups/faq](http://www.janm.org/visit/groups/faq).

<sup>244</sup> “Interviews: Discover Nikkei,” Japanese American National Museum, accessed October 28, 2013, [www.discovernikkei.org/en/interviews](http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/interviews).

camp as internees help facilitate programs “as people are available.”<sup>245</sup> As Chief of Interpretation Alisa Lynch explained, “Some of them have done them [programs] several times, but there is always, because the folks are getting older, there's health issues as far as who can be scheduled when.” To accommodate health issues and travel limitations, MNHS sponsored “an electronic fieldtrip broadcast in 2007 that was onsite, bringing internees here and that [the broadcast] went out to schools all over the country.”<sup>246</sup>

MNHS works to bring varied first-person perspectives to interpretation at their site. For example, in October of 2011, MNHS sponsored an event where Art Williams and Fred Causey, children of employees of the War Relocation Authority at Manzanar, shared “their stories from camp” as they spent “much of World War II at Manzanar as children.”<sup>247</sup> In 2012 the Manzanar History Association published *Children of Manzanar*, which depicts the experience of nearly fourth thousand children and young adults at Manzanar through photographs and quotes from oral histories.

In my visits to multiple exhibits dedicated to representing the Japanese-American interment experience, I have been struck by the abundance of photographs, quotes,

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<sup>245</sup> Alisa Lynch, Chief of Interpretation, Manzanar NHS, telephone interview with the author, January 5, 2011.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Manzanar National Historic Site News Release, “Former Children of Manzanar to Share Their Unique Experience with Visitors on October 9 & 10,” September 19, 2011.

material culture, and stories related to the experiences of children.<sup>248</sup> At MNHS, a site devoted to the history of Japanese internment, the dual meaning of children's history (both the history *of* children and history *for* children) are fully, richly explored.

As visitors first enter the Manzanar Visitor Center—which houses 8,000-square-feet of exhibit space, an orientation film, and bookstore—they encounter a large panel which practically stretches from floor to ceiling.<sup>249</sup> The background of the interpretive panel is a photograph of the internment barracks set against the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range with an American flag raised on a flagpole towards the left of the image. Superimposed is the photograph of a Japanese-American child with an identification tag hanging around her neck. The superimposed image has been taken from a May 8, 1942, photograph by Dorothea Lange of the Mochida family as they await evacuation. To the right of the child is a mounted, rectangular, acrylic didactic with text which reads: “In 1942, the United States government

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<sup>248</sup> I have visited “Uprooted! Japanese Americans During WWII” at The California Museum in Sacramento (April 16, 2013), Manzanar National Historic Site (February 28, 2009), the Community Gallery at the Sacramento History Museum (September 27, 2011 and January 9, 2011), “Common Ground: The Heart of Community,” at the Japanese American National Museum in (2009), and displays at the Oakland Museum of California (January 2012 and April 2013) and the San Diego History Center (October 2013).

<sup>249</sup> My observations are based on my visit to MNHS on February 14, 2009 as well as correspondence with Alisa Lynch, Chief of Interpretation at MNHS, in January 2011 and March 2014. The panels I reference are part of the visitor center's permanent exhibit, which opened on April 24, 2004 in the renovated high school auditorium as the first onsite interpretive center. Manzanar is located six miles south of Independence, California.

ordered over 110,000 men, women, and children to leave their homes and detained them in remote, military-style camps. Two-thirds of them were born in America. Not one was convicted of espionage or sabotage. For 10,000 of them, Manzanar would be their new home.”<sup>250</sup>

Before entering the museum, I asked the employee at the front desk if there was an admission fee; she explained there was not as they felt that the story was so important that all should hear it. As I proceeded through my visit and watched the orientation film, toured the exhibits, and drove around the historic sites and remnants of the camp, I learned the history and implications of Manzanar, and I learned what life was like to be a child at Manzanar. Furthermore, throughout I saw techniques employed to reach young audiences. For example, all of the objects that are in accessible, public spaces (i.e. not behind Plexiglas cases) are replicas and visitors are free to touch them. Each object bears a tag identifying who it belonged to, or, providing more information.

Although the voices and perspectives of children are heard throughout (whether through the historic writings of children, or, adult memories of childhood) a replica barrack most fully explores the implications of Manzanar on childhood and helps depict how childhood at Manzanar was similar to and different from other childhoods. For example, above a suitcase filled with toys (yet covered with Plexiglas so children can only look in), a didactic panel bears the question, “What kinds of toys could I play with?” An answer is provided next to a historic photograph

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<sup>250</sup> Exhibit text, panel #L-00-006, Manzanar National Historic Site..

of a Japanese American child sitting atop a suitcase: “Because you could only bring a few things to camp, you probably couldn’t bring your toys, games, books, or bike. Parents started the Toy Loan Center. It was like a library of toys. The toys in this room are like the ones you might have borrowed from the Toy Loan Center.”<sup>251</sup>

Within this replica barrack building the question, “what would it be like to live in a barracks” is also posed. When children lift the plastic panel bearing that question they learn, “it would be crowded and noisy. Your family would have to share a room with up to eight people, sometimes strangers. Seven-year-old Mary Noda said, ‘I want to live in a house where there is a bedroom, dining room and a living room with chairs and tables in it. I want two trees in my yard, so I can play with my friends in my own yard.’”<sup>252</sup>

Questions that present-day children may easily relate to—such as the place of pets at Manzanar—are addressed within the example. For example, above a metal dog bowl, a picture captures Mr. and Mrs. Moji, a childless couple from Bainbridge Island, WA, reaching out of an Army truck to interact with their dog King, who standing on its hind legs struggles to reach them. The question is posed, “Could I bring my pet to Manzanar” and an answer is provided that weaves in the specific account of a seven-year-old child:

The Army would not let you bring your pet to camp. Seven year old Kei Nomura wrote, “We left our dog at a friend’s house. His name is Snooky. We will be glad to see our dog again.” Kei was lucky

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<sup>251</sup> Exhibit text, panel #L-06-335, Manzanar National Historic Site.

<sup>252</sup> Exhibit text, #L-06-305, Manzanar National Historic Site.

because someone took care of his dog. Other people had to abandon their pets. You might have found a new pet at Manzanar like a lizard or mouse or stray cat or dog. Some pets are buried near the cemetery.<sup>253</sup>

Additional questions (such as “would I get Christmas Presents at Manzanar?”) encourage visitors to compare their childhood expectations to the reality of childhood at Manzanar.

As these examples illustrate, the voices of children are presented authoritatively in the telling of children’s history; their voices and perspectives are taken on their own merit and at times stand alone. Sometimes, composite statements based on the accounts of multiple children synthesize the overall experience rather than speak to one certain experience. For example, under a question “What did children dislike or like about Manzanar?” the answer reads:

Dust, Dust, Dust. Terrible dust storms swept into Manzanar, for hours at a time, even for days without let up. No escaping it. Dust blew into the barracks through cracks and openings in the floors and walls. Into our eyes, nose, lungs. Into our food.

After things settled down, we formed clubs and sports teams, made new friends, and enjoyed organized activities which kept us busy.

The food was pretty bad. Rice, potatoes, boiled vegetables, and canned meat. Breakfast was rubbery scrambled eggs and cooked cereal we called mush. The mess hall food was terrible and many of us got diarrhea.

The best part was the beauty of the mountains and soaring red-tailed hawk that allowed us to dream of freedom.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Exhibit text, #L-06-321, Manzanar National Historic Site.

<sup>254</sup> Exhibit text, #L-06-301, Manzanar National Historic Site.

The level to which this museum discusses the history of children and childhood, and its abundant incorporation of childhood memories piqued my interest in this site and the interpretation that occurs there. When I asked Lynch to reflect on “why their [i.e., the children’s] story is so well woven into the museum,” she responded:

Just from my personal perspective, a big part of it is that the people that we are working with now who are still living were children at the time: the former internees that we work with and the camp staff children, you know, those are the people who we know firsthand. If this exhibit was done in 1950 when all of the adults who were adults in camp were the ones informing the content it might have been different. I don't know.

I think the other thing from my perspective is the misconception that some people have that places like Manzanar were camps for our enemy, almost like P.O.W. camps, and, you know, we've had people say, "well, you know, they bombed Pearl Harbor," or "look what they did to our boys in Bataan," and when you tell someone like that, “well, you know, actually, two-thirds of the people here were kids,” it reaches people in a different way than if you're just talking strictly about adults and businessmen and Buddhist priests or whoever you're talking about. I think, it sounds, um, [pause] I don't want to say necessarily that it gains more sympathy, but I think, it gives a more accurate picture of who was here.<sup>255</sup>

Lynch’s assessment captures the complexity of using the child victim as an interpretive focal point in museum exhibitions. Although the representation of children increases and it is assumed such narratives are more authentic as an extension of participant perspective, these narratives remain victim to bias, perspective, and construction like any other.

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<sup>255</sup> Lynch, interview.

The reliance on the child narrative in Japanese internment exhibitions echo Mark M. Anderson's argument in his study of the role of the child victim in Holocaust Representation that "children have consistently proved to be the most moving and believable witnesses." Anderson states the "defenselessness [of children] serves as a metaphor for the general plight of Holocaust victims."<sup>256</sup> This staff member's comment that the emphasis on children's perspectives "gives a more accurate picture of who was here" conflicts with Anderson's contention that "foregrounding of child victimhood cuts both ways, allowing for a previously unimaginable emotional response from broad segments of the population but also systematically skewing and effacing crucial aspects of the historical event" and overlooking "the constructed nature" of child narratives.<sup>257</sup>

The symbolic use of children in exhibitions or museums devoted to the topic of Japanese internment parallels choices made at museums exploring other examples of persecution, such as the Holocaust or Missouri Executive Order 44, also known as

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<sup>256</sup> Mark M. Anderson, "The Child Victim as Witness to the Holocaust: An American Story?" *Jewish Social Studies History, Culture, Society* n.s. 14, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 1-2.

<sup>257</sup> Anderson, 19, 5; A tour I took of Preston Castle, a former juvenile reformatory in Amador County, further illustrates this point. On the day of my tour I was toured by a docent who, at the age of fifteen, had spent time at the Preston school of Industry in 1954. Having returned to Preston Castle as a visitor, he was "inspired to do something about it," and began to volunteer time as a docent, "sharing his personal experiences as a ward when leading tours of the Castle." I took a tour by this docent on July 1, 2011, and while his personal connection to this site is unquestionable, his knowledge of the site, outside of personal experience and emotions he recalled from being a ward, appeared lacking compared to a later tour I accompanied. Field notes, Preston castle, July 2, 2011. *Preston Communicator* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2011), 5.



the Mormon Extermination Order. For example, at the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, the effects of both pre-war persecution and the Holocaust on children is thoroughly charted. Central to interpretation at this site is the audio tour that allows visitors to navigate the text, images, and objects on display independently with an option to always learn more. An example of Nazi propaganda found in “a German school classroom in 1945 after liberation” comparing physical features of Aryan and Jewish children is on display as well as anti-Semitic school books, such as *Trust No Fox in a Green Meadow* and *No Jew Upon His Oath* of which approximately 100,000 copies were printed.<sup>258</sup>

Not only does the museum demonstrate how the Nazi Regime affected German children’s view of Jewish children, the horrifying impact of the holocaust on Jewish childhood is central to the exhibition. Visitors learn of Anne Frank and visitors see photographs that chronicle the impact of the Holocaust on children. Whether depicting life in a Ghetto or the consequences of scientific experiments, all displays are in full view. The injustices done to children and the blatant disregard for their safety and protection—values so long valued in American society—are brought to the forefront of interpretation and exist as a constant thread in the museum’s interpretive tapestry.

Another site that brings child perspective to the forefront of interpretation is the Mormon Battalion Historic Site in Old Town San Diego. Due to its focus on the 1840s, there are no oral histories to integrate nor survivors to include. Still, central to

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<sup>258</sup> Field notes, Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, visited June 17, 2013.

the tour is the perspective of children and the impact of anti-LDS persecution on their life. This museum offers a forty-five minute interactive presentation on the Mormon Battalion, a volunteer unit comprised of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) which served from July 1846 to July 1847 during the Mexican-American War. At this museum, guests are invited to “come experience the long march from Iowa to San Diego with the Mormon Battalion. Learn why this group of Latter-day Saint men and women joined the U.S. Army and what they accomplished during and after their march.”<sup>259</sup>

A female volunteer takes visitors through the forty-five minute presentation. During this presentation, visitors move through replica rooms (such as an 1840s store and encampment), and watch as their guide interacts with nine computer-generated characters that enter the presentation at different points via computer monitors placed throughout the tour.<sup>260</sup> Two of the nine characters are under the age of eighteen, and their stories are central to the presentation. When I spoke with one of the volunteers at the site, she described the symbolic value of nine-year-old Charles Colton, one of the historic characters whose perspective guides the presentation and whose character “represents the children that came on the march.”<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>259</sup> “San Diego Mormon Battalion Historic Site,” Historic Sites, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, accessed October 28, 2013, available at [www.lds.org/locations/san-diego-mormon-battalion-historic-site](http://www.lds.org/locations/san-diego-mormon-battalion-historic-site).

<sup>260</sup> Docents for this program are typically nineteen to twenty-three-year-old females who are serving as missionaries for the LDS church.

<sup>261</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #98, October 21, 2010. I visited this site on October 26, 2012 and February 8, 2014.

At this site, the persecution of LDS members during the nineteenth-century, the call for their extermination by Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs, and the subsequent westward migration of LDS members are discussed from a LDS perspective. When I asked the survey respondent to expand on how children's history is addressed within the context of persecution and pioneer hardship (two themes that she had identified in her survey), she responded:

In the very beginning of the presentation when they're talking about why the Mormons left Missouri, and Illinois, and why they were leaving the United States and camping out all across Iowa heading west, it talks about the persecution was really against families, and, shows the families being driven out of their homes. It shows a young child dropping her doll in the mud as they're having to run as their homes are being burned and they're having to leave and she looks back with tears at the doll that just has to be left in the mud and it really emphasizes that it was whole families that were—it wasn't just the men—the children were run out of their home.<sup>262</sup>

As these instances illustrate, whether staff and volunteers turn to oral histories of others or their own childhood experiences, childhood memories inform research, interpretation, and preservation at many California history museums and often stand on their own in terms of authenticity. The weakness of memory or the construction of memory is often overlooked. In the case of representations dealing with persecution and discrimination, the use of the child victim presents one of the most thorough investigations of childhood as it leverages the “sacred child” ideal for effectiveness.

As children move from the periphery of museum interpretation to the center as voices of authority, or primary sources, once again the sacred child ideal is being

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<sup>262</sup> Interview with the author, survey respondent #98, October 21, 2010.

evoked. Such representations of children and childhood tug at visitors' emotions and suggest an empathetic understanding that may obscure other interpretive paths. As

Anderson observes:

These "true" or "living" stories become another form of entertainment that provides American audiences with the "thrill of the real," with the *impression* of bumping up against an authentic historical tragedy, when in fact they offer a simplified narrative of good and evil that does not necessarily lead to greater historical knowledge, critical awareness, or political commitment....the mobilization of "loving children" can have more to do with conservative American notions of family values and Christian spirituality than with any real encounter with past or present politics; it can neutralize historical understanding while claiming to celebrate "memory."<sup>263</sup>

## Conclusion

One of the leading works to inspire my study of California History museums and their representation of children is Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small's seminal publication, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums*. Within that work, Eichstedt and Small examine how 122 plantation museums in the US South represent slavery. Eichstedt and Small admit that their work presents "a picture of a particular moment in the plantation museum industry," but the findings of their research are still striking.<sup>264</sup>

From their five-year study, Eichstedt and Small identified four trends which typify how the enslaved and slavery are represented at plantation museums in the US South: symbolic annihilation (the enslaved are absent from the narrative; referred to

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<sup>263</sup> Anderson, "The Child Victim as Witness to the Holocaust: An American Story?", 20.

<sup>264</sup> Jennifer L. Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery*, 21.

fleetingly, spoken about in passive voice, or referred to as servants or workers); trivialization and deflection (the enslaved were presented as benevolent, happy and grateful; the good intention of the white enslavers was emphasized); segregated knowledge (separate tours about slavery were offered but not always as frequently available); and relative incorporation (while these narratives disrupt the master narrative at some level they do not overturn such narratives).

Within my own study, which has also spanned five years, I too have been concerned with tracking the representation of a group I had long felt underrepresented and marginalized. By speaking with museum professionals and volunteers I have become aware that not all is what it appears; even the understanding of “children’s history” in museum spaces is not straightforward.

While many museum staff may not have thought about a history of children before, others appear unconcerned by its absence. Even when it is recognized, however, children’s history sometimes falls victim to limited space, resources, staff, and funding. Essentially, interpretation is not always a reflection of values, sometimes it is a manifestation of circumstances.

I reference Eichstedt and Small’s work as their compartmentalization of interpretive themes based on participant observation at a significant body of museums suggests that such an approach would yield similar results for the study of any group’s history, such as, women, American Indians, servants, or, in my case, children. As a public historian, however, I value the perspective of volunteers and

interpreters in the history-making process. I also respect the influence of visitors on tour content and understand the complexities that accompany running a site.<sup>265</sup>

Museums are complex and those working within them are often well aware of their shortcomings. When I asked Jackie Dumin, who holds a MA degree in public history and works as the site director at the Tallac Historic Site in South Lake, if she had any recommendations as I continued my study of California museums:

Probably I would have originally said, are they being as inclusive as possible, and I come from very much a gender's studies background, so trying to bring out women's stories is coming around in museums but is not always there and that's something that I look for as an academic. Now as somebody [*laughs*] who runs a museum, [I'm] going: Are the lights on? or Do you have funding for paper? Awesome. You're doing a great job [*laughs*].<sup>266</sup>

Furthermore, as museums meet the call to “share authority,” they surrender more of the message which is produced within museum spaces. For example, some volunteers take liberties as they stray from historic fact in their interpretations. And while the centrality of children’s history to California history museums ranked low in my survey, interviews suggest that the child audience is of the utmost importance. Reasons provided for why the history of children and childhood is not further explored within museum content included limited historical information and material culture on children and lack of resources (such as space, time, money). With limited

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<sup>265</sup> Just as I encourage museums to share authority with youth (the topic of Chapter 4), underlining my methodology throughout the entirety of this project has been a commitment to share authority with museums in my discussion of museum interpretation.

<sup>266</sup> Jackie Dumin, Site Director, Tallac Historic Site, interview with the author, South Lake Tahoe, CA, August 22, 2010.

resources, California history museums struggle to revamp interpretation. Often, children's history is one of many areas in need of revision to parallel the strides being made in academia. Thus, not only do these museums struggle under financial strain and not enough "hours in the day," but they face competing interpretive priorities.<sup>267</sup>

Considering the many, complex issues at work, I suggest seven commonalities I noticed concerning the representation of children's history in California museums.

First, the centrality of children's history to museum interpretation is viewed as a relatively low priority by museum professionals and volunteers.

Second, the level to which children's history is discussed is not only location-specific (some locations appear to incorporate the history of children more easily than others), but also audience-specific: educators recognize that children engage more when learning about the history of children and, as a result, create relevant programming.

Third, children's history is often mediated through an adult lens, whether that adult is the manufacturer behind the toy on display, the volunteer recalling his or her childhood, or the curator writing museum text.

Fourth, while stories of individual children may rise to the top if there is a unique or substantial collection related to a child, the child grows up to be famous, or

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<sup>267</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #65, January 10, 2010.

the child does something notable in childhood, resulting interpretations of these children, and their lives as children, are often presented by cursory facts absent of analysis and filtered primarily through adult perception. For a number of sites children's history is learned "only by inferences drawn by visitors."<sup>268</sup>

Fifth, adult memories of childhood often affect museum interpretation, especially in the case of house museums, although such influence may go unnoticed by visitors. These memories serve as one source museum professionals turn to as they develop interpretation at their sites and should be treated as but one source of evidence subject to bias and not infallible.

Sixth, the richest explorations of childhood are often found in museums or exhibits chronicling a trauma, persecution, and injustice. Within these museums, children become elevated objects of authenticity and authority and become central, rather than peripheral, to museum interpretation.

Seven, the histories that museum professionals and volunteers tell at California history museums typically play into the sacred child ideal, that children are innocent and that childhood is a time of instruction, play, cultivation, and protection. While some museums represent the ideal through exhibiting toys and dolls, others uphold this ideal by exposing injustices committed against children, such as in the case of Jewish Holocaust, Mormon persecution, or Japanese-American

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<sup>268</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey #67, December 18, 2009.



internment. In these instances children are used as symbols to complicate and challenge the acts done against the groups of which these children are a part.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **History *for* Children at California History Museums**

As Chapter 2 contends, museums are much better at thinking about children as present-day visitors/consumers than they are about thinking of them as historical subjects in their own right. Indeed, for many, my survey instrument may have been the first time that museum professionals and volunteers were forced to think about their institution's content in terms of the history of children or the history of childhood. Within California history museums, child-centered programming takes various shapes beyond formal, elementary school tours, including cooking classes, summer camps, tea parties, storytelling events, and curator camps. Underscoring many of these programs is a message that childhood has not always been the same and that theme is explored in fun, meaningful, and engaging ways that leave a lasting impression on child visitors. Museum educators' commitment to create authentic, rich experiences that explore the past while complementing present-day conceptions of children prevails.

After providing a brief background on educational theories that inform child-centered museum programming, this chapter will examine three primary points regarding history *for* children in California history museums. First, that many stakeholders influence the history developed and presented *for* children in California history museums, specifically: state educational standards, museum personnel or

volunteers, adult chaperones and teachers, and child visitors.<sup>269</sup> Each of these stakeholders shapes and negotiates the history presented at the site. Second, this dissertation argues that within programs focusing on presenting history *for* children, some of the best history *of* children exists. While presented histories often overlook the diverse spectrum of childhood that exists at any given historic time period and the experiences of children in the past are too often assumed to be uniform, the use of the compare and contrast technique invites children to contemplate the meaning and boundaries of childhood and questions the universality of children. However, adults continue to mediate the histories presented and critiques I introduced in Chapter 2 continue to exist in child-centered programming. Once again—and this is the third point of this chapter—the sacred child ideal is at work as adults mediate the histories that are told, whether through sanitizing or downplaying certain narratives, in museum spaces.

### **Development of Child-Centered Museum Programming**

A focus on specific, child-centered museum narratives can largely be attributed to the interpretive principles of Freeman Tilden, author of *Interpreting our Heritage* (first published in 1957). In a foreword to the second edition of this title, then Director of the National Park Service George B. Hartzog, Jr. explains the historical importance of this work: “Since an objective of any park administration is to

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<sup>269</sup> The impact and influence of child volunteers is reserved for discussion in Chapter 4 since the use of children as volunteers and docents represents a minority of docent-led tours in California.

improve the quality of park use, the effectiveness of our interpretive program is a major concern for all administrators. Until the first edition of this book appeared in 1957, no one had attempted to analyze this fascinating new discipline, nor to identify its guiding principles.”<sup>270</sup> Tilden devoted an entire chapter, “For the Younger Mind,” to the discussion of interpreting for children. The chapter commences with its primary point printed in italics: “Interpretation addressed to children (say, up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.”<sup>271</sup>

The choice to develop child-centered programming is both a manifestation of Tilden’s seminal work and a reflection of twentieth-century educational theory. George Hein, scholar of museum education, argues that education within the museum developed parallel to progressive education outside of the museum with both sharing “common ideals and practices.”<sup>272</sup> Reflecting the belief that the government should take a more active part in securing the welfare of its citizens, Progressive education “broaden[ed] curriculum of the school beyond traditional subjects that had consisted primarily of preparation for the classics in the early

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<sup>270</sup> George B. Hartzog, Jr., foreword to second edition, in Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, third edition (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977), xiv.

<sup>271</sup> *Interpreting our Heritage*, 47.

<sup>272</sup> George E. Hein, “Progressive Education and Museum Education,” 161.

grades and academic subjects in secondary school.”<sup>273</sup> Progressivism encouraged museum staff to “provid[e] access for all potential museum visitors, especially underserved populations,” while the incorporation of developmental theories, such as those of John Dewey, Marie Montessori, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Michael Spock provided guidance on how children best learn.<sup>274</sup>

The educational theories of John Dewey gained steam in the classroom during the 1920s and 1930s<sup>275</sup> and altered the understanding of how knowledge is transferred and pushed for children to learn through active engagement with their environment.<sup>276</sup> Dewey “believed that children needed concrete experiences, open experiments, and freedom to explore and interact with the larger physical and social world in order to truly learn.”<sup>277</sup> Whereas Dewey underlined the importance of the teacher in the learning process, Montessori encouraged for children to be entrusted to learn independently with teachers acting more like “facilitators.”<sup>278</sup> The Montessori

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<sup>273</sup> George E. Hein, “Progressive Education and Museum Education, 163.

<sup>274</sup> Within Dana Sheridan’s dissertation, the author lists several others who have influenced museum educational theory, including but not limited to, Friedrich Fröbel, Jerome Bruner, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. See Dana Sheridan, “Show me How you Learn: Evidence of Children’s Learning Through Repeat Visits to Children’s Museum,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Virginia, 2005), 18.

<sup>275</sup> Cari Barragree, “Museum and Public School Partnerships: A Step-by-Step Guide for Creating Standards-Based Curriculum Materials in High School Social Studies” (PhD Dissertation, Kansas State University, 2007), 15-16.

<sup>276</sup> Sheridan, 8-9.

<sup>277</sup> Sheridan, 8-9.

<sup>278</sup> Sheridan, 11.

approach focuses on “giv[ing] children the freedom to teach themselves....[and] a child’s spontaneous desire to learn not be[ing] hindered by a teacher’s wish to control.”<sup>279</sup>

Piaget, Vygotsky, and Spock continued to shape educational theory during the 1960s. Jean Piaget argued for the importance of play in a child’s construction of knowledge and resulted in play spaces being created, the Boston Children’s Museum being one of the first museums to designate space for this purpose.<sup>280</sup> Dana Sheridan argues that the theories of Piaget have had lasting effect on museum education: “Because of Piaget’s work, touching, exploring, interacting, manipulating, directly experiencing, pretending, imitating, and discovering became synonymous with learning.”<sup>281</sup> Vygotsky pushed for active learning and aided discovery and, unlike Piaget, “believed that active learners work within a social context, or a social world in which the rules of culture and conduct are passed through adults, or in some cases, peers.”<sup>282</sup> An important component of Vygotsky’s theories, which is reflected in museum interpretation, is the “importance of make-believe play in the development of social and cultural awareness.”<sup>283</sup> Finally, Michael Spock revolutionized the

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<sup>279</sup> J. Edwards, *Women in American Education, 1820-1955: The Female Force and Educational Reform* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 95 as quoted in Sheridan, “Show me How you Learn,” 11.

<sup>280</sup> Sheridan, 14-15.

<sup>281</sup> Sheridan, 15.

<sup>282</sup> Sheridan, 16.

<sup>283</sup> Sheridan, 16.

function of children's museums with his focus on interactive learning as introduced by his first exhibit at the Children's Museum of Boston, *What's Inside?*, which provided "dozens of different modules, some very personal like a pregnant woman and all the stuff around the house, like water heaters cut in half. There was 'What's Inside a City Street?' with a manhole you could climb down and go through the sewer system. There was also a cross-section so you could see the old wooden ties that had been covered up with asphalt and the cobblestones."<sup>284</sup>

While hands-on learning has origins in US museums dating to the late-eighteenth century, the widespread application of touch objects and experiential learning has flourished during the twentieth century and reached new heights in the twenty-first century with the integration of touch technology.<sup>285</sup> Within her dissertation on experiential learning in American History Museums, Bettye Alexander Cook first credits Charles Wilson Peale's museum in 1787 with the use of experiential learning. For example, the experience of visitors was heightened by the ability to play an organ. During the twentieth century, types of experiential learning,

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<sup>284</sup> Donald Garfield, "Museum News Interview: Michael Spock," *Museum News* (November/December 1993): 56-60 as cited in Herminia Weihsin Din, "A History of Children's Museums in the United States, 1899-1997: Implications for Art Education and Museum Education in Art Museums" (PhD Dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1998), 79.

<sup>285</sup> Within her dissertation, "A Chronological Study of Experiential Education in the American History Museum," Bettye Alexander Cook defines experiential education as "learning with a physical dimension, characteristically with people's hands touching materials[.] The visitor must participate, rather than just observe..." See Bettye Alexander Cook, "A Chronological Study of Experiential Education in the American History Museum" (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 2007), 11-12.

such as traveling trunks with touch objects or role playing, increased exponentially.

The first traveling trunk may be attributed to the American Museum of Natural History in 1905 while role-playing for children gained steam in the 1970s, perhaps in part due to Tilden's support of role playing as a means to better understand the past.<sup>286</sup>

Today, most—if not all—museums recognize the importance of museums being hands-on, interactive, and participatory in order to be relevant. Museums integrate experiential learning to different degrees and in different ways. For example, at the Oakland Museum of California the visitor experience is heightened through touch screens, touch objects, and several interactive stations meant to allow visitors the opportunity to act out a task important to California history, such as making your own animation, manning a sound stage, or designing your own costume in the Hollywood history section. The Autry National Center in Los Angeles provides an Early Opportunities Program for Grades K-2 and the museum publicizes the experiential nature of the program: “In this hands-on program led by our trained museum docents, your young students will investigate replica artifacts and role-play to discover the history of Western communities, Plains Indians, and cowboys and cowgirls.”<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Cook, “A Chronological Study of Experiential Education,” 150, 154.

<sup>287</sup> “Early Opportunities Program (docent-led) (Grades K-2),” Programs and Tours for Kindergarten through 2nd Grade, Autry National Center, accessed January 31, 2014, available at, <http://theautry.org/education/teacher-programs-and-tours-for-school-groups>



Within my study, the implementation of educational theory and the preoccupation of museum professionals regarding the educational suitability of their programs were undeniable as was the predominance of the school audience to museum attendance. Within my survey, school tours was the most widely selected educational/interpretive program offered at 87 percent (see Figure 12). Furthermore, 85 percent of museums selected “elementary school tours” as one of the demographic groups that best reflects visitors to their museums (see Figure 13). Through developing programs that align with the state standards, offering off-season programming, or hosting special events geared towards child audiences (such as storytelling), California museum professionals and volunteers encourage the visitation of all children to their museums despite their own limited budget.

California Museum professionals and volunteers are also aware of the tight budgets public schools work within and many offer free programming or subsidize field trip costs for low-income students. For example, Rancho Los Cerritos Historic is able to provide fee scholarships to seventy-two classes and transportation for thirty-three buses due to the generosity of the Earl B. and Loraine H. Miller

**Figure 12**

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**Question 8** from Children and their Education and Representation in  
California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "Please select all educational/interpretive programs your institution currently offers on a routine basis and note how often each program is made available (bi-monthly, weekly, daily, etc)?" In the table below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to the various types of programs, as well as identified the number of respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011. Survey respondents were invited to select all applicable answers.

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Type of Programs	Number of Respondents
Docent led tours	192
Self-guided tours	163
School tours	202
Outreach programs for school children	106
Living History Programs	79
Left Blank	4
Not Applicable*	1

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\* For the survey respondent who wrote N/A s/he explained: "we are no longer conducting mine tours; we are planning on offering geology tours of our district next summer by reservation only - we are too remote to keep regular hours - we've tried!" (Survey #161)

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**Figure 13**

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**Question 7** from Children and their Education and Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "Which demographic groups best reflect the visitors to your museum(s) (please select all that apply)?" In the table below, I have given the demographic groups and the corresponding number of survey respondents who selected that option, as well as identified the number of respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011. Respondents were invited to select all applicable answers.

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<b>Demographic Groups</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Adults	205
Families	209
Elementary school tours	197
School tours	117
Other*	89
Left Blank	1
Not Applicable	0

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\*Other groups listed by survey respondents included, but were not limited to, senior groups, commercial tour groups, home school groups, boy scout troops, special needs groups, college students, individual children, youth groups, descendent groups, and summer camps.

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Foundation.<sup>288</sup> The Autry National Center publicizes the “All Aboard!” free bus program on its website offering free transportation to Title I schools<sup>289</sup> and free admission to the students’ families for one year.<sup>290</sup>

In Sacramento, The California Museum empathizes with the economically challenging climate public education institutions work within: “Learning experiences extend beyond the classroom. But, due to budget cuts and decreased resources, many schools are finding it increasingly difficult to provide students with the first-hand learning opportunities provided on a field trip to a cultural institution or museum.” The California Museum offers field trip scholarships to Sacramento City School District Title I schools “to further its mission to educate, enlighten and inspire students through hands-on learning experiences and educational tools that bring

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<sup>288</sup> Jan Shafer, Director of Visitor and Volunteer Service, Rancho Los Cerritos Historic Site, email to author, January 30, 2014.

<sup>289</sup> Title I schools receive federal funding from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. According to the Los Angeles Unified School District, “The purpose of Title I is to meet the educational needs of children from low-income households and the needs of children in local institutions for neglected or delinquent children. Participants include students who are at-risk of failing, disabled, and in private schools. These funds supplement services needed to raise the academic achievement levels of K through 12 participants in basic and advanced skills. See “Title I,” Los Angeles Unified School District, accessed March 5, 2014, [http://notebook.lausd.net/portal/page?\\_pageid=33,1067699&\\_dad=ptl&\\_schema=PTL\\_EP](http://notebook.lausd.net/portal/page?_pageid=33,1067699&_dad=ptl&_schema=PTL_EP).

<sup>290</sup> “All Aboard!” Free Bus Program for Title I Schools, The Autry National Center, accessed January 31, 2014), <http://theautry.org/education/teacher-resources-and-training>.

California's history, arts and culture alive for under-served children in our community.”<sup>291</sup>

### **Child-Centered History Programming and Its Players**

The field of education impacts California history museums in two distinct ways. First, many staff and volunteers bring training in education to museum programming. Second, the state's curriculum standards influence and guide the topics covered in museum programming for children.

The prevalence of educational professionals in museum programming is reflected in post-secondary training models. For example, The George Washington University offers a Master of Arts in Teaching in museum education. This program requires its students to complete one internship (sixteen hours per week) in an area school during the fall semester, and then in the spring semester work thirty-two hours per week in a museum context. Programs such as these recognize the importance of both educational theory and museum practice to the preparation of future museum educators. As the Tufts Master of Arts in Museum Education program description articulates, “museum educators need both content knowledge and strategies for teaching that content. For instance, the science museum educator may take science courses and a course in the teaching of science.”<sup>292</sup> As one Los Angeles-area

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<sup>291</sup> “First-Hand Learning Opportunities for Under-Served Children,” Field Trip Scholarships, The California Museum, accessed January 31, 2014, available at <http://www.californiamuseum.org/field-trip-scholarships>.

Director of Education described to me, within museum education departments educators with a history background argue they know the history and can learn *to teach*, while museum educators with an education background argue they know how to teach and can *learn* the history.

In my study, I found that museum educators and docents constantly brought a background in education, not history or historical study. I found that retired teachers played a prominent role in the production of child-centered programs and the execution of such programs. For example, at the Stagecoach Inn Museum in Newbury Park, California, I interviewed seventeen individuals who volunteer their time to help facilitate a two-hour school program (run entirely by volunteers). Of those I interviewed, ten bring teaching experience and of those ten, six bring between twenty-five to thirty-eight years of experience to the program. This is not to say that all volunteers who participate with children's programs enjoy formal teaching in the classroom. For example, one volunteer at the Stagecoach Inn explained how she earned a degree and began teaching French, realized she was "not really cut out to be a teacher," and went on to obtain a Law degree.<sup>293</sup> Furthermore, none of the seventeen volunteers were retired museum professionals, history teachers, or history professors.

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<sup>292</sup> "Master of Arts in Museum Education," Department of Education, Tufts University, accessed January 31, 2014), <http://ase.tufts.edu/education/programs/museumEd>.

<sup>293</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, June 23, 2012.

While educational training and theory broadly underpin much of museum education, the California Department of Education directly influences how museums structure the child-centered programs they market to elementary schools.<sup>294</sup> Museums recognize that they must meet curriculum standards to “make ourselves relevant.”<sup>295</sup> The influence of the content standards on museum programming is evidenced by its abundant representation on museum education webpages. In addition to outlining innovative programs, museums are quick to acknowledge and outline how their programs meet state standards. Meeting content standards—both within and outside the social-science realm—keep history museums relevant, viable, and competitive. As one Sacramento museum educator explained:

From what I understand lots of teachers when they want to go on a fieldtrip they actually have to turn in a form saying exactly what state standards they're hitting by going on this fieldtrip. So, it needs to be something that is very persuasive for them to hand to their principals. What we're also now trying to do is to say "yeah, we're a history museum, but there's lots of other subjects that can be taught here: English, the language arts, math, science." We're cross-disciplined, so it hits a lot more state standards than just your typical social science standards. And that makes us more marketable.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> It is important to note, in light of the gradual integration of *California Common Core State Standards* ( adopted in 2010; implementation starting in the 2013-2014 academic year), that due to the time that my survey was distributed (2009-2011), the content standards affecting interpretation would have been the 1998 document, “History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve.”

<sup>295</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #9, December 17, 2009.

<sup>296</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #15, March 3, 2010.

Those standards, as pointed out by a Director of Education earlier in this chapter, provide little impetus to address the role of history in children and childhood as they minimally and indirectly consider children's history.<sup>297</sup> Another interviewee referenced the state standards in her discussion of children's history at her site:

Interestingly enough, [in] California State Standards I think there is only one point within the eight or ten that actually deals with children and it's the daily lives. It's not specific to children, but to all the people who live in the missions, pueblos, or presidios. We do try to meet California State Standards. It says describe the daily life of the people, so it doesn't say specifically children, but children are a part of the people there.<sup>298</sup>

A rich history exists of museums working to build connections with local schools. Even since the recent introduction and adoption of the Common Core State Standards, many museums have been quick to adapt to shifting public education standards and priorities. In October of 2011 the Brooklyn Historical Society hosted a roundtable titled "Museums and the Common Core: What's Your Role?" to discuss and brainstorm ideas relevant to conceptualizing Common Core and its

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<sup>297</sup> California State Board of Education, "History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve," (1998) available electronically at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/histsocscistnd.pdf> Grades Kindergarten through Grade Eight are the focus for this program, and standards within those school grades which encourage the indirect study of how children's experiences have changed over time through a focus on community or education include standards 1.4, 1.5, 2.1, 3.3, 3.5 and 8.6. Standard 8.12 encourages students to "discuss child labor," but, as with other standards, student are not encouraged to consider the specific role of children in shaping the community, economy, politics, or social movements.

<sup>298</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #88, December 14, 2009. This quote is pulled from a transcription typed during the interview as this particular interview was not audio-recorded.



implementation. At the end of the night, Brooklyn Historical Society Education Assistant, Samantha Gibson, attempted to pull together the ideas that had been shared:

As museum educators, our role in the implementation of the Common Core Standards is to adopt a shared responsibility for students' literacy and education with classroom teachers across grade levels and subject areas. Museum visits and museum-based classroom activities can be a vital part of in-depth, project-based learning that draws on the classroom curriculum, students' independent conclusions, and the museum visit experience."<sup>299</sup>

Not only do museums align their programming with interpretive priorities identified by the state, some build partnerships that go far beyond a field trip as demonstrated in programs such as *School in the Park*, a collaboration between San Diego's Balboa Park museum complex and Rosa Parks Elementary School.<sup>300</sup>

While there are strong examples of museums and schools working together to facilitate academic success, there co-exists a long, complicated history between historians and the public school system. The role and place of history in curriculum,

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<sup>299</sup> "Museums and the Common Core: What's Your Role," *Brooklyn Historical Society*(blog), posted October 31, 2011, <http://brooklynhistory.org/blog/2011/10/31/museum-and-the-common-core-whats-your-role/>.

<sup>300</sup> For example, School in the Park, which takes place in Balboa Park, San Diego, began in 1999 and "shifts the location of school from traditional classroom settings, in an inner-city community, to include the outstanding resources and educational opportunities available in the many museums and zoo located in Balboa Park...School in the Park allows students and teachers to experience expanded learning opportunities for approximately one fourth of their instructional year."<sup>300</sup> The impact of this program is undeniable: From 1999 to 2004 the Rosa Parks Elementary School moved from being ranked fifth to first "among its 10 comparison schools." Ian Pumpian, Douglas Fisher, Susan Wachowiak, editors, *Challenging the*

the attention given to it compared to other disciplines, the choosing and defining of social studies content standards, and the ultimate selection of whose voices and which stories rise to the top have changed over time and reflect competing visions regarding the purpose of public education, differing attitudes towards the importance and value of history instruction, and larger, political agendas at work.<sup>301</sup>

If curriculum standards and educational training shape how museum personnel and volunteers design the overall content and objectives of their child-centered programs, it is the frontline museum educators who play a decisive role in the actual interpretation and representation of history at museum sites. With volunteers making up a notable portion of the California museum workforce, a significant number of retired educators shape the development of curriculum, course of action, and execution of museum programs. From my field research I have observed, or worked alongside, many retired teachers, one retired museum educator, and zero history professors.

While some museum volunteers and staff directly affect curriculum and program objectives, others must take to the frontline of delivering these programs and, therefore, must often think on their feet and quickly adapt as they interact with

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*Classroom Standard Through Museum-Based Education: School in the Park* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publisher, 2006), 6-8.

<sup>301</sup> For a detailed account of National History Standards and their development, see Gary B. Nash, Charlotte Crabtree, and Ross E. Dunn, *History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc., 1997).

child visitors. Such improvisations and reactions can result in educators deviating from guidelines or objectives and each museum visit being unique and diverse.

For example, at one Los Angeles county museum I observed a costumed volunteer play *ring on a string* with local fourth graders. After one of the children found the ring underneath a schoolmate's hands, the volunteer informed the group that this meant that the young girl was going to be the first to be married. Later, when the girl succeeded at the game a second time one of her male classmates enthusiastically concluded that since she had already found the ring once before, this meant she was going to get married, then divorced, and then married again. To this, the volunteer who was performing an 1870s living history character responded sadly, and somewhat dramatically, "Oh, don't say that! God hates divorce!" While most children perhaps never learn about divorce—or God's feelings towards it—while on tour of this site, this particular experiential learning opportunity provided an opportunity for the volunteer to think—albeit quickly—on her feet as she presented what she saw as an accurate answer for the 1870s character she portrayed. Often, the experiential approach of teaching to children in museums and its one-on-one interaction results in information that is less uniform or consistent than a scripted house tour provided by a docent.

Not only do the volunteers and their prior education, work experience, and understanding of their museum role (as the aforementioned volunteer prioritized historical authenticity over sensitivity to children with divorced parents) shape child-centered programming, but adult chaperones and children likewise influence

interpretation. A number of my interviews referenced how reactions of chaperones and teachers made on tours, whether it be actual comments or facial expressions, affect how, or which, topics are discussed. For example, during my interview with a volunteer Museum Director at one Contra Costa museum I learned about a collage of 9/11 photographs in a corner display that has received mixed reviews from visitors. “Some of the teachers,” the interviewee shared, “avoid that section because they, for some reason, don’t want third graders to be aware of what 9/11 was, but we leave the display up.” When I asked her to tell me more about the frequency and reasons behind this choice on the part of the teachers, she responded:

It was more so a few years ago, I think, when 9/11 was so recent. It's basically because we took a lot of the photographs, the large photographs from—I can't remember if it was like the *Life* or *Post*, but it was from a major magazine—and we enlarged them and then used it as a pictorial collage of the people coming out covered with soot and those photographs that have become somewhat famous. Um, showing the buildings going down and things of that sort, and it wasn't that they avoided the room, because it's only in one corner of the room, they would kind of take the children around before they could have visual contact with that and then turn them around and then go [sic] them back the other way. Um, but, it's generally in the schools room so when we take our school tours in there, the kids pour all in all at one time and, um, they go all the way around the room. I don't see the teachers objecting to it so much now, it's just, part of history and they just move them through the room. But, uh, initially in, you know, 2004, 2005, 2006, um, we did have some other school classes coming through and there was some real resistance on the part of a few of the teachers. I don't know if they thought it would psychologically damage the kids or what, but they basically didn't want them to see the photos.<sup>302</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #65, January 12, 2010.

Children also shape the tour. The questions of children undoubtedly shape the direction of a tour as do manifestations of their disinterest. When I asked junior docents how they decided what to talk about on their tours, some referred to the role that visiting children played. When I asked Martin, a Latino seventh grader at a private school how he decided what to talk about on his tour, he replied, “Mostly about the objects and what the kids would just look at first. So, if they started walking towards one thing, I’d follow them, and I’d just start talking about that. And then I’d go around the rest of the room.”<sup>303</sup> David, a Caucasian eighth grader with a slight British accent also noted the role of audience in the choices he made when giving his tour. When I asked him how he decided what to talk about on his tour, he responded, “Um, just sort of what the kids seemed to be interested in, like, looking at and pointing at.”<sup>304</sup> I asked David to say more on how he could tell what they were interested in, to which he replied, “they’d be looking at certain things and asking questions.”<sup>305</sup>

While some docents respond to visual cues given by museum visitors or alter their tour based on questions that visitors ask, others try to anticipate questions. For example, Elizabeth, an eighth grade junior docent, explained how she decided what to talk about when she gave tours:

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<sup>303</sup> Martin [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 2, 2012.

<sup>304</sup> David [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 6, 2013.

<sup>305</sup> David [pseud.], interview.

I would talk about the things I found most interesting because boring little details are boring little details no matter if you're the junior docent or if you're the person taking the tour. So, I also tried to answer kids' questions a lot and try to anticipate their questions. It's like everybody would ask, "what's that staircase doing there?" so I would explain it before I asked for questions so the less people would ask about it.<sup>306</sup>

Just as the questions children ask influence museums tours, negative behaviors or body language do so as well. I asked a number of junior docents to reflect on aspects of leading tours that they did not like. A number commented on the misbehavior or disinterest of visiting kids. Seventh-grader Morgan, a Caucasian female, shared how "sometimes the kids were a little out of control"<sup>307</sup> while Simon, a seventh grade student of Asian descent, shared how some kids "didn't pay much attention, and I felt kind of ignored that they were just, like, sitting there playing with their shoe or something or like their hands."<sup>308</sup> Sierra, a seventh-grade, female student of Mexican descent, admitted that while it didn't happen a lot, she didn't like when "sometimes the people we were touring didn't always pay so much attention so it felt like we were just telling them the information for nothing."<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Elizabeth [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 1, 2012.

<sup>307</sup> Morgan [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 27, 2011.

<sup>308</sup> Simon [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, April 30, 2012.

<sup>309</sup> Sierra [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 23, 2011.

Touring children through museum spaces is a different experience than touring adults. In fact, sometimes children conceive of museums in very different ways. During my second year of observation at the PMH, I began to ask junior docents how they would define a museum and its purpose to broaden my understanding of how one group of young museum volunteers sees and defines museum spaces. My conversations with twenty-eight junior docents about the definition and purpose of museums revealed an almost unanimous correlation of museums with education, an awareness of different types of museums existing, and a focus on events and objects over the stories of people.

Outside of their work as volunteers at the PMH, these junior docents reported little museum attendance. For twenty of the junior docents, I asked how often they attended museums. While two noted that they probably attended monthly, the rest described their museum going as less frequent. As one student put it, “I never have the time to go.”<sup>310</sup> For another, she had “never really been to a history museum.”<sup>311</sup> Of those I asked, six went once or twice a year, nine went three to five times per year, and one answered that she went about eight times per year.

Overwhelmingly, the thirteen and fourteen-year-old students I spoke with cited education, teaching, knowledge, or learning in their definition of a museum, with 82 percent making the reference. This perception of the museum as a place of learning mirrors conceptions typically found among adults. Visitor studies conducted

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<sup>310</sup> Simon [pseud.], interview, April 30, 2012.

<sup>311</sup> Melanie [pseud.], interview, June 14, 2012.

with adults from the 1990s have revealed the strong correlation museums visitors make between their visit and education: “When visitors are asked why they visit museums the overwhelming reason they give is for some type of learning experience, usually described as education, getting information, expanding knowledge or doing something worthwhile in leisure.”<sup>312</sup>

Many junior docents described the kind of education that takes place in a museum as preferable to that of a classroom. Within her definition of a museum, Grace identified the museum as a safe place for learning, “It’s sort of like an atmosphere where learning is okay,” she explained, “and where you can learn and feel like, ‘oh, it’s okay to learn, and I can know these facts, and I can learn more about all these different time periods and stuff.’”<sup>313</sup> To George, a seventh grader with bright blue eyes who attended a private school, the museum is a place that caters to different learning styles, “To put it really bluntly, it’s a place where you learn things, but it’s also a place where they can display artifacts, where you can also learn from, I guess, sight and not just listening to a teacher, and I guess also you can learn at your

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<sup>312</sup> Lynda Kelly, “Visitors and Learning: Adult Museum Visitors’ Learning Identities,” in *Museum Revolutions: How Museums Changed and are Changed* edited by Simon J. Knell, Suzanne MacLeod, and Sheila Watson (London: Routledge, 2007): 277.

<sup>313</sup> Grace [pseud.], interview, April 25, 2012.



own pace...”<sup>314</sup> Simon, a male, Asian student at a public school described a museum as place that prepared him for the classroom:

I would define it [the museum] as a fun way of learning new and very interesting things because when you go to [a] museum and you look at exhibits you might see an item that you might learn in class the next day and then you already know about it so then you can say “teacher, oh, I know,” and then she’s like, “yeah, good job.”<sup>315</sup>

Several students saw the education that takes place in museums as preferable to that in the classroom. Elizabeth, an eighth grader with a serious interest in robotics, identified the museum as more accessible than a history textbook, “A museum is where you learn about the past and has, like, artifacts for you to learn about and stuff that shows you how the past looked like because while a history textbook might inform you about the past, it’s not the same as actually seeing the stuff that was from that time.”<sup>316</sup> Melanie, an eighth grader who took speech and drama, also spoke of the education occurring at a museum as superior to that of the classroom: “It’s a different way of learning. It’s a better, more of an outside experience than just inside a classroom learning. Especially in this museum, it’s kind of smaller so it doesn’t take as long and you can take shorter amounts on things, so it’s fun.”<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>314</sup> George [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 8, 2012.

<sup>315</sup> Simon [pseud.], interview. April 30, 2012.

<sup>316</sup> Elizabeth [pseud.], interview, May 1, 2012.

<sup>317</sup> Melanie [pseud.], interview, June 14, 2012.

One junior docent's definition of a museum focused on the celebratory nature of museums. I asked Samuel, a male, eighth-grade student who had recently graduated from a private school to tell me about his previous experience with museums before volunteering at the PMH. He responded, "I really just go to them. More when I was small, and they were fun. I didn't really understand most of the stuff I was seeing, but it was still cool to look at."<sup>318</sup> Samuel described his current museum visitation as "not that much" and compromising of perhaps one or two visits a year. Within our interview he described a museum as "something to show off our history or show off some art. It's something to show something off that people think is cool and worth showing off."<sup>319</sup>

Junior docents demonstrated an awareness of the different types of museums that exist. With 57 percent defining a museum as teaching about history or helping visitors learn about the past, ten of the junior docents alluded to the fact that there are different types of museums. Robert, who had led tours at the Gamble House the year prior, included both typology and education in his definition of a museum: "Basically a museum, it picks, like a topic, like, for example artwork, and then it kind of goes

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<sup>318</sup> Samuel [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 20, 2012.

<sup>319</sup> Samuel [pseud.], interview, June 20, 2012.

into depth about the history of art and the different artists so it basically just goes into depth about a certain topic and educates the public.”<sup>320</sup>

Justin, an African-American eighth grader, clearly drew a connection between a museum’s typology and the education it might offer, “say there’s art museums so they go and study different art, a bunch of art students would go there and, like, copy paintings, learn different styles, so I guess it’s just to educate the people.”<sup>321</sup> Mariah, a seventh grade private school student of Philippine descent, felt that the definition of a museum did not need to be one with many restrictions: “I suppose a museum can be really anything that just teaches you something. It doesn’t have to be sort of something that’s classified into a group, I mean.”<sup>322</sup>

Several students drew a connection between museum typology and its interactivity: “There’s different sorts,” explained Evelyn, “like Art [museums] where you stand and look at it, or, like, hands-on, more like science museums.”<sup>323</sup> George linked the type of museum to its potential for fun: “I’ve gone to museums. I haven’t done the docent thing before. We’ll go to art museums—not my favorite—I like natural history museums, and I’ve been to a car museum; that was really cool. So,

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<sup>320</sup> Robert [pseudo.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 18, 2013.

<sup>321</sup> Justin [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 6, 2012.

<sup>322</sup> Mariah [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 18, 2013.

<sup>323</sup> Evelyn [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 9, 2012.

it's fun going to museums, but sometimes it depends on what the museum is for.”<sup>324</sup>

Others, linked the level of interactivity of a museum to enjoyment: “I just like the museums that you can, like, actually do things there and be a part of it instead of just walking around and reading everything.”<sup>325</sup> Or, as another said as she recounted her visit to the Discovery museum, “There's a lot of, like, hands-on interactive stuff so if you're a kid you can touch a bunch of things and learn about different things through the way they move and things like that, so that's fun.”<sup>326</sup>

While the educational role of museums was recognized overwhelmingly by the students I interviewed, other duties often associated with museums were rarely mentioned. For example, while preservation and conservation are duties many museums identify as central to their founding and mission, only one student made any reference to preservation when he suggested that part of the purpose of a museum was, “that people could show, I guess, the more fragile and ancient big things because you can't really take a mummy or a dinosaur skeleton into a classroom.”<sup>327</sup> Yet, even within this quote, the main mission of the museum appears to be education with preservation and conservation byproducts to sustainability.

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<sup>324</sup> George [pseud.], interview, May 8, 2012.

<sup>325</sup> Marie [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 14, 2012.

<sup>326</sup> Jackie [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 29, 2012.

<sup>327</sup> George [pseud.], interview, May 8, 2012.

While a consensus exists amongst these children's descriptions regarding the educational purpose of museums, and the children appear well-versed in the variety of museums, absent from these children's comments is the specific mention of museums being a place where you can learn about people or their stories.<sup>328</sup> Their definitions focused more on events and objects. Ten of the junior docents referred specifically to objects or artifacts within their definition of a museum. Justin, an African-American, eighth-grade student defined a museum in this way, "I guess a museum is a place where you go and learn about artifacts and basically the history of a certain area, or a land, or country or whatever, or learn the history about that artifact."<sup>329</sup> Eighth-grader Samantha described the purpose of a museum as being, "to inform people about prior events or even future events."<sup>330</sup> Melissa, a student of Asian descent described a museum as, "a place of history, I think. That's mostly what I think of when I hear museum. I'm like, 'oh, you go there to learn about things that happened in the past.'"<sup>331</sup>

Only one definition connected museums to cultural stewardship as Martin, a Mexican-American, male student took a global approach in his definition: "[a]

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<sup>328</sup> I acknowledge some of the interviewees could have meant for their use of the phrase "the past" or as one child said "our past" to include the stories of people. For my analysis here, I relied on the specific words they used to build their definitions.

<sup>329</sup> Justin [pseud.], interview, May 6, 2012.

<sup>330</sup> Samantha [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 14, 2012.

<sup>331</sup> Melissa [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 7, 2012.

museum holds hundreds of exhibits that can help you learn about different eras from the world's past and can help you learn about different country's cultures and a lot about the processes that led up to the major events in our world's history."<sup>332</sup>

When I asked junior docents if they liked learning about history, all but two answered affirmatively and several students mentioned they liked history *because* of the stories they learned.<sup>333</sup> African-American student Justin liked history "because they have different stories and everything that happened within history affected you. So, it influenced your culture. It influenced you. If the plague didn't go on, you might not have been born. So, it's a bunch of different things that happened to you and affected you."<sup>334</sup>

Joseph, a male, Caucasian eighth-grade student, set history apart from other subjects because of its focus on stories: "I guess it's just like a story and all the other subjects are just learning about something when history's like learning about stories

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<sup>332</sup> Martin [pseud.], interview, June 2, 2012.

<sup>333</sup> For the two students who did not respond in the affirmative that they liked history, both cited pedagogical approaches as the reason why they did not like history. One student clarified that he "sometimes" like history depending on how it is taught (the student did not like learning from lectures) while another student said he did not like history "because during class we have to remember the date, the timeline, and also the major persons for our tests and quiz and to me I could get the dates easily, but I just forget what is important for." Lewis [pseud.], interview by author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 18, 2013; Daniel [pseud.], interview by author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 6, 2013.

<sup>334</sup> Justin [pseud.], interview, May 6, 2012.

of people and civilizations and that's always interested me."<sup>335</sup> For private-school student Grace, she was drawn to the stories in history rather than learning the "details," a term a couple of students used:

I like history, but, like, Paul Revere's ride. That's interesting because it's this big story around and, oh, Paul Revere had to make this ride in the middle of the night, and I find that really cool. It's almost like a novel and you would never think it would happen. I like studying history, but I don't like the dates. The dates and the people are just what drive me nuts because it's, like, I don't care. Well, I care, but okay, so Columbus sailed the sea in 1492, that's important but it's not a story. It's the story that really gets me into it.<sup>336</sup>

Junior docents Marie and Melanie both liked history because of a personal connection they felt to it. Marie—who described her heritage as, “well I'm really mixed. I'm African American, Scottish, I'm Native American, I'm French, Italian, and German”—mentioned her interest in her ancestors and “people before me,” while Melanie enjoyed “just learning about different people and the culture and kind of experiencing time back then is really interesting, and I like to see how people affected our lives now. It's really fun.”<sup>337</sup>

These interviews cannot stand as representative of what all twelve to fourteen-year-olds make of museums and history. The youth interviewed brought months of museum-volunteer experience to their respective interviews and, in

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<sup>335</sup> Joseph [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 28, 2013.

<sup>336</sup> Grace [pseud.], interview, April 25, 2012.

<sup>337</sup> Marie [pseud.], interview, June 14, 2012; Melanie [pseud.], interview, June 14, 2012.

consequence, an unusual level of museum familiarity. Still, the common focus on education that emerged proved enlightening. The comments of these youth carry elements of the modern museum (its focus on education), as well as echo more recent trends scholars have examined regarding the role of objects in the modern museum.<sup>338</sup> The comments of these youth suggest that their understanding of museums is grounded in its educational role, much to the exclusions of other purposes, and that while these children are connecting museums as a place to learn about the past, that past is often grounded in events or objects rather than family, community, or personal stories—themes quite evident in their discussion of history.

Thus, children bring their own ideas regarding the nature, purpose, and function of museums. Likewise, their experiences in museums are affected by attributes physically associated with being a child (such as height or literacy) and conceptions we make of children. Throughout my research it became clear that there are docents willing to work with children and others who are not, in part, due to these defining attributes. As one former educator explained to me when she described her choice to become involved in a child-centered museum program, “I like to participate in it because I know they don't always have the people that want to get involved with children; it tends to sort of scare people I think.”<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> See Steven Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010) and Rainey Tisdale, “Do History Museums Still Need Objects?” *History News* 66, No. 3 (Summer 2011): 19-24.

<sup>339</sup> Name withheld, interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, April 27, 2012.



During my conversation with an eighteen-year-old volunteer who had volunteered for eight year in a junior docent program at a Central Coast museum, I became aware of the tension, or disconnect, that sometimes exists between junior and senior docent programs. When I asked if she had any recommendations for the junior docent program she suggested that a liaison position between the junior and senior docent programs be created to ease tensions as “I remember they were talking a lot about there were conflicts between junior docents and the older adult docents working together.” When I asked if she could tell me more about the challenges that existed she politely explained:

Well it sounds kind of silly but the, of course the junior docents they’re young and they get distracted easily, or they don’t want to stay focused or they see something interesting and they want to walk around, so sometimes the older docents feel like they have to babysit and they start to get upset because they want to do the volunteering job and not just be babysitters and the younger docents they don’t understand. They’re doing it for fun and they see something fun and they want to go try it. That’s pretty much the whole conflict they had. It never was too drastic.<sup>340</sup>

Children’s vocabulary, height, attention span, and ability to think abstractly all affect children’s museum experience and influence the structuring of child-centered programming.<sup>341</sup> While these considerations encourage educators to choose experiential modes of learning, the persisting conception of children as innocent

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<sup>340</sup> Name withheld, interview with the author, July 11, 2012.

<sup>341</sup> For a thorough discussion of how museums can engage child visitors with history see, D. Lynn McRainey and John Russick, editors, *Connecting Kids to History with Museum Exhibitions* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2010).

further influences choices museum educators make, a point which I will expand on more fully towards the close of this chapter.<sup>342</sup>

### **Child-Centered History Programming and Its Content**

In spite of the difficulty balancing the demands of state standards and museum goals in a climate of decreased funds and reduced staff, many museum professionals and volunteers pull the histories of childhood into their programs. Not uncommonly, these histories place greater emphasis on children than those intended for the general public. Throughout my interviews, I learned that the concern of museum professionals to deliver age-appropriate, competitive programs that align with state curriculum standards *for* children often led to their developing programs that explore the history *of* children. Of the respondents that selected a “5” (the highest end of the rubric I provided in the survey) to represent the inclusion of children’s history at their site, I spoke with four in a follow-up interview. In explaining what they took into consideration when answering this question, three justified their high ranking by referencing the strength of their children’s programming or, by referencing the way in which they work to make exhibits accessible at a child’s level. For example, one Ventura county museum explained:

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<sup>342</sup> Experiential education is “learning with a physical dimension, characteristically with people’s hands touching materials. The visitor must participate, rather than just observe—most obviously in *doing* things, such as sawing wood or weaving cloth—and more subtly in assuming a role of a historical character” (11-12), see Bettye Alexander Cook, “A Chronological Study of Experiential Education in the American History Museum” (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 2007).

our children's history program that I have related to you, is one of the best in the area, as I said, we're booked two years ahead of time. People are dying to come and people who come, like the teachers and the parents, they can't get over what a wonderful program it is and how much the children enjoy it and they say this is the best time we've ever had and we've learned so much and we have all kinds of letters that the children write back to the museum telling them how much they enjoyed it and how much they learned. I have been to museums—in fact we started out this way many years ago—with the children come to a museum and they line up and a docent takes them in a line all the way around through the museum she talks about it. And that's fine, but this is always hands-on and kids get to do exactly what the early children use to do who lived here. And they play and they were even dressed, as I said. And, so, to me, that's a five [*laughs*].<sup>343</sup>

Still, not all child-centered programs cover the history of children and childhood more extensively than that done for adult visitors. An audio-tour at Mission San Juan Capistrano provides a useful example regarding the dual meaning of children's history that exists among California museums. To better engage child visitors, Mission San Juan Capistrano introduced a children's audio tour in 2008.<sup>344</sup> On this tour, children join fourth-grader Megan and Tommy as they and their classmates haphazardly time travel each time the mission bell rings. On the tour the children meet two other children, a young girl named Tushmal, or Little Teeter, of the Hummingbird Clan who has a homemade flute and Rosa, a teenager who is betrothed to a man that she does not want to marry but lives in a context where it is common to be married by the age of fifteen. Throughout the journey, the children primarily meet adults and are “saved by the mission bell” several times as they

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<sup>343</sup> Telephone interview with author, survey respondent #135, November 22, 2010.

<sup>344</sup> San Juan Capistrano staff member, interview with author, December 14, 2009.

escape an earthquake, eating seaweed, being dragooned by the pirate Hippolyte Bouchard, and getting married.

While this audio tour clearly presents history for a child audience, effectively and creatively communicates the layers of history at this particular site, and incorporates humor, adventure, and an intriguing mystery, it says little about the history of being a child at San Juan Capistrano. While the audio tour could be an opportunity to learn how meanings of childhood changed over time (since the children travel through time from 1616 to the present), it seldom speaks to how gender, class, race, religion, or time alone affected meanings of childhood. That said, this is only one interpretive offering, intended for the children unable to come with a school group or join a group tour at Mission San Juan Capistrano. The museum offers many other programs that do explore aspects of childhood, such as, leisure and work.

For some child-centered history programs, the goal is not to teach social history. For example, at one San Joaquin County museum, raising awareness among child visitors regarding where their food comes from takes precedence:

Young people coming into [...] nowadays are usually coming from San Francisco, Sacramento, Stockton, the families that move into the country to get away from the lawlessness of the big city, and, they really don't know anything about how things grow, they think strawberries are automatically in baskets sitting in the store, think eggs come in cartons, they have no idea what it is to go into a chicken coop and gather the egg right out from under the hen, as they will do when they come to the ranch. So, for them, number one, the first learning is learning about agriculture and its importance not only to the history of California but to their everyday life.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>345</sup> Telephone interview, survey respondent #136.

Although a number of child-centered history programs may focus on other historical themes, such as agriculture, many do provide some of the most detailed histories of childhood that I found within museum interpretation. Still, programs often universalize the experience of childhood now, and “then,” as they focus on learning about the “Victorian” child or the “Pioneer” child and draw correlations between those children’s lives and the lives of children today. This effort to draw correlations, however, does provide an indirect opportunity for children to think of factors that shape childhood, but in the process it often oversimplifies and misrepresents the diversity of experiences that make up “now” and “then.”

The compare and contrast method is a common tool used to engage children in learning history. Within my survey, 67 percent of survey respondents selected “compare/contrast activities (i.e. comparing the present to the past) as one of the types of activities they use to teach visiting children. Compare/contrast activities received only three less answers than hands-on activities within my survey. I commonly observed programs that invited children to compare their home to the home they were touring, compare their clothes to the clothes they saw children wearing in pictures, or compare their modern classroom experience to that of the replica nineteenth-century classroom. Thus while my survey suggested that

museums, as a whole, do not discuss how childhood has changed over time, my field visits demonstrated how many child-centered programs do.<sup>346</sup>

In several instances, a moral judgment regarding children of today underscores much of the comparison to children's lives in the past. For example, when I spoke with an interpreter in Kern county regarding programming at his site, he said, "We stress the interaction of children with the work, and the work ethic. They were part of the business or the farm. They weren't just simply along for the ride like most kids today are."<sup>347</sup> Another educator in San Joaquin County suggested that "Pioneer" children did not complain like today's children, "For a kid who was in a pioneer family, chores were expected. It wasn't something that they grunted about. They just did them. It was expected of them."<sup>348</sup>

It is hard to escape the compare and contrast method without some pre-existing assumptions entering the process. For example, at the Stagecoach Inn Museum in Newbury Park, students visit and experience different topical/interpretive stations as they learn what life was like to be a child 150 years ago. While at the complex they are given a historic name, a bandanna or apron dependent on their gender, and rotate through four stations that provide experiential learning

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<sup>346</sup> Within Question 22 of the survey I asked, "Does your site interpret how the meaning of childhood has changed over time?" 132 institutions reported "no," while 89 reported "yes."

<sup>347</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #17, December 16, 2009.

<sup>348</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey #136, January 13, 2011.

opportunities grounded in nineteenth-century activities: gold panning; chores at a replica log cabin; toys, games, and dancing; and a school lesson in a replica school house. I have observed this program fourteen times and witnessed how much visiting children love the program and how well they respond to its format and structure.<sup>349</sup>

During the course of my study, I read over three hundred thank-you letters written by child visitors to the museum educators who facilitate this program. The majority of the letters speak very highly of their experience, while a few provide recommendations of accommodations that could be added, docents who could be kinder, or stations which could be more engaging. One fourth-grade girl drew a picture at the bottom of her note. The picture is of her standing at the entrance sign to the museum. The sign bears the name of the museum and then, in parenthesis, “(A.K.A. Heaven” and three angels surround the sign. From the girl, two dialogue balloons project; from her mouth, “Yah!!!!” and from her mind, “HEAVEN has arrived.” Within her letter to the museum she expressed her desire to return and her love for the program:

Thank you SO much for the trip and tour! I LOVED every minute of it except when I had to go back to school. I especially like when I baked biscuits! They were the best thing I ever ate! I also loved cooking at the covered wagons. I convinced my mom to buy a game on her iPhone called "Oregon Trail" and it is very smaller to what I saw today (covered wagons). It was a dream I could not believe it. BEST DAY EVER!!! P.S. covered wagons, etc is my favorite subject.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> I visited the Stagecoach Inn Museum fourteen times between January 19, 2011 and June 13, 2012. The program is held Wednesday mornings from 9:30am until approximately noon.

Thank-you letters written by children to museum staff and volunteers at the Stagecoach Inn Museum reflect not only their approval and love for the program, but also the generalization that children today are privileged compared to children of the past. For example, one female, fourth-grader wrote, “Thank you so much for teaching me about the life of people back then and that we now have it really easy but the people back then really had to work.”<sup>351</sup> Another wrote, “You helped show me how lucky I am to be living in the twenty-first century.”<sup>352</sup>

Other students gained a new sense of appreciation from their encounter with the life of a child 150 years ago. As one student wrote, “We loved how you taught us how school was back then. I’m glad we didn’t go to school back then.”<sup>353</sup> One girl wrote, “Thank you for the most amazing fieldtrip I’ve ever had in my life!!! I learned how hard it was back then. It was very hard and fun for me. I would like to thank you

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<sup>350</sup> Thank-you letter to Stagecoach Inn Museum, November 16, 2011, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #18 in author’s possession). For my study I looked at a number of thank-you letters written by children. Letters were often kept by a member of the education department with the primary purpose being to share these letters with other staff or volunteers. As these letters are not archived or catalogued and their organization reflects more of a private collection rather than an archive, they will be footnoted as such. The date for each letter reflects any date listed on the letter. The specific catalogue number for each letter reflects how I have organized copies of these letters in my personal files. In some cases, the name of the museum has been withheld and a pseudonym given in its place.

<sup>351</sup> Thank-you letter to Stagecoach Inn Museum, April 16, 2010, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #153 in author’s possession).

<sup>352</sup> Thank-you letter to Stagecoach Inn Museum, November 12, 2010, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #184 in author’s possession).

<sup>353</sup> Thank-you letter to Stagecoach Inn Museum, no date, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #205 in author’s possession).



all for teaching us about back then.”<sup>354</sup> Another wrote not only of her new awareness of pioneer life, but an appreciation for the duties associated with it:

I now appreciate how hard the pioneers worked to have a good life. I loved making the delicious, golden, warm, and fluffy biscuits. They're very simple to make and they taste very good. Also I loved doing the laundry. I think it shows us how to appreciate what we have today. I also think that it is interesting how the boys and the girls do very different chores than one another [...] All in all, I had a wonderful time learning about the lifestyle the Pioneers' lead. It was a very interesting field trip. Now I respect of how easy our lives are today. It was also one of my favorite experiences in elementary school that I have ever done.<sup>355</sup>

As far as using the compare and contrast technique to distinguish how historical categories have affected children over time, museum educators appear most comfortable in exploring the effect of gender and class upon childhood. For example, at the Stagecoach Inn Museum children perform either girls' chores (laundry, housekeeping, baking biscuits) or boys' chores (shampooing a saddle, fetching water, and hauling firewood). When the children go for their school lesson, the girls enter by one door and the boys enter by another. At the games and dance station, the children once again learned the effect of gender.

The performance of these gender-specific roles did not go unnoticed by visiting children who wrote thank-you letters. For example, one fourth-grade boy wrote, “I had a great time because the boys got to get wood. And the boys also got to

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<sup>354</sup> Thank-you letter to Stagecoach Inn Museum, April 15, 2011, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #34 in author's possession).

<sup>355</sup> Thank-you letter to Stagecoach Inn Museum, March 31, 2011, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #117 in author's possession).

get buckets of water and give it to the girls so they cold [*sic*] do laundry. Also I liked the part when we hit the dirt off the rug. And I liked the part when the girls made the biscuits and gave it to us so we could eat it. Also I liked the part when we were panning for gold.”<sup>356</sup> A girl wrote, “I liked that the boys were outside and the girls were inside doing chores.”<sup>357</sup> Another wrote of how she learned that gender affected the games children played: “I also did enjoy the jump rope. I always thought that jump rope was a game made for girls. But it turns out that girls not just jump rope because of their skirts or dresses and if their ankles showed it would be unladylike.”<sup>358</sup>

One boy, who was given the period appropriate name of Jeb during his visit, captured the interaction between the boys and girls as they each carried out their separate tasks towards the completion of similar goals: “First we brought wood to our neighbor. Then we beat a rug, and waxed a saddle. Then we got water from a metal barrel. We brought it over to the girls, who were washing clothes. We dumped

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<sup>356</sup> Thank-you letter to Stagecoach Inn Museum, June 2, 2011, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #69 in author’s possession).

<sup>357</sup> Thank-you letter to Stagecoach Inn Museum, April 16, 2010, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #158 in author’s possession).

<sup>358</sup> Thank-you letter to Stagecoach Inn Museum, March 31, 2011, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #117 in author’s possession).

out their dirty water and filled it with clean water. That was the end of chores, so we went inside and got a surprise. The girls had baked biscuits! I had mine with jam.”<sup>359</sup>

Throughout my study I came across several museums that wove gender roles into their curriculum for visiting students. At one museum in El Dorado County, the third-grade tour not only teaches students about how gender once shaped the lives of children, but invites children to consider how it shapes childhood today:

the expectation of, um, of, what a little boy would be expected to do around the house versus what a little girl would be doing. We have a kitchen display and I know in our school group tour we talk about, you know, the collecting [of] wood to feed the stove versus, which is probably what the little boy would have been doing, versus learning to cook with her mother, which is what a little girl would be doing and getting kids to talk a little bit about. Is that still true in your family or not? Or, you know, to think about it a little bit.<sup>360</sup>

While these examples show how gender affected childhood chores, education, and games, another museum takes advantage of its interpretive space, a courtroom, to demonstrate how gender has historically affected the judicial system for adult females. During the museum’s role-playing activity of a woman’s trial, the program coordinator would call up only boys to be the various positions, such as the lawyers, judge, and bailiffs, while confused girls (and at times perplexed teachers) looked on, unselected. Towards the end, the program coordinator would typically ask the girls, “Do you guys think this is fair? Do you think this is right?” For the girls, according to the program coordinator, “it kind of clicked, the unfairness of it” and for both boys

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<sup>359</sup> Thank-you letter to Stagecoach Inn Museum, April 27, 2011, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #58 in author’s possession).

<sup>360</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey #113, October 27, 2010.

and girls the program helped them “see the visual of, this is what it would have been like, and did this woman have a fair trial? Was she really tried by her peers if it was all men? I think it does have a good impact on them.”<sup>361</sup>

While the re-enacting of gender roles has found success in this program, the program coordinator has found less comfort and acceptance in the re-enacting of discrepancies based on race. When I asked, “do you do this the same with the ethnicity or the race of the children?” the program coordinator explained:

You know, I try not to get into that too much. I might say something that it might not just be gender but also based on class or the color of their skin, but I do see that as more of a sensitive issue. I try to do that based on, like for instance if it’s a more conservative home group I might not [laughs], but if it’s a school with a lot of diversity then yes I usually bring that up. At first I always threw that in there, and I got some really funny looks from parents, so I did back off from that a little bit depending on the group I was with even though it’s an extremely important issue. Sometimes they’re, like, okay with the gender thing but you start throwing in race and class, and I noticed that the chaperones got a little uncomfortable—which isn’t necessarily a bad thing—but the same time, you know, it was, at least I got one message through to them, at least I got something through.<sup>362</sup>

One Southern California interpreter clearly stated how their museum does not include role playing within its interpretive programming for children out of respect for the culture the museum represents:

We don’t pretend. We don’t put ourselves in the place of California Indians. [We] just try to look at what they’ve left us to interpret. They were

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<sup>361</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey #94, 15 October 2010.

<sup>362</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey #94, 15 October 2010.

instrumental in putting together the museum. We don't do living history programs. I would feel uncomfortable doing that because it's a totally different culture. If someone from the culture wants to do it, I would feel totally out of place. I don't feel I would represent them in the way they should be represented.<sup>363</sup>

The interpreter clarified that in their school programming they do not incorporate role-playing but do teach American Indian games in an effort to try and have the children understand what it was like, realize that American Indians continue to live, and foster appreciation for other people. When I asked if she would be open to role-playing, she responded, "Only if put on by someone from [an] American Indian tribe. I just don't know enough about their culture."<sup>364</sup>

While exploring the effect race and ethnicity have had on children through history has been daunting for some museums, others have found successful ways to explore the effects of class on childhood. During my visit to the Tallac Historic Site in South Lake Tahoe, which is operated by the US Forest Service, I observed a children's program that centered around "pretending" and demonstrated the impact of wealth on childhood during the 1920s. At the Pope House, one of the house museums at the Tallac Historic Site, interpreters invite children to attend a weekly,

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<sup>363</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #80, January 29, 2010. This interview was with the only interview participant who requested that the interview not be audio recorded. These quotes and thoughts are based upon a transcript of notes typed at the time of the interview.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

ninety-minute program titled “Garden Party” that invites children to pretend that they are child guests to the Pope Home in the 1920s.<sup>365</sup>

Mores, etiquette, and social structures that applied to wealthy children of the 1920s elite are replicated within this experiential learning program. For example, children are dropped off by their parents to spend time with two costumed interpreters (a nanny and servant) to replicate the division between upper-class, Victorian children and their parents.<sup>366</sup>

During their time with the nanny and servant, children are taken around the property to see where they would have slept, ate, and met with a tutor. They then learn etiquette of the time, decorate a hat, and then walk out to the gazebo dressed in a hat, beads, and gloves to practice their etiquette over lemonade and cookies. The activity ends with a game of croquet on the lawn of the summer resort. While visiting children learn a lot about how things were for certain, privileged children in the 1920s, they don’t necessarily learn why. Why did parents not spend a lot of time with children? Is this how it was or all children in the 1920s? These questions remained

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<sup>365</sup> This program was likely started in the late 1990s to early 2000s. In 2010 a staff member revamped the program to “make it not so much about a manner’s class but a day in the life of a Pope house child. So it’s not so much, it seemed very female-based; they called it the Little Kids Tea Party and boys didn’t want to go on it, and we’re really trying to change the image of that program.” (Jackie Dumin, Site Director, Tallac Historic Site, interview with the author, August 22, 2010). After the 2010 season, the program has been temporarily disbanded as staff and volunteers worked to revamp the program to be more engaging for male participants.

<sup>366</sup> Field Notes, Visit to Tallac Historic Site, South Lake Tahoe, August 22, 2010.

unexplored, and, therefore, the representation of childhood seems historically one-dimensional.

Another house museum, in Alameda County, once operated a program that explored the effects of class on childhood. A very staff- and volunteer-intensive program, it “fell by the wayside when pressures of having more school groups visit on any given day have propped up.”<sup>367</sup> Within this program, children were divided into groups and performed class-specific tasks:

We've done a thing that hasn't been done for ten years but at one point we had a program where we took a school and split it into two groups. One group was taken and served tea and was essentially given manners classes and served tea, and the other group was told they were the working class and was taken out and shoveled manure. And half way through we decided, "oh, a terrible mistakes been made," we switch groups and pulled the one from the field into the house and take the ones from the house and kicked them out into the field to shovel manure. Um, which was a really interesting thing, What was a child expected to do based on class?<sup>368</sup>

Within many programs, I noticed a tendency for either the present situation of children to be universalized, and/or the history of children and childhood to be universalized. The pedagogical tool to compare and contrast accurately plants the notion that not all children experience childhood the same, but the reasons for such differences are often left unexplored. And, in the process, the juxtaposition of two childhoods excludes all the other childhoods that always exist, both

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<sup>367</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, November 5, 2010, Survey #72. On the day of our interview, the house museum was hosting eighteen school tours; the director of the house museum reported that that number can be as high as twenty-seven.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

contemporaneously and historically. When comparing a universal assumption about the past to a universal assumption about the present, it is easy to simplify and misrepresent the reality of childhood as historically experienced. For example, one educator spoke in idyllic terms when he speaks about corporal punishment as something of the past:

In the history of childhood, we also tell about, again, that is just what children were allowed and not allowed to do. Things that, back then, were considered acceptable which would not be acceptable today. Such as, corporal punishment, you know, you don't go around spanking or beating your children now-a-days, back then it was allowed, spare the rod and spoil the child was something people did believe in. So [...] like one of the things we have rug beaters in there that the parents would have used to beat, you know, would have used beaten rugs well there's another use for rug beaters, as well, you know, that just shows how far we've come.<sup>369</sup>

This educator's comment underplays the diverse reality that makes up both historic and present-day childhoods. For example, it downplays the existence of child abuse and misrepresents the status of corporal punishment in the US classroom. At present, corporal punishment is allowed in nineteen states and continues as a contentious point of disagreement between educators, parents, and children.<sup>370</sup> Thus, to speak in such collective terms not only misrepresents the past, but it misrepresents the present.

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<sup>369</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #120, October 20, 2010.

<sup>370</sup> In the year 2006, a total of 223,190 students received physical discipline according to the US Department of Education. See Alison Bath, "Despite Opposition, paddling students allowed in 19 States," *USA Today* April 23, 2012.



Just as the presence of children may encourage museum educators to tell about the history of children, the presence of a child audience may also influence a museum educator's decision to sanitize or censor the history presented. For example, I asked one interpreter who works at a site focused on the Mexican and Spanish era of California to further explain why her site chooses not to introduce the topics of captivity and slavery to visiting children. The interpreter first explained that the site is not associated with a mission, where the topic "might be more appropriate" and then proceeded to explain the complexity of understanding the history of captivity and slavery in early California and the various viewpoints concerning whether or not the practice was oppressive:

One of the things that I think is hard for children to grasp is the idea that [sigh] you know it's kind of a touchy subject because depending on where people's political views lie, um, I mean, this is even considering adults, depending on the viewpoint you might view the Spanish and Mexican control of California as having been an oppressive society for the Native Americans, um, if you look individual lives you're going to find a diverse, you know, number of viewpoints. There were some people who were Native American who didn't think that their life in the mission was necessarily oppressive. There were others who did who ran away and, you know, created revolts against the Spanish. If you, would look at it from the Padres, you know, probably you'd be hearing, well, you know "we didn't come here to oppress them we came in here to convert them to Christianity," which wasn't necessarily viewed as being an oppressive thing at that time.<sup>371</sup>

The interpreter continued to explain how Spain's actions fit into broader world history trends of the time and how philosophies concerning captivity and slavery have changed over time. While the site's interpreters do not introduce the topic of

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<sup>371</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #78, February 12, 2010.

captivity and slavery as “all of that's, I think, kind of a lot for children to wrap their heads around,” interpreters are prepared to answer questions on the topic if children ask of their own volition. I asked the interpreter, “when kids do ask questions about captivity and slavery, how are docents trained to respond to those questions?” to this question, the interpreter responded:

They're trained to show respect to the child asking the question, to share a factual response to the question, so in other words, um, again a lot of it depends on the specific question that's asked. But to talk about what the way of life was, that what we may consider to have been slavery today would not have necessarily have been considered to be slavery at that time because in fact the Spanish and the Mexicans didn't believe that they had slaves working for them, which is, you know, we look at it and go, “oh, how can they think that?” But they didn't. I think, ideologically, they did not agree with slavery and yet obviously there was what I would consider today instances of slavery.<sup>372</sup>

This was not the first time I had learned of parts of history being sidestepped out of concern for the child's ability to navigate and digest the topic. For example, during my pilot study among colonial house museums on the east coast, one staff member at a historic site in Massachusetts described her discomfort with educators sharing the story of Eunice Williams, a seven-year-old captive who assimilated into Native-American culture.

Due to the popularity of this particular captivity narrative and its proximity to the site, teachers often ask to learn about the raid and the kidnapping of Eunice Williams. This staff member, however, argues that for young children the

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<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

undercurrents of the story, that a child was kidnapped, overpowers a child's ability to think objectively about the political climate of the time. "My feelings about this particular raid," she explained, "is that it is really overblown and that if you take it out of its political context it becomes very condemning of one group over the other, and I think when you tell the story of a little girl being kidnapped that kind of seals the deal for them [visiting children] and makes it difficult for them in the future to see that event from a different angle."<sup>373</sup>

While these educators edited the narratives they presented to children out of concern for children's ability to navigate the complex background to and context of the narratives, one volunteer at a Southern California museum decided to add a disclaimer to her thirty-minute performance of a late-nineteenth-century school lesson out of a concern for the vulnerability of children. The program begins with volunteers arranging children by height (to hopefully allow the best visibility once they are sitting at desks) and gender (as each gender has its own door to enter by) before entering the schoolroom. Children enter and take a seat (when instructed to do so) at desks that are nearly 150 years old. A female volunteer, dressed in a black dress, proceeds to start the lesson with a statement, such as, "It is [today's date] 1889" and, thus, invites children to enter a performance of the past.

During the course of the lesson, the performing volunteer teaches the children about manners, unique attributes of an 1889 classroom (such as the American flag of

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<sup>373</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with author, May 15, 2009. This quote is taken from a transcript that was typed during the course of the interview; this interview was not audio recorded at the request of the interviewee.

the 1888), and performs a health check on two volunteers. The teacher often engages the children in a discussion to explain how the class operated and what the lives of the children who attended this school house would have been like before and after school. By the end of the lesson, the docent provides time for the children to practice spelling on their slate boards, participate in a McGuffey Reader lesson, and solve an arithmetic problem.

During the lesson, the volunteer goes over classroom discipline at length. She explains that there were many rules within the classroom; there were rules for the teacher as well as the student. The volunteer proceeds to pick up a paddle and ask what it would have been used for. At one of my visits, a boy answered, “It’s a paddle, so if someone [is bad they] get spanked with the paddle.”<sup>374</sup> The docent continues to go over which types of misbehavior would result in being paddled, and the severity of discipline for each act.

Depending on the volunteer, the level to which the process and implications of being paddled varies. While one docent approached the subject matter with humor and had a student come to the front of the class as the role playing of paddling turned more into a trust activity (of whether or not she would actually paddle the student), another went into vivid details using words and phrases such as children would be bruised and injured, or, “you would be hurt.” This docent proceeded to tell them how the discipline would continue at home and after being paddled at school for misbehaving, they would be whipped at home for getting into trouble at school.

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<sup>374</sup> Taken from field notes taken during a program at Museum A on April 13, 2013.

The response to the shock value of this presentation on corporal punishment, from my observations, has varied from roaring laughter to intent listening. According to thank-you letters written by students to the museum, the explicit discussion of corporal punishment yields various results. While some only wrote descriptively of what they learned regarding school discipline, others used that information to draw conclusions about life for children at that time. As one, female student explained, “I also enjoyed the school, because I would be in the same class as my siblings. However I didn’t like what they did to kids my age back then.”<sup>375</sup>

Other students also wrote of liking the school, but not the discipline side of it. “My favorite part about the [...] was the school,” one female student wrote, “because I got a picture in my head about how they used to teach. I thought it was weird when the students got a clean check. What I did not like was the paddle, because they used to hit kids with it.”<sup>376</sup> Another female student wrote, “Secondly, my second favorite was school. It was amazing to see what the discipline was and what the school was like. I feel bad though because of the paddle that they used! SCAREY! [*sic*]”<sup>377</sup> One letter described the punished children as “innocent,” the same attribute that so often guides education and interpretive techniques, as this fourth-grade female deplorably

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<sup>375</sup> Thank-you letter to Museum A, no date, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #259 in author’s possession).

<sup>376</sup> Thank-you letter to Museum A, no date, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #262 in author’s possession).

<sup>377</sup> Thank-you letter to Museum A, March 31, 2011, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #30 in author’s possession).

wrote about schoolroom discipline: “And to know that poor innocent kids got paddled in school is just horrible and really rude, too!”<sup>378</sup>

For many students the presentation on discipline was a talking point in their letter, and for a number of students their favorite part of the program. “I really enjoyed all of it,” wrote one male student, “but the best part was also interesting, but pretty strict, was if the children lied they would get hit with a paddle.”<sup>379</sup> One girl wrote, “My favorite part was how kids went to school and what the consequences were if they misbehaved. That was my favorite part of the field trip because I love learning and also because [I] never knew a lot about the children in the 1800s.”<sup>380</sup>

I noticed during my observations, that one docent gave a disclaimer before discussing classroom discipline, such as the paddle, a dunce’s cap, and a wood block to punish speaking out of turn. When I observed this docent, I noticed how she took the time to clearly emphasize “this would never happen in the modern classroom.”<sup>381</sup> In a phone interview, the volunteer clarified that her prefacing this part of the lesson was not in response to a child having looked fearful or making a comment. At one time, the museum had a breadboard rather than a “proper” paddle, and this volunteer

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<sup>378</sup> Thank-you letter to Museum A, June 3, 2011, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #96 in author’s possession).

<sup>379</sup> Thank-you letter to Museum A, no date, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #252 in author’s possession).

<sup>380</sup> Thank-you letter to Museum A, no date, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #277 in author’s possession).

<sup>381</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, June 25, 2012.

noticed “that my director was a little bit worried about that being there. I don’t know, I just think it’s something she personally doesn’t like the idea of it.” The volunteer proceeded to share how that uneasiness influenced her presentation and her choice to frame her lesson in the careful way that she does:

And once I knew that I really sort of emphasized it a little bit more. Now, I always say, “Well, this would never happen in a classroom today, so you don’t have to fear of this happening to you. This is just something that happened, you know, over a hundred years ago in order to emphasize that point because, of course, the last thing you’d want is a sensitive child to be upset because it’s a field trip and it’s meant to be fun [laugh]. You want them to have a good experience, not to leave frightened that a piece of wood was going to be left in their mouth for half an hour [laughs].”<sup>382</sup>

Throughout my study, other museum educators have expressed a concern for how the history of childhood is presented. For example, at one Sacramento site the interpreter relayed to me how, at one time, there was a group of docents “who took too seriously the idea of how children were treated in the nineteenth century.”<sup>383</sup> He proceeded to describe, in universal terms, the harsh realities of being a nineteenth century child and in the process flattens the historical reality and misinterprets complexity of child rearing: “Frankly I wouldn’t want to have been a child in the nineteenth century even for a nice family. Children were seen and not heard and basically, you know [...] spare the rod and spoil the child.”<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Name withheld, telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #93, September 26, 2010.

<sup>384</sup> Telephone interview with the author, survey respondent #93.

Within one of the museum's living history children's programs, this interpreter began to notice "there was a lot of gruffness to give them the first person impression of what it was like to be a child. Unfortunately these children aren't that and weren't raised like that, and that was a real pet peeve with me, and, well, I got rid of some of the docents and had the new ones that were trained and stuff back off on that."<sup>385</sup> For this interpreter, it was not the content that he disagreed with, but the presentation by the living history docents:

We talk about what it was like and the idea that, you know, children were subject to corporal punishment about any time someone felt like giving it to them and that we do get gruff with them when we first give them their orientation about [interviewee changes voice to a booming, foreboding tone] "you have stepped back in history to my time now," you know, "and in my time, children picked up their feet when they walked, or they were sent to hug a tree." Well, these guys used to literally make them go hug a tree [laugh].<sup>386</sup>

The interpreter went on to explain why he disapproved of the way some docents delivered the material: "we're not living with nineteenth-century mores, we're living with twenty-first-century mores and we have to adapt our interpretation to fit with our present-day norms and mores rather than the ones we're trying to talk about. That's why it's interpretation and not life."<sup>387</sup>

Not only do museum educators and frontline interpreters make judgments concerning when to edit or censor history to protect visiting children's experience,

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<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.



sometimes institutions as a whole shut down exhibitions in the name of protecting children. Just as some museum curators use the symbol of the sacred child to evoke emotion in visitors, some boards side-step exhibiting controversial topics that they feel compromise the sacred child ideal. For example, the Museum of Children's Art in Oakland (MOCHA) canceled an exhibit, *A Child's View of Gaza* which was to be co-produced with The Middle East Children's Alliance (MECA) and display art by Palestinian children. Despite prior exhibitions of paintings by American children during World War II or art by Iraqi children, the MOCHA board expressed concern as certain constituents complained and ultimately decided "this exhibit was not appropriate for an open gallery accessible by all children."<sup>388</sup>

The cancellation of this exhibition not only silenced the Palestinian perspective, but the voices of children. As the Associate Director of MECA expressed at the time, "Even while the children in Gaza are living under Israeli policies that deprive them of every basic necessity, they managed through art, to express their realities and hopes. It's really very sad that there are people in the U.S. Silencing them and shredding their dreams."<sup>389</sup>

This concern for a child's vulnerability to museum content, or delivery, is not necessarily unwarranted. In 1997 historian Eric Foner, and his fourth-grade daughter Daria, co-authored a review of Ellis Island and its lack of attention to the historical

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<sup>388</sup> Jill Tucker, "Oakland Museum cancels Palestinian Kids' War Art," *San Francisco Chronicle* 9 September 2011.

<sup>389</sup> Tucker, "Oakland Museum cancels Palestinian Kids' War Art."

effect of gender. According to the article, “Daria was very interested in how immigrant children were portrayed,” and found one of the presentations too “disturbing” to visit, while the other lacked any gender analysis and failed to answer, “was there a difference between how girls and boys experienced America?”<sup>390</sup> The presentation that was too distressing focused on child labor: “There is a small section on ‘Child Labor,’ but she found the very idea too disturbing to look at the vivid photographs. (Her hesitation seemed to be linked to a book she had read in school about the trials of immigrant child workers in the contemporary Southwest).”<sup>391</sup>

Presenting difficult history has been an obstacle that the field of public history has dealt with for decades.<sup>392</sup> To present tough topics to children raises its own set of questions and concerns. While the concerns of the museum educators regarding children’s ability to understand historical complexity or their ability to handle alarming topics is valid, precedence exists for museums presenting tough and complicated history to young audiences with powerful and positive results (a theme that will be addressed in Chapter 5).

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<sup>390</sup> Daria Rose Foner and Eric Foner, “Everywhere and Nowhere: Women at Ellis Island,” *CRM* Vol 20, No. 3 (1997): 8.

<sup>391</sup> Foner and Foner, 8.

<sup>392</sup> One of the seminal works on the presenting of “tough history” to the public focuses on the challenges of representing slavery, see James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, editors, *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (New York: The New Press, 2006).

## **Conclusion**

Within my study of child-centered programs, I left impressed by the level to which children learn children's history through experiential learning models. Whether washing laundry at the Stagecoach Inn in Newbury Park, CA, doing chores at the Rancho Los Cerritos Site in Long Beach, CA, or playing croquet at the Tallac Historic Site in South Lake Tahoe, CA, children often perform the past and learn about the history of children to a more fuller degree in child-centered programming than those who visit the museum as part of the general audience.

The adults spearheading these programs fight for authenticity (such as one concerned educator who voiced dissatisfaction when fellow docents wore sunglasses) yet monitor content as not to upset their own belief—or the belief of teachers and adult chaperones—in children's innocence. While museum educators affect the material introduced, children and adults on the tour further shape the presented narrative through their queries, comments, and behavior. While a parent's look of concern may quiet a docent who has begun to describe corporal punishment in 1890s California, a child's question about chores, discipline, family life, or race relations may invite a docent to share more on the history of children than previously planned. In each instance, museum educators navigate the complexity of presenting a wealth of knowledge in a limited amount of time and execute their own solutions and compromises.

Ideals and conceptions of childhood remain at work in museum education. The teacher who censored her lesson on schoolroom discipline did so as to avoid

tainting or upsetting the innocent children she viewed as filling her classroom. Just as museum professionals and volunteers highlight the innocence of children in exhibits meant to draw out visitor empathy, such as those dealing with sites of trauma as discussed in Chapter 2, they also use the innocence of children as a smoke screen to sidestep controversial topics or exhibits such as MOCHA's decision to cancel the exhibit *A Child's View of Gaza*—which held the potential to upset certain constituencies. Thus, at times the sacred child ideal influences museum educators to proceed with caution as they embark on certain narratives and, at other times, comes in useful when directors or boards want to sidestep divisive issues.

Other conceptions of childhood are also at work, conceptions which merit a thorough investigation not found within this dissertation. Further work needs to be done to study the central role of the child consumer in museum space. Through these rich programs directly created for and marketed to children, museum professionals and volunteers both cater to and critique the child consumer. Museum personnel encourage children's consumption of history and souvenirs in the gift shop, yet they also criticize their supposed ownership of time-saving devices such as electronics.<sup>393</sup>

Within these programs, children often leave with a newfound appreciation for the present having received a message of how easy their life is in comparison to life “back then.” One girl's thank-you letter to the Stagecoach Inn Museum particularly demonstrates how moral judgments about today's pampered child consumer resonate

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<sup>393</sup> As identified in Chapter 2, a rich literature exploring conceptions of child consumers exists. The historical study of child consumers from the vantage point of the museum is an untapped resource worthy of academic attention.

and stick with children as she shares, “Now I respect of [*sic*] how easy our lives are today.”<sup>394</sup> When adult educators use the pedagogical tool of “compare and contrast,” children are invited, unequipped, to consider how today differs from the past. Despite the increased attention to the history of children, these histories often continue to simplify childhood, flatten its complexity, and rarely analyze attributes, other than gender, that shape childhood experiences. Even when differences by gender or class are introduced, causation is often left unexplored.

This study of child-centered programs in California museums suggests that museum professionals and volunteers see the history of children and childhood as an integral point of connection for children and their museum experience. Less clear to these adults, however, is the important role the perspective and voice of children play in the general study of history, and the importance of weaving such perspectives into the general fabric of the museum. While museum professionals and volunteers may currently overlook such voices on a whole, a number of museums view the perspective of modern-day children as visitors as valuable and vital to museum programming.

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<sup>394</sup> Thank-you letter to Stagecoach Inn Museum, March 31, 2011, uncatalogued education department collection (catalogued as letter #117 in author’s possession).

## Chapter Four

### The Feeling of Being an Adult and Getting to Lead: Shared Authority and the Inclusion of Child Volunteers

Junior docents, junior interpreters, teen volunteers—a variety of names describe young persons who donate their time in exchange for service hours, experience, or simple extracurricular fun. Perhaps one of the best documented and earliest cases of children exerting authority in a museum space is at the Brooklyn’s Children Museum. During World War II, the Brooklyn Children’s Museum was for all intents and purposes turned over to children. In 1942, the museum lost sixty-five Works Progress Administration (WPA) funded staff members who now “went elsewhere, leaving a total of eight curators, docents and librarians to run two buildings full of exhibits (some of them alive), with children swarming at the rate of hundreds a day—on Saturdays thousands.”<sup>395</sup> When the museum announced that it would have to reduce access, many children petitioned to facilitate museum activities. Within a 1942 *New York Times* article, Anita Brenner caught the spirit of the children’s desire and assertion to assist: “ ‘If the reason,’ they argued, ‘is that there aren’t enough people to run the place, well, we’re people. Let us take it on.’ ”<sup>396</sup>

Seventy-five children, ranging from age eight to sixteen, submitted “junior docent” applications and worked with existing staff to operate the museum.

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<sup>395</sup> Anita Brenner, “A Museum Run for and by Children,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1942.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*

According to the Curator in Chief Jane Garrison, a pre-existing program of clubs and mentoring was expanded and regularized, and now the museum relied more extensively on the children: “the juniors have keys to the museum cases, they are in charge of the exhibit libraries, they run the lab, they clean the animals’ cages and feed and air collections, they make maps and mountings, they run the printing press, they shepherd and teach the smaller children.”<sup>397</sup>

Brenner argues that such authority was not new; these “children have been running the place for a long time.” Adult employees fostered independence and trust in the children assisting: “The adults connected with the museum do not behave at all like the teachers and supervisors children expect to find. They are seldom in evidence. When a child wants to know something, or wants something that is beyond the authority or capacity of a junior docent or any of the other children around to provide, some adult emerges from the background and then withdraws.”<sup>398</sup> What starts as an article tracing the involvement of children in yet another wartime exigency ends with an underlying message of pride and patriotism:

So, because in a democratic land the public ordinarily gets what it wants, this particular public does too, and what it wants is freedom to “do it myself.” It is perhaps a startling idea to adults brought up to believe that children need censors and propaganda and policing. But it seems to work.

Children of all sizes stroll cheerfully in and out of galleries and offices as they please, attach themselves to some working group if they like, request keys to some case that interests them, or spend the afternoon if they choose

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<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid.

playing with one stuffed bird or museum doll. Obviously, they are enjoying themselves very much, and in doing so accumulate an amazing amount of accurate information. They teach themselves and each other how to get and use tools and objects and facts, and in their own ways they keep order and reasonable quiet. To a visiting adult they are Exhibit A—an unforgettable exhibit of what democracy is, and a convincing contrast to the goose-stepped harried young of Fascist lands.<sup>399</sup>

The Brooklyn experiment was just that—a short-lived and unique experiment, but children have continued to volunteer in museum spaces in a variety of ways. As of yet, no comprehensive study has been written on the origins and history of junior docent programs in United States museums. While literature exists encouraging the involvement of youth in the museum process<sup>400</sup> or profiling successful programs,<sup>401</sup> the extension of authority to youth in museum spaces has yet to be studied by historians.<sup>402</sup> Of works that profile the participation of children, few

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<sup>399</sup> Ibid. Today, the junior docent program has been revamped and children now have the opportunity to become an “explainer” and join a museum team and assist with after-school programming: museum staff member, Brooklyn Children’s Museum, telephone interview with the author, November 12, 2013.

<sup>400</sup> See “Listening to the Future: The Perspective of Youth” found in the Center for the Future of Museums an initiative of the American Association of Museums, *Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums* (Washington DC: The AAM Press, 2010): 22-27; Deborah F. Schwartz, “Dude, Where’s My Museum? Inviting Teens to Transform Museums,” *Museum News* September/October 2005, available at <http://www.mercermuseum.org/assets/Education-Documents/Learn-and-Do/Dude-Wheres-My-Museum..pdf>; Jennifer Elizabeth Janes, “High School Volunteerism, Student Docents, and the Sacramento History Museum” (MA Thesis, California State University, Sacramento, 2011).

<sup>401</sup> Donna Kaiser Croft, “The Pint-Sized Preservationists of Drayton Hall,” *Sandlapper: The Magazine of South Carolina* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 2003): 16-19; Doris H. Platt, “Children Make History: The Wisconsin Junior Historian Program,” *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 42, no. 1 (Autumn 1958): 35-38.



report on the actual perspective of youth on such experiences,<sup>403</sup> and conclusions regarding a program's success are often pulled from observations and comments made by adults.<sup>404</sup> Indeed, the entire body of literature on the history of museum volunteerism is rather limited.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Few articles or dissertation exist that focus on junior docent programs, and those that do focus less on the history of such programming and moreso relay information on contemporary programs rather than situate such programs in a historical context. See Karen Hensel and Merryl Kafka, "Student Interpreters: Narrowing the Gap Between Visitor and Exhibit," *The Journal of Museum Education* 11, no. 3 (Summer 1986), 8-11; The majority of literature dealing with youth and historical interpretation (outside of that which concentrates on child museum visitors) focuses on children and living history opportunities: See Jamie A. Romine, "Where the West Stays Young: Child Re-Enactors in Contemporary Wild West Shows" (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2007); Megan Sanborn Jones, "Re(living) the Pioneer Past: Mormon Youth Handcart Trek Re-enactments," *Theatre Topics* 16, no. 2 (September 2006): 113-130; Oona Elizabeth Kersey Hatton, "Taking on History: Children's Perspectives on Performing the American Past" (PhD diss., Evanston, Illinois, 2010).

<sup>403</sup> See Schwartz, "Dude, Where's My Museum?"; Susan E. Striepe, "How Some Art Museums Appeal to Teenagers," *Journal of Museum Education* 38, no. 2 (July 2013): 207-217.

<sup>404</sup> For example, a 2003 article by Donna Kaiser Croft on the junior docent program at Drayton Hall includes pictures of children, observations about interpretive choices that children makes, as well as one quote by a child as to how he came to conclude that Drayton hall was vacant after the Civil War. What is not included within Croft's article; however, are quotes from children describing what the program means to them, or, how the program could better serve them. Croft quotes a twenty-year-old former National Trust Junior Docent as he recalls the programs hands-on training, and Croft integrates quotes from two different parents as they reflect on how the program has benefitted their respective children. See Donna Kaiser Croft, "The Pint-Sized Preservationists of Drayton Hall," *Sandlapper: The Magazine of South Carolina* 14, mo. 3 (Autumn 2003): 16-19.

<sup>405</sup> A comprehensive work devoted to the history of volunteers in United States museums remains to be published. The majority of works focused on museum volunteerism that I found are guides/handbooks focused on how to include volunteers in modern-day museum operations, dissertations produced out of education departments, or, works that concentrate on art museums. These works

Yet a significant number of museums involve children in the leading of tours and facilitating of public programming. Within California, a wide spectrum of junior docent opportunities exists, the most informal inviting youth to dress up on sporadic living history days to the most formal being structured programming that parallels an academic school year, requires training, and entrusts youth to lead a significant amount of tours in place of an adult docent over the course of many months. Of the programs I have studied, it appears that opportunities for youth to volunteer in museum spaces typically take one of four forms: child-to-child tours, child-to-general-public tours, living history tours, and teen councils.

Child-to-child tours entrust the touring of elementary students into the hands of their older peers. One of the earliest museums in the country to develop child-to-child tours is the Gamble House, located in Southern California. This museum has offered a junior docent program in collaboration with the Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD) since 1980, while the Pasadena Museum of History—the main case study of this chapter—has offered a similar program since 1987. Also in Los Angeles, the Autry National Center involves Arroyo Seco Museum Science Magnet School students as costumed youth who facilitate the Casa de Adobe Program for

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include, but are not limited to: Amanda C. Neill, “Museum Docents’ Understanding of Interpretation” (PhD diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2010); Emory L. Chenoweth, “Becoming Ambassadors of Informal Learning: Docents’ Development within a Museum Community of Practice” (PhD diss., Capella University, 2009); Katherine B. Giltinan, “The Early History of Docents in American Art Museums: 1890-1930,” *Museum History Journal* 1, no. 1 (January 2008): 103-128.; Ellen Hirzy, *Transforming Museum Volunteering: A Practical Guide for Engaging 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Volunteers* (Bloomington, IN: American Association for Museum Volunteers, 2007).

fourth graders in Highland Park. Within this program, students train at the beginning of the school year before touring younger students in the spring. The program strives to teach these children about the museum profession, overall, and invites them to propose exhibits and discuss those proposals, and their feasibility, with the education director.<sup>406</sup>

Child-to-general-audience tours appear less frequently but exist across the country. For example, visitors to the Frederick C. Robie House, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, in Chicago, Illinois, can participate in a Saturday afternoon tour led by trained fifth- to tenth-grade students on *The Wright 3 Mystery Tour*, a tour that invites visitors to see where events in a popular teen mystery story, *The Wright 3* written by Blue Balliett and illustrated by Brett Helquist, took place, and learn the architecture and history of the Robie house.<sup>407</sup> Like child-to-child tours, sometimes these opportunities merge with a living history application. For example, at Drayton Hall in Charleston, South Carolina, since 1988, students have been invited to participate in its junior docent program, a “collaboration between local students and a National Trust property.”<sup>408</sup> Here, sixth graders receive nine weeks of training in

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<sup>406</sup> Staff Member, telephone interview with the author, The Autry National Center, December 17, 2009.

<sup>407</sup> “The Wright 3 Mystery Tour,” Frank Lloyd Wright Trust webpage, accessed March 8, 2014, available at: <http://www.flwright.org/programs/wright3mysterytour>.

<sup>408</sup> Croft, 16.

architecture, archaeology, and history as they prepare to offer living history tours “for visitors from around the world.”<sup>409</sup>

Many living history opportunities are less tour-based and more special event or program driven. For example, at the Stagecoach Inn in Newbury Park, you can find a costumed youth, age eight to eighteen, in the kitchen to tell you more about the room when you arrive to that spot. The use of costumed children has a history of its own. For example, children have been part of the living history program at Colonial Williamsburg since at least 1941.<sup>410</sup> Likewise, The Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation invites students age eight to sixteen to train as a junior docent for special living history events.

Last, while some museums share authority with children by allowing them the freedom to relay information they have been trained in to the public, others involve children in the production and planning of museum priorities, content, and programming. In the 1980s, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, created the Walker Art Center Teen Arts Council (WACTAC), “a diverse group of 12 young artists and art enthusiasts who ensure that events for teens are part of the Walker’s overall program throughout the year.” These youth meet weekly and “identify opportunities in the Walker’s exhibition schedule for teens to connect with

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<sup>409</sup> Croft, 16.

<sup>410</sup> Ed Crews, “Junior Interpreters Enliven Historic Area,” *The Colonial Williamsburg Journal* (Winter 2001-2002) available at: [http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/winter01-02/jr\\_interpreters.cfm](http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/winter01-02/jr_interpreters.cfm).

contemporary art and artists.”<sup>411</sup> The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) also recognizes the importance of youth and their perspective. In a pursuit to “find better ways to engage with teenagers and understand their perspective” the OMCA truly involved youth in the co-production of the exhibition *Cool Remixed: Bay Area Art and Culture Now*. During the late 2000s, OMCA conducted focus groups, hosted teen exhibitions, involved teen-led demonstrations, and created a set time (known as Loud Hours) where “teenagers and other visitors could participate in a less-hushed Museum experience.”<sup>412</sup> Furthermore, staff took what they learned from working with youth in the creation of *Cool Remixed* and applied those lessons to the overall renovation of the Gallery of California Art.

Despite these successful examples, however, relatively few museums provide formal or structured opportunities for youth to participate as volunteers overall. While children are a majority audience for museums, in most institutions child perspectives are as underrepresented among the volunteer core as they are in exhibit content.<sup>413</sup> Within Jennifer Elizabeth Janes’ 2011 thesis project, she found that of the twenty-three Sacramento-area museums she surveyed, four (17 percent) offered a

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<sup>411</sup> “About Teen Programs,” Walker Art Center webpage, accessed March 14, 2014, available at <http://blogs.walkerart.org/teens/about-teen-programs/>.

<sup>412</sup> Barbara Henry and Kathleen McLean, editors, *How we visitors changed our museum: Transforming the Gallery of California Art and the Oakland museum of California* (Oakland Museum of California, 2010), 25-26.

<sup>413</sup> For example, at the Pasadena Museum of History for the year 2012, the junior docents comprised approximately 10 percent of the volunteer base.

teen-focused program and one museum was in the process of developing a program.<sup>414</sup>

At times, museums struggle to integrate children because of the skill set they require of volunteers. For example, as a twelve-year-old child in the 1960s, Maria Kwong (pictured in Figure 14) often visited one of the museums at Exposition Park in Los Angeles with her family, her parents being drawn to the free admission and safe environment that permitted Kwong to roam freely. A Shirley Temple doll collection at this museum especially captivated Kwong. She enjoyed looking at each case and studying the contents; visiting this collection inspired her to acquire books on antique dolls.

Kwong wrote a letter to the museum offering to volunteer and care for the collections. She received a letter from the Director of Exhibits,<sup>415</sup> and shared a digital copy of the letter, dated August 6, 1964, with me. Within the letter, the Director of Exhibits thanks Kwong for her “letter of June 22” and expresses appreciation for her writing as “it is interest such as yours that makes our job so rewarding.”<sup>416</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> See Jennifer Elizabeth Janes, “High School Volunteerism, Student Docents, and the Sacramento History Museum” (MA thesis project, California State University, Sacramento, 2011), 61. Within Janes’ thesis project, I could not find a date for when the survey was completed.

<sup>415</sup> Name has been withheld to ensure privacy.

<sup>416</sup> Letter to Maria Kwong, August 5, 1964, private collection of Maria Kwong. Name withheld out of respect for museum professional.



Figure 14: This photograph, taken with a Brownie Box camera, captures Maria Kwong's early love and interest in dolls. This photograph was taken of Maria and Dan Kwong by their mother Momo Nagano Kwong in Los Angeles, CA, circa 1957. Courtesy of Maria Kwong.

The next paragraph takes a turn in tone as the author delicately and regretfully addresses Kwong's desire to help: "Unfortunately," he writes, "we do not have an opening for any part time work such as you ask for. Not being a collecting museum in the true sense of the term, we do not have individual employees assigned to just one job, exclusive of all other work; every one functions in many capacities in the

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Museum. Your age and experience would limit your abilities to handle other tasks.”<sup>417</sup>

Despite the rejection, within our interview Kwong spoke positively of the letter she received, the experience in full, and the recommendations he made to her. Within the letter, the Director of Exhibits took the time to make, and number, three points that assumedly address what Kwong may have asked within her letter: the dust on the collection, the presence of dead bugs, and the poor condition of some of the dolls’ clothing. For each item, the Director of Exhibits acknowledged and agreed to the aesthetic problems Kwong noticed but also provided an explanation for how the poor conditions she perceives are either the result of better alternatives (dead bugs being better than alive bugs) or beyond the scope of the facility’s resources or capabilities (such as the patching of fragile textiles).

The letter ends with a recommendation to twelve-year-old Kwong, “If you are interested in such works,” he writes, “you might try to visit the costume department of the County Museum of Art and discuss how they handle such problems with them. The entire field of fabric and costume preservation and renovation is a most interesting profession.” Then, in a final one-sentence paragraph: “I might also suggest, if you haven’t already seen them, to try and visit the doll collection at Immaculate Heart College. It is fabulous.”<sup>418</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Letter to Maria Kwong, August 5, 1964.

<sup>418</sup> Letter to Maria Kwong, August 5, 1964.



This letter left a lasting impression on Kwong that was positive, encouraging, and meaningful. When I asked how she reacted at the time, she responded, “Well, I was happy to get an answer. I was disappointed, you know, that I was turned down, but I [...] sort of understood that I was turned down, but something prompted me to save the letter.”<sup>419</sup> While Kwong did not get to care for the Shirley Temple doll collection, she soon after became a toymaker at the age of thirteen, which led to a career in the arts, and eventually became a museum professional herself. Kwong has curated exhibitions, worked as a museum store director, and founded the Los Angeles Toy, Doll & Amusements Museum in 1999.

Even recently, third-grader Eli Navant gained widespread media attention when he applied for the position of chief curator of the Denver Museum of Nature & Science in the fall of 2012.<sup>420</sup> The museum accepted his handwritten application and a letter of recommendation (written by his elementary school teacher) and provided an opportunity for him to interview for the position. Navant’s application stressed a love of paleontology that his parents had encouraged since he was three, as well as

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<sup>419</sup> Maria Kwong, telephone interview with the author, October 21, 2013.

<sup>420</sup> See “Eli Navant, 9, is honorary chief curator for a day at Denver Museum,” *The Denver Post*, March 22, 2013, accessed October 13, 2013, available at [http://www.denverpost.com/ci\\_22853816/eli-navant-9-is-honorary-chief-curator-day](http://www.denverpost.com/ci_22853816/eli-navant-9-is-honorary-chief-curator-day).; “Museum interviews 9-year-old for head curator job,” 9news.com, November 28, 2012, accessed October 13, 2013, available at <http://www.9news.com/news/article/301826/188/Museum-interviews-9-year-old-for-head-curator-job>.; Steve Hartman, “Nine-year-old scientist plays curator for a day,” *CBS News*, March 29, 2013, accessed October 13, 2013, available at [www.cbsnews.com/8301-18563\\_162-57577086/nine-year-old-scientist-plays-curator-for-a-day/](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-18563_162-57577086/nine-year-old-scientist-plays-curator-for-a-day/).

his self-publication of a book on dinosaurs titled, “Step through the Eras.” Navant also cited how he had participated in “a few digs, some in my backyard and some on the South Table Mountain.”<sup>421</sup> While Navant did not get the job—he lost the position to Dr. Scott D. Sampson—he left a lasting impression on the hiring committee.<sup>422</sup> Navant impressed the committee to the point that they awarded him the “newly-created” position of honorary chief curator and invited him to spend the day with them.<sup>423</sup> Like Kwong, Navant was disappointed that he did not secure the position: “It was kinda sad that I didn’t get the job,” he relayed to *The Denver Post*, “But I’m young, and probably I need to stay in school a little bit longer.”<sup>424</sup>

While the kindness of each museum to take seriously the interest of Kwong and Navant warrants acknowledgment, the larger question of how and when museums invite youth to participate and extend authority to them warrants academic attention. This chapter chronicles one of the longest running junior docent programs

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<sup>421</sup> As quoted in the “Eli Navant, 9, is honorary chief curator for a day at Denver Museum,” *The Denver Post* .

<sup>422</sup> Dr. Scott Sampson brings experience from the Utah Museum of Natural History, University of Utah; American Museum of Natural History in New York City; as well as field work in Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Madagascar, Mexico, the United States, and Canada. See, “Bio,” Scott D. Sampson webpage, accessed October 13, 2013, available at [www.scottsampson.net](http://www.scottsampson.net).

<sup>423</sup> Hartman, *CBS News*, March 29, 2013; *The Denver Post*, March 22, 2013.

<sup>424</sup> *The Denver Post*, March 22, 2013.

in California—the Pasadena Museum of History (PMH) in Pasadena, CA—and brings the perspective of child participants to the forefront.<sup>425</sup>

Children’s history has long grappled with the issue of perspective and this critique can be extended to programs designed for children but implemented by adults. Take for example a 1991 documentary of the PMH Junior Docent Program produced by the Pasadena Unified School District [PUSD]’s telecommunications department, *KIDS TEACHING KIDS about History at the Pasadena Historical Society*. This twelve-minute documentary weaves excerpts of child-led tours with commentary and interviews by adult participants, such as the acting director of the Pasadena Historical Society, the Junior Docent Program Coordinator, a docent of the Pasadena Historical Society, a visiting teacher, and a parent of one of the junior docents. While children are shown in the video and clips of child-led tours are captured, no child is interviewed during the course of this documentary.<sup>426</sup>

Within this documentary, children’s perspectives are entirely mediated by adults, a critique I made in Chapter 2 regarding museum exhibition practice in

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<sup>425</sup> Throughout my research, I have been transparent with staff, volunteers, parents, and children about the nature of my involvement at this museum and my research with the children and adults is governed by professional standards for Human Subject [HS] research, as monitored by the HS Research protocols of the Office of Research, University of California, Santa Barbara. As necessary when working with children, I have renewed my research protocol, “Junior Docent Program Research” (Protocol Submission ID 10-552) on an annual basis since originally filing a protocol on September 22, 2010: HS Protocol Submission ID, 11-554, 9/22/2011; HS Protocol Submission ID 12-590, 8/17/2012; HS Protocol Submission ID 13-0534, 8/13/2013.

<sup>426</sup> *Kids Teaching Kids About History at the Pasadena Historical Society*, VHS, 12 minutes (Pasadena Unified School District, Telecommunications Department, 1991).

general. The role of children as stakeholders is overlooked; the ways in which children negotiate the potentially unfamiliar territory of museum etiquette and practice left unexplored. Adults film and edit the documentary; adults reflect on what this program means for the child participants.

Thus when I set out to study child-to-child tours in this institution I thought the most important contribution I might make would be to highlight the perspective, voices, and thoughts of children involved in the program.<sup>427</sup> I wanted to know how one particular group of children with unique attributes, challenges, and privileges viewed their role in the program, perceived the program itself and offered suggestions for change.

I chose to study the PMH due to its rich programs exploring children's history, dynamic child-centered programming, and its sense of responsibility to preserving and sharing all history related to the San Gabriel Valley.<sup>428</sup> This chapter is based on three years of participant observation with the PMH and more than 250

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<sup>427</sup> Allison James wrote an article arguing that the inclusion of children's voices into research does not eliminate many of the problems and issues researchers encounter when trying to represent child perspective. James writes of the importance of acknowledging the "cultural contexts of their production" when incorporating the voices of children into research. James also cautions researchers to not "typify an entire culture based on conversations with privileged informants" (263) and to be aware of how the researcher mediates, simplifies, and translates what is being said. See Allison James, "Challenges and Opportunities in the Anthropology of Childhoods: An Introduction to 'Children, Childhoods, and Childhood Studies,'" in *American Anthropologist* 109, issue 2 (2007): 241-246.

<sup>428</sup> For a justification of why I selected this particular junior docent program, please see Appendix E: Program Selection Justification.

hours of on-site participation.<sup>429</sup> Each year (from September to June) I attended training meetings, observed tours, attended graduations, and held exit interviews. In total, I held forty interviews with junior docents which represent 46 percent of the junior docents who participated in the program.<sup>430</sup> I am looking at all of the junior docent interviews as one body of evidence despite the range of time or the changing space of interpretation as their role and responsibility did not change over the course of the program.<sup>431</sup>

The PMH junior docent program benefits both elementary and middle school students in the Pasadena Community. PMH reaches out to all elementary schools

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<sup>429</sup> For a detailed account of my methods and approaches in collecting this data, and my compliance with the Office of Research, please see Appendix D: Participant Observation Methodology, and Appendix G: Voluntary Consent Forms.

<sup>430</sup> While I argue for the importance of junior docent perspectives in informing future museum policy and for the centrality of this sort of information to the museum's institutional history, I do not believe that these students can represent all child volunteers or represent any unified "children's voice." The junior docents I observed and interviewed are a special group, shaped by several unique identifiers, including their standing as GATE students. The problem of adult mediation remains as well: I select which quotes speak best to communicate the themes and trends that emerged in my research. But my study goes further than most in demonstrating the value of speaking with these young people.

<sup>431</sup> While critiques of the program made by junior docents during the exit interviews I held changed over the three years in relation to the space they were interpreting—as the junior docent program had to accommodate the mansion's renovation—their overall assessment of the program, structure, and content remained similar enough to compare. As these interviews represent less than half of participating junior docents and each year's participants interpreted a different space, or combination of spaces, at the museum, I have set a confidence interval. For my study, when 25% or less of the interviewees site a particular issue I consider that a minority. When 75% or more site a particular issue I consider that a majority.

(both public and private) in the Pasadena community inviting third and fourth grade teachers to sign up their class to participate in either a tour of the mansion through the junior docent program, or, attend the *My Masterpieces* program. Within the junior docent program, local middle-school students, accompanied by an adult, give a tour to visiting school children on Wednesday and Friday mornings. On that tour, that lasts roughly one hour, middle-school students drawn from either local, private schools or the PUSD GATE program, teach the history of the Fenyes family in the larger context of early-twentieth-century Pasadena history.<sup>432</sup>

In the course of my involvement and interviews, I learned of the centrality of teaching, authority, and working with younger children to the junior docents' motivations for joining the program and their assessment of the program overall. As one volunteer, who has participated in the program as a senior docent since 2008, shared, "it's making a connection between students and the museum. In regard to the students, I think that it gives them an opportunity to be involved, it's not a professional level, but at a higher level than just visiting the museum. They're actually part of the museum in staffing and learning and teaching what the museum is about."<sup>433</sup> Based on my interviews, many children realized the important role they played in making tours more meaningful for audiences and prized the opportunity to

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<sup>432</sup> For a detailed account of how the tour content and route changed between 2010 and 2013 to accommodate the renovation schedule, please see Appendix F: Junior Docent Tour Description, 2010-2013.

<sup>433</sup> Name withheld, interview by the author, April 18, 2012, Pasadena Museum of History, Pasadena, California.

lead and be the teacher. A number complained when misbehaving youth or overbearing senior docents compromised their tours and disclosed methods they integrated in an attempt to make tours more meaningful.

Being listened to as a child in a museum space should not be underestimated. An exchange I had with a fifteen-year-old museum volunteer in Amador County illustrates this point. Having come off a guided tour during my July 2011 visit, I made my way into the gift shop and was helped by McCall who had been volunteering at the museum since she was eleven. Intrigued by both her personality and confidence, I made an effort to speak with her on my return visit on October 1, 2011. She told me how she started volunteering by way of a school opportunity and had stayed involved since, having given her first tour when she was twelve. Now a busy high school sophomore, she continued to give occasional tours but, as she told me, “No one really listens to me because I’m young.”<sup>434</sup>

The struggle of children to come across as knowledgeable or as authority figures in museum spaces is further illustrated in a scenario drawn from Croft’s study of the junior docent program at Drayton Hall. Within Croft’s profile, she included a story about a female visitor who, at first, “appeared perturbed she had bought a ticket for a tour led by qualified National Trust docents, and instead had to listen to a bunch of youngsters.” As the tour continued, her opinion changed as she shared with a

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<sup>434</sup> Conversation with anonymous junior docent, Amador County, October 1, 2011.

companion, “I’ve never seen children this age so knowledgeable and well-spoken.”<sup>435</sup>

Thus explains the appeal of programs that *do* result in children feeling knowledgeable, important, and needed. Within a promotional video for the Gadsby’s Tavern Museum’s junior docent program in Alexandria, Virginia, junior docent Kiernan’s enthusiasm to teach and lead reflects the unique opportunity afforded by many junior docent programs: “Now, I feel like I’m the teacher [*Kiernan places her hand on her chest*], and I get to tell everyone about what I have learned about.”

Karlee, another participant in the program, equated her favorite part of being a junior docent to teaching both adults and kids, “My favorite part of being a junior docent is that they let kids actually do this. It’s a great opportunity to learn about colonial culture... And kids get to teach adults!”<sup>436</sup> For Catharine, another participant, the ability to teach left her with a feeling of responsibility, “I like feeling responsible, and I like feeling like I’m the one who’s teaching someone - I know this!”<sup>437</sup>

My interviews with junior docents suggest that students don’t want to simply share authority in museum spaces; they look forward to the challenge of exerting authority. This came through several interviews, but it also manifested in their

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<sup>435</sup> Croft, 19.

<sup>436</sup> “Junior Docent Program at Gadsby’s Tavern Museum,” YouTube video, 3:10, created by Catharine Addington (summer intern at Gadsby’s Tavern Museum) and posted by “gadsbystavernmuseum1,” October 11, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zenvnoOC9uU> (accessed 2 February 2014).

<sup>437</sup> Ibid.



actions. For example, I noticed how students sometimes would touch objects that they had been given instructions not to touch. While junior docents were allowed to handle certain hats on display in the foyer, they were instructed not to let the children try them on. Not all junior docents abided by the instruction they received. When I asked Melanie to expand on how she incorporated role-playing into her tour, an experiential learning element she initiated on her own, she opened up about the liberties she took when it came to taking charge during her tours: “They used the corset, and they used the clothespin and then in technology I let them use the vacuum and the clothesline—that thing whatever it's called [a clothespin]—and the calling cards, the parasols, and the hats.”<sup>438</sup>

When I followed-up by asking Melanie, “how did you bring in role playing with the parasols and the hats,” she admitted that by doing so she went against museum policy:

I would let them try them on and open them [*Melanie laughs*]. Um, Mr. Mac said “be really careful and don't let them use it,” but, I still kind of did it [*laugh*], and I would let them try it, just because, it was supervised so it wasn't as bad, but I think it's just interesting for them to try it on and say, “oh, look, she wore this hat or she wore a hat like this,” and “oh, they open this kind of parasol,” and “this is what a parasol is.” So, um, that's where I used it.<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>438</sup> Melanie [pseud.], interview, June 14, 2012.

<sup>439</sup> Melanie [pseud.], interview. At times, critiques that a lack of hands-on opportunities exist also extended to junior docent training. Kiley, who volunteered after the mansion had been reopened after its renovation, criticized junior docent training as “It wasn't much of us doing stuff. It was mostly being lecture[d] and I, for me at least, I find it kind of hard to learn that way.” Kiley [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 28, 2013.

These interviews provide not only a glimpse into the inner workings of power sharing in one California museum, but they attest to the strength of this program and the importance of programs such as this. The benefits of this program are far reaching. For one student, the exposure to public speaking in an unfamiliar setting left her feeling less inhibited to try new things. For many, the experience in this program shaped how they saw other museums as they gained empathy for other docents, or, felt more confident to attend other museums. Confidence, experience, and good memories are all measurable outcomes mentioned during my interviews.

This chapter now turns to a brief introduction to my case study site. First, I situate the Fenyes mansion, operated by the Pasadena Museum of History [PMH], in the broader literature on US historic house museums. Next, I discuss the physical and historical context of the PMH and the family whose history it presents. After introducing the origins of the junior docent program and its history, I then turn to my analysis of the motivations, learning outcomes, and critiques of junior docents regarding this program.<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> This chapter is an exercise in collecting the historical experiences of children and building up an institution's record of child participation and voices. If a serious study of child-driven programs is to be written, museums need to begin collecting the perspectives of participants now as such archives rarely exist. I will be donating forty junior docent interview transcripts to the PMH so that they can start a historical collection on this program, its meaning, and the perspective of its participants.

## **The Pasadena Museum of History**

While today the PMH includes gallery, office, library, archive, collection, and meeting space, the origins of the PMH date back to the founding of the Pasadena Historical Society (PHS) in 1924. Pasadena residents organized the PHS “as a result of the tremendous interest in the historical display of old photographs of early Pasadena days being shown at Carmelita Gardens by the Pasadena 1924 committee of the Chamber of Commerce and Civic Association.”<sup>441</sup> The initial motivation behind the historic display of 1924 grew out of the City’s efforts to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Indiana Colony’s arrival from the Midwest and subsequent subdivision of land which later became present-day Pasadena.

The PHS was formally instituted in September 1924 and officially organized in January of 1925.<sup>442</sup> The PHS did not find a permanent home until 1970 when Leonora Curtin Paloheimo, her husband Y.A. Paloheimo, and their children donated the contents of the Fenyes mansion and set up a long-term lease of the 10,162 square-foot mansion, known as the Fenyes Mansion, and gardens to the PHS, now the Pasadena Museum of History.<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> “Pictures of Old Days are Sought; Formation of Historical Society May Result from Exhibition,” *Pasadena Star-News*, July 9, 1924.

<sup>442</sup> “Launch City Historical Society: Pioneers Take Formal Action, Establishing New Civic Body, Many Citizens Show Interest, Nomination Committee is Appointed to Submit Recommendations,” *Pasadena Star-News*, September 10, 1924; “New Society Officially Organized,” *Pasadena Star-News*, January 28, 1925.

The Fenyes Mansion fits in the broader context of historic house museum. The movement to save historic houses grew out of Ann Pamela Cunningham's 1850s crusade to save the home of George Washington— Mount Vernon. While there appears no consensus, or knowledge, of the number of historic homes that dot the nation, the last figure to be published confidently was 8,000 in 1999, although a number of more recent publications have listed the number at six thousand.

Comparing those figures to the twenty historic homes Laurence Vail Coleman, president of the American Association of Museums from 1927 to 1958, attributes to the 1890s suggests an amazing level of growth throughout the twentieth century. According to Coleman, by 1910 there were nearly one hundred historic house museums open to the public and more than four hundred by the 1930s at the time he wrote his book. He attributed this growth, in part, to the rise of the automobile.<sup>444</sup> A boom occurred between World War II and the year 2000 in the development of historic house museums with an average of one house museum opening every three days in the United States.<sup>445</sup> Since 1960 alone, Patrick H. Butler contends, 6,000 historic house museums opened.<sup>446</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> PHS became the Pasadena Historical Museum in 1994. In 2002 the name was changed a second time, this time to the Pasadena Museum of History.

<sup>444</sup> Laurence Vail Coleman, *Historic House Museums* (Washington, DC: The American Association of Museums, 1933), 18.

<sup>445</sup> Patrick H. Butler, III, "Past, Present, and Future: The Place of the House Museum in the Museum Community," In *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, edited by Jessica Foy Donnelly, 28-29 (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2002).

<sup>446</sup> Butler, 18.

While authenticity, sense of place, and realism draw visitors to house museums, relevance in an ever changing and diversifying society remains a challenge. The sheer abundance of house museums that now dot the country and their often similar method of use (the house tour) and limited resources in terms of funding and staff, which impact the ability to do more, questions the sustainability and relevance of such museums. In 2012 *The Washington Post* reported on the unnerving pattern of dropping attendance to house museums.<sup>447</sup> As house museums struggle in a climate of disinterest, competition, and economic insecurity, some have reconsidered if the house tour is the best method by which to preserve a historic house, or, if historic houses would be better used in the private realm or as community centers. Despite dropping attendance and challenges, many house museum staff members continue to adapt and create innovative and diverse programming to meet the demands of the local community.

Within Pasadena, the Fenyes Mansion and the PMH is valued as a community treasure as the PMH provides free school tours of the mansion, participates in community cultural exchanges such as ArtNight Pasadena—a free evening of art, music, entertainment, and museums— and hosts the annual city birthday party. A tour of the Fenyes Mansion transports visitors back to the early

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<sup>447</sup> For example, at Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello, that Virginia site received 671,000 visitors in 1976 but only 440,000 in 2011; 80,000 people visited the birthplace of General Robert E. Lee in 1976, while 51,000 visited in 1991 and only 27,000 twenty years later in 2011. See J. Freedom du Lac, “Struggling to attract visitors, historic houses may face day of reckoning,” *The Washington Post*, December 22, 2012.

twentieth century as the majority of the objects on display are original furnishings and objects purchased by the family.<sup>448</sup> As Orrin Fox, president of PHS at the time the mansion was gifted, recalled, “It was just as though they walked out and said, ‘This is yours.’”<sup>449</sup> Furthermore, the PMH also looks to additional ways to use the mansion to bring in additional income to support the museum. At present, portions of the basement are rented to the St. Monica School and the Junior Chamber of Commerce.

The mansion itself radiates architectural significance. Built in 1906 with a 1911 addition, the Fenyes mansion has been described by architectural historian Dr. Robert Winter as “an Italian villa with rounded windows and balustrades...more than a hint of the Classical Revival around the front door and a decidedly French feeling to the whole.”<sup>450</sup> The Fenyes Mansion is a physical reminder of Pasadena’s early-twentieth-century affluence. As a 1986 *La Times* article states, “The Fenyes mansion is one of only a handful that survived the progress and economics that caused the obliteration of dozens of elegant homes that once lined Orange Grove Boulevard.”<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> As Mary Barber wrote in a 1986 *Los Angeles Times* article, ““It has all the original family furniture, including rare European antiques and some early American paintings of inestimable value. The last family member to live there turned it over to the Pasadena Historical Society in 1970, with dishes still in the cupboards, linens in the closets and plants in the solarium,” see Mary Barber, “The grand mansion on Millionaire’s Row is still rich in memories,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 16, 1986.

<sup>449</sup> Bert Mann, “Beauty Beats Bulldozer; Mansion Saved,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 29, 1971.

<sup>450</sup> As quoted in junior docent manual, 2013, section 4, pg. 26.

Due to the proximity of Los Angeles, the PMH is less than ten miles from several major museums, including but not limited to, The Autry National Center and the Huntington Library and Gardens. In Pasadena alone, the museum is situated within a 2-mile radius that is populated with several, prominent museums: the Gamble House to the north; the Norton Simon to the South; Kidspace Children's Museum to the northwest; the Pacific Asia Museum to the east; and the Pasadena Museum of California Art to the east.<sup>452</sup>

The museum complex consists of multiple buildings and approximately 2.1-acres of land.<sup>453</sup> Buildings on this property include the 18-room, Beaux Artes-style mansion built in 1906, a French-style house built in 1915, the Finnish Folk Art Museum, and the two-level Pasadena History Center which was completed in its entirety by 2000. The addition of this history center has allowed the museum to tell broader stories, better protect its collection, and support outside researchers.

The PMH offers regular hours and programming, and, in 2012, accommodated approximately 20,000 visitors. That year, museum membership came to

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<sup>451</sup> Bert Mann, "Beauty Beats Bulldozer"; Other mansions that still stand include the Wrigley Mansion (closed to the public and used as headquarters for the Pasadena Tournament of Roses), the Bissell House (operated as a bed and breakfast), and the Gamble House (open as a house museum).

<sup>453</sup> According to the PMH's 2012 annual report, the museum's total revenue and support equaled \$925,119, *Pasadena Museum of History 2012 Annual Report*, 8. Based on a CAM survey of 140 California museums, approximately half of California's museums (49.6 %) have an annual operating budget that is less than \$500,000; approximately a quarter of museums (25.2%) have an annual operating budget between \$500,001 and \$2 million, and another quarter (25.2 percent) have an annual operating budget that exceeds \$2 million. See "Budget Size," *2012 California*

approximately 1,200. A staff of approximately 15 (including part time, full time, and contractors) facilitate each of these programs with the help and contribution of 293 volunteers who gave close to 10,000 hours of service in 2012.<sup>454</sup>

As previously outlined, the PMH strives to connect with the local community by offering free school tours, providing free admissions to local residents on Wednesday afternoons, hosting the annual Pasadena City birthday party, and installing exhibits that capture and reflect the diversity of Pasadena's past.

During the house tour, visitors learn of the prominent Fenyes-Cutrin-Paloheimo family who made contributions to the fields of art, science, linguistics, and cultural studies. Within the 1991 documentary, Acting Director of the Pasadena Historical Society, Sue Scheter, acknowledged how she hoped such a privileged story would resonate with their diverse visitors:

We want to get more docents and more junior docents involved, and we hope after we build our history center that this is going to be a great opportunity to bring more young people in on the program and more school tours here. And by children of different cultures coming here they can begin to see how other people live and it broadens their life and hopefully it will give them a quality and a view, if you will, a vision, open a window, to where they might want to be at some point; not that everybody would want to live in a fancy house, or, but it gives understanding and I think once there's understanding then there's a better feeling of cooperation and working together.<sup>455</sup>

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*Museums Financial and Salary Survey: A Report from the California Association of Museums.*

<sup>454</sup> *Pasadena Museum of History 2012 Annual Report*, 5.

<sup>455</sup> *Kids Teaching Kids About History at the Pasadena Historical Society*, VHS.



Many of the children I observed are indeed filled with awe as they tour through the Fenyes Mansion. The same awe-inspiring qualities, however, make the family less relatable to certain children. For example, when I asked Logan, an African American junior docent, “From your observations of the tours, did you feel like the kids were able to relate to the Fenyes family?” he responded, “No,” and explained:

It seemed like they admired the wealth that they had and admired that these people actually lived this way. I don’t think that they, like, actually would relate to it. We docented a lot of, like, different schools and a lot of them weren’t really in the higher class. We had a lot of public school kids and a lot of public school kids aren’t really in the higher class, so, they wouldn’t be able to really relate to Fenyes family.<sup>456</sup>

The history of the Fenyes family is female-centered story of wealth and privilege, a story that some visitors may struggle to relate to, while others find it alluring and engaging.<sup>457</sup> Often, school-tour interpreters invite children to consider the wealth of the Fenyeses and ask: If I had a lot of money, how would I spend it?

The Fenyes family pioneered advancements in their respective specialties, and, collectively, impress with their devotion to service. The family’s diverse interests and passions are often used as a hook by the education coordinator to engage visiting schoolchildren. When elementary students visit the house, they are often divided into four groups and each group is given one of the following names: the artists, the musicians, the scientists, the entertainers, the inventors, or the world

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<sup>456</sup> Logan [pseud], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 27, 2013.

<sup>457</sup> Due to this chapter speaking on the history of one family, I often use first names rather than surnames when speaking about individual members of the family.

travelers. The children are told that the four generations “were all of those things; they loved to do all of those different things.”<sup>458</sup> Next, Brad Macneil, the education coordinator, often asks the visiting schoolchildren the following questions to demonstrate a similarity between the somewhat intimidating Fenyes family and the children that visit:

How many of you are artists? Raise your hand, if you like to draw, you like to paint, you like to collect, you like to look. Okay. How many of you like to travel and go to different, far off places? Okay. How many of you like music? You like to play instruments, like to listen to music? And who am I missing? The scientists. How many of you like to invent? Come up with new inventions that help mankind.<sup>459</sup>

Put in these terms, the lives of the Fenyes family members become less foreign and perhaps somewhat familiar. Still, the ethnicity and class of the Fenyes family does not reflect current Pasadena demographics. According to the 2010 Census, the population of Pasadena is 137,122. The City’s population in 2010 was more diverse than the nation at large with the four most predominant ethnicities being: white (55.8 percent), Latino (33 percent), African American (13.4 percent), and Asian (12.7 percent). The median household income in 2011 was \$72,265 (having been \$46,012

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<sup>458</sup> Tour introduction by Brad Macneil, field notes, PMH, February 15, 2012, in author’s collection. Group names that day were: the artists, the world travelers, the inventors, and the entertainers.

<sup>459</sup> Field notes, PMH, January 25, 2012, in author’s collection.

in 2000) which is approximately \$15,000 higher than California as a whole (\$57,287).<sup>460</sup>

As eighth grader, Theo, of Filipino descent expressed, “It was kind of hard to relate to the family because their story is much more different than mine, so it was hard for me to really grasp them.”<sup>461</sup> Samuel, a private-school student who had recently graduated from the eighth grade, shared that he was more interested in the husband, Dr. Adalbert Fenyes, than the wife Eva as “from what I learned, [she] seemed more like the stereotypical, snooty upperclassmen.”<sup>462</sup> Samuel felt the husband, Dr. Adalberg Fenyes, “seemed like he was, you know, the least pretentious” and he also admired Fenyes’ study of the nervous system, knowledge of thirteen languages, and his interest in beetles.<sup>463</sup> When I asked Samuel what he meant by saying that Dr. Fenyes seemed the least pretentious, he explained, “He seemed, like, the most well-educated, and he didn’t seem like he had to hide behind money or fancy things. I guess he did technically hide a little behind his Hungarian

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<sup>460</sup> “Pasadena Facts,” The City of Pasadena, accessed March 1, 2014, available at [http://www.cityofpasadena.net/Pasadena\\_Facts\\_and\\_Statistics/](http://www.cityofpasadena.net/Pasadena_Facts_and_Statistics/).

<sup>461</sup> Theo [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 2, 2012.

<sup>462</sup> Samuel [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 20, 2012.

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.

royalty, um, but, from what I made him up to be in my mind, he seemed like the least pretentious.”<sup>464</sup>

Historians might characterize Eva Scott Fenyes as a “New Woman,” a term used to describe US women in the 1880s and 1890s who took advantage of the increased occupational, educational, and legal opportunities, embraced economic and social independence, and rejected Victorian societal norms.<sup>465</sup> Eva married later than typical (marrying for the first time at twenty-nine to a Marine Lieutenant), and filed for divorce eleven years later. A New York heiress, world traveler, shrewd businesswoman, artist, collector, musician, and “social leader,” Eva lived a life that offers a remarkable lens through which to study Pasadena in the early twentieth century.<sup>466</sup>

Eva’s influential role in the Pasadena art scene of that time, and the broader context of women’s history in the southwest, warrants more academic attention than she has yet to receive and cannot be done justice in this brief historical context. But

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<sup>464</sup> Samuel [pseud.], interview, June 20, 2012.

<sup>465</sup> Lorelee MacPike, “The New Woman, Childbearing, and the Reconstruction of Gender, 1880-1900,” *National Women’s Studies Association Journal* 1, no. 3 (Spring 1989): 368-372; Gail Collins, *America’s Women: 400 Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines* (New York: Perennial, 2003): 255-256, 294-5; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1985), 176; Ellen Wiley Todd, *The “New Woman” Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

<sup>466</sup> “Drawings of Adobes to be Seen,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 24, 1931.

a cursory introduction to her story is important because it is central to the current interpretive scheme that junior docents absorb and, sometimes, challenge.<sup>467</sup>

Born into a family of wealth and privilege, Eva's childhood and adulthood was filled with multiple opportunities for training, travel, and personal growth. After graduating from Pelham Priory School—a school that catered to the female youth of New York's elite— at the age of eighteen, she embarked on a four-year tour throughout Europe, Egypt, and the Mediterranean. Eva exhibited artistic talent early on in her childhood and commenced formal training during her teenage years. While on the grand tour with her parents, Eva received training from artist Stanford Gifford during their trip down the Nile River.<sup>468</sup>

Eva continued to study art throughout her life in various contexts, such as New York, Italy, and Egypt. Even after her divorce, travel continued to be a part of Eva's life, and while traveling and studying art in Cairo, Egypt, she met Dr. Adalbert Fenyes in 1896. Fourteen years younger than Eva, Adalbert's interests included linguistics, art, and music. A neurologist, his scientific interests extended to entomology and orionthology. Adalbert "gathered specimens of beetles throughout

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<sup>467</sup> Eva Scott Fenyes is mentioned in the following academic works: Virginia Scharff and Carolyn Brucken, *Home Lands: How Women Made the West* (Los Angeles: Autry National Center of the American West, 2010), 28-33 and Jasper G. Schad, "'A City of Picture Buyers': Art, Identity, and Aspiration in Los Angeles and Southern California, 1891-1914," *Southern California Quarterly* 92, no. 1 (Spring 2010), 19-50.

<sup>468</sup> Kathleen Thorne-Thomsen, *Painting the Beautiful: Learning about Art & Landscape Paintings at the Pasadena Museum of History* (Pasadena, CA: Pasadena Museum of History, 2007), 44

the United States, Mexico, Canada, and Egypt,” wrote on the subject, and kept an insectarium on the grounds of the Fenyes estate. His intrigue with insects was more than a hobby; it warranted mention on several accounts.<sup>469</sup>

The Fenyesses married in 1897 and moved to Pasadena; Eva was forty-eight and Adalbert, thirty-four. On their return to the states, they picked up Eva’s daughter Leonora who was at a European boarding school and enrolled her in a Pasadena school. In a matter of months they hired the architectural firm of Dennis & Farrell to construct a thirty-two-room Moorish-Revival villa. Just three years later, Eva purchased the property that her 1906 Beaux Artes-style mansion would eventually sit on. For the remainder of her life, Eva split her time between Santa Fe (New Mexico), Carpinteria (California), Pasadena (California), and traveling the world. It was after her move to Pasadena, however, that her art collection truly began.<sup>470</sup> According to Jasper G. Schad, Eva “filled her home by about 1910,” and purchased little after that date.<sup>471</sup>

Eva involved herself in the local community and used her wealth and connections to support up-and-coming artists through hosting routine salons at which “guests could meet artists, view selections of their work, and perhaps purchase

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<sup>469</sup> On July 13, 1904, the *Los Angeles Times* reported in its “Social Notes” section that the Fenyesses had returned from a 6-week trip to Northern California bringing “a hundred new Specimens to add to his collection of beetles, a collection which was already one of the finest, if not the finest, in this country. Several of these specimens are entirely new to science.” *Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 1904.

<sup>470</sup> Schad, 33.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid.

canvases.”<sup>472</sup> In addition to supporting other artists, Eva continued with her own lessons, practiced her craft, and although she never sold her art, used her talent to help preserve the California landscape.<sup>473</sup>

Eva’s love of the southwest, historic preservation, art, and travel continued to be important components to her daughter Leonora’s life. Widowed at the age of thirty-two, Leonora Muse Curtin moved back to Pasadena with her young daughter Leonora the second, or, Babsie. By 1915 her mother and step-father built a house for Leonora and Babsie adjacent to the Fenyes mansion and on the same property. To date, the building is used to house the caretaker of the mansion, as well as provide additional meeting space.<sup>474</sup>

Never remarrying, Leonora spent the rest of her life traveling with her daughter, studying “the evolution of the Spanish language as it traveled from Spain to Mexico to Native America,” researching and writing on the topic of ethnobotany,

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<sup>472</sup> Ibid.

<sup>473</sup> In response to a “suggestion” made by anthropologist, Dr. Charles F. Lummis, Eva traveled throughout California over the course of thirty years, by various modes of transportation as technology developed, and painted more than three hundred “historic buildings of California.” Eva gave these paintings to the Southwest Museum after her death, and two hundred of the water-color drawings were exhibited in 1931. See, “Woman Painter’s Memory Honored: Drawings of Adobes to be Seen: Museum Today Will Have Exhibition of Sketches by Mrs. Eva Fenyes,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 24, 1931; Hodge, F.W., foreword to *Thirty-two Adobe Houses of Old California*, descriptive text by Isabel López de Fages and watercolors by Eva Scott Fenyes (Los Angeles: Southwest Museum, 1950), np.

<sup>474</sup> Junior Docent Manual, Pasadena Museum of History, 2013, 17-19.

and studying cultures of the Southwest.<sup>475</sup> Like her mother, Leonora exhibited a love for preservation and in 1931 she and Babsie purchased a substantial amount of acreage south of Santa Fe, New Mexico. In time, Babsie and her future husband Y.A. Paloheimo would restore existing historic buildings and build additional replicas and open the site as a living history museum—El Rancho de las Golondrinas—to the public in 1971.<sup>476</sup>

Leonora's daughter Babsie made "linguistics her career," working as a linguistic researcher at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC. While in Washington, she received an invitation to attend a dinner party that resulted in her meeting Y.A. Paloheimo, a native of Finland who made a career in diplomacy. They married in 1946 and moved into the Fenyes Mansion. Between 1949 and 1951 they adopted four Finnish orphans and soon a fourth generation came to be living at the Fenyes Mansion. On January 22, 1948, Y.A. Paloheimo became the Finnish consul-general and the Fenyes Mansion the Finnish Consulate for Southern California, Arizona, and New Mexico.<sup>477</sup> Discussions on donating the collections and use of the mansion to the Pasadena Historical Society commenced in 1965, but it would take five years until the long-term lease agreement was finalized.<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>475</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>476</sup> "About Us," El Rancho de Las Golondrinas, accessed October 11, 2013, available at [golondrinas.org/museum\\_info/about\\_us/index.html](http://golondrinas.org/museum_info/about_us/index.html).

<sup>477</sup> Mann, "Beauty Beats Bulldozer"; "Finnish Consul Opens Offices," *Los Angeles Times*, January 23, 1948.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.



For approximately sixty years, the Fenyes Mansion supported and promoted the study and celebration of the arts and sciences, welcoming revered guests such as Albert Einstein, Jean Sibelius, Herbert Hoover, and Eleanor Roosevelt.<sup>479</sup> Since becoming a museum, the mansion has continued to foster an appreciation for historic preservation, culture, and art for residents of not only Pasadena, but the San Gabriel Valley and the greater Los Angeles area.

### **History of Junior Docent Program**

The Junior Docent Program was started at the PMH as a “collaborative project between the Museum and Pasadena public and private schools.”<sup>480</sup> As described by the Junior Docent Training Manual, “It was designed to provide a peer-teaching experience for exceptional students in the seventh and eighth grades and to fulfill social studies standards that are mandated by the state.”<sup>481</sup>

Seven years prior, in 1980, Randell L. Makinson, curator for the Gamble House, began a junior docent program based on a model he encountered while visiting the Frank Lloyd Wright House in Oak Park, Illinois. A 1988 *Los Angeles Times* article credits the staff at the Wright House in Oak Park with originating “child-to-child” tours. At the time of the article, the educational director of that museum was quoted

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<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

<sup>480</sup> Junior Docent Program Manual, Pasadena Museum of History, September 2013, Unit 1, Page 6.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

as being aware of only one program, outside of those in Pasadena and Oak Park, that utilized child-to-child tours.<sup>482</sup>

When Makinson set up a junior docent program at The Gamble House in 1980, PUSD teacher and GATE program coordinator Germaine Potter volunteered to help. Eight years into the junior docent program at The Gamble House, three hundred junior docents had been trained and one thousand children had been toured through the historic house.<sup>483</sup> In 1987, Potter proceeded to set up a program at the PMH and invited retired teacher Pat Hamerle to spearhead the development of the program.

Hamerle had recently retired from teaching school for thirty-three years in the Los Angeles School District. After retiring and looking to fill her new-found free time, Hamerle browsed newspaper advertisements and came across several listings of museums, including the PMH, that were looking for help. Hamerle took the docent training, loved it, and soon after getting involved met Germaine Potter. Potter and Hamerle worked together to develop the junior docent program, with Potter in charge of recruitment and Hamerle taking the lead in developing training. For Hamerle, the junior docent program filled the void retirement from teaching had left; the junior docent program is indebted to Hamerle for the passion and commitment she brought to the program's founding and early origins.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> Berkley Hudson, "Tour Guides Start Young at Historic Gamble House," *Los Angeles Times*, March 23, 1988.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid.

<sup>484</sup> Pat Hamerle, interview with the author, private residence, March 8, 2012. I am grateful to Pat Hamerle who graciously spoke with me concerning her experience in

Over the course of the program's history, the program has continued its emphasis on teaching Fenyes family history, cultivating child-to-child teaching moments, and creating impacting programming for both the junior docent and visiting elementary school child. The junior docents continue to be taught "the history of the artifacts and how they reflect the lifestyle of the family" as well as "techniques for leading groups" and "instruction in public speaking."<sup>485</sup> While there have been some slight logistical, recruitment, pedagogical, and interpretive changes, the program has remained remarkably the same in its twenty-seven-year history.<sup>486</sup>

My participant observation of this program coincided with a time of logistical disruption as I arrived amidst a \$1.7 million, two-year renovation funded by the Paloheimo Foundation. This renovation resulted in the mansion being closed for the

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the PMH junior docent program and shared relevant documents with me from her personal collection.

<sup>485</sup> Dr. Brad Williams, Executive Director of the Pasadena Historical Society, as quoted in the Pasadena Museum of History, *The Pasadena Historical Society Junior Docent Program*, 9.5 minutes, 1988.

<sup>486</sup> Junior docent training has grown to being seven weeks in length (rather than six), with each training session being two hours in length rather than the ninety minutes referenced in the 1988 documentary. While training and implementation originally relied on all-volunteer support, Ardis Wilwerth joined the museum in 1996 with a full-time appointment, with half of her time delegated to the operation of all student and adult programs. In 2002, current education coordinator Brad Macneil took over the junior docent program. The GATE program has continued to facilitate the recruitment of students as well as coordinate all school tours to date. While children are encouraged to avoid t-shirts or shorts in their dress, some interviews suggest that the dress code has relaxed since the program's early beginnings.

first two years of my observation. Due to the renovation, the program I observed changed each year.<sup>487</sup>

During my three years of participant observation I have observed hour-long tours that, in adjusting with the mansion's renovation, have taken one of the three formats: junior docents rotating through two fifteen-minute gallery tours and two fifteen-minute hands-on educational segments; junior docents rotating through two fifteen-minute period-room tours and two fifteen-minute hands-on educational segments; and a junior docents giving a sixty-minute house tour that rotates through four areas of the house.<sup>488</sup> In all forms, junior docents taught the history of Pasadena, the Fenyes family, and Victorian lifestyles and largely dealt with the same objects to tell the story.

Regarding interpretation, there have been two primary changes over time. First, in the earliest years of the program, as reflected in junior docent homework dated October 11, 1989 and the 1991 documentary, the tour was structured around the granddaughter Babsie. Elementary school children visited the museum as Babsie's guest and brought a calling card they had made in class prior to visiting the museum. Second, since my arrival to the museum there has been an increased attention to the lives of servants and the integral role they played in facilitating the

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<sup>487</sup> See Appendix F: Junior Docent Tour Description, 2010 - 2013.

<sup>488</sup> At the beginning of the program I was able to observe a handful of sixty-minute gallery tours until the North Gallery closed in preparation for an upcoming temporary exhibition. The way in which tours changed over time during my participant observation is chronicled in detail in Appendix F.

Fenyés' lifestyle. By my third year in the program, an entire training lecture was devoted to the role of servants in the mansion and by the fourth year that lecture had developed into a power point presentation. Throughout the history of the program, however, servants have been discussed as even in the 1989 reading assignment junior docents learn about the role of servants in receiving calling cards.

Pedagogically, the program has relied on volunteer teachers since its beginning and since addition of a designated staff member in 1996 has continued to welcome, and need, the involvement of volunteers. As of fall 2013, junior docents typically meet for forty-five to sixty minutes in a conference room with lecture-style seating to go over reading assignments, hear lectures (often guest lectures) on local history and social history of the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, and learn public speaking skills. After this first segment, the entire class of junior docents heads to the mansion where they are either taught together or broken into groups to learn the tour route, the primary interpretive themes for each room, and the significance of the collections in each of the rooms. As the weeks progress, the junior docents are broken into smaller group sizes, depending on the number of senior docents available to train, and practice giving tours in their group. As is tradition, the final opportunity for junior docents to practice culminates in a "family day" where junior docents are required to tour members of their family through the mansion without adult volunteer supervision.

As argued in Chapter 3, both adult and child participants affect how this programs plays out yearly. For example, during my second year of involvement the

misbehavior of two particular students resulted in one senior docent stepping away from the program and compromised the ability of other students to learn in the face of distracting disruption. Likewise, the good questions of junior docents and their commitment to the program affects the pace of the program.

Likewise, adult docents affect the program. The changing body of adult volunteers who participate in this program and their individual historical interests, attention to detail, and concern for the accuracy influences the content that is taught, whether collectively during general training meetings or individually during tours. The natural turnover of volunteers—whether due to scheduling conflicts, lack of interest and/or commitment, or health issues—results in a level of variety from one year to the next as each adult docent comes with his or her own understanding of the mansion and the broader story of the Fenyes family.

Pedagogically, the program has become more interactive and hands-on. While I have noticed how the program has slowly increased the number of touch objects in its program each year, during my interviews with junior docents, a couple saw the need for the program to be more hands-on. For example, when I asked George, a private-school seventh grader—who had toured in both the gallery space and the recreated period rooms in the basement of the mansion—if there was anything about the tour that he would change, he responded:

There's things that I would like to be changed, but I'm not entirely sure how to change them. Like, as I said, it was a bit boring for both the kids and the docents. If it were, like, a bit more, interactive—because it's mostly just standing and looking at things and being told about them—because when they got to touch the carpets, for example, they really liked that and when we had the hats, they were all like, "ooh, can I try it on? I want to try it on." At

least the girls were with the hat and sometimes the boys were like, “yeah, I want to try on the top hat.” So I could tell that they liked it a lot more when they got to interact with things, not when they were just standing and looking at it.<sup>489</sup>

The merit, reputation, and selling power of this program may be its most consistent attribute. As one senior docent who became involved in the junior docent program in the early 2000s expressed, “Well, I guess having programs like this are really good for museums. I don't know much about that, but I do hear that it's very important when, whoever the powers at be or funds or whatever, when they do have programs like this, it's very important for a museum to have things like this.”<sup>490</sup> This senior docent's observation echoes a comment made by the then Acting Director of the Pasadena Historical Society, Sue Scheter, in the 1991 documentary referenced earlier: “This is good business for us because we can get to be known, and I've also found from my experience that if we can work with other groups it helps everyone if we're in a cooperative venture. And, our mission is to educate—is to preserve and to educate and to interpret—so it's a very natural partnership with the schools.”<sup>491</sup>

The programs collaborative nature is another strength recognized by participants. In 1991, docent Jane Armel explained the strength of the program's collaborative structure in the PUSD sponsored documentary: “it's a win situation for

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<sup>489</sup> George [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 8, 2012.

<sup>490</sup> Name withheld, interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, April 27, 2012.

<sup>491</sup> *Kids Teaching Kids About History*, VHS, 1991.

everybody. It's just so good for the students that participate. It's something for them to strive toward to do better so they could get into the program. It brings more people into the [Historical] society. It brings their parents in. I just think it's a terrific program, and I hope it continues."<sup>492</sup>

Historically, adults involved with this program have been well aware of the importance of junior docents to this program. For example, Schechter points to the junior docents as role models and that "history has a whole different perspective than it ever had before."<sup>493</sup> Potter argues that "the junior docents share a special outlook on history. There's a warmth and spontaneity about them that cannot be duplicated by adults."<sup>494</sup>

Through its history, the junior docent program has continued to strengthen and overcome the challenges it faces. District support, board support, finances, and the logistics of working with child volunteers (who are dependent on reliable parent drivers and the GATE office which coordinates the tours) are challenges that the PMH has weathered and managed. As I spoke with multiple senior docents or staff members about the strengths of this program, many pointed to the opportunity it affords junior docents to grow and develop. Others pointed to pivotal role it plays in reaching out to elementary schools in the PUSD and building the habit of museum going among a group of children "who," as one Senior Docent put it, "would

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<sup>492</sup> *Kids Teaching Kids about History*, VHS, 1991.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid.



probably not ever come to a museum, I mean, that's not in their background, that's not what their parents have time to do.”<sup>495</sup> Having provided a sense of the museum's purpose in the community and the merit of this program, I next turn to my analysis of junior docent opinions, perspectives, and thoughts on history, museums, and this program.

### **Observing Junior Docents – 2010 to 2013**

Of the eighty-seven youth who participated in the junior docent program between 2010 and 2013, seventy-seven (89 percent) participated within my study. Of the seventy-seven that participated in my study, forty junior docents (52 percent) participated in an exit interview. Although unintended, the balance of female and male interviewees and seventh and eighth grade interviewees was remarkably balanced: twenty of the participants were female and twenty of the participants were male; eighteen of the participants were seventh graders and twenty-two of the participants were eighth graders. Of those interviewed, thirty were public school students (75 percent) and ten were private school students (25 percent). This spread reflects the program overall. Between 2010 and 2013 of the eighty-seven students who signed up (including those who did not participate in my study), twenty-four were private students (28 percent) and sixty-three public students (72 percent).

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<sup>495</sup> Name withheld, interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, April 18, 2012.

Therefore, the students I interviewed were balanced in terms of gender and grade, and reflected the school typology reflective of the program as a whole.

During interviews I limited the personal data that I collected in order to protect children's privacy and ensure their comfort during the interview. I went into each interview aware of the child's gender, grade, and public or private school affiliation. I entered each interview less certain of each child's specific age (until Year 2 and 3 when I asked this more directly and consistently), socioeconomic class, and ethnicity.<sup>496</sup>

Within the PMH Junior docent program, students volunteer between twenty-five and thirty hours throughout the school year to training and touring. Not uncommonly, I saw students seek the signature of the education coordinator in order to claim hours spent in the program for the service hour requirement mandated by their schools. Of the forty junior docents I interviewed, twelve brought previous docent experience as they had participated in a similar program at the Gamble House the year prior. The

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<sup>496</sup> I indirectly collected information concerning ethnicity through asking children to tell me about any family history research they had done or relying on the program's first day ice breaker where each child picks a country important to his or her family history. Ethnic identity, especially in children, is complex, nuanced, and ever changing. The topic of class can be especially sensitive to children on each side of the spectrum. Out of a concern to be sensitive to the population I was interviewing, I chose not to ask children to define their race, class, or ethnicity. As I talked with Logan, I became grateful for being cautious. Ethnicity is a complicated category of analysis and can prove more difficult for some students to answer than others. When I asked Logan to reflect back to the ice breaker and tell me what place he had picked, he replied, "I think I picked Africa, but I don't know where, so I just put it on the name because we're African American so we're bound to come from some place over there, but I don't know where." See Logan [pseud.], interview by the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 27, 2013.

Gamble House remains the only museum-related volunteer experience that any of the students cited.

I learned that some of the students participated in other volunteer activities through sports, girl scouts, church, or the service club at their school. Of the twelve junior docents I asked about previous volunteer experience, seven answered in the affirmative. According to a 2005 *USA Weekend* Teens and Volunteering Survey, 44 percent of teens find volunteering highly rewarding and 30 percent of students in grades sixth through twelve volunteer more than 80 hours per year.<sup>497</sup> When I asked Robert, an eighth grade student who had volunteered the previous year at the Gamble House, how he would compare volunteering at the PMH to other places he responded:

It's kind of different here. I mean volunteering at other places, it's more of like working how you would in a job, but here, I don't know, it's just different because it doesn't feel like you're volunteering; it feels like you're just educating people. I don't know how to explain it, but it's just a really different experience and, in a way, I kind of like it better than regular volunteer work.<sup>498</sup>

Maya, one of the youngest of my interviewees at twelve-years-old, shared in Robert's sentiment when she compared her experience at the museum to volunteering at school or in the community, "Well, at the other times it's kind of more working and this one's kind of like you have to learn and then you kind of teach, so it's really

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<sup>497</sup> As cited in Ellen Hirzy, *Transforming Museum Volunteering: A Practical Guide for Engaging 21<sup>st</sup> Century Volunteers* (Bloomington, IN: American Association for Museum Volunteers, 2007), Kindle Edition.

<sup>498</sup> Robert [pseud.], interview, June 18, 2013.

different.” When I asked if she had a preference between the different volunteer experiences she had had, she responded, “Um, I’ve kind of enjoyed them both, just, kind of like seeing what it’s like for volunteering both ways.”<sup>499</sup>

Eighth-grader Logan, a black youth who valued the social element of school and playing basketball with his friends, told me how he had volunteered at homeless shelters and in the classroom. When I asked Logan to compare those experiences to his experience at the museum he said:

This one had a lot more training than the other one did and there was much more commitment that you had to make, but this one probably has more reward to it. The fact that, not only that you’re learning about it, but you’re also going to be able to put this on your, like, transcript so that colleges and high schools will look at you better.<sup>500</sup>

Twelve of the students I interviewed brought museum docenting experience with them as they had volunteered at the Gamble House the year prior. As I spoke with junior docents to compare their experience at the two sites, some referenced the integration of guest speakers, the size of groups during training, or the way in which senior docents operated in the program. For example, while a senior docent is assigned to each junior-docent led tour at the PMH, senior docents at the Gamble House stayed in stationary positions, such as in hallways, and allowed junior docents to tour rooms on their own. Robert, an eighth-grader with a love for skateboarding,

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<sup>499</sup> Maya [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 23 2013.

<sup>500</sup> Logan [pseud.], interview, June 27, 2013.

photography, cinematography, and sports, described the freedom he equated with the format at the Gamble House and its use of senior docents:

Basically you were on your own, so, I don't know it just felt more free and relaxed because you didn't have to worry about saying something wrong. Like, you don't want to say something wrong in the tour, but you don't have to always worry about that the senior docent thinking about what you're saying. The senior docents they were pretty much just there, like, in the hallways making sure kids wouldn't like touch a lot of stuff or anything like that.<sup>501</sup>

While Robert was one of the last students that I interviewed, by the time of our interview I had begun to realize a theme of authority had surfaced in my research. Many of children's positive comments tied back to the authority they had in the program while some of the negative comments linked to the taking away of that authority by either senior, adult docents or visiting schoolchildren. While only two of the forty junior docents mentioned that they wanted to gain leadership experience as part of their motivation for joining the program, several mentioned how much they enjoyed the leadership they gained through this program. I early on realized the importance of authority to the enjoyment and success of this program in the view of children.

## **Motivations**

So why did children join this program? During my exit interviews I learned that junior docents came to participate in the program through a variety of avenues

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<sup>501</sup> Robert [pseud.], interview, June 18, 2013.

with no one reason serving as the majority answer.<sup>502</sup> Despite a variety of answers being provided, and most junior docents providing several reasons behind their joining the program, I traced several themes that emerged.

A little over 20 percent of the junior docents referenced their participation in the junior docent program as a way to gain some type of credit or academic recognition, whether to satisfy required service hours or to beef up a college application. When I asked Larissa to expand on why she chose to participate she added, “Well, it looks good for a college, so [*Larissa Laughs*]. And, I don’t really play, like, an instrument or anything, so I’m trying to find other interests that would help me get in.”<sup>503</sup> Samuel spoke to how the program could benefit not only his current academic record but his future prospects, “I thought it would be a good experience, and it might look good on my report card, and if I get into the business on my resume.”<sup>504</sup>

Seven junior docents referenced the role their parents played in their decision to join the program. For both Daniel and Joseph, their parents made them join. For eighth-grader Joseph, his mom made him join despite his protest in the seventh

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<sup>502</sup> As these interviews represent less than half of participating junior docents and each year’s participants interpreted a different space, or combination of spaces, at the museum, I have set a confidence interval. For my study, when 75 percent or more site a particular issue, I consider that a majority. When 25 percent or fewer site a particular issue I consider that a minority.

<sup>503</sup> Larissa [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 17, 2011.

<sup>504</sup> Samuel [pseud.], interview with the author, June 20, 2012.

grade. When I asked why he wanted to join the junior docent program he clarified, “At first I didn’t, and then my mom [*laugh*] signed me up for it, and she was like, ‘You’re going to do this,’ and I was like, ‘Okay.’ But at first I didn’t, uh, I didn’t think I’d like it, but then once we started, and I found out that my friends are doing it I was like, ‘okay,’ and then I ended up liking it and then when the museum of history [PMH] came out I was like, ‘oh, this is going to be fun again.’” When I asked Joseph why he did not want to try the program initially, he responded, “I don’t know. I’m not a big person to do new things, and I didn’t know if I’d, uh, like giving tours to little kids.”<sup>505</sup>

Twenty-five percent of the junior docents were influenced to join the program because of previous experiences they had had with the PMH—whether having visited the museum previously as a child or having had an older sibling participate in the program—or because of prior experience as a junior docent at the Gamble House. For Abbi, her memory of visiting the museum as a fourth grader motivated her to join the program:

Well, in fourth grade when I first came we had a seventh grader give us a tour of the mansion, and it looked like a lot of fun, and the docent was telling us, “oh, you should get involved with it. You should do it when you get older.” So when they gave out a flyer in our envelopes, and I told my mom, “Mom I want to do it,” and she said, “Okay, sure, but why do you want to do it?” and I said, “Because I remember in fourth grade when we came and we got to do the mansion. It was a lot of fun.”<sup>506</sup>

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<sup>505</sup> Joseph [pseud.], interview with the author, May 28, 2013.

<sup>506</sup> Abbi [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 16, 2011.

Abbi was not the only junior docent to use her own childhood as a reference point for joining the program. For Grace, she alluded to her childhood and the role that mentorship played when she described why she joined the program:

I really like history, and I also like being able to give stuff to other kids. Because I remember being a kid and having people do really nice stuff for me, and it sort of makes me want to keep passing that gift on. I remember people teaching me stuff, and I remember one of my older cousin's reading with me, and now I have cousins who are really little, and so I want to read with them, because I want to keep passing that gift down, so it's the same thing with history. I want to keep passing the gift of history that I got from my tour guides down to these guys and then maybe some of them will become tour guides and keep passing it down.<sup>507</sup>

Grace's interest in history was a very common motivator for junior docents joining the program. Thirty-five percent of the junior docents I interviewed referred to their interest in history playing a part in their joining the program. As I looked through essays that Hamerle had invited junior docents to write as to why they joined the junior docent program and still held onto within her personal file, I came across additional examples expressing the role that a love for history played in junior docents joining the program. For example, thirteen-year-old Whitney wrote, "I live a bit of history everyday[...] I have a love of history that is odd for someone my age. I love the idea of being a docent; it thrills me to do something to help the public at my age. The things in the house are great and I can't wait to start touring."<sup>508</sup>

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<sup>507</sup> Grace [pseud.], interview, April 25, 2012.

<sup>508</sup> Name has been changed to ensure privacy. Letter held within the private collection of Pat Hamerle.



For Bruce, a public school eighth grader who participated during the second year of my research, he wanted to pass on his love of history to other students. Like Grace, he “wanted to show kids that learning about history can actually be fun.”<sup>509</sup> Where some students were drawn to the program because of their love of history or their desire to pass on history to other students, a number joined to learn history themselves. For example, George, a seventh-grade private student, joined the program as he “wanted to learn about Pasadena’s history because, I mean, I live here, I thought it might be interesting just to see, learn about the history.”<sup>510</sup>

About 30 percent of junior docents referenced the new opportunity the program provided and its appeal of appearing fun and interesting as a motivating factor for joining. While for some, like Joseph, the new experience proved intimidating, for others the opportunity drew them to the program. “I wanted to participate because I really don’t have any experience anywhere else,” Melissa explained.<sup>511</sup> Alexa, an eighth grader whose father was born in England and whose mother was born in Bolivia, also joined the program as it appeared new and interesting and would refine skills that she did not get to practice often:

I thought it would be interesting and, like, it would give me an experience to teach little kids and just to, like, be a leader at something and kind of speak in public because I [*laugh*] don’t really do that a lot. So, I liked how we got to

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<sup>509</sup> Bruce [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 13, 2012.

<sup>510</sup> George [pseud.], interview, May 8, 2012.

<sup>511</sup> Melissa [pseud.], interview, May 7, 2012.

teach younger kids about history, too, because that's something that fascinates me, so it was nice to do that.<sup>512</sup>

Skills Alexa referenced, such as teaching, developing leadership, or refining public speaking skills, were motivating factors for about 25 percent of the junior docents.

### **Exerting Authority, not just sharing**

When I asked children what they enjoyed most about being a junior docent or being a member of the junior docent program, 65 percent made a reference to teaching or sharing knowledge. Alexa who participated in my first year of study recognized the significance of child-driven education happening at the museum: “I enjoyed being able to teach the little kids, and I liked to know that they would learn it from somebody who's still a kid, but, you know, like it's not an adult, like, teachers are an adult, and then sometimes kids want to hear something from somebody who's still a kid and to learn something from somebody who's still in school like they are.”<sup>513</sup>

When I asked junior docents what they saw as their role and responsibility, the role of teaching and passing on information was most often referenced. While a number of children mentioned teaching or making sure “the kids learned something”

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<sup>512</sup> Alexa [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 23, 2011.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

within their interviews, ten of the students saw part of their role as providing a fun and engaging learning environment. Elizabeth described her role and responsibility as, “teaching the kids about the history of Pasadena in a way that will actually interest them and, well, stay with them hopefully.”<sup>514</sup> For Mariah she recognized the need not only to teach the students but to create a positive learning environment: “I think my role was to be, of course, formal and be a teacher to them but at the same time I had to make it fun and interactive for them because I realized early on that if you’re too stiff with them, they’re not going to, you know, cling onto the information as well. But, if you’re just too, you know, sort of flouncy with them they’re just not going to listen to you at all, so you kind of have to find that median to how you’re teaching them.”<sup>515</sup>

Just as the opportunity to teach drew children to the program and, for many, shaped the way they identified themselves in the program, the ability to educate others in a museum space proved a highly rewarding, and expected feature of the program among junior docents. “I get to control what I say,” Hunter expressed, “and then I get to, like, they’re learning from me. Like, you know, I learned from someone else, but then they learn from me. There’s not someone there holding my hand to hold their hand.”<sup>516</sup> Abbi also enjoyed being on the other side of the educational

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<sup>514</sup> Elizabeth [pseud.], interview, May 1, 2012.

<sup>515</sup> Maria [pseud.], interview, June 18, 2013.

<sup>516</sup> Hunter [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 21, 2011.

spectrum in her role as a junior docent: “My role as a docent is like a leader because you take children around and you teach them some new things about history. I mean it makes me feel like the teacher instead of the student, so I got to look at it from a different point of view.”<sup>517</sup>

Teaching, having authority, and leading proved very rewarding and inspiring to junior docents. The ability to step into an authority position was one of the factors that drew Evelyn, a seventh-grade private school student, to the museum. A combination of factors influenced her decision to participate at the PMH. Her previous experience with the museum, her love of public speaking, and her interest in taking advantage of the rare opportunity to teach as a child drew her to the program: “This was actually my first time, but I love to, like, I’m in speech and debate. I love talking to people once I get to know them, like, just kind of go on and, it’s just kind of fun for me to be the teacher for once, you know, just to be able to speak to these kids that don’t necessarily know as much.”<sup>518</sup>

For Larissa, an eighth grade public student of Irish descent who participated in my first year of research, her favorite part of the program rested on the reversal of roles afforded by the program: “probably doing the tours and getting to share my knowledge with other people. And, it was fun to have, like, a feeling of being an adult and getting to lead the kids around and show them things. Because usually I felt

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<sup>517</sup> Abbi [pseud.], interview, May 16, 2011.

<sup>518</sup> Evelyn [pseud.], interview, May 9, 2012.

like I'm the one being led. So you kind of get a sense of leadership and responsibility."<sup>519</sup>

Simon, who participated in my second year of research, also appreciated the authority he gained through participating in the museum. When I asked him what he liked most about leading tours he responded, "That I get to be a leader for once, and I get to give tours, and no one will interrupt me when I'm talking."<sup>520</sup> Melissa also felt empowered when listened to in a museum space, "I liked that I could actually share the information that I took a long time learning. I felt like, um, like it was appreciated, you know. You took the time to learn this and like someone's actually going to listen to you."<sup>521</sup>

My awareness of the role of authority in this program came late in my understanding of the program overall. While my earliest thoughts were preoccupied with what children said on their tours and how the history they presented may have differed from that of adults, my notes and interviews pointed to the importance of the junior docents' thoughts on the actual power-sharing opportunity they had at the museum. Several of the students in the junior docent program spoke highly of the authority they received and a number complained when such authority was compromised by adults or visiting students (a finding which I will soon turn to).

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<sup>519</sup> Larissa [pseud.], interview, May 17, 2011.

<sup>520</sup> Simon [pseud.], interview, April 30, 2012.

<sup>521</sup> Melissa [pseud.], interview, May 7, 2012.

I was so struck by the theme of authority in Year 1 and Year 2 that I spoke about authority in my graduation talk to junior docents on June 12, 2013 as I argued that the program provides “a unique level of authority in a museum setting and the results are just incredible because the tours that they give to the thousands of, um, school children who come through are just fantastic and they give insight and they interact with those kids in a very unique way.”<sup>522</sup>

Following that speech, I interviewed seven of the junior docents in the audience in the days that followed, and the level to which my talk affected them is uncertain. While my speech may have influenced some of the seven students who interviewed afterwards, I hoped that such a risk was worth the potential that some junior docents may feel comfortable enough to correct me if I was wrong. Furthermore, I felt that they had a right to know what meaning I was making out of a program that they co-create. Despite the transparent feelings I expressed in my speech that these youth have unique authority in the broad museum context, the balance and breadth of their answers below suggest that they took my thoughts as an invitation rather than a standard to echo.

When I asked these seven junior docents, “do you feel like you had authority as a junior docent,” I received a spectrum of answers from the five boys and two girls who answered this question. Two of the docents spoke of the authority they had without any conditions. For example, Bella, a recent eighth grade graduate at the

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<sup>522</sup> Author, audio recording of Junior Docent Talk, June 12, 2013, personal collection of the author.

time of our interview, shared how she felt “like I was a leader and that I was leading the children and teaching them about the mansion and there was a senior docent there wandering around the room just if I needed anything which was really nice.”<sup>523</sup> For Maya, who at age twelve was one of the youngest junior docents I interviewed, she too felt like she had authority, “Well, I got to, kind of, like, lead the kids and it was all about, you know, they paid attention to me and not someone else.”<sup>524</sup> To my question, “Did you feel like you were the one making the decisions and the choices and had authority, or did you feel like the senior docent was,” she replied, “I still felt like I had authority because I was, like, kind of the one who was suppose to take them on the tour and they [the senior docents] were just there to help me in case I needed some help.”<sup>525</sup>

Many of the seven junior docents recognized the limited nature of their authority. For example, Lewis spoke to the role that the senior docent and visiting children played in the power dynamics when answering my question about having authority, “Yeah, um, to a certain extent because we always had that senior docent to kind of discipline the kids and tell them what to do, but I could tell them basically whatever I wanted about a certain subject, what I found interesting.”<sup>526</sup> Liam, who

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<sup>523</sup> Bella [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 27, 2013.

<sup>524</sup> Maya [pseud.], interview, June 23, 2013.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid.

<sup>526</sup> Lewis [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 18, 2013.

had recently gone with a group of colleagues to the state championship for the state History Day competition, said, “I guess in a sense because I was [a] docent we did have authority. It wasn’t, like, uh, being our own manager or anything, but we did have some power, but it wasn’t anything that we could become, like, crazy over.”<sup>527</sup>

Nathanial was less certain about the authority he had within the program. When I asked Nathanial if he felt like he had authority as a junior docent he asked, “Authority of what?” I struggled to rephrase the question as I had not had to do so for any of the other students. After a couple of false starts I managed, “do you feel like you got to make some choices about how you wanted your tour to be and how to give your tour? Do you feel like you made a lot of choices or do you feel like others made choices about that?” To this Nathanial responded “Others made choices about that.” I asked him to expand, and he explained, “Because, like, I didn’t get to choose where to go first when I gave the tour. I didn’t get to really talk that much because some of the senior docents like talked in and some of the kids didn’t listen to me.”<sup>528</sup> While earlier in our interview Nathanial had expressed appreciation for the structure of having a senior docent to work with “Because sometimes I didn’t remember and sometimes they helped me,” his comment regarding retaining control, or authority,

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<sup>527</sup> Liam [pseud.], interview by the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 24, 2013.

<sup>528</sup> Nathanial [pseud.], interview by the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 19, 2013.



with the museum demonstrates the ways in which power is negotiated between the various stakeholders.<sup>529</sup>

Understanding the context, and limit, of their authority also came through Robert's answer to my question. Robert, an eighth grader who had previously toured at the Gamble House, explained how authority he had was concentrated to the tour, "Like, tour wise when I'm in the middle of my tour, yeah, because the little kids they realize that I was in charge of the tour and they have to listen to me. So, yeah, it definitely felt like I had the authority during my tour rather than the senior docent." When I asked Robert about "outside of the tour?" He replied, "Outside of the tour not as much because you were just being educated, like, when you're giving the tour it's kind of cool because you feel like you're the authority and you're in charge of other people learning but during the training it's the complete opposite. You're the one receiving all the knowledge from someone else."<sup>530</sup>

While Nathanial's comments suggest he did not feel like he had authority, more commonly students, like Robert, recognized the limits of the power they had. As African-American student Logan explained, "I felt like I could tell the students what they needed to know instead of their teachers telling them what they needed to know. I felt like it was like authority, but some kids didn't want to listen so, like, they wouldn't really get all of it. But the authority was over the kids that did want to

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<sup>529</sup> Ibid.

<sup>530</sup> Robert [pseud.], interview, June 18, 2013.

listen, and so then I had authority.”<sup>531</sup> Just as Nathaniel recognized the role visiting students and senior docents played in the power structure of the tours, Logan also recognized the role that visiting children played.

While Mariah recognized the presence of the senior docents, she still claimed she has a “sense of authority.” As she explained, “I do feel like I had authority because I had to, of course, there were other docents who were senior docents with me, but I sort of had to look after my group of children and make sure that they stayed in line [*laugh*] and didn’t touch anything that they weren’t suppose to, so I do feel like this gave me a sense of authority while I was still trying to teach them.”<sup>532</sup>

While I only asked seven children such a direct question about their thoughts on authority in the program, themes of authority resonated throughout junior docent interviews for the three years that I studied this program. For example, when I asked junior docents to reflect on what they enjoyed most about the junior docent program or being a junior docent, nearly 50 percent made a reference to having authority or leadership, while 72 percent made a reference to being a teacher, sharing knowledge, or giving tours.

While on the tours, the children share power with their accompanying senior docent and the children and adults who come on their tour. Junior docents are accompanied by an adult senior docent who is to be there in the event the junior docent needs help, or, if there is a behavioral or logistical issue that needs to be

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<sup>531</sup> Logan [pseud.], interview, June 27, 2013.

<sup>532</sup> Mariah [pseud.], interview, June 18, 2013.

resolved. When I asked junior docents if they liked the structure of having a senior docent to accompany, or help, them on their tour of the museum, twenty-seven junior docents spoke positively about that structure. Saige summed up the value of senior docents concisely as she explained “I’d sometimes forget things.”<sup>533</sup>

Fourteen other junior docents made a direct remark to the role that senior docents played if they were to “forget.” Bruce gave a glowing review of the pairing of junior and senior docents as he recognized the difficulty associated with giving a tour: “I could not be any happier to have a senior [*laugh*] docent accompany me,” he gushed, “because even though it wasn’t that difficult to memorize this stuff there was a lot to memorize and then the senior docents—if I forgot something—I could always rely upon them to jog my memory, so it was very helpful.”<sup>534</sup>

Not only did the senior docents help junior docents when they forgot information, but they also assisted when junior docents “said something that was off,”<sup>535</sup> Mark found it “reassuring” to have senior docents there to help while Morgan appreciated the time management senior docents offered, “for my first and second tour it was helpful because sometimes I get tongue-tied, or I’d be too slow in a room, or too fast, and they’d have to add on, or, you know, tell me that I had to go a

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<sup>533</sup> Saige [pseud.], interview by the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 27, 2011.

<sup>534</sup> Bruce [pseud.], interview, June 13, 2012.

<sup>535</sup> Jared [pseud.], interview, May 17, 2011.

little faster.”<sup>536</sup> When I asked Nigel if he was interested in volunteering again, he expressed that he would “like a little more help.” Evelyn recognized the important role the senior docent played in supplementing training: “I think it was helpful. As, you know, we did go through a training process but you still don’t know everything about the museum, so you need someone there with you just to make sure you cover most of the important topics and then fill in with littler topics and just to make sure you get your facts right. That’s a big part of it.”<sup>537</sup>

Not all of the junior docents enjoyed having a senior docent accompany their tour, often because junior docents felt the senior docent compromised their authority and interfered with the junior docent’s role and responsibility. Three students voiced how some senior docents had a tendency of “overtaking or taking charge” of tours.<sup>538</sup> Sierra explained how she felt when senior docents interjected too often and compromised what was meant to be her tour: “Sometimes when we thought we knew when we were talking, um, the senior docent would try to cut in and try and say more about it, but I think usually we already knew what they were going to say, so I didn’t feel it was necessary for them to be talking so much because we were supposed to be giving the tours.”<sup>539</sup>

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<sup>536</sup> Mark [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 13, 2011; Morgan [pseud.], interview, June 27, 2011.

<sup>537</sup> Nigel [pseud.], interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 17, 2011; Evelyn [pseud.], interview, May 9, 2012.

<sup>538</sup> Robert [pseud.], interview, June 18, 2013.

<sup>539</sup> Sierra [pseud.], interview, May 23, 2011.

Six students had mixed feelings as they weighed the pros and cons to have a senior docent accompany their tour. Like Sierra, Alexa valued being independent. When I asked if she liked the structure of having a senior docent accompany her tour she responded, “Yes and no. Like if you needed help then it’s good to have them there, but it’s also nice to be independent.” When I asked if she felt she was able to be as independent as she wanted to be on tours, she responded, “Most of the time. Um, yeah, we could be independent and teach the kids what we found interesting.”<sup>540</sup>

Grace also expressed mixed feelings about sharing authority during her tour. When I asked if she liked the structure of being paired with a senior docent she responded:

I sometimes did, but sometimes didn’t. Like, I’m fairly independent. I’m sort of stubborn, and very independent, but I liked having the docent that—if I wasn’t sure on a date or wasn’t sure on something—they would be like, “oh yeah, it was this,” or they would add in a fun fact that I missed that they felt the kids would enjoy. But not when they sort of took over, so it wasn’t me giving the tour it was more, I’m helping them give the tour.<sup>541</sup>

For Jackie, the uninhibited interjections of senior docents resulted in her feeling unneeded, “I don’t want to be mean or anything but sometimes they would say more facts than you, so I guess it feels, like, we didn’t need to be there because they already knew more than us, so it was like, ‘oh, I guess I don’t really need to be here if,’ because they know they’re better than us, and they’ve been alive longer, so it

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<sup>540</sup> Alexa [pseud.], interview, May 23, 2011.

<sup>541</sup> Grace [pseud.], interview, April 25, 2012.

seems like you don't need to [be there], but, it helps if you're there, so I guess you do because it's just better."<sup>542</sup>

Children were not the only ones to protect their right to lead on the tour. Many senior docents were aware of the importance of children leading the tour, and during my tenure two elementary school teachers wrote that they would like to see "more junior docent input."<sup>543</sup> One teacher wrote a harsh critique of her experience in the basement of the mansion due to the senior docent taking charge of the tour, "I was frustrated," she wrote, "that the adult docent did most of the talking. I specifically booked this tour to hear the student speak, so that would be my only suggestion. It was great they got to move around so much."<sup>544</sup> I spoke with this senior docent five days later and within our interview she referenced this criticism as she answered my question: "What would you describe as some of the challenges the junior docent program faces?":

Well, just for me, sometimes it's really hard in terms of if they don't have the best time management or if they haven't really thought about it beforehand and [are] not able to conceptualize the information, again, thematically and then how to present it in a timely fashion. Sometimes it's difficult not to talk over them [*laugh*], and a teacher commented on this the other day, and I felt really bad because it was with one of the boys from the [*school location withheld*], [he] really knows his information and he's fun, but he goes really slow, so I would cut him off [*laugh*] like two minutes before it ended and just

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<sup>542</sup> Jackie [pseud.], interview by the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 29, 2012.

<sup>543</sup> Teacher Evaluation, Pasadena Museum of History, Junior Docent Program, April 2, 2011.

<sup>544</sup> Teacher Evaluation, Pasadena Museum of History Junior Docent Program, May 30, 2012.

sum everything up and probably talk way too much. So I think that would be a challenge: just letting them do their own thing especially if I feel like they're floundering, also, and it's so hit or miss with the schools.<sup>545</sup>

The senior docent continued to describe the difficult job junior docents have as they never quite know what they're going to get in terms of individuals on their tour.

Sometimes junior docents have as few as four or five students to tour, other times they have eight or nine students with a handful of adult chaperones. Some children that visit hardly talk or answer questions, while others cannot resist the urge to perpetually fire off questions and comments, much to the disruption of the junior docent's tours

The changing body of senior docents, and the varying level of training and knowledge they each bring, also introduces a level of interpretive discontinuity as recognized by eighth grader Kiley. When I asked Kiley if she liked the format of having a senior docent accompany her she responded, "Sometimes." When I asked her to expand on her answer, she said, "Um, sometimes we learn stuff that was different than what they knew which is hard because then we're like, 'Well, this was the way I learned it, and they said it was for this reason,' and then they say, 'no, it's not for that reason, they actually did it for this, and that's wrong,' and because they're older than you they think they're right [*laughs*]."<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>545</sup> Name withheld, interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 4, 2012.

<sup>546</sup> Kiley [pseud.], interview, May 28, 2013.

For some students, the senior docent added extra pressure. Marie recognized the value of having senior docents to help when she got “stuck” but she felt that their presence added stress as “it was kind of weird because I was scared that if I messed up they would not necessarily get mad but, like, say something about it.”<sup>547</sup> To follow-up on her comment I asked if she had been corrected by a senior docent and, if so, how that process could be improved. To this Marie responded, “I don’t think, well, it’s kind of hard to correct someone, so I don’t think that there is a way that it could be improved. I think they handled it well, so I don’t think they could have done anything different.”<sup>548</sup>

The concern expressed by several junior docents about losing authority to senior docents has also been a concern of adults involved with the program historically. As one staff member shared, “when I first came we had a docents [who] would tend to correct junior docents in the middle of their tours. They would step in and, you know, these were often people who loved the place and they meant well but, um, it didn’t do an awful lot for the junior docent’s sense of confidence and all that, so, we eliminated that, [I] hope, as much as possible.”<sup>549</sup> For one long-time

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<sup>547</sup> Marie [pseud.], interview, June 14, 2012.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid.

<sup>549</sup> Name withheld, interview with author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 6, 2012.



volunteer, she also recognized how some senior docents struggle to limit their interjections:

Our purpose was really—and some of the senior docents couldn't do this very well—our purpose was to let them do the tour and to only correct them if they made some [*laugh*] great error, but not take over the tour. And figure out how to interject the correction without demeaning, you know, it's sort of an interesting way of doing it. And it turned out that there were some senior docents who loved to do it early on and they would just sort of take over the tour because they decided the kid wasn't telling them enough and we had to tell them, “well, they didn't learn all of these things, there's certain things they're suppose to [teach].”<sup>550</sup>

While authority was one of the main attributes junior docents enjoyed from the junior docent program, a number also spoke to the joy they received from working with kids (65 percent), learning history (45 percent), socializing with other students (23 percent), and the overall fun experience that it was (23 percent). Of the nineteen junior docents that I asked, “what do you think you’ve gained most from volunteering this past year in the program,” students most commonly replied that they gained public speaking skills and experience (42 percent) or an increased knowledge of Pasadena history or history related to the museum (37 percent).

For some, they learned lessons beyond the skills the program hopes to cultivate (such as leadership, public speaking, and a knowledge of local history). For example, Marie, who participated in my second year of research, learned “to have more courage and to actually try things because, as I said before, I wasn’t really sure if I should try it, but I ended up liking it, so I should definitely try things.” Mariah, a

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<sup>550</sup> Name withheld, interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, April 20, 2012.

third year participant, admitted she gained knowledge but also expressed appreciation for “this connection with the museum now and more opportunities to volunteer because I hadn’t really done things like this in the past, and I think it was really fun, and I’d like it.”<sup>551</sup>

### **Measurable Outcomes of this Program**

Observing this program left me wondering what the long-term implications were to these children. Did they even like, or identify with, the Fenyes family, a family so blatantly tied to wealth and prestige? Did this program result in them having an interest in volunteering again? Did this program affect their overall understanding of museums and, perhaps, increase their desire to visit other museums? Through my interviews I learned that the learning outcomes for this program were significant. Children wanted to volunteer again, children felt more comfortable to go to museums, and, children liked the Fenyes family—admiring their hobbies, hard work, and character and finding common ground with the family. When I asked junior docents who they enjoyed learning about most in the program, nineteen of the thirty-eight students chose Eva as the most interesting person they learned about, fourteen chose her husband Dr. Adalbert Fenyes, one chose her daughter Leonora, two chose her granddaughter, and one chose William Hoover, of Hoover vacuum fame.

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<sup>551</sup> Marie [pseud.], interview, June 14, 2012; Mariah [pseud.], interview, June 18, 2013.

What reasons did students give for choosing Eva? For several, the centrality of Eva to the house warranted their interest. As Logan explained who he was most interested in, “Probably Eva because she was like the main character. It was like a TV show, and she was the main character, so she’s the most interesting.”<sup>552</sup>

For others, they found her interests, adventuresome spirit, and intelligence admirable. As junior docents explained why they found Eva interesting, I was struck by how many cited her supposed nonconformity. As Morgan, a recent seventh grade graduate and female explained, “I think Eva is the most interesting because she challenged her role in society and because she took risks and made bold moves.”<sup>553</sup> When I asked her, “what do you think are the risks and bold moves that she made?” she responded, “well, like I said before, she married a man who was fourteen years younger than herself which is not something that was very commonly done and also there was something else too. I don’t remember. Well she did challenge her role in society and she did take a lot of risks.”<sup>554</sup>

Many of the students equated Eva’s marital status with unconventionality. As fourteen-year-old David explained concisely: “She divorced and married again which was big back then.”<sup>555</sup> Thirteen-year-old Marie echoed similar sentiments when she explained, “because she did a lot of things that weren’t necessarily ‘good’ in a

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<sup>552</sup> Logan [pseud.], interview, June 27, 2013.

<sup>553</sup> Morgan [pseud.], interview, June 27, 2011.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid.

<sup>555</sup> David [pseud.], interview, May 6, 2013.

woman's life, or that were looked down upon." When I asked Marie if she could give some examples, she responded, "She married late, and also not only did she marry late she divorced which was looked down upon back then."<sup>556</sup> For fourteen-year-old Kiley, who brought an impressive awareness of US women's history, a byproduct of her fascination with *American Girl* dolls, her view of Eva as forward thinking took into account the role that class played in Eva's life: "I think Eva was pretty interesting. Pretty cool. I'm not sure how much she was, but she seemed kind of forward for her time, too. She wasn't just a housewife, 'oh, let me go organize the maids,' I mean, she really was, like, involved in things. I mean she was pretty wealthy, so she had the chance to."<sup>557</sup>

Kiley was not the only student to see class as an important component in the story of the Fenyes family. For example, Bruce, a recent eighth-grade graduate, found Eva unconventional for both for her gender and class: "I think that Eva was actually probably the most interesting because in that era, uh, I mean, just, generally speaking, wealthy people didn't actually do that much, however, if you look around the exhibit, she did a lot." Bruce also spoke to Eva's nonconformity and saw it as a sign of strength: "she was actually quite strong because after she divorced William Muse she went on even though it wasn't common for women to divorce men back then, so I just thought that was interesting."<sup>558</sup>

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<sup>556</sup> Marie [pseud.], interview, June 14, 2012.

<sup>557</sup> Kiley [pseud.], interview, May 28, 2013.

<sup>558</sup> Bruce [pseud.], interview, June 13, 2012.

The reason eighth-grader Elizabeth, who had a penchant for robotics, gave for finding Eva the most interesting acts almost as a composite of the many different comments concerning Eva's forwardness, interests, and centrality to the site overall:

Well, we learn the most about her [Eva], and she was an oddity for the time and still a little bit unconventional. She married, divorced, remarried, and then her husband lived her out. She was, like, getting all the crazy new fangled technology in her home; she was pretty wealthy, and it's just, so many cool little things, like, she would collect stuff wherever she went and she would collect antiques and, just, looking at the stuff that she collected it's like you're learning a little bit more about her because, you think, "Why would she collect this? Why is this special?" and you learn a little bit more about what she might have thought.<sup>559</sup>

For the fourteen students who chose Eva's husband, Dr. Adalbert Fenyes, as who they found to be the most interesting, none referenced how Adalbert fit into nineteenth and twentieth century narratives of masculinity. But, as a number of students recognized, the narrative that they learned at the mansion was female-centered. For those who chose Dr. Fenyes, his interest in science, linguistics, medicine, and beetles dominated responses as only two students made references outside of these (one to travel and the other to Fenyes' royal heritage). While African-American student Justin was intrigued as "I've never heard of a guy who studies beetles, and he spoke thirteen different languages which is insane," Melissa was intrigued by how much Dr. Fenyes did, "It was like he had so many jobs. He

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<sup>559</sup> Elizabeth [pseudo.], interview, May 1, 2012.

brought the x-ray machine, and he was interested in beetles, and so it was, like, he was all these things and, like, one person. He had a lot in him [*laughs*],”<sup>560</sup>

Unquestionably influenced by knowledge they bring to the program and the actual training of the program, these students’ perception of Eva, as a whole, reflect a view that understands the role of class and gender in her life. For Dr. Fenyves, they saw him as a talented man of multiple skills and unique interests, but they reserved any assumptions regarding his personality, information that they were not exposed to in the program. While Samuel assumed Eva to be snooty and typical of the rich, Bruce saw Eva as strong and resilient, and Grace championed Eva’s self-confidence. These assumptions reflect points made in training and the female-centered narrative presented at the mansion. Missing from these answers are descriptions or discussions of racial identity and the “possessive investment in whiteness” that shape the story of Eva or the role of Adalbert’s Eastern European heritage; again, these are topics not explored during training.<sup>561</sup>

In short, junior docents did relate to the family despite ethnic, class, or other differences. Many students found common ground with Eva. As one junior docent responded when I asked whom she found to be most interesting, “I really liked her [Eva] because she also had a few of my favorite hobbies, like I play the piano and the

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<sup>560</sup> Justin [pseud.], interview, May 6, 2012; Melissa [pseud.], interview, May 7, 2012.

<sup>561</sup> Within his groundbreaking book, George Lipsitz explores privileges that accompany “whiteness,” a category of identity, See George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1998).

guitar. And, I want to learn the violin.”<sup>562</sup> Another girl identified not only with Eva’s interests but with her personality and high self-esteem:

She seemed like a really smart lady even when women, you know, maybe weren’t suppose to be as smart, which I found pretty cool. Like, she, sort of, was not exactly normal. She was more out there, and she was kind of like me in a way, so, I really liked her because, you know, she’s not willing to be, like, “Okay, I’m smart so I’m not going to say anything about it,” you know, “okay, I’m just going to be normal.” She wasn’t afraid to be herself, and I really liked that about her.<sup>563</sup>

This student continued to go on to further describe the similarities between herself and Eva, such as, their mutual appreciation of art, music, learning, travel, and their stubborn personalities. Several junior docents identified with family members suggesting in another way the effectiveness of the PMH.<sup>564</sup>

Another measurable outcome of this program was the high rate of students that were interested in volunteering again. I asked thirty-nine of the junior docents if they would be interested in volunteering again. Twenty-two junior docents (69 percent) responded that they would be interested in doing so, while eleven (28 percent) said they may be interested, and one answered “kind of not really. I think the most I

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<sup>562</sup>Abbi [pseud.], interview, May16, 2011.

<sup>563</sup> Grace [pseud.], interview, April 25, 2012.

<sup>564</sup> In his contribution to *Public History: Essays from the Field*, George W. McDaniel speaks to the correlation between succeeding as a historic home and a historic home providing points of connection, “If they set their sights high, house museums can communicate an authentic sense of place about their region and help people develop a sense of connectedness to others and strengthen the sense of worth and responsibility that goes with that.” George W. McDaniel, “At Historic Houses and Buildings: Connecting Past, Present, and Future,” in *Public History: Essays from the Field* ed. James B. Gardner and Peter S. LaPaglia, 234 (Malabar, FL: 2004).

would do is if I had something of historical value, I would donate it to a museum.”<sup>565</sup>

For students who said future volunteering was a possibility, they clarified that it depended on their schedule or the type of museum that provided the opportunity. As Elizabeth explained, “I think it would be fun. But, it is fairly time consuming, so, if I have the time and if there’s another good place that I can volunteer.”<sup>566</sup>

Most students responded that they would like to volunteer again as they enjoyed the program. Larissa enjoyed “showing what I know to other people,” while Evelyn said she would “definitely” volunteer again as “I enjoy the talking to other people and making it almost fun for other people, so, being able to do those things is just kind of something that I enjoy and would do again.”<sup>567</sup> For Marie, she enjoys volunteering in general while Melanie enjoyed the structure of the program, “It’s really interesting, especially this kind of program where kids are involved. I really like[this] more than being an adult and working at a museum. Like, I really would want to be, in the future ,a kid again working at a museum.”<sup>568</sup> While some students mentioned the type of museums they would like to volunteer at next, others

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<sup>565</sup> Theo [pseud.], interview, May 2, 2012.

<sup>566</sup> Elizabeth [pseud.], interview, May 1, 2012.

<sup>567</sup> Larissa [pseud.], interview, May 17, 2011; Evelyn [pseud.], interview, May 9, 2012.

<sup>568</sup> Melanie [pseud.], June 14, 2012.



expressed their hope to stay involved with the PMH. “I really like this museum,” Bella shared, “so I’m thinking of volunteering here again. I think that’s really fun.”<sup>569</sup>

Starting in the second year of interviews, I began to ask children if the program changed how they think about history or museums. About half of the twenty-four junior docents that I asked the question, “has this experience changed how you think about history” answered in the affirmative, while eight expressed the program did not alter their view of history, and three remained uncertain.

Several junior docents, such as Saige, mentioned how the history they learned at the museum appeared less boring than that taught in the classroom. For Evelyn, who has always enjoyed history, she found that through “being the person in the museum and doing history” she learned history in a different way and she learned it not in anticipation of being tested, but in preparation for teaching other students. “It’s a different way to learn about it,” Evelyn explained, “because you know you’re not learning about it for a test or for something that once you learn about it then you take a test and then you almost don’t have to remember it because it’s not going to show up on another test in a way. But this is for other kids that aren’t going to learn about it and are coming with their class so they may be learning about stuff about Pasadena and then you’re just expanding their knowledge on it.”<sup>570</sup>

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<sup>569</sup> Marie [pseud.], interview, June 14, 2012; Melanie [pseud.], interview, June 14, 2012; Bella [pseud.], interview, June 27, 2013.

<sup>570</sup> Saige [pseud.], interview, May 27, 2011; Evelyn [pseud.], interview, May 9, 2012.

For a number of students the focus on one city, or one location, helped them see history in a new light. Mira mentioned, “We don’t learn about, like, Pasadena history,” and how this opportunity resulted in her understanding of history expanding: “I don’t really think of history, like, where I live. I think of it, like, I don’t know, bigger, like a state or even a country, something like that. Not really just a city.”<sup>571</sup>

Elizabeth also learned about the local application of history through this program, “Before it was just a subject and now it’s why we are where we are. It’s not just ancient civilizations. It’s learning about our community.”<sup>572</sup> The narrow focus of the museum and the history presented there also shaped Melissa’s thoughts on history. Melissa contrasted her experience at the museum to that of school where “they would teach you, like, very general, like, they wouldn’t go into the details.” Through learning the details at the PMH, history became less boring for Melissa.<sup>573</sup>

Martin also commented on how the program “taught me a lot more about Pasadena history because before I hadn’t learned much about Pasadena,” whereas Jackie found that she knew more about the history around her: “since I live in Pasadena I know kind of a lot more about it, so, it makes me feel like I know about

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<sup>571</sup> Mira [pseud.], interview by the author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 29, 2011.

<sup>572</sup> Elizabeth [pseud.], interview, May 1, 2012.

<sup>573</sup> Elizabeth [pseud.], interview, May 1, 2012; Melissa [pseud.], interview, May 7, 2012.

where I live, so it makes me feel like, ‘yes, I know about where I live,’ instead of if you live here, and you don’t know anything about it. So that’s cool.”<sup>574</sup>

For Melanie and Grace, the program helped them see the personal side of history. Melanie expressed how she learned “I can like my own history” and that there is much to learn about Pasadena. Prior to volunteering at the PMH Melanie “thought American history was kind of boring, and I really liked Europe more, but this is really interesting and it brought a new spin on it, and it wasn’t just dates or times, it was these people lived here and these people did this and they were just like you.” Grace also spoke to the way that the museum experience personalized history: “It’s reminded me there’s usually a story behind history,” she further clarified “the way that you see history isn’t, a lot of the time, about the big things, it’s about the little things that make most people’s lives special, like, every day.” She concluded, “it makes you sort of see that there’s often more than one perspective of history.”<sup>575</sup>

While many of the students mentioned specific ways the program changed how they thought about history, for Morgan the implications of the program on her understanding of history were broader. She expressed that her experience at the museum “changed what I think about history because now I think I appreciate it more. I understand it better, and I just have more respect for it, and I enjoy it more.”

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<sup>574</sup> Martin [pseud.], interview, June 2, 2102; Jackie [pseud.], interview, May 29, 2012.

<sup>575</sup> Melanie [pseud.], interview, June 14, 2012; Grace [pseud.], interview, April 25, 2012.

After speaking with one of the senior docents, I began to incorporate questions into my interviews to gauge how the junior docent experience at the PMH altered how they thought about museums. I asked thirty junior docents, “has this experience changed how you think about museums,” to which twenty-one responded in the affirmative (70 percent), eight in the negative (27 percent), and one felt that the program primarily reminded her “how much I like museums since I’d forgotten for a little while.”<sup>576</sup>

While Mira said that she felt the same about museums as she did before joining the junior docent program, she did credit the program to increasing her appreciation for those who work in museums. “I think it gives me more, like, how someone working there might feel and stuff,” she explained during our interview. When I asked her to expand on how she now understood about the work that goes on in a museum she explained, “Like, it’s not that easy to do. I don’t know. It takes a lot of effort. And, also, it might be hard for the person who is giving the tour. When I was giving the tours sometimes I felt like if someone was doing something that I would rather not have them do, I didn’t really want to tell them to stop.”<sup>577</sup>

Students who did acknowledge that the program changed how they think about museums also explained how their appreciation for museums and those who work within them grew. “I think now I appreciate them more,” Morgan explained, “and just more interested in learning about what they have to share and what the

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<sup>576</sup> Mariah [pseud.], interview, June 18, 2013.

<sup>577</sup> Mira [pseud.], interview June 29, 2011.

docents have to share if there are any.” When I asked Morgan how the experience had changed how she thinks of docents in museums she answered that she respected them more because “I know they had to study hard and what they were doing and really memorize it so that they don’t get the facts wrong because if you have the wrong facts that’s just not right and also the fact that they love what they’re doing. And that they want to share it with whoever wants to listen.”<sup>578</sup>

Martin also gained an appreciation for the work that goes into museums “it makes me a little more appreciative,” he shared, “of the work that goes into setting up exhibits and the docents.” Samantha also gained an awareness of the work that goes behind museum exhibits, “I think I find museums a little more interesting, and I kind of respect them a little more than I use to, and I think, I use to think, ‘oh, you put a bunch of stuff in a room and you let people walk around,’ but there’s a lot behind it. So, I changed my thought of museums a little bit.”<sup>579</sup>

For a number of junior docents, their involvement in the junior docent program changed their perception of museums from being boring to “exciting and fun.”<sup>580</sup> From her experience, Sierra learned that museums are “Actually really fun to learn things about.” For Melanie, the use of children in touring and interpretation changed her view of museums as boring places where “all you did was get lead

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<sup>578</sup> Morgan [pseud.], interview, June 27, 2011.

<sup>579</sup> Morgan [pseud.], interview, June 27, 2011; Martin [pseud.], interview, June 2, 2012; Samantha [pseud.], interview by author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 14, 2012.

<sup>580</sup> Bella [pseud.], interview, June 27, 2013.

around by some adult that just wants to talk their head off about boring subjects.” The junior docent program and kids getting to tour “makes me more interested in other museums. I want to know if other museums do this same kind of thing with junior docents.”<sup>581</sup>

When I asked Maya why she used to think museums were boring she explained that, in thinking of art museums, “I couldn’t really stare at art all day.” Through the junior docent program Maya realized, ““Whoa, you can actually learn a lot from museums.”” Bella also thought museums were boring previously “because there wasn’t a lot to do at some museums that I’ve been to, but, like this one there was, like, so much to look at and you were, like actually in the house, like you actually went back in time to see the family.”<sup>582</sup>

While for some students the experience of preparing a tour or the awareness of the work that goes into exhibits challenged preconceptions they brought concerning museums, for Evelyn, the structure of the child-to-child tours challenged her previous understanding of museums and led her to conclude that the tours would be more meaningful for visiting children as having an “older kid or someone that they admire in a way teach them about it I think it draws them in more because when you have, like, especially with schools you just kind of, you find it a little more fun, like, ‘okay, well, this kid spent their time figuring out all this stuff that they need to

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<sup>581</sup> Sierra [pseud.], interview, May 23, 2011; Melanie [pseud.], interview, June 14, 2012.

<sup>582</sup> Maya [pseud.], interview, June 23, 2013; Bella [pseud.], interview, June 27, 2013.

teach me, so if they kind of enjoy it, so I'm guessing I'm going to enjoy it,' so then it just kind of makes them feel a little more connected to it in a way, or makes them feel like, 'okay, this isn't fully boring in a way, I guess.'”<sup>583</sup>

Not only did the junior docent experience alter how many junior docents thought of history and museums, the experience also increased some junior docent's comfort to visit museums. When I asked Martin if the junior docent experience resulted in him feeling more comfortable to visit other museums he responded that it did “because I know that the docents are going to be friendly and that they're not going to be, um, just, watching you because they think you're going to do something bad. And, it just makes me a little bit more comfortable to be able to go to museums.”

Samantha also felt more comfortable in visiting other museums. “It's easier,” she explained, “and you kind of learn etiquette of how you're suppose to act around museums and around pieces at a museum.” James agreed that knowing “how the museums work” resulted in him feeling more comfortable like Bella who feels more comfortable visiting museums as she knows “what the tour guides are feeling and I know what the, um, people being toured are feeling, so I know, like, how it all works.”<sup>584</sup>

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<sup>583</sup> Evelyn [pseud.], interview, May 9, 2012.

<sup>584</sup> Martin [pseud.], interview, June 2, 2012; Samantha [pseud.], interview, June 14, 2012; James [pseud.], interview by author, Pasadena Museum of History, April 13, 2013; Bella [pseud.], interview, June 27, 2013.

## **Junior Docents and Historical Understanding**

Throughout my research I was impressed by the level to which junior docents understood the privilege and singularity of the Fenyes family history and how many of the junior docents recognized the perspective servants brings. When I asked Abbi, “are there any people in Pasadena history or who would have lived in the house or on the property, that you would have liked to learn more about,” she responded, “probably about, like, the maids or maybe, like, anybody else that worked for them, just to see their point of view of Eva, what they thought about her.”<sup>585</sup>

When I asked Larissa, “Are there any people in Pasadena history you would have liked to learn about?” she responded, “Maybe more about, like, well I feel like I’ve only really learned about the upper class, maybe like some of the lower class, because we don’t really talk about them much.” When I asked Larissa why she wanted to learn more about some of the lower classes, she responded, “Well, it just kind of gives me more of a sense of what it was like back then because it wasn’t just rich people. There were also some poorer people.”<sup>586</sup>

Throughout my research I was impressed by how many junior docents recognized the story of the Fenyes family as privileged. For Lewis, one of his complaints and critiques of the program was that the subject matter of the program could be boring as he felt “they were just a rich family of the time, there was nothing really

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<sup>585</sup> Abbi [pseud.], interview, May 16, 2011.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid.



interesting, I mean there was interesting stuff, but nothing that stood out in comparison to all the other rich people.”<sup>587</sup>

Other students demonstrated an awareness of the role that servants played to the function and operation of the Fenyes Mansion, a theme that strengthened in junior docent training over the course of my involvement. When I asked Mariah who she learned about through the junior docent program, she mentioned not only the Fenyes family but also the servants. Mariah continued to discuss how she talks about the servants on her tour as she feels “the servants also need to be remembered here because they sort of made the whole house function.”<sup>588</sup>

Later within the tour Mariah mentioned how she would have been interested to learn how “the poor people got along because, of course, they couldn’t have these great big houses, and they couldn’t have too many servants, so I suppose I would just be interested in learning how they worked and how they sort of dressed and things [laughs] because I’m a girl, and I’m interested in dress.” When I asked Mariah how she felt the tour could incorporate talking about other classes she recommended, “the tour would, of course, still be [pre]dominantly about the family, but I suppose at the beginning we could talk a little bit about the other classes because I do feel like it is important for the kids to be made aware that this was not the only living style, there

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<sup>587</sup> Lewis [pseud.], interview, June 18, 2013.

<sup>588</sup> Mariah [pseud.], interview, June 18, 2013.

were of course other people who were not quite so fortunate as the Fenyes or did not have such an inclination to the arts and things like the family did.”<sup>589</sup>

Within my interview with Kiley, I was impressed by her familiarity with *American Girl* dolls and the stories behind each character. When I asked her if she felt there were any perspectives missing in the American girl stories she responded, “Um [pause], no, most of the girls came from pretty open families. I mean they had their ladylike things to do, but their families weren’t completely closed off, like, to anything and that may not be something they wanted to promote, but, I think it would still be interesting to do that.” When I asked her to clarify what she meant by the families being pretty open, she expounded:

Like, the girls [pause] I’m not sure, like, so the wealthy Victorian girl, she’s an orphan and she lives with her grandma, and she befriends this factory worker girl who ends up working next door and eventually through all the stories they become like adopted sisters with one of their aunts, but, like a lot of people in that time would have just said, “Ew, factory girls, that’s awful. No you’re not allowed to see her. I don’t care if she’s nice.” I mean, it wasn’t really limited perspectives.<sup>590</sup>

While a number of junior docents mentioned that they would have liked to learn more about the servants, their overall criticisms of the junior docent program content and structure remained minor. Some junior docents disliked the day of the week tours were held on, the scheduling of training immediately following school in the fall, or the overall length of the tour, while others complained about missing school (junior docents miss about two mornings of school each month) or that

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<sup>589</sup> Mariah [pseud.], interview, June 18, 2013.

<sup>590</sup> Kiley [pseud.], interview, May 28, 2013.

homework for the program was not routinely checked. A number criticized senior docents interjecting too much, and a couple mentioned they would have liked to work in smaller groups or had more time to practice their tours. Criticisms focused on structure rather than content but, in general, many students spoke highly of the program. When I asked Bella if she had any recommendations for the program she replied, “I do not. I think it’s great. I think that the children are really engaged. I learned everything perfectly.”<sup>591</sup>

Teachers who bring their students to the PMH agree with Bella. I interviewed third-grade teacher Margaret Doherty who has brought her students since the program started in 1987. She spoke enthusiastically about the program and its educational merit with comments such as: “It really opened their [her student’s] eyes,” and “It’s always, always successful.” Doherty also complimented the preparedness and organization of the program: “They have it set up so well; they’re always on time; you never wait.” Doherty continued, “I don’t think I’ve ever shown up when they weren’t ready for us.”<sup>592</sup>

In my analysis of 112 teacher evaluations for tours given between December 3, 2010 and May 15, 2013, only one teacher wrote that she was “not sure” if she would use the program again. This teacher commented that there were “too many pictures not enough artifacts as a year ago. A tour of the mansion would be more

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<sup>591</sup> Ibid.

<sup>592</sup> Margaret Doherty, interview with the author, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary School, February 14, 2013.

interesting” and that the “emphasis on family history and corsets was unusual.”<sup>593</sup>

This evaluation is based on a tour that would have been held in the gallery (to accommodate the closure of the mansion during its renovation) and would have been an evaluation of one of the first tours of the year, likely by a junior docent on his or her first tour. Considering that touring within the mansion was not an option and that the gallery did not provide comparable space to show as many artifacts as the mansion, the critique of this evaluation is based on circumstantial accommodations rather than the program’s overall merit.

Most of the teachers not only wrote that they would use the program again but committed to with optimistic language, such as, “definitely” or “absolutely.” Within the 112 evaluations, I only read ten critiques or suggestions. The majority of the reviews were glowing, positive, and grateful for the experience the museum and program affords local, Pasadena youth. Some teachers encouraged the museum to modify the vocabulary that is used or circulate pre-visit material. “My kids come from very poor homes,” wrote one teacher, “and do not have exposure to many things. For example, what is a carriage?”<sup>594</sup> Only one teacher recommended that the program consider other perspectives, a theme I thought might dominate teacher

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<sup>593</sup> Name withheld, Junior Docent Program Teacher Evaluation, Pasadena Museum of History, December 16, 2011.

<sup>594</sup> Name withheld, Junior Docent Program Teacher Evaluation, Pasadena Museum of History, December 8, 2010.

evaluations due to the contrast between the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of students that visit the mansion and the mansion's focus on one, elite family.<sup>595</sup>

During my research I interviewed one adult chaperone, who described herself as being of Black and Mexican descent, and the mother of junior docent Justin who identified herself as African American. Both women suggested that the museum content at the PMH could be more inclusive in terms of race. In describing the junior docent program, the mother of Justin, who participated in the second year of my research, made note of the lack of inclusiveness at the museum:

The other thing I was kind of missing was (because we are African American): So what were we doing [*laugh*] during that time? It was not all roses and orange fields for us, you know. I'm like, "When did they start having families and stuff here?" and he couldn't quite discuss that, and if the public school systems are the ones that are coming here, they're predominantly of color.<sup>596</sup>

When I asked one Caucasian teacher if she felt her ethnically diverse class was able to relate to the Fenyes family and the history presented at the mansion she argued that her students understood the concept of family and especially understood the concept of multigenerational living and thus did relate to the story as it dealt with a family. I spoke with several junior docents about the program's focus on one

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<sup>595</sup> Name withheld, Junior Docent Program Teacher Evaluation, Pasadena Museum of History, April 27, 2012. The female teacher wrote: "Might be fun to contrast with another family (perhaps from the P.O.V. of a servant)."

<sup>596</sup> Justin's Mom, interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History, May 6, 2012; Kiley [pseud.], interview, May 6, 2012.

family and received mixed reviews regarding that. Some junior docents noted that it was easier for the visiting children to focus on one family while others saw the benefits of bringing in various perspectives.

## **Conclusion**

An entire dissertation could be written on the PMH junior docent program and the children who have participated in this program for more than twenty-five years. The purpose of this chapter has been not only to document this program and particularly the meaning children make of this program, but to provide an example of how the voice, perspective, and experience of children can be easily documented and how such knowledge provides fresh perspectives on operations or procedures that could otherwise be seen as routine.

While various motivations brought these GATE students to the junior docent program—from parental pressure to a love of history—these students often found a common appreciation for the program, recognition of its merit, and a desire to continue volunteering should the opportunity arise in the future. Evident throughout my study was the junior docents' appreciation for, and at times demand for, authority within the program. Junior Docents recognized their role and responsibility and felt their experience compromised when adults overly mediated their tours. Junior docents felt ready for authority and wanted to be trusted to fulfill their responsibility of leading other children on a tour. This chapter reminds us that the movement for museum professionals to share authority with the public needs to extend to youth as

they bring fresh insight and give voice to perspectives that otherwise may remain marginalized. The responsibility of museums to represent and involve the communities they serve extends to the inclusion of children. As this chapter demonstrates, when children are invited to participate, create, and co-produce in museum spaces by adults that trust and value them, their perception of museums improves, their awareness of museums' reliance on community and volunteer support expands, and their interest in and understanding of the broader museum community heightens.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Overcoming the Obstacles and Redefining Visitor Experiences: Incorporating the History of Childhood**

Throughout the course of my study, I have been impressed by the small steps some museum interpreters and volunteers have taken to increase the presence of children's history at their site. Whether through reading aloud from a child's diary to adding an interpretive panel on a particular child's experience, such steps mirror the positive response I received from those I interviewed. To this point, this dissertation has examined how the history *of* children and history *for* children plays out in California history museums and noted several commonalities as museum curators and educators do, or do not, share authority with children of the past or present in the telling of history.

This dissertation has demonstrated how museum professionals recognize that often the best children's history is reserved for child audiences. Exhibitions aimed at the general audience and pertaining to children's history are typically narrow in their representation and fail to capture the breadth, texture, and diversity of children's history as they too often represent an isolated conception of childhood rather than in dialogue with competing conceptions, or, in contrast to the complex realities of childhood. California history museums fit into a tradition of exhibiting childhood "by using objects that depict a romanticized adult view."<sup>597</sup> Exhibitions most often

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<sup>597</sup> Carla Pascoe, Museum Victoria, "Beyond the Porcelain Doll: Museum Engagements with the History of Children," MA Conference Presentation, 18 May 2007.



representing childhood tend to be those where nostalgia and idealism are still at work, exhibitions based on the adult memories of childhood, and exhibitions memorializing historical acts of prejudice and injustice. Even then, representations lend more to evoke visitor response than to the serious, balanced study of children's history. Underlining many of the themes within this dissertation has been the strength of the sacred child ideal and its hold over history *of* and *for* children.

In many ways, the insufficient representation of children's history in California museums reflects a commentary made by Curator L. Thomas Frye in 1974 regarding museum collecting practices: "Most history museums have not actively acquired contemporary materials, nor interpreted recent phenomena, and for a number of reasons: noncontemporary emphases in overall programming, lack of funds or space for new collections, disinterested curators and a not-uncommon aloofness from the real world."<sup>598</sup>

The same can be said of children's history. Limited resources, overworked staff, and visitor apathy allow the place of children's history in museums to be overlooked by both the general public and the academy. Money, time, and interest (such as political and financial) are powerful tools in the creation and survival of museums. Furthermore, current museum personnel are limited by choices their predecessors made in terms of what types of objects have been collected related to children's culture and the level to which social history has been integrated at their institution.

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<sup>598</sup> L. Thomas Frye, "The Recent Past is Prologue," *Museum News* 53, No. 3 (November 1974): 24.

For a number of museums I studied, they not only overlooked the contributions of children, they overlooked the social aspect of history.

The lack of representation of children is compounded by the exclusion of children from the production of history in museums spaces. Carla Pascoe of the Museum Victoria has argued, “the challenge with bringing children’s history to the forefront of popular consciousness is that children rarely agitate for themselves in the same way that adults might.”<sup>599</sup> As my research at the PMH has demonstrated, a number of junior docents previously thought of museums as boring, or didn’t understand all that they had to offer, until becoming involved in their operation.

Museum staff need to take a number of steps to integrate the history of children and childhood into their museums as such representations will improve not only the accuracy of their exhibitions but the longevity, relevance, and appeal to museum visitors. The benefits of inclusion are vast: rich histories of childhood can lead to more thorough investigations of adulthood; representations highlighting the diversity of childhood experiences prove more relevant and personal to present-day child visitors than ideals; and exhibitions exploring childhood ensure that museum content is more accurate in its telling of history.

The potential for museums to represent the perspectives and stories of children in the past may seem out of reach to many museums who struggle in the face of cut budgets, competing interpretive priorities, dwindling staff, lack of space, or

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<sup>599</sup> Carla Pascoe, Museum Victoria, “Beyond the Porcelain Doll: Museum Engagements with the History of Children,” MA Conference Presentation, 18 May 2007.

otherwise insufficient resources. Within Laura Peer's work *Playing Ourselves: Interpreting Native Histories at Historic Reconstructions* she acknowledges the challenges that obstruct inclusion yet still advocates for change:

I accept that these sites have other messages to communicate, and that managers have to make difficult choices to cope with budget cuts and the broader political contexts in which they work. (As I write this, Fort William is once more flooded; serious structural repairs will dominate the attention of staff this year.) I am concerned, however, that by continuing to minimize the representation of the numbers and roles of Native peoples, by failing to show real interactions between Native peoples and others, by a relative lack of Native people in managerial positions, and in the absence of strong relations with local Native communities, these sites have not only compromised the implementation of their intended critical histories, but have also compromised the potential impact of such critical histories on the present.<sup>600</sup>

By including the understudied, such as children, in museum exhibitions, not only are more accurate representations of the past delivered, but the relevance of history to children is more firmly cemented.

While Chapter 2 noted the obstacle that limited historical information and material culture play in museum personnel feeling equipped to exhibit fuller representations of children's history, Chapter 3 suggests that historical realities of childhood are, at times, sidestepped in fear of upsetting children or tainting their worldview at an early age. And underlining much of my research exists an all-too-common belief that children do not have a history, or, that their history does not warrant special attention. And, as Chapter 4 demonstrated, while some children are

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<sup>600</sup> Laura Peers, *Playing Ourselves: Interpreting Native Histories at Historic Reconstructions* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 175-6.

afforded the opportunity to lead in museum spaces, on the whole, room exists for museums to include children more fully in the operations process.

This conclusion takes these concerns in turn as I address four ways in which museum educators, interpreters, curators, and directors can increase the centrality of children's history—in its dualistic meaning—to their museum. By understanding the multiple meanings of children's history, involving children in collecting initiatives, affording children opportunities to co-produce history, and reconsidering the censorship of history for children, museum professionals and volunteers can make strides towards richer museum experiences for present-day children and more accurate depictions of the history of children and childhood. Thus far, I have already made a case for why the history of children and childhood should be represented in California history museums; this chapter makes a case for how it can be done by drawing on best practices I observed throughout my research.

### **Understanding the Multiple Meanings of Children's History**

As this dissertation has demonstrated, children's history connotes several meanings and museums would do well to embrace the field of children's history (as a developed academic discipline) as they tell the history *of* children and construct history-focused programming *for* children. One hope of this dissertation is to raise awareness among museums professionals that a significant body of literature exists chronicling the ways in which childhood has changed over time in the United States and detailing ways that children have navigated, negotiated, and initiated such

changes. Museums would benefit from recognizing children's history as an established field similar to other socio-cultural focused disciplines and finding ways to connect with the academics fluent in the field.

Museums can ensure they stay current within the field of children's history through inviting researchers and academics to participate on exhibit advisories. For example, at the Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) an interpretive panel in the *Before the Other People Came* exhibition, devoted to representing the history of Indigenous Peoples in California, details the collaboration that culminated in the exhibit:

This area is a collaboration between the Oakland Museum of California and our Native Advisory Council. Native videographers taped culture-bearers at home in seven environmental regions around California. Then, to illustrate how they described their homelands in the era "before the other people came," artifacts were selected from the museum's collections.<sup>601</sup>

The panel proceeds to note those serving on the Native Council, as well as Advisors and Contributors.

The DiMenna Children's History Museum (DCHM), located in the lower level of the New-York Historical Society (N-YHS), presents the history of New York through the perspective of children and relied on the assistance of outside academics despite the existence of historians and curators on staff. Turning to scholars fluent in fields, such as urban archaeology, American Indian history, comparative ethnic studies, and pharmaceutical history, the museum also turned to noted historian of

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<sup>601</sup> Exhibit didactic, *Before the Other People Came* exhibition, Gallery of California History, Oakland Museum of California, based on a field visit September 9, 2011.

children and youth, Steven Mintz of Columbia University.<sup>602</sup> Such rich collaborations with the academic community ensure that museum exhibits meet academic standards and reflect the latest scholarship.

The field of children's history has continued to professionalize and a number of rich, widely accessible resources exist on the history of children and childhood. When site-specific information does not exist on children, museum professionals and volunteers should feel comfortable to study broader trends in the history of children and childhood and interpret how they may have played out in regards to their particular site. During my interview with Melanie, then a recent eighth grade graduate in Pasadena, CA, I asked her to tell me more regarding her choice to highlight child Babsie Curtin on her junior docent tour at PMH. Melanie's interpretive approach illustrates a method that other museum volunteers and professionals could adapt in the telling of children's history: "I would just read our packet, and I'd read more about the children, and I think that just learning about this broad subject of child we can fit Babsie in there. She was one of those child [*sic*], so I read up more on [Victorian] children through the packet."<sup>603</sup>

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<sup>602</sup> Steven Mintz is the author of several children's history titles, including but not limited to *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* and *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood*.

<sup>603</sup> Melanie [pseud.], interview. Within the 2011-2012 Junior Docent Program Manual about three pages of text are devoted to the discussion of children during the Victorian era, focusing on life span, leisure, family life, and education.

While museum educators need to avoid universalizing or glossing over the history of children and childhood—one of the central theses of this dissertation—rich, secondary literature can assist museum educators and interpreters as Melanie suggests, just as it has aided in the balanced representation of ethnic minorities, women, and other underrepresented museum groups. As this fourteen-year-old observes, the individual stories of children can be pulled from broader narratives when primary sources do not exist.

### **Building Meaningful Museum Collections**

While museums professionals should turn to scholarly works on the history of children and childhood, they should also focus on reevaluating their institution's collections and discovering opportunities that exist to tell stories of childhood. One museum that has found great success in exhibiting stories of childhood from its collections in its effort to be more relevant with family audiences is the N-YHS.

In November of 2011, the N-YHS opened the DCHM, a 4,000 square-foot museum, within its lower level. This museum within a museum allows visitors to explore the history of New York through the perspective of children through innovative, interactive, and colorful pavilions. In creating this museum staff prioritized telling stories from the museum's collection, as well as capturing a diversity of experiences. According to Director Alice Stevenson of the DCHM, the museum understood that in order to “appeal to kids this age they needed to do character-based stories, basically, that would then open the door to a particular time

period. So they needed a character that had a childhood that is, you know, like a visitor who is a young kid who came to the museum and could empathize a little bit and at least identify with on a basic level.”<sup>604</sup> Early on, museum staff decided they “didn’t want to create a composite figure” and instead wanted to pull out stories of historical figures that the collections supported.<sup>605</sup>

Within the museum there are six personal narrative pavilions “each devoted to a person or a group of people representing a particular time in history.”<sup>606</sup> The characters span two centuries and each pavilion “tell[s] two stories, one focused on New York City, and the other on broader national and even global themes directly related to the local story.”<sup>607</sup> These pavilions provide opportunities for young visitors to connect and learn “history as a human story that begins in childhood.”<sup>608</sup>

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<sup>604</sup> Alice Stevenson, Director of the DiMenna Children’s History Museum, interview with author, New-York Historical Society, New York, New York, May 17, 2012.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid.

<sup>606</sup> New-York Historical Society Museum Library, *A Teacher’s Guide to the DiMenna Children’s History Museum*, 5. Other pavilions include a historic viewfinder which allows visitors to compare historic and present day photos, *Cast Your Vote* which focuses on electoral history, and *New York Inaugurates a President* which focuses on George Washington taking the presidential oath in Manhattan, and *American Dreamers* which takes an inclusive look at the contributions of New Yorkers: “Some were born here. Some moved here. Many became famous. Others didn’t. Today’s New Yorkers are making tomorrow’s history. What kind of history will you make?” Exhibit didactic, *American Dreamers*, DiMenna Children’s History Museum, N-YHS, based on field visit May 18, 2012.

<sup>607</sup> New-York Historical Society Museum Library, *A Teacher’s Guide to the DiMenna Children’s History Museum*, 5.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid.



As visitors journey through the museum, they are encouraged to touch anything they like, and, in the process interact with touch screens as they play computerized games, listen to audio recordings, and manipulate moveable exhibit didactics. In the process, visitors learn how race, class, and gender have affected childhood experiences in New York.<sup>609</sup> Children learn about the discrimination and prejudice James McCune Smith faced in his journey to becoming the first University trained black physician in the US; that poverty, homelessness, and labor were realities for many children; and that the urban setting of New York provided a childhood backdrop that differed from other parts of the country.

Despite the longevity, prestige, and affluence of the N-YHS in comparison to so many other institutions, the limits of its own collections has impacted the stories told in the DCHM. The mandate to create an exhibit based entirely on the museum's collections limited the ethnic diversity of the exhibitions, as well as, the historical timeline of the exhibit. For example, staff at N-YHS would have liked to tell the story of an Asian protagonist, but a substantial collection did not exist to facilitate the telling of such a story. Furthermore, the most recent protagonist within the

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<sup>609</sup> Visitors meet Cornelia Van Varick, a Dutch girl whose life spanned from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century; Alexander Hamilton, “a virtual orphan in the Caribbean” who started a new life in New York City; James McCune Smith, the first university-trained black doctor in the United States; Esteban Bellan, the first Latin American to play professional baseball in the United States; newsies who worked the streets of New York City in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and, orphan train riders who were transported westward beginning in the mid nineteenth century into the twentieth century.

museum is from the early twentieth century as the N-YHS collection “gets weaker after that period.”<sup>610</sup>

While the strengths of the DCHM will be more fully analyzed later within this chapter, its example of telling history through the story of children, and relying on items within its collection to do so, provides a useful, successful, and positive model for museums to reference. Of the museums I surveyed, 87 percent reported having items within their collections related to children. Opportunity exists for museums to reconsider their holdings and pull out objects to tell a fresh, new, and personal story about childhood.

One example of how one Southern California museum highlights objects related to the history of children and childhood is the Autry National Center’s use of a free pamphlet titled, *Your Guide to Children in the American West*. Within this guide a few objects that “illuminate what life was like for children in the American West” are highlighted including descriptions detailing what the objects tells us about childhood. For example, a pair of ice skates provide the opportunity for the pamphlet to speak about child leisure in the American West, and a child’s church dress allows curators to write on the role of African American children in the building of cultural institutions in the post-Civil War US.

As explained in the introduction to this pamphlet, the guide helps visitors explore “how children had a special place in the West, with communities developing

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<sup>610</sup> Louise Mirrer, President and CEO, N-YHS, interview with the author, New York, New York, May 15, 2012.

distinctive ways to welcome and raise children; how everyday objects reveal the experiences of children growing up in the West; the appeal of the mythic West to children, who became an important audience for Western popular culture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>611</sup> A guide such as this weaves the history of children within the overall themes of the museum by highlighting specific pieces that shed light on childhood. A supplemental approach such as this is a start many museums may consider who do not have the time, staff, or finances to significantly alter their exhibitions.

Despite the high percentage of museums within my study that have objects relevant to children in their collections, it became apparent that many museum professionals and volunteers felt that their low representation of children’s history was due to limited historical information or material culture. Perhaps objects exist, but not enough to support an effort such as that found in New York City, or, perhaps not diverse enough to support a pictorial guide covering childhood.

Whether those I interviewed felt “limited by what we have in our collection,” or that their collection “doesn’t necessarily lend itself to” exploring the history of being a child, a number of interviewees spoke optimistically regarding diversifying their collections to support the telling of such stories. For example, the executive director of a Mendocino county museum explained, “we’re limited by what we have

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<sup>611</sup> Autry National Center Museum of the American West, “Your Guide to Children in the American West,” pamphlet, obtained on August 24, 2012 visit. Other pamphlets in this series include “Your Guide to Horses in the American West” and “Your Guild to Women in the American West.”

in our collection, so, and that's a matter of, you know, seeking out more artifacts, expanding the collection to cover childhood better.”<sup>612</sup>

For some museums, the answer to limited material culture or historical information is to reach out to the community. During my interview with an executive director of a small, volunteer-run Ventura County museum, she acknowledged how their collections contained clothing to demonstrate “how they dressed” and photos of schoolchildren, but she shared how she might go about better utilizing the collection and eventually expanding it:

It's a matter of culling through the collections, see what I've got, and putting the word out because I would just bet that if I put the word out to the residents there are so many people who grew up here that we would probably get quite a few things. So, we have, like I said, we have dolls, we have photos of school classes, we have clothing, um, I'd have to really start working on it to figure out what all we got. It would be interesting. It's going to be an interesting project.<sup>613</sup>

The conclusion of this executive director that she could diversify her collections through “putting the word out” is my recommendation for museums who feel limited by the collections they house. If objects do not exist that shed light on the history of children and childhood, or if objects that exist “comprise mainly toys, games, dolls and beautiful clothes, all representing pleasant, happy or privileged childhoods,” then museums should take the initiative to seek out and acquire additional artifacts.<sup>614</sup>

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<sup>612</sup> Name withheld, phone interview with author, survey respondent #118, November 20, 2010; Name withheld, phone interview with the author, survey respondent #103, October 28, 2010.

<sup>613</sup> Name withheld, phone interview with the author, survey respondent #95, October 5, 2010.

In the acquisition of artifacts, however, museums must proceed with caution. As argued within Chapter 2, too often objects within museums tell us more about adults than children when it comes to childhood. Curator Lynette Townsend's study of children's collections at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and the Auckland War Memorial Museum concluded that while curators have collected objects related to children, "the thoughts, feelings and ideas of the children who used them have not."<sup>615</sup> How can museums better build their collections to speak not only to the experiences of childhood but to the individual perspectives of children? Invite children to participate in the collecting process.

In 1969, Chief Curator L. Thomas Frye at the Oakland Museum of California<sup>616</sup> initiated an "experimental program in contemporary collecting" by inviting sixth- and eighth-grade students from nine different East Bay school districts "to look around their homes and neighborhoods and select an everyday, commonplace object that for them symbolized each of three cultural constants—work, family and play."<sup>617</sup> Between January and June of 1969, students brought their item to The Oakland Museum and met with an adult docent who "interviewed each

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<sup>614</sup> Townsend, 49.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid.

<sup>616</sup> Then known as The Oakland Museum.

<sup>617</sup> L. Thomas Frye, "The Recent Past is Prologue," *Museum News* 53, No. 3 (November 1974), 27.

youngster, posing as visitors from the year 2069, who had no knowledge of their world and their objects.”<sup>618</sup>

Through this collecting initiative, some seventy-five to one hundred objects were collected and a 1969 exhibit, *A Children’s Collection for 2069 AD* was installed in the museum with the objects displayed, as well as quotations from the children.<sup>619</sup> Today, in the *Chevron History Hangout* area of the OMCA a display case is devoted to highlighting twenty-three of these items. To the right of the case is a tall, vertical, pink didactic with the heading “things kids collected” and in front of that didactic rests a binder with information on the displayed objects, adapted from the initial interviews.

Objects on display range from a Blue Chip Savings Book, a penny, pliers, and skateboard, to a light bulb, *Luden’s* Wild Cherry Cough Drops, and a clothespin. Within the overview didactic above the display, visitors learn the background to this collection:

In 1969, Chief Curator, L. Thomas Frye created a project called “Children Collect for 2069.” School children were asked to bring in objects that they felt might have significance in the future. They created a time capsule for the year 2069. They were directed to think about the use of the objects they selected. Were they used for work or for play? Did the object represent family? Here are some of the objects, along with the reasons why the students felt their choices were important.<sup>620</sup>

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<sup>618</sup> Frye, “The Recent Past is Prologue,” 27.

<sup>619</sup> L. Thomas Frye, personal e-mail to author, March 26, 2013; “Children’s Collection on Display,” *Daily Review*, December 23, 1969.

While only a select number of objects are on display, the entire collection could provide the needed material for a more substantial exhibit on children's culture in the 1960s. As docents interviewed child donors, they asked after the child's thoughts on the object, its background, what it represents, and the child's attitude to the object and why he or she chose to bring that object to the museum. Docents also asked after the future historical value of the object, and asked for an assessment of the object's worth. The success of this experiment rests in its involvement of children, its allowance for children to bring whatever they felt important (so as not to limited them to toys or playthings), and its focus on capturing the child's understanding of the object and the object's present relevance and future potential.

Interviews such as those held with the children at the OMCA can help museum curators gather the necessary data to develop exhibitions that provide richer context, background, and meaning to the objects on display. The Doll Oral History Project at The Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, New York, serves as another example of how interviewing donors can personalize museum text. For this project, interviews captured "vivid memories of play and provided a personal context for the dolls that elevated their value beyond the basic data of maker, year, and material."<sup>621</sup> Dorothy K. Washburn directed this project in 1987 and interviewed

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<sup>620</sup> "Things Kids Collected" exhibit didactic, *Chevron History Hangout*, Gallery of California History, Oakland Museum of California, based on visit to the museum by the author April 18, 2013.

<sup>621</sup> "Strong Connections," *Play Stuff Blog*, posted by Carol Sandler, Strong National Museum of Play, accessed March 1, 2014, available at [www.museumofplay.org/blog/play-stuff/2011/06/strong-connections/](http://www.museumofplay.org/blog/play-stuff/2011/06/strong-connections/)

mothers and daughters who played with dolls between 1900 and 1940. Efforts such as this capture perspective and meaning that is too often missing from museum exhibitions. Taking this example one step farther would be to not always rely on “the recollection [that] has been filtered through the memories of an adult,” but to engage present-day children in collecting initiatives and the recording of their perspective, stories, and history.<sup>622</sup>

Following this example, museum curators should start collecting objects relevant to children now and involve children in that process. As L. Thomas Frye argues, “Collecting objects of everyday life while they are current and available provides curators with the raw material for presenting and interpreting more recent phenomena and will supply curators of the future with unparalleled resources.”<sup>623</sup> Within his seminal work, *Introduction to Museum Work*, G. Ellis Burcaw also advocates that progressive museums look forward in their collecting practices: “collecting from today’s world for tomorrow’s makes sense.”<sup>624</sup>

Museum personnel of the present can help future curators achieve richer and fuller representations of childhood by actively collecting culture relevant to children

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<sup>622</sup> See Townsend, 48; The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis is another example of involving children in the building of museum collections having asked schoolchildren in 1928 to donate items to the museum. See “Museum Collection,” The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis, accessed March 1, 2014, available at <http://www.childrensmuseum.org/collection>

<sup>623</sup> Frye, “The Recent Past is Prologue,” 24.

<sup>624</sup> Burcaw, 61.



from present-day children. In addition to involving children in the building of museum collections, museums should also involve children in the production of museum exhibitions and programming, to which I next turn.

### **Co-producing History with Youth**

Chapter 4 illustrated how one museum shares authority with present-day youth by providing docent and leadership opportunities and recommended that in addition to creating junior docent opportunities, museums should consider the possibility of creating youth councils or committees that can represent the interest of young volunteers and stakeholders. In addition to junior docent programs and teen councils, there are several other ways that museums can share authority with youth who may not wish to enter such a committed relationship.

The OMCA history gallery has incorporated several interpretive techniques that allow children to leave their mark, and perspective, on the exhibit walls. An approximate 28,000 foot gallery, the OMCA history gallery reopened in May 2010, part of a \$62.2 million renovation of its three museum spaces (art, natural science, and history). The renovation invites visitors, both adult and child, to leave their story, perspective, and feedback and in the process many displays look co-produced. On the “Welcome to the Gallery of California History” interpretive panel, visitors learn “here you can explore peoples’ stories of arrivals and departures, and their

interactions with the land and the people already here. You can also explore the idea of coming to a California state of mind.”<sup>625</sup>

As visitors enter the gallery, they encounter a small display that explains museum exhibit design and etiquette. Within this display, visitors learn what not to touch or stand on as well as the overarching themes of the gallery and ways visitors can “conserve California’s history and culture.” One of the didactics presents the question, “why do some things look unfinished?” The answer reveals the centrality of visitors’ perspectives, voices, and opinions to the telling of history at the OMCA:

Because we need you, our visitors, to help us create the exhibits.

California history is made of the stories of all the people who lived in California over time, and people who are here today. People like you.

Throughout the gallery, you can leave your story, or contribute a thought to the conversation about California.

Some exhibits will be made over time, as you, our visitors, contribute your stories and ideas. We made them out of paper and materials that we can change easily, as you add your stories.<sup>626</sup>

The use of paper proto-types allows visitors to comment on potential exhibits that the OCMA staff may turn into permanent displays. Throughout the museum there are several areas for visitors to leave feedback, whether casting a vote on a particular issue with a poker chip, posting an opinion with an index card or sticky note, or

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<sup>625</sup> Exhibit Text, Gallery of California History, Oakland Museum of California, based on a field visit by the author to the museum on September 30, 2011.

<sup>626</sup> Ibid.

answering questions such as “how do you fix a broken system” or “what do you remember about the period 1960-1975?”

Towards one end of the Gallery of California History—the *Chevron History Hangout*—visitors are welcome to help curators identify artifacts. As an introductory panel explains to the public, “Welcome to Chevron History Hangout, a place where you can relax and take a closer look at the objects and what they can say about history. Come on in and play, and explore, and investigate our wonderful History Things.” Inside this area, visitors are encouraged to explore using all their senses and help absentee curators by examining historical artifacts. For example, one exhibit invites the help of visitors because “our clumsy curator knocked over a tray of artifacts. One thing fell in that doesn’t belong. Can you find which thing that is? Look for clues in the box with the tabs.”<sup>627</sup>

The importance of the visitor—and his or her perspective—continues towards the every end of the exhibit where visitors are provided the opportunity to record their story. At the Story Studio, visitors may “share your thoughts with the Oakland Museum of California” and watch the stories other museum visitors have left by way of a touch-screen monitor. As you enter the story studio, a screen allows you to watch yourself as you record your story as well as answer suggested prompts, such

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<sup>627</sup> Exhibit Didactic, “What Thing Doesn’t Belong,” *Chevron History Hangout*, Gallery of California History, Oakland Museum of California, site visit April 13, 2013.

as, Why did you or your family decide to come to California? Describe your journey to get here? What is your first memory of California?<sup>628</sup>

Adults and children alike participate in the recording of their personal history and once they record the story and choose to “share my story” other museum visitors can watch their story as if it were part of the permanent exhibit. Techniques such as these share authority with visitors and also bring a child’s perspective to the museum experience as children often take advantage of these opportunities. Whether leaving their interpretation, or perspective, by way of video story, 3x5 card, push pin, or drawing, children and adults alike have the opportunity to exert authority on various subjects and shape museum exhibition at the OMCA.

For children of all ages (but especially those too young to read and write), there are other ways to capture their perspective when it comes to museum meaning. A conference presentation at the Australian Association for Research in Education demonstrated the multiple ways that a child’s perspective can be obtain in the study of museum exhibitions whether through providing children with digital cameras to photograph, videorecord, or audiorecord their visit, inviting children to draw maps of their visit, or encouraging children to make art projects based on their visit.<sup>629</sup> At the OCMA, opportunities to draw animals European explorers might have discovered,

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<sup>628</sup> Computer Interactive, *California: To Be Continued* exhibition, Gallery of California History, Oakland Museum of California, Based on site visit April 13, 2013.

<sup>629</sup> Lynda Kelly, Sarah Main, Sue Dockett, Bob Perry, and Sue Heinrich, “Listening to young children’s voices in museum spaces,” conference presentation at the Association for Active Educational Researchers, 2006.

or, design a dress in the Hollywood-era fashion studio, allow literate and illiterate children alike to interact with the museum and contribute something to the walls of the exhibitions.

Such multimedia approaches to capturing the perspective of children can provide the content for stand-alone exhibitions. In the exhibition *Coming Together in Difficult Times: Farmworkers' Lives in Photographs*, “children ages 4 to 18, took pictures of family members, town elders, teens watching TV, local landmarks and their beloved schools” to create an exhibition as a method of coping with the closure of the only elementary school in Knights Landing, a Yolo County farm community. The exhibition, comprised of thirty black-and-white photos taken and developed by children, communicated a story from the perspective of children and, as curator Natalia DeebSossa contends, shared “the story they wanted to tell about their town, what they want people to know about it and its struggles.”<sup>630</sup>

California museum personnel would benefit from the multi-sensory approach these researchers and museums have undertaken as they strive to capture child perspectives. California museum personnel can work head-on with children in the co-production of history and creation of exhibits. As covered in Chapter 4, the OMCA involved teens in the creation of the *Cool Remixed* exhibition, and several other institutions have made comparable strides in the co-production of exhibitions.

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<sup>630</sup> Dixie Reid, “Farm Kids’ photos show Knights Landing Life,” *The Sacramento Bee* 7 December 2010. Natalia DeebSossa is a professor of Chicana Studies at the University of California, Davis. This exhibition was on display at the Davis Art Center from December 7th through December 17, 2010.

For example, The Madison Children's Museum in Madison, Wisconsin, was founded by early childhood specialists in 1980 and has involved children "in all aspects of exhibit development: as researchers, designers, content experts, prototype testers, makers and occasionally builders."<sup>631</sup>

Children can also participate in the creation of exhibits as peer reviewers. For example, with the opening of the DCHM, the attendance of zero to thirteen-year-old visitors increased by 500% in the first six months of its opening. Part of the museum's success can be attributed to the involvement of children in the creation of the museum. In the development of the pavilions, protagonists, and computer interactives that make up the experience of the DCHM, staff at N-YHS utilized focus groups of school students, mothers, and children. Children were especially integral in the creation of interactives. "We added games and subtracted games based on the children's reactions," Director Louise Mirrer explained, "Children were really instrumental to the games, the interactive that we ended up with. Some of the things that our experts thought the kids would love, the kids didn't love at all."<sup>632</sup> The museum continues to take into consideration how children interact with the museum space as "we want to challenge them; we don't want to frustrate them."<sup>633</sup> Thus, not

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<sup>631</sup> "KidShare: Collecting, Presenting, and Preserving Children's Culture," *Center for the Future of Museums* (blog), posted Tuesday, September 25, 2012, accessed March 8, 2014, <http://futureofmuseums.blogspot.com/2012/09/kidshare-collecting-presenting-and.html>

<sup>632</sup> Mirrer, interview.

<sup>633</sup> Stevenson, interview.

only were children part of the creation, but they continue to be part of the ongoing evaluation of this museum's success in its representation and presentation of children's history.

Through inviting children to help design exhibits, lead tours, serve as representatives on volunteer councils, or participate in focus groups, museums can better ensure that the interests of children are reflected. With children involved in the production of knowledge, *tough* topics that are so important to the overall study of our nation's history can be successfully broached.

### **Reconsidering Censorship**

While finalizing which protagonists would become part of the eight pavilions at the DCHM, some historians warned staff that the story of the orphan train riders and the newsies was “really some tough history.”<sup>634</sup> Despite that warning, Director Alice Stevenson has found that kids between eight and fourteen “like to hear about struggle” and those two pavilions are among the most popular.<sup>635</sup> During my observation of this museum space I, too, witnessed how children swarmed to those interactives and raced to the two pavilions with enthusiasm. I watched as several children role-played on the orphan train, as they have the opportunity to “sit next to a

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<sup>634</sup> Stevenson, interview.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid.

cutout of a composite orphan on a three-dimensional train, listen to train noises and see a map of places along the routes.”<sup>636</sup>

During my five-day study of the DCHM, I observed just how successful these exhibitions resonated with children. While observing a second-grade class with twenty-seven students, I watched as children completed their first assignment to go off on their own, find a thing from the past, and come back and share. I noted that one girl skipped towards the newsstand proclaiming, “This is going to be so cool!” while another girl approached the orphan train and tried very hard to shake the outstretched, green, wooden hand of the female-child cutout.

When the overhead audio of “All aboard!” was triggered by the motion of the children at the Orphan Train Riders Pavillion, a girl in pink declared, “Oh! We’re on a Train.” One male adult chaperone role played with the second graders at that pavilion as though they were actual orphans on the train. One girl asked if he would adopt her, to which he replied, “yes, I’m going to adopt you all”<sup>637</sup> The chaperone continued to pretend as he asked the children if he could give chocolates to the “little orphans.”<sup>638</sup>

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<sup>636</sup> Felicia R. Lee, “Historical Society to Open a Children’s Museum,” *The New York Times* January 22, 2010.

<sup>637</sup> Field notes, DiMenna Children’s History Museum, New-York Historical Society, May 17, 2012.

<sup>638</sup> Ibid; From my study, children were not the only visitors to enjoy and connect with these two pavilions in particular. For example, I came to know one of the security guards at N-YHS. This guard had emigrated from Africa five years earlier and joined the museum about four to five months prior to my visit. He took me over to the



The stories presented at the DCHM are unquestionably about children who overcome tough challenges. Yet, children are not solely symbols; they are actors. The breadth of experience captured in the museum provides children the opportunity to explore the histories of children of various ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds. The variety of experiences represented allow children to see other children in a wide range of roles (such as victim, leader, activist, delinquent, wage earner, family member, dreamer, and student) and consider an equal range of emotions (such as fear, excitement, frustration, anger, happiness, and sadness). For example, children can play an interactive game where they attempt to survive for three days as either a male or female newsie. At the end of each day, the player must decide how to spend his or her money and deal with the looming threat of bullies, the daily expense of purchasing more newspapers, and the uncertainty of whether or not he or she will sell enough papers.

Death, discrimination, poverty, broken families, religious persecution, and immigration are themes that are explored through the lens of childhood.<sup>639</sup> The struggles that many children faced are addressed head on through audio clips, photographs, objects, computer interactives, and didactics. At times, the hardship

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newsies pavilion and with enthusiasm explained how he, too, had been a newsie for two years when he first came to New York.

<sup>639</sup> Interestingly, one of the earlier suggested characters who did not make the final cut, James Beekman, would have represented the rising middle class following the American Revolution and would have been a window into the life of a wealthy family and the “individualized education” and travel that accompanied such wealth. See Lee H. Skolnick Architecture + Design Partnership, *New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children’s Gallery 100% Conception Design* (April 29, 2009), 15.

underpinning most of these stories may appear as a stark contrast to the personal experiences children bring to these exhibits. The museum's focus on how children have navigated challenges—and the role of adults in creating challenges (such as factory owners) or trying to relief hardship (such as the Children's Aid Society)—and overcome, or survived, hardship brings a positive, encouraging, and inspiring undercurrent to the exhibition. And while there are displays that examine play and home life—such as what that may have meant for a seventeenth-century Dutch child in New Amsterdam—the eventual exploration of themes such as peer culture (in addition to the peer culture of newsies that is alluded to), child consumerism, and family life would ensure that the histories presented are balanced in their representation.

The exhibits at the DCHM also demonstrate how the reality of childhood often fails to meet the ideal. For example, one of the exhibit headings at the Orphan Train Pavilion reads “Children without Childhoods; Sending Poor City Kids to Farms and Families Across the Country.” As the didactic continues, it details the harsh realities faced by some New York youth:

Childhood ended early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Illness and poverty left many New York City children on their own. Thousands were homeless. Others had families, but fended for themselves. Many stayed in orphanages—some *actual* orphans, some kids left by parents who couldn't support them. The Children's Aid Society tried to help, sending needy kids to rural families. It hoped to provide stable homes for children and workers for farms while reducing the number of “wild street kids.”<sup>640</sup>

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<sup>640</sup> Exhibit Text, *DiMenna Children's History Museum*, based on a visit to the museum by the author May 17, 2012.

As children sit aboard the orphan train and “look out” onto a flat-screen monitor with its changing view of the landscape (to simulate the train moving), visitors overhear a conversation between several children on the train. Through this conversation, hopes and fears are articulated as well as authentic sounds (such as the train) reproduced. Above the seats, handwritten letters from orphan train riders are displayed so that visitors can read the actual words of children. In a didactic titled, “How’s It Going?” visitors learn that “The Children’s Aid Society encouraged kids to stay in touch and share their experiences. Most sent cheery reports. But some kids were unhappy, ran away, or pleaded to change families.”<sup>641</sup> From my observation at the DCHM, children enjoy exploring the various pavilions, interacting with the touch screens and, in the process, *learning* the history that is being presented. Children connect with and successfully navigate the *tough history* that they are encountering.

There are other examples of tough history being presented with a child-audience in mind. For example, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s exhibition, *Remember the Children: Daniel’s Story*—an exhibit crafted and installed in 1992 for youth ages eight and older—demonstrates that if planned carefully, tough history can be presented in ways that children can relate to and understand.

Within *Daniel’s Story*, the story of a fictionalized family’s experience during the Holocaust is presented from the perspective of child, Daniel, who grew up in Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1945. As visitors enter the exhibition, a didactic

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<sup>641</sup> “How’s it Going?” exhibit text, DiMenna Children’s History Museum, based on a visit by the author May 17, 2012.

clarifies that “this is the story of a boy named Daniel and how he survived the Holocaust. It is based on the stories of children who experienced the Holocaust in Germany, the Lodz Ghetto and the concentration camp at Auschwitz.”<sup>642</sup>

Taking a multisensory approach, the design of the exhibit “is based on historical imagery gathered from family photo albums, documentary sources, and pictorial diaries of the period. Daniel’s diary entries, which serve as the exhibition’s primary text, are based on the wartime writings of young people and on the memories of some of those who survived.”<sup>643</sup> In the crafting of this exhibit, museum professionals sought the input of child psychiatrists, educators, interpreters, and a mixed group of schoolchildren representing public, private, suburban, and inner city schools.<sup>644</sup> As one of the exhibit designers shares, “*Daniel’s Story* is sensitive to young visitors, telling children what they will see before they see it. Visitors learn from the beginning that Daniel survives to share his story.”<sup>645</sup>

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<sup>642</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Remember the Children: Daniel’s Story,” virtual tour, 9:47, accessed March 8, 2014, available at: <http://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/museum-exhibitions/remember-the-children-daniels-story/video>.

<sup>643</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Remember the Children: Daniel’s Story,” accessed November 23, 2013, <http://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/museum-exhibitions/remember-the-children-daniels-story>.

<sup>644</sup> Ibid.

<sup>645</sup> “Daniel’s Story,” Museum Exhibitions, Darcie C. Fohrman webpage, accessed March 20, 2014, available at <http://www.darciefohrman.com/projects/daniels-story>

The input of children was valued in the creation of this exhibition. For example, a member of the design team shared that “children did not relate to Daniel until they added a diary written in the script.”<sup>646</sup> Unlike the N-YHS, the US Holocaust Museum did use a composite character and what resulted from this collaboration is a staple of the US Holocaust Museum that charts the impact of the Holocaust on one, Jewish eleven-year-old as visitors follow his journey from a middle-class German home, to the Ghetto, to the concentration camp. “Scary Changes,” as the title of one didactic reads, are faced head on as visitors witness the agency that is slowly taken from Daniel. By the time visitors enter the concentration camp, even Daniel’s diary is to be surrendered a long with other sentimental belongings and, most importantly, contact with his mother and sister.

The benefit of including Daniel as a vessel by which to discuss how the Holocaust affected children is reflected in the notecards children fill out after seeing the exhibits. For one child, the exhibition served as a point of connection as the child related his or her own difficult heritage, specifically the Trail of Tears, with Daniel’s: “I know how you feel, Daniel[.] My ancestors were murdered also.”<sup>647</sup> For another child visitor, the story of Daniel helped him or her realize the price of silence and the reality of the Holocaust’s impact: “Daniel, After hearing your story I feel the pain I now know how bad it all was. I can not imagine how painful all of that would be. It

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<sup>646</sup> Adrienne Kertzer, *My Mother’s Voice: Children, Literature, and the Holocaust* (Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, Ltd, 2002), 148.

<sup>647</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Remember the Children: Daniel’s Story,” virtual tour.

shouldn't have been ignored. I am glad you were one to Survive! Be Proud.” And for another, the exhibit provided a forum for the child to express his or her thoughts on prejudice: “I am happy that you have survived [*sic*]. Whoever is prejudice [*sic*] to anybody is wrong [*sic*].” Within this exhibition, Daniel is, in part, used symbolically, but the richness of the exhibits breadth and depth into the life of one composite Jewish child allows children to make meaningful connections and begin to learn how to navigate, comprehend, and internalize such a difficult history and narrative.

There are a number of positive examples such as *Daniel's Story* where museum professionals carefully embrace *tough history* head on and create meaningful exhibits that engage children and start early conversations on inequality, social justice, and the politics of identity. Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial in Arlington, Virginia, provides another positive example where staff introduce slavery to children early on. There, staff have found great results in their approach to broaching such a complex, difficult, and frightening subject. Arlington House historian Karen Byrne contends that introducing “dialogues on slavery” has proven less difficult with young audiences. “Historians and educators at historic sites,” Byrne argues, “have encountered substantial obstacles in their attempts to establish meaningful dialogues on the history of slavery and race relations in the United States. At times, adult audiences find the subject of slavery so painful that

they are reluctant to engage in the very discussions that should occur in the nation's historic places.”<sup>648</sup>

Through her article, Byrne demonstrates how Arlington invites children to discuss the subject of slavery using the historic house as an artifact and inviting critical thinking among the young visitors. Through entering work and living spaces of the enslaved and performing tasks that would have been assigned to the enslaved, “children are encouraged to draw their own conclusions about the nature of slavery as it existed at Arlington.” Byrne cites the success of the program and the positive response it has received, and asserts that the difficult subject of slavery needs to be introduced early on: “Future efforts to include children in conversations about slavery and race must be given serious consideration, for such efforts will undoubtedly result in a generation of adults less ill at ease with the subject.”<sup>649</sup>

Museum personnel should feel empowered to reconsider what elements of children's history they censor, or, which historical moments they exclude. As these examples demonstrate, through careful collaboration and the solicitation of children's advice, responsible exhibitions dealing with the darker sides of history can be effectively created and installed, and, in the process, facilitate meaningful museum connections with young visitors.

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<sup>648</sup> Karen Byrne, “The Power of Place: Using Historic Structures to Teach Children about Slavery,” *CRM* 23, no 3 (2000): 9.

<sup>649</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

## Watch What Happens

While driving to a conference presentation in Woodland, California, I was listening to one of my favorite original cast recordings, *Newsies*. I saw *Newsies* on Broadway while researching the DCHM and the musical's representation of the newsie strike of 1899 served as an appropriate comparison to the newsie exhibition at the DCHM. Perhaps it was the general fear of presenting or an unnerving worry that my research would not be well received, but in my state of pre-presentation anxiety I latched onto the lyrics of one particular song on the original cast recording, "Watch What Happens." Listening to the lyrics, I immediately felt a connection to the fictionalized, novice journalist, Katherine Plumber, who musically laments as she struggles to adequately capture the important movement she sees unfolding before her:

"Write what you know," so they say.  
All I know is I don't know what to write  
Or the right way to write it.  
This is big, lady, don't screw it up!  
This is not some little vaudeville I'm reviewing.  
Poor little kids versus rich, greedy sourpusses:  
Ha! It's a cinch! It can practic'ly write itself,  
And let's pray it does, 'cause as I may have mentioned,  
I have no clue what I'm doing!<sup>650</sup>

Katherine continues to talk about the importance of the story she is covering and the invisibility of those she is advocating on behalf of:

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<sup>650</sup> Jack Feldman, "Watch What Happens" (music by Alan Menken), *Newsies The Musical* Original Broadway Cast Recording, Ghostlight Records, 2012. Lyrics reprinted with permission and in consultation with Jack Feldman.



Thousands of children exploited, invisible,  
Speak up, take a stand,  
And there's someone to write about it --  
That's how things get better.  
Give life's little guys some ink,  
And when it dries  
Just watch what happens!  
Those kids will live and breathe right on the page,  
And once they're center stage  
You watch what happens!<sup>651</sup>

Upon hearing the song as I drove to my presentation, I felt as though someone finally understood how I feel on the subject of my dissertation. Often, I have related to Katherine, her self-doubt, her deep fear of failing those she is advocating on behalf of, and her committed belief that the story matters. In time and in the writing of my dissertation, I finally listened to Katherine's advice and resolved that getting anything on paper is a start in validating the lives of the invisible.

Throughout this dissertation, I have advocated that attention be given to the perspective and history of children in the representation of the past and in the operation of museums at present. While I've made several recommendations that involve small steps, obstacles such as space, funding, and lack of visitor or administrative support can still undermine what I have suggested. Inviting children to participate takes the buy-in of parents, administrators, and, at times, local school officials. Expanding collections takes the time of staff and, at times, a certain level of

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<sup>651</sup> Jack Feldman, "Watch What Happens."

funding. Broadening the stories that are told and seeking academic peer review demand even more time.

I was once asked at a conference if I really thought it feasible that on a forty-five minute house tour (where docents already struggle to cover the general history, decorative arts, architecture, and adult history of the house), docents could also address information on children. In my response to this veteran museum professional, I cited the many examples that exist of museums slowly integrating the stories of the enslaved, the servant class, or women. Today, the argument that “there isn’t time” to cover slavery at a plantation museum or a servant at a historic house museum would not receive much attention, traction, or respect in most circles; I hope that in time the public will come to expect learning about the historical contributions of children when they visit historic sites and museums in that same way. In short, I think it is feasible to craft balanced, dynamic interpretation despite time limitations as what I am advocating for is tight, economical scholarship related to the history of children and childhood.

How, or the speed at which, museums move towards richer, fuller representations of childhood will be an individual journey for each museum. While this dissertation has been strict in its hope for museums, hopefully it has appeared understanding, empathetic, and aware of the challenges that may be temporarily insurmountable. My hope is that this dissertation has encouraged museum staff and volunteers to believe that the stories of children matter, the stories of children can be different than some of us have ever considered, and the stories of children can be

efficiently and effectively woven into the interpretive thread of any museum. Central to all of this is my belief that present-day children are invaluable partners to the production of such history and what matters most is the recognition that interpretation can, and should, be improved. As Katherine concludes towards the end of her musical confrontation with writer's block, insecurity, fear, and desperate desire to do right, "It can't be any worse than how it's been, and it just so happens that we just might win, so whatever happens, let's begin!"<sup>652</sup>

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<sup>652</sup> Jack Feldman, "Watch What Happens."

## **Appendix A**

### **Survey Methodology**

I solicited museums accredited through the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) to ensure I represented museums that had the resources, staffing, and professionalism to attain accreditation. To be accredited through the AAM, a museum pays an application fee and then enters an accreditation process which takes approximately 12 to 19 months. The accreditation process requires a museum application, a self study completed by the museum, a two-day site visit by peer reviewers (the Visiting Committee), and the submission of a report by the Visiting Committee to the Accreditation Commission.<sup>653</sup>

In 2012, 15 percent of AAM accredited museums are located in the Western region of the United States. In 2012, the Accreditation Commission reviewed 135 institutions and awarded accreditation to 72 institutions, “tabled” 24 institutions (meaning that those institutions needed to overcome a few obstacles which the commission determined could be resolved within the space of a year or less), did not deny any institutions, and reported that 39 institutions’ accreditation process were still in progress.<sup>654</sup>

The AAM analyzed “reasons for tabling” between 2007 and 2011 and listed institutional planning (35 percent), collections stewardship (21 percent), and

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<sup>653</sup>“Accreditation Process and Timeline,” American Alliance of Museums, accessed December 18, 2012, [www.aam-us.org/resources/assessment-programs/accreditation/process-and-timeline](http://www.aam-us.org/resources/assessment-programs/accreditation/process-and-timeline).

<sup>654</sup>“Statistics,” American Alliance of Museums, accessed November 13, 2012, [www.aam-us.org/resources/assessment-programs/accreditation/statistics](http://www.aam-us.org/resources/assessment-programs/accreditation/statistics).

financial stability (12 percent) as the top reasons for tabling. Facilities and risk management, governance, other, mission, code of ethics, and interpretation were other areas which merited tabling. Concerns over interpretation only accounted for 1 percent of tabled decisions.<sup>655</sup>

According to the AAM, accredited museums gain “national recognition of your museum’s commitment to excellence and the highest professional standards of museum operation and public service,” and “a positive public image and validation of your museum’s work and accomplishments.”<sup>656</sup> To be accredited is both an achievement and a challenge and expires after ten years. According to a 2010 press release, “of the nation’s estimated 17,500 museums, 777 are currently accredited.”<sup>657</sup> I contacted approximately seventy-two AAM accredited museums to participate within my survey, and fifty-seven chose to do so.

As becoming accredited through the AAM is a lengthy, expensive, and demanding process—a process which few California museums have navigated—I found it important to solicit museums that either had not attained, or had not tried for, accreditation. To broaden my awareness of California museums in an objective way, I approached museums listed in the *Directory of Historic House Museums in*

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<sup>655</sup> Ibid.

<sup>656</sup> Ibid.

<sup>657</sup> “American Association of Museums Announces Re-Accreditation of N.C. Museum of History,” North Carolina Museum of History, October, 25, 2010, <http://www.ncdcr.gov/ncmoh/Home.aspx>.

the *United States* by Patricia Chambers Walker and Thomas Graham,<sup>658</sup> all twenty districts in the California State Park System, as well as applicable institutional members of the California Association of Museums (CAM).<sup>659</sup> While I solicited museums that had a history focus when referencing the list of museums accredited through AAM or affiliated with CAM, I approached children's museums throughout the state—despite their tendency to be science focused—in the event that history-based components existed. I also have thirteen surveys which are the result of museum referrals or subjective choices made on my part.

I distributed my surveys in three phases over the course of twenty-two months.<sup>660</sup> In **Phase 1** (August 2009 and March 2010), I contacted State park

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<sup>658</sup> Published in 2000, this compilation lists and provides information on house museums that met a criteria established by Walker and Graham for inclusion: “the house must be exhibited and interpreted as a dwelling place; the house must be open to the public on a regular basis, or readily available to the general public by appointment; houses used as historical society or other organization headquarters are included only if a significant portion of the building is exhibited and interpreted as a home.” Patricia Chambers Walker and Thomas Graham, *Directory of Historic House Museums in the United States* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2000), ix.

<sup>659</sup> To be a member solely requires annual membership dues based on the “organization’s operating budget.” “Membership,” California Association of Museums, accessed December 18, 2012, <https://www.calmuseums.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.ViewPage&pageId=474>.

<sup>660</sup> My target population was persons involved with the production of knowledge at California museum sites that interpret history. Because of the inconsistency in museum structure, organization, and resources that exist among California museums, I decided to conduct a snowball sampling. Meaning, when there was a choice of departments at an institution, I sought out education or interpretation departments. If it was clear such departments did not exist, I would try to find a specific contact at

districts, AAM accredited “historic house sites” and “history museums,” and house museums listed in the directory compiled by Patricia Chambers Walker and Thomas Graham.<sup>661</sup> During Phase 1, I received 86 surveys and conducted 16 follow-up interviews.

During **Phase 2** (May 2010 – January 2011), I contacted institutions from Phase 1 who did not return a survey, and invited them to participate. I also invited institutional members of CAM—except museums which fell into the categories of art, natural history, anthropology, botanic garden, science related or airspace nature unless online research suggested they had history exhibits—to participate. During this phase, I also contacted twenty-six children’s museums in the event they interpreted history. From this phase, I received 141 surveys (9 from children’s museums) and conducted 56 follow-up interviews.<sup>662</sup>

In **Phase 3** (April 2011 – June 2011), I sent out thirty surveys. The purpose of this phase was to revisit my lists and ensure that I had made a good faith effort to contact every applicable museum on those lists. This phase also afforded the

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the museum, such as an executive director, and mail it to the attention of that individual. If I could not find department or staff information, I mailed the survey to the attention of the museum staff. Although I initially hoped to target the same museum positions or departments, this method of sampling increased sample size and diversified participation.

<sup>661</sup> See Patricia Chambers Walker and Thomas Graham, *Directory of Historic House Museums in the United States* Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2000. In general, I attempted to exclude house museums from my study that never served as a dwelling for children.

<sup>662</sup> Unlike Phase 1, the second mailing of the survey to Phase 2 participants occurred within Phase 2.

opportunity to reach out to new listings on the AAM and CAM lists, as well as to try once more to reach museums where previous mailing attempts had failed due to inaccurate addresses, contact specific State Parks whose overall district did not respond in Phase 1, identify National Park Services sites that I had yet to contact, as well as contact any museums not previously identified. During this phase, I received eleven surveys and conducted no follow-up interviews.

Throughout each of the phases, I mailed surveys to museums that were not necessarily on any single list. This group eventually totaled twenty-four invitations and resulted in seventeen received surveys. Within the first two phases, I followed-up with museums that had not responded and eventually mailed a second survey to those sites if it remained unclear why they had not participated.<sup>663</sup>

Of the 238 survey responses that I received over the course of two years, six responses were discounted as outliers; therefore, 232 surveys were deemed suitable for analysis and all ratios pulled from my survey data reflect this selection of 232 total survey responses. I conducted follow-up interviews with approximately 30 percent of survey respondents. My selection of interviewees was predicated on survey respondent interest, survey respondent availability, and my own prioritization as outlined in Chapter 1.

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<sup>663</sup> In the case of children's museums, I assumed their lack of participation was due to the survey not being applicable to their site.



## Appendix B: Survey Sample, Distributed 2009 - 2011

### **Children and their Education and Representation in California Museums**

The purpose of this survey is twofold: First, to determine the collective representation of **children (defined here as infants to age 18)** in California history museum exhibits and programs; second, to learn more about the history of museum education programming for children. **Please select the best answer or multiple answers where appropriate.** Thank you so much for your participation and time!

#### **Background Information**

1. What is the name of your institution? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What are the names and titles of the individuals who completed this form?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How many paid staff members does your institution have?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Does your institution operate more than one museum or historic site?
  - a. Yes, \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No
5. Which best describes the museum(s) your institution operates?
  - a. General Museum
  - b. History Museum
  - c. Historic House / Site
  - d. Culturally Specific Museum
  - e. Maritime
  - f. Military
  - g. Other, \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the annual attendance to your museum(s)? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Which demographic groups best reflect the visitors to your museum(s) (please select all that apply)?
  - a. Adults
  - b. Families
  - c. Elementary school tours
  - d. School tours, other \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Other, \_\_\_\_\_

8. Please select all educational/interpretive programs your institution currently offers on a routine basis and note how often each program is made available (bi-monthly, weekly, daily, etc).
- a. Docent led tours
  - b. Self-guided tours
  - c. School tours
  - d. Outreach programs for school children
  - e. Living History Programs
9. What is the interpretive period for your museum(s)? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Which field(s) of history do you feel best represents your site's interpretive themes?
- a. Cultural History
  - b. Ethnic History
  - c. Family History
  - d. Military History
  - e. Political history
  - f. Social History
  - g. Western History
  - h. Other, \_\_\_\_\_

**Representation of Children at your Museum(s)**

11. Were children present during the historical period(s) that your museum(s) interpret?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
12. What were the ethnicities of the children (please select all that apply)?
- a. American Indian
  - b. Asian
  - c. African American
  - d. European descent, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. White American
  - f. Latino
  - g. Other, \_\_\_\_\_
13. Have members of your staff conducted research regarding children at the site?
- a. Yes
  - b. No

14. Please indicate where representation of children at your site occurs (please select all that apply):
- a. exhibits
  - b. docent led tours for the general audience
  - c. self-guided tours for the general audience
  - d. onsite educational programming for schoolchildren
  - e. out reach programs for schoolchildren
  - f. Other, \_\_\_\_\_
15. Is there a specific tour, educational program, or exhibit dealing with the history of children?
- a. Yes, \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No
16. How is children's history interpreted at your site (please select all that apply)?
- a. Through material culture (such as toys, utensils, clothes, etc)
  - b. Through their own voices / words (excerpts from diaries)
  - c. Through the viewpoint of others (their parents, their teachers, etc)
  - d. Their history/experiences are not interpreted at our site
17. Does your institution have archival or material culture collections pertaining to children?
- a. Archival Material
  - b. Material Culture
  - c. Both
  - d. Neither
18. Is the material \_\_\_\_\_ (please select all that apply).
- a. Held in collections
  - b. Available for research
  - c. Occupying a preeminent display location in your museum
  - d. Other, \_\_\_\_\_
19. Please select the types of archival or material culture objects your institution has if applicable.
- a. Toys
  - b. Clothes
  - c. Utensils
  - d. Furniture
  - e. Literature / Magazines
  - f. Diaries / Letters (written by children)
  - g. Other, \_\_\_\_\_

20. If applicable, within which themes do you discuss the history and role of children?

- a. Captivity / Slavery
- b. Economy
- c. Education
- d. Everyday life
- e. Family life
- f. Politics
- g. Religion
- h. War
- i. Other, \_\_\_\_\_

21. How are children represented at your site (please select all that apply)?

- a. As individuals
- b. As family members
- c. As wage earners
- d. As slaves / captives
- e. As consumers
- f. As laborers
- g. As political participants
- h. As students
- i. As at play
- j. Other, \_\_\_\_\_

22. Does your site interpret how the meaning of childhood has changed over time?

- a. Yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. No

23. Does your site explore the history of children through any of these historical questions / discussions (please select all that apply)?

- a. Parent / child relations
- b. The history of childhood
- c. The role of gender in shaping childhood experiences
- d. The role of ethnicity in shaping childhood experiences
- e. The role of class in shaping childhood experiences
- f. The influence of children on society
- g. Other, \_\_\_\_\_

### **Education of Children at your Museum(s)**

24. When did your museum open to the public? \_\_\_\_\_
25. When did your museum begin offering docent led tours? \_\_\_\_\_
26. When did your museum begin offering school tours? \_\_\_\_\_
27. When did your museum begin offering outreach programs to schools? \_\_\_\_\_
28. What types of activities do you use to teach visiting children (please select all that apply)?
- a. Role playing
  - b. Compare / Contrast activities (i.e. comparing the present to the past)
  - c. Hands-on activities (i.e. making soap, handling objects, playing games)
  - d. Other, \_\_\_\_\_

### **Concluding Questions:**

29. On a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high), please rate the centrality of children's history to interpretation at your site. \_\_\_\_\_
30. If children are not represented at your site, what are some reasons?
- a. Limited historical information
  - b. Limited material culture
  - c. Lack of interest from visitors
  - d. A future goal not yet implemented
  - e. Other, \_\_\_\_\_
31. If you do not mind this survey being followed up by a phone call or email, please provide the preferred method of contact (phone/email) and your availability: \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you have any additional comments you'd like to share regarding your present programs or goals for the future? Please feel free to use the back of this sheet to record additional information. I look forward to learning about your museum!**

## Appendix C: Survey Results

Below, I have listed survey responses to interval or nominal level questions within my survey. Questions 1, 2, 9, and 31 (available in Appendix B) were deemed unquantifiable and not included below. As previously noted, 71 of the institutions surveyed operate more than one museum or historic site. Subsequently, the “number of respondents” refers to the number of respondents that selected a particular answer, not the number of museums each answer represents. For a thorough methodology, please see Appendix A (Survey Methodology).

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### Question 3 from Children and their Education and Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "How many paid staff members does your institution have?" Below, I have given the number of survey respondents that correspond to the number or range of total paid staff, as well as identified how many respondents left this question blank. The definition I'm using for total paid staff is the number of all staff members that receive remuneration regardless of number of hours worked. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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Total Paid Staff	Number of Institutions
<hr/>	
0	48
1	21
2	31
3	19
4	12
5-9	43
10-19	28
20-29	6
30-39	7
40-49	3
50-59	1
60-69	4
70-79	1
80-89	0
90-99	2
100 and above	2
Left Blank	4
Not Applicable	0

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**Question 4** from Children and their Education and  
Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question:  
"Does your institution operate more than one museum or  
historic site?" In the table below, I have given the total  
number of respondents that correspond to the answers  
given, as well as identified the number of respondents  
that left this question blank or marked it not applicable.  
The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected  
between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Operate Multiple Sites?</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
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Yes	71
No	161
Left Blank	0
Not Applicable	0

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**Question 5** from Children and their Education and Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "Which best describes the museum(s) your institution operates?" In the table below, I have given the total number of museums that correspond to the various options provided, as well as identified the number of respondents that left the question blank or marked it not applicable. Each survey respondent could select multiple definitions. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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Type of Institution	Number of Respondents
General Museum	17
History Museum	102
Historic House / Site	107
Culturally Specific Museum	29
Maritime	5
Military	4
Other*	48
Left Blank	0
Not Applicable	0

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\*Popular answers included art museums/galleries (10), children's museums (6), natural history museums (4), or gardens/nature learning centers (3).

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**Question 6** from Children and their Education and  
Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question:

"What is the annual attendance to your museum(s)?"

Below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to a particular range of annual museum attendance, as well as identified respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. I have also noted any outliers. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Total Annual Attendance</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
500 or fewer	8
501 - 1,000	11
1,001 - 5,000	60
5,001 - 10,000	35
10,001 - 20,000	30
20,001 - 30,000	14
30,001 - 40,000	5
40,001 - 50,000	6
50,001 - 60,000	4
60,001 - 70,000	4
70,001 - 80,000	4
80,001 - 90,000	1
90,001 - 100,000	6
100,001 - 200,000	8
200,001 - 300,000	5
300,001 - 400,000	2
400,001 - 500,000	2
500,001 - 600,000	0
600,001 - 700,000	1
Left Blank	22
Outliers	2
Not Applicable	2

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While 208 surveys answered this question, only 206 were considered in the chart above as two were determined to be outliers: a state park in a retail, service context that receives 4 to 7 million visitors per year and an online museum that irregularly hosts temporary exhibits.

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**Question 7** from Children and their Education and  
Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question:  
"Which demographic groups best reflect the visitors to  
your museum(s) (please select all that apply)?" In the  
table below, I have given the demographic groups and the  
corresponding number of survey respondents who  
selected that option, as well as identified the number of  
respondents that left this question blank or marked it not  
applicable. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses  
collected between 2009 and 2011. Respondents were  
invited to select all applicable answers.

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<b>Demographic Groups</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Adults	205
Families	209
Elementary school tours	197
School tours	117
Other*	89
Left Blank	1
Not Applicable	0

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\*Other groups listed by survey respondents included, but  
were not limited to, senior groups, commercial tour  
groups, home school groups, boy scout troops, special  
needs groups, college students, individual children, youth  
groups, descendent groups, and summer camps.

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**Question 8** from Children and their Education and Representation in  
California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "Please select all educational/interpretive programs your institution currently offers on a routine basis and note how often each program is made available (bi-monthly, weekly, daily, etc)?" In the table below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to the various types of programs, as well as identified the number of respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011. Survey respondents were invited to select all applicable answers.

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<b>Type of Programs</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Docent led tours	192
Self-guided tours	163
School tours	202
Outreach programs for school children	106
Living History Programs	79
Left Blank	4
Not Applicable*	1

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\* For the survey respondent who wrote N/A s/he explained: "we are no longer conducting mine tours; we are planning on offering geology tours of our district next summer by reservation only - we are too remote to keep regular hours - we've tried!" (Survey #161)

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\*As previously outlined, Question 9 ("What is the interpretive period for your museum(s)?") was deemed unquantifiable and not tabulated.

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**Question 10** from Children and their Education and  
Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question:  
"Which field(s) of history do you feel best represents your  
site's interpretive themes?" Below, I have given the total  
number of respondents that correspond to the specified  
fields of history, as well as identified the number of  
respondents that left this question blank or marked it not  
applicable. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses  
collected between 2009 and 2011. Participants were  
invited to select all applicable answers.

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<b>Field of History</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Cultural History	171
Ethnic History	67
Family History	117
Military History	33
Political History	33
Social History	109
Western History	101
Other*	72
Left Blank	2
Not Applicable	1

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\* There were approximately forty additional fields listed,  
ranging from non-western to railroad, maritime, or  
firefighter history. The most common answers included  
agricultural history, local history, Native American history,  
natural history, and architectural history.

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**Question 11** from Children and their Education and  
Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question:  
"Were children present during the historical period(s) that  
your musement(s) interpret?" In the table below, I have  
given the total number of respondents that correspond to  
the answers given, as well as identified the number of  
respondents that left this question blank or marked it not  
applicable. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses  
collected between 2009 and 2011.

---

<b>Were children present?</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Yes	215
No	12
Left Blank	3
Not Applicable	2

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\* A number of responses to this question suggested a  
level of uncertainty or confusion on the part of the survey  
respondent as respondents either stated their confusion,  
put a question mark, or scratched out a previously  
selected answer.

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**Question 12** from Children and their Education and Representation in  
California Museums Survey

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As a follow-up to Question 11, I asked each of my respondents the following question: "What were the ethnicities of the children (please select all that apply)?" In the table below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to the various ethnicities, as well as identified the number of respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Ethnicity of Children</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
American Indian	132
Asian	91
African American	62
European descent, please specify	123
White American	173
Latino	109
Other*	19
Left Blank	11
Not Applicable	5

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\* Answers included, but were not limited to: Pacific Islander, Meztizos, Creole, Multi-racial, Polynesian, Hispanic, Philipinos, Somalian, Chinese, Hindu Indians, Interracial, and Californio.

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**Question 13** from Children and their Education and Representation in California  
Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "Have members of your staff conducted research regarding children at the site?" Below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to the answer given, as well as identified the number of survey respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Have conducted research regarding children?</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Yes	106
No	119
Left Blank	4
Not Applicable	3

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It was evident from the responses that confusion existed among a number of survey respondents. A number questioned if "research" referred to present-day research on children (such as market research, audience evaluation, etc) or to the historical research on children.

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**Question 14** from Children and their Education and Representation in California  
Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "Please indicate where representation of children at your site occurs (please select all that apply)?" In the table below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to the various options provided in the survey, as well as identified the number of survey respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Sites of Children's Representation</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Exhibits	157
Docent led tours for the general audience	131
Self-guided tours for the general audience	70
Onsite educational programming for schoolchildren	152
Out reach programs for schoolchildren	84
Other*	24
Left Blank	6
Not Applicable	6

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\*Answers included, but were not limited to, annual events, living history events, children's rooms, and the museum's quarterly journal.

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**Question 15** from Children and their Education and  
Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question:  
"Is there a specific tour, educational program, or exhibit  
dealing with the history of children?" Below, I have given  
the total number of respondents that correspond to the  
answers provided in the survey, as well as identified the  
number of respondents that left this question blank or  
marked it not applicable. The data is drawn from 232  
survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Tour, Program, or Exhibit on History of Children?</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Yes	67
No	164
Left Blank	0
Not Applicable	1

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**Question 16** from Children and their Education and Representation in California Museums  
Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "How is children's history interpreted at your site (please select all that apply)?" In the table below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to the answers provided in the survey, as well as identified the number of respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. Survey respondents were invited to select all applicable answers. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Mediums for Interpretation of Children's History</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Through material culture (such as toys, utensils, clothes, etc)	168
Through their own voices (excerpts from diaries)	42
Through the viewpoint of others (their parents, their teachers, etc)	77
Their history/experiences are not interpreted at our site.	44
Left Blank	8
Not Applicable	2

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**Question 17** from Children and their Education and Representation in  
California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "Does your institution have archival or material culture collections pertaining to children?" In the table below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to the various answers provided in the survey, as well as identified the number of respondents that left this question blank or marked it as not applicable. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Collections Pertaining to Children</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Archival Material	142
Material Culture	160
Both	114
Neither	41
Left Blank	2
Not Applicable	1

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**Question 18** from Children and their Education and Representation in California Museums Survey

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As a follow-up to Question 17, I asked each of my respondents the following question: "Is the material \_\_\_\_\_ (please select all that apply)?" Below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to the various options given to finish this phrase, as well as identified the number of respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. Respondents were invited to mark all applicable answers. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Accessibility of Children's History Collections to the Public</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Held in collections	147
Available for research	112
Occupying a preeminent display location in your museum*	98
Other	27
Left Blank	23
Not Applicable	16

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\* The respondents of four surveys modified by pencil/pen the answer I provided and my choice of using the word "preeminent." For example, respondents of two surveys crossed out "preeminent" in the provided answer, respondents of another placed a question mark next to it, while another respondent clarified, "not pre-eminent, but included in our displays"(Survey #139).

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**Question 19** from Children and their Education and  
Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "Please select the types of archival or material culture objects your institution has if applicable?" In the table below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to the various options given in the survey, as well as identified the number of respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. Survey respondents were invited to select all answers that apply. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Types of Objects</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Toys	164
Clothes	144
Utensils	82
Furniture	119
Literature / magazines	100
Diaries / Letters (written by children)	51
Other*	64
Left Blank	15
Not Applicable	13

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\*The most common object added by survey respondents was photos (27 surveys). Other objects survey respondents added included, but were not limited to: paintings, school books, tools, scrapbooks, videos, school records, oral histories, and cultural items.

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**Question 20** from Children and their Education and  
Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "If applicable, within which themes do you discuss the history and role of children?" In the table below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to the various options given in the survey, as well as identified the number of respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. Respondents were encouraged to select all applicable answers. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Theme</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Captivity / Slavery	15
Economy	32
Education	118
Everyday life	171
Family life	156
Politics	13
Religion	23
War	14
Other*	25
Left Blank	20
Not Applicable	15

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\*Additional themes included, but were not limited to, leisure, literacy, ranching, immigration/ethnicity, art, boarding schools/genocide, farming, cultural differences, Native American life, role of the single individual, then and now, crisis, crime, labor, and travel.

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**Question 21** from Children and their Education and  
Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my participants the following question: "How are children represented at your site (please select all that apply)?" In the table below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to the various options given in the survey, as well as identified the number of respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. Respondents were invited to select all applicable answers. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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**How Children are Represented    Number of Respondents**

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As individuals	102
As family members	172
As wage earners	14
As slaves / captives	9
As consumers	12
As laborers	35
As political participants	6
As students	113
As at play	114
Other*	9
Left Blank	15
Not Applicable	9

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Other representations included, but were not limited to: as troubled youth or homeless; as objects of consumption; as workers on the family ranch; as part of a specific cultural group, as mission neophytes, and as family members and visitors visiting the Tahoe Basin on vacation.

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**Question 22** from Children and their Education and  
Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question:  
"Does your site interpret how the meaning of childhood  
has changed over time?" Below, I have tabulated the total  
number of respondents that correspond to answers  
provided in the survey, as well as identified the number of  
respondents that left the question blank or marked the  
question as not applicable. The data is drawn from 232  
survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Does your site interpret how the meaning of childhood has changed over time?</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Yes	90
No	129
Left Blank	11
Not Applicable	2

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**Question 23** from Children and their Education and Representation in California  
Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "Does your site explore the history of children through any of these historical questions / discussions (please select all that apply)?" Below, I have given the total number of respondents that correspond to the various options given in the survey, as well as identified the number of respondents that left this question blank or marked it not applicable. Respondents were invited to select all applicable answers. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Historical Question / Discussion within which Museums Explore Children's History</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Parent / child relations	81
The history of childhood	30
The role of gender in shaping childhood experiences	57
The role of ethnicity in shaping childhood experiences	43
The role of class in shaping childhood experience	40
The influence of children on society	16
Other*	24
Wrote "No" or "None"	14
Left Blank	66
Not Applicable	18

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The twenty-four survey respondents who selected "other" wrote varied answers with the most common being child labor, which was added four times. Other examples include "troubled youths, ward of the state," "child's life on the trail and in frontier society," and "traveling companion for adult family member." One survey wrote, "the role of political events in shaping childhood experiences (example: Mexican-American War)" while another wrote "the role of the environment in shaping childhood experiences."

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**Question 24** from Children and their Education and  
Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question:  
"When did your museum open to the public?" An open-  
ended question, this question yielded a variety of answers.  
Below, I have grouped responses by decade and listed them  
below, as well as identified how many respondents left this  
question blank or marked it not applicable. The data is  
drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009  
and 2011.

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<b>Date Museum Opened</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
1880s	1
1890s	1
1900s	1
1910s	2
1920s	3
1930s	7
1940s	8
1950s	11
1960s	37
1970s	47
1980s	46
1990s	33
2000s	24
Left Blank	10
Marked Not Applicable*	1

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\* This particular respondent is an online museum.

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**Question 25** from Children and their Education and  
Representation in California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question:  
"When did your museum begin offering docent led tours?"  
Below, I have grouped responses by decade and listed them  
below, as well as identified how many respondents left this  
question blank or marked it not applicable. The data is  
drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009  
and 2011.

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<b>Start of Docent Led Tours</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
1880s	1
1890s	1
1900s	1
1910s	2
1920s	3
1930s	7
1940s	8
1950s	11
1960s	37
1970s	47
1980s	46
1990s	33
2000s	24
Left Blank	10
Not Applicable*	1

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\*This particular respondent is an online museum.

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**Question 26** from Children and their Education and Representation in  
California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "When did your museum begin offering school tours?" Below, I have grouped responses by decade and listed them below, as well as identified how many respondents left this question blank or marked it not applicable. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Decade School Tours Commenced</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
1930s	3
1940s	0
1950s	2
1960s	18
1970s	51
1980s	54
1990s	46
2000s	33
Left Blank	17
Not Applicable	8

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**Question 27** from Children and their Education and Representation in California  
Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "When did your museum begin offering outreach programs to schools?" Below, I have grouped responses by decade and listed them below, as well as identified how many respondents left this question blank or marked it not applicable. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Decade Outreach Programs to schools started</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
1940s	1
1950s	0
1960s	1
1970s	13
1980s	34
1990s	30
2000s	54
Left Blank	38
Not Applicable*	61

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\*Not Applicable included respondents who wrote "none" or "no," crossed out the answer, or wrote of future plans. There were six respondents who referred to outreach programs being a future plan. As written on Survey #106: "investigating grants to develop a Traveling Trunk Program."

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**Question 28** from Children and their Education and Representation in  
California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "What types of activities do you use to teach visiting children (please select all that apply)?" In the table below, I have tabulated the total number of respondents that correspond to the various options given in the survey, as well as identified how many respondents left this question blank or marked it as not applicable. Survey participants were invited to select all applicable answers. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Types of Activities Used to Teach Children</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Role playing	63
Compare / contrast activities	156
Hands-on activities	159
Other*	60
Left Blank	17
Not Applicable	9

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\*Examples included, but were not limited to: child-centered tours, special tours, show and tell, speakers, song, treasure hunts, storytelling, gold panning, and art/crafts.

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**Question 29** from Children and their Education and Representation in  
California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "On a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high), please rate the centrality of children's history to interpretation at your site?" In the table below, I have listed the total number of respondents that correspond to the various options given, as well as acknowledged how many survey respondents left this question blank and noted any outliers. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Centrality of Children's History Rubric</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
0	3
1 to 1.5	83
2 to 2.5	62
3 to 3.5	54
4	14
5	5
Outliers	5
Left Blank	6

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For this question, five surveys answered in a non-numerical way (such as specifying they only interpret the story of one child, or, that they are "low"). Such answers could not be quantified and were considered outliers.

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**Question 30** from Children and their Education and Representation in  
California Museums Survey

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I asked each of my respondents the following question: "If children are not represented at your site, what are some reasons?" In the table below, I have listed the total number of museums that correspond to the various options given, as well as identified the number of respondents that left the question blank or marked it not applicable. Respondents were invited to select all answers that applied. The data is drawn from 232 survey responses collected between 2009 and 2011.

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<b>Reason Children are not Represented</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Limited historical information	36
Limited material culture	27
Lack of interest from visitors	6
A future goal not yet implemented	36
Other	33
Left Blank	127
Not Applicable	16

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A number of survey respondents noted that they felt the question did not apply, or, that their answer related to the under-representation of children rather than the absence of representation. Reasons why respondents chose "other" as an answer ranged from lack of skilled volunteers to relevance of subject matter, lack of space, or higher interpretive priorities.

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## **Appendix D: Participant Observation Methodology**

This appendix is based on my interaction with adults and youth in the junior docent program at the Pasadena Museum of History (PMH) over the course of three years.<sup>664</sup> In total, I participated in 116 tours, 260 hours of museum programming, 28 junior docent training meetings, and observed and took notes on 77 junior docents. I devoted a significant amount of time to interviewing individuals involved with this program. I interviewed forty junior docents, eleven senior docents or staff, analyzed 110 teacher evaluations of the program, and interviewed one visiting teacher, one visiting student, one visiting chaperone, and one junior docent parent. Furthermore, I attended several special events and volunteer events at this museum.

Due to the age of the junior docents (ages 12 to 14), it was requisite for me to obtain both subject and parent permission in order to collect data.<sup>665</sup> Each year, on the first day of training I spoke briefly to the students outlining my research, inviting them to participate, and distributing consent forms. Towards the end of training, I mailed a copy of the consent form to students who had yet to submit a form to ensure

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<sup>664</sup> I continued to participate as a mentor during the 2013 – 2014 school year, although I did not participate formally as a researcher. I kept my human subject protocol renewed and current during this time.

<sup>665</sup> As junior docents are over the age of seven, their permission, in addition to their parents, was required by the Office of Research for participation within my research. Participation was completely voluntary. The confidentiality of participation was closely respected, as were the students who chose not to participate. I still interacted with those students (although I collected no data) as not to draw attention to their non-participation. Those interested in participating signed a consent form, along with their parents, that outlined my research.

that all students were given the opportunity to participate without “outing” their non-participant status in front of other students.<sup>666</sup>

Over the course of three years, I became quite close to several volunteers, staff members, and program participants, and I spent between two and five hours at the museum each week during the school year. As a result of my participation, I have hundreds of pages of typed notes, scores of hours of audio-recordings, and twenty hours of interviews with junior docents. Furthermore, I now continue to participate in the program as a volunteer and help with the training of junior docents, so my participation and learning from this program continues. It is impossible to capture all that I learned in the confines of one chapter. This chapter is an invitation to consider how youth perceive and view an educational program that is a staple of the community.

As described in Chapter 1, my involvement in this program changed over the course of three years. The first year I was very “hands off” as I silently accompanied junior docent-led tours and tried to immerse myself into the peer culture that developed at the museum. Having researched ethnographic principles and participant observation techniques specific to working with youth, I was afraid to come across as an authority figure and said little as I shadowed tours. In Year 2, I

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<sup>666</sup> During Year 2 and Year 3 the education coordinator spoke with the parents of youth who had not yet signed up to participate at “family day,” a day set aside for the youth to tour their parents through the mansion before formal, elementary school tours commenced. That effort proved profitable and raised the level to which youth participated in my study for year 2 and 3.

began to relax as my first year of involvement taught me that being too hands-off and silent was, perhaps, complicating for the youth; my focus on not acting as an authority figure or not overstepping boundaries possibly resulted in me seeming distant and unfamiliar by the end of the year. By Year 3, I had tremendously reduced the level to which I took notes to ensure that I remained “present,” and tried to focus on building relationships with junior docents and functioning within the museum as a volunteer rather than an observer.

### **Interview Methodology**

In Year 1 and Year 2, I mailed two letters inviting junior docents to participate. Letters briefly reminded parents of their child’s participation in my research, and invited their child to participate in a 20 to 30 minute exit interview.<sup>667</sup> Graduation also served as a time to have additional students sign on as I spoke, briefly, about my research. For Year 3, I mailed only one letter but, as in previous years, used graduation as a time to get additional interview sign-ups.<sup>668</sup>

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<sup>667</sup> Within the letter, I specified that interviews would take place at PMH, interviews would be audio recorded with their child’s permission, and audio files would stay within my possession and not be turned in with my dissertation. Furthermore, I clarified that any quotes taken from the interview and published within my dissertation would remain anonymous, and anonymous transcripts of the interviews would be given to the museum. Furthermore, I listed some of the questions that I was interested in asking their child. See Appendix H: Example of Letter Inviting Junior Docents to Exit Interview

<sup>668</sup> Each year at graduation, I spoke between five and a half to eight minutes. For Year 1, ten students interviewed prior to graduation (June 21, 2011) and two interviewed afterwards. For Year 2, ten students interviewed prior to graduation (June 13, 2012) and five afterward. For year three, five interviewed prior to

When I met with each child, I, again, obtained his or her permission to record the interview, and reminded him or her that the audio file would stay in my possession and an anonymous transcript would be given to the museum. I also took a few moments—except for a few of the students who met with me soon after graduation where I spoke about my research—to briefly explain my research and what brought me to the museum. The comfort and confidentiality of each child’s experience was of the utmost importance to me throughout this process.

The interviews I held ranged from fifteen to forty-eight minutes. Although I took a set list of open-ended questions to each interview, I remained flexible in the course the interview took. For each child, I tried to begin the interview with questions related to his or her interests in and outside of school as to help him or her ease into the interview experience. Many appeared nervous having not participated in an interview before or feeling insecure with the process as one child prefaced, “I suck at interviews.”<sup>669</sup>

As my project spans three years, a number of the questions changed over time when I realized there were questions being left unasked, or questions that failed to resonate with the youth. As time went on, I added questions that felt pertinent, rephrased questions that failed to resonate, incorporated questions at the

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graduation (June 12, 2013) and eight afterwards. In reviewing and analyzing answers given by junior docents, I have taken into consideration and noted any language they appear to appropriate or adapt from the speech I gave. While I understand the risk associated with giving a speech to the subjects I was study, I felt that the value of validating the experiences of junior docents publicly to parents and museum staff (as this was the only opportunity to do so) outweighed the risks.

recommendation of museum volunteers, and added a variety of unscripted follow-up questions as I explored the meaning of museums, history, the junior docent program, and interpretation with these youth.<sup>670</sup>

While a core body of questions helped direct the interviews, the scope and breadth of each interview is qualitative in nature as I encouraged interviewees to expand on points I felt relevant to the larger study of my work. For example, I encouraged Grace to speak at length about her love for historical fiction; I interrogated Hunter about his love for video games such as *Age of Empires* or *Assassin's Creed*; and I enthusiastically took advantage of Kiley's obvious expertise on the topic of *American Girl Dolls*. Additional factors that shape each transcript includes the varying level of talkativeness each junior docent brought to the interview and the amount of time each junior docent (or his or her parent) had for the interview.

After transcribing the twenty hours of interviews (resulting in 465 pages), I developed an excel spreadsheet and devoted a "tab" to recurring themes and trends I noted throughout the interviews. Within each theme, I entered pertinent junior docent quotes. Themes I charted included: junior docent background, motivation, identity, comments on history, comments on museums, learning outcomes, assessment, authority, critiques of the program, comments on history pedagogy, comments on

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<sup>669</sup> Robert [pseud.], interview, June 18, 2013.

<sup>670</sup> Please see Appendix H for a sample of the letter I mailed to parent(s) and guardian(s) inviting their child to participate in an exit interview; Please see Appendix I for a sample of questions asked over the three years.

social history, comments on museum interpretation, and comments on children's history.

## Appendix E: Justification for Junior Docent Program Selection

First, the initial survey I circulated in 2009 as part of my state-wide survey suggested that PMH offered more programming that interpreted the history of children, childhood, or family history than the Gamble House (whose junior docent program dates to 1980), an interpretive choice influenced by the respective stories of each house as well as the mission of each organization.<sup>671</sup> As Justin, a junior docent who toured at The Gamble House in the seventh grade and PMH in the eighth grade observed: “We didn't really learn about the family. We learned that they were two boys in the house, but here [PMH] we learned about the family more than we learned about the house and the Green and Green architecture at the Gamble House.”<sup>672</sup> Justin was not the only junior docent to feel that the PMH taught more about the family than the Gamble home. When I asked eighth grader, David, “when you were at the Gamble House, does that tour talk about a family like this one?” He responded, “Kind of. It talks about a slight history of the family. Not like this one.”<sup>673</sup>

Second, PMH offers multiple child-centered programs. Since the late 1980s, PMH has continued to expand and offer classes to meet the needs of PUSD and supplement history education. *A Child's Life* was piloted and developed by the current education coordinator Brad Macneil in 2003. Within *A Child's Life* museum

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<sup>671</sup> The Gamble House was designed by Charles and Henry Green in 1908 and has operated as a museum since 1967.

<sup>672</sup> Justin [pseud.], interview, May 6, 2012.

volunteers teach visiting third graders about the founding of Pasadena and life during the late nineteenth century. Children dress up in period clothing, play period games, listen to period appropriate music, and receive a complimentary book, *The Way Pasadena Was*, which explores through pictures and text the way certain children lived in Pasadena during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>674</sup>

*My Masterpieces* is another central program to the Pasadena Museum of History. This art-focused program includes multiple stations, such as, a tour through the bottom level of the mansion focused on art that Eva Scott Fenyes collected, sketching in the garden, and the making of a silent movie in the Fenyes gardens. PUSD fourth graders attend this award-winning program and receive a complimentary book preparatory to their visit: *Painting the Beautiful: Learning about Art & the Landscape Paintings at the Pasadena Museum of History*.<sup>675</sup> This book acquaints children with “basic terms and vocabulary, so they get a feel for the different techniques that an artist uses to create a painting” before their visit to the

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<sup>673</sup> David [pseud.], interview, May 6, 2013.

<sup>674</sup> Kathleen Thorne-Thomsen, *The Way Pasadena Was: Photographs and Stories About Pasadena One Hundred Years Ago* (Pasadena, CA: Pasadena Museum of History, 2003). As of 2013, the program has been given 76 times, to 1,643 students and 282 adults. With staff cuts, the number of *A Child's Life* programs has been significantly cut since the 2007 to 2008 school year.

<sup>675</sup> Kathleen Thorne-Thomsen, *Painting the Beautiful: Learning About Art & Landscape Paintings at the Pasadena Museum of History* (Pasadena, CA: Pasadena Museum of History, 2007).



museum, a visit which allows children to see the “actual paintings they've been reading about and looking at in the book.”<sup>676</sup>

Third, I chose to study PMH as it carries a broader mission statement “to preserve and share the rich history, art, and culture of Pasadena and neighboring communities,” while the Gamble House emphasizes the importance of interpreting “the architecture of the Gamble House” and “providing education programs that enhance the public’s understanding of The Gamble House within the context of architectural and cultural history.”<sup>677</sup> When I asked Mira, an eighth-grade student of German and Indian descent, to contrast her experience at the Gamble House and PMH she explained that at The Gamble House, “There wasn't really that much history, like, there was a little bit of, like, Pasadena history and stuff, but, mostly it was about the family who lived in the house.”<sup>678</sup> When Theo, an eighth-grade student of Philippine descent compared the two programs, he too identified the role that history, family, and mission play, “The program at the Gamble House, well, they showed what Pasadena was like back then, but I think this place goes back more in the past [ . . . ] and [another] difference between this place is the Gamble House

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<sup>676</sup> Brad Macneil, education coordinator, interview by author, Pasadena Museum of History, June 4, 2012.

<sup>677</sup> “Mission Statement,” The Gamble House by Greene & Greene in Pasadena, California: official website, available at [www.gamblehouse.org/index.htm](http://www.gamblehouse.org/index.htm) (accessed November 4, 2013); Pasadena Museum of History website, available at [www.pasadenahistory.org](http://www.pasadenahistory.org), (accessed November 4, 2013).

<sup>678</sup> Mira [pseud.], interview, June 29, 2011.

doesn't have, like, an archive of stuff of Pasadena, but this one does, so it's pretty cool.<sup>679</sup>

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<sup>679</sup> Theo [pseud.], interview, May 2, 2012.

## Appendix F: Junior Docent Tour Description, 2010-2013

In Year 1 of my participation, students interpreted the exhibit *Pasadena Patron: The Life and Legacy of Eva Scott Fenyés*, which was displayed in the north and south gallery of the history center, because the Fenyés Mansion was closed for renovation. On the day of tours, visiting children were broken into four groups to be taken around by one or two junior docents. Despite the changing interpretive space junior docents worked within to accommodate the renovation of the mansion, they always rotated amongst four stations.

In Year 1, while the students were trained to lead tours through the two gallery spaces in four twelve-minute intervals (the four focuses of the tour being social life and entertaining; Eva's love for family history and genealogy; Eva as a musician, artist and collector; and travel), by February of 2011 the PMH staff revamped the South Gallery so that the *Pasadena Patron* exhibit was solely housed in that gallery to make way for a temporary exhibit, *Mad for Hats* in the North Gallery.<sup>680</sup> Due to the need to close all exhibit space to accommodate the installation of the new temporary exhibit and modifications to the long-term exhibit on Eva Scott

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<sup>680</sup>*Mad for Hats* ran from February 2, 2011 to September 25, 2011 in the north gallery, the Ralph M. Parsons Foundation Gallery, of the PMH History Center. The exhibit displayed "more than 100 hats and related photographs, selected from the Museum's collections, showcase the various materials, styles, and shapes of ladies' hats from the 1860s to the 1960s." See "Mad for Hats!", Tours and Exhibits, Pasadena Museum of History, accessed November 5, 2013, available at <http://pasadenahistory.org/thingstosee/MadAboutHats.html>.

Fenyés, junior docent tours were on break from mid-December to early February. Thus, some junior docents gave their first tour in February 2011 even though training have ended in November 2010.

With only one gallery space to interpret by February 2011, students learned two twelve-minute educational components, one on fashion and dress of the late nineteenth century and the other on technology of the nineteenth and early twentieth century “on the job.” Junior docents watched senior docents deliver the educational components, helped by holding pictures during the presentation, and by the end of the school year took part in leading the components.

Touring in the gallery space came with some challenges. For example, the space was tight and noisy. As Evelyn noted in her exit interview on May 5, 2012, within the gallery “it echoes a lot,” and once in the basement of the Fenyés Mansion, “I found it a lot easier over there because you have certain rooms so then you can kind of, like, close the door of that room so that they can pay attention to their docent and my kid, you know, they can pay attention to me, so I felt that was easier because there were designated rooms.”<sup>681</sup>

Although a tight space to work with, the gallery afforded some benefits according to junior and senior docents. For example, one senior docent who has participated since the early years of the program noted how junior docents had more control as “in the mansion there are some distractions and then you begin answering

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<sup>681</sup> Evelyn [pseud.], interview, May 9, 2012.

questions” as visiting elementary school students are not only digesting the story and objects, but also the grandeur of the house and its architecture.<sup>682</sup>

The didactics and object labels in the gallery further helped some junior docents maintain better control during their tours. For example, I saw how children relied on the labels when they forgot details during their tour. When I asked Saige, “before each tour, did you do anything to prepare?” during our exit interview, she replied, “No. I didn’t do anything. I just remembered it. And there are labels on the things well next to them. I remembered most of it, but if I forgot something, I’d go over to the label.”<sup>683</sup> In fact, on the first junior docent tour I shadowed on December 1, 2010 I noted that two of the boys discussed how they hadn’t practiced. I remember Curtis explaining to Mark that they could just rely on the labels.<sup>684</sup> Sometimes this backfired, however, as I occasionally watched third graders use information on the labels against their junior docent, whether to retrieve an answer to a question asked by a junior docent or to question or challenge information a junior docent had shared.

In Year 2 of my study (2011-2012) students started by leading tours in the South Gallery of the History Center and by giving educational components (for which they had been more thoroughly trained). In March of 2012, junior docents were relocated from the history center gallery to the basement of the Fenyes mansion

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<sup>682</sup> Name withheld, interview with the author, Pasadena Museum of History April 20, 2012.

<sup>683</sup> Saige [pseud.], interview, May 27, 2011.

<sup>684</sup> Junior Docent Field Notes, Year One, December 1, 2010, page 2.

to interpret replica period rooms while the renovation of the upper floors of the mansion continued. Students interpreted a replica foyer, studio, and bedroom, as well as a long room that had more of a traditional gallery space feel to it with entertainment, leisure, and travel objects/items on display. They continued to give the two educational components on technology and dress that were introduced the previous year (having learned them formally during training).

Several students noted the difficulty of switching from touring in the gallery to the basement of the mansion with very minimal training. When I asked Elizabeth, “Was there any part of the junior docent program that you did not like?” she responded, “Maybe, if there was anything, it was being relocated because for my last tour I was touring the basement, and I had never seen it before. Most of the stuff was the same, but kids would ask questions about stuff that I had no clue about, and then I was very glad for my adult aid because they knew how to answer the questions when I didn’t.”<sup>685</sup> When I asked Grace to describe how she was trained to tour the basement she honestly replied, “It was sort of like a slap in the face when you realize, ‘oh I have to teach about the bicycles’ because I didn’t know anything about the bicycles.”<sup>686</sup> Marie agreed that the change occurred suddenly, but the help of senior docents and the chance to move to period rooms proved worth it, “I think it was

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<sup>685</sup> Elizabeth [pseud.], interview, May 1, 2012.

<sup>686</sup> Grace [pseud.], interview, April 25, 2012.

handled really well. It was mostly the same things, and it actually gave us more to talk about.”<sup>687</sup>

While many of the students I interviewed echoed the challenge of switching from the gallery to period rooms with only ten to twenty minutes of training (as they were trained the morning of their first tour in the new space), like Marie, many adjusted to the space because so many of the objects and themes were the same and because they had the companionship of a senior docent. Chris’s summation of the process sums up what I heard echoed in many of the students interviews regarding how they learned to tour in the basement:

At first I didn't know how, but he told us that it's the same as the gallery except at different spots and we were going to have a senior docent to help us out so that was kind of reassuring so then he just told us to try and do our best, try not to get lost, things like that, and then, well, I didn't really have much practice time, but after the first tour I got the hang of it a bit and then the second tour I did better and then now I know how to give tours in the museum and the gallery.<sup>688</sup>

Samuel described how he quickly adapted to the new environment, “I got adjusted pretty well. It's more just a quick run through, point out the couple new items, but, otherwise it was pretty much the same, it's just a different layout.”<sup>689</sup>

While the change may have been hard, many students agreed with Evelyn’s summation that while you had to “get use to it again,” the change was for the better

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<sup>687</sup> Marie [pseud.], interview, June 14, 2012.

<sup>688</sup> Simon [pseud.], interview, April 30, 2012.

<sup>689</sup> Samuel [pseud.], interview, June 14, 2012.

“because the kids had more of an understanding of what a studio looks like or [what] a bedroom had in it, and stuff like that.”<sup>690</sup>

Even by Year 3, the education coordinator and senior docents had to work around the final stages of the museum renovation as they trained students how to tour the house. While the students only toured the mansion in Year 3 of my participant observation, training still had to accommodate the renovation schedule which sometimes delayed entrance to certain parts of the house. The museum reopened to the public in the fall of 2012, with students touring the mansion weeks before it was open to the general public. Feeling as though I had never seen the program in its true form, I participated a third year. Now participating as a mentor for my fourth year of involvement, I continue to see just how much the actual mansion impacts the program.

Within the mansion, the junior docents gain the opportunity to interpret an authentic space and add architectural detail to their tours. Junior docents continue to tour four areas: the upstairs (including a child’s bedroom, the master bedroom, a bathroom, and a private sitting room); the kitchen (which also includes a visit to the butler’s pantry and servant’s hallways); the foyer (which also includes a visit to the dining room); and the studio (which also includes a quick walk through the drawing room and downstairs bedrooms and a visit to the conservatory). The history of the family remains central although junior docents struggle to speak as cohesively about

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<sup>690</sup> Evelyn [pseud.], interview, May 9, 2012.



the family as evidence of them is scattered throughout the house rather than grouped together next to a family history chart as was the case in the gallery space. Within the mansion, memorization plays a more important role as didactics are not to be found, and junior docents must accommodate for the time it takes to travel from one location to the next. The abundance of objects and rooms, however, provides more opportunity for junior docents to feel as though there is sufficient information to cover in the twelve minutes they have to cover each area of the house.

## **Appendix G: Voluntary Consent Forms**

### **Child Participant Consent / Parent Permission Form**

The following consent form was circulated (with current dates) to all students in the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 class of junior docents at the Pasadena Museum of History to inform students and their parents regarding my research, invite interested students to participate, and to comply with human subject research standards. This form was submitted to the Santa Barbara Office of Research prior to the start of my research for review as part of my protocol.

#### **Junior Docent Program Research Study Parent Permission / Consent Form**

##### **PURPOSE:**

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study. UC Santa Barbara Graduate student Tory Inloes will be observing the junior docent program at the Pasadena Museum of History as part of her dissertation research. The purpose of the study is to observe how children are trained to be junior docents, observe how children present history to others, and ask children questions regarding their experience in the program and other experiences with history and museums.

##### **PROCEDURES:**

If you decide to allow your child to participate, data will be collected by way of notes, photographs, and audio recordings. Observation, the asking of open-ended questions, and data collection will occur at the museum during the fall training meetings (September – October 2012), tours given between November 2012 and June 2013, exit interviews conducted during the winter and spring of 2013, and any additional dates or events arranged with the museum.

##### **RISKS:**

There are no foreseeable risks that your child may expect from participating in this study.

##### **BENEFITS:**

This study will validate the contribution of junior docents at the Pasadena Museum of History. Students will be encouraged to reflect on their role as a junior docent, as well as, their experiences with history and museums. As little literature has been written on the presenting of history by children, this study will help advance knowledge and raise awareness in the field of public history, as well as, museum studies.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Signed consent forms will be stored securely in the UC Santa Barbara History Department. Aside from the consent forms, data collected during this study will not be associated with your child's last name. Furthermore, your child's real first name will never be used in any circulated material or publications that result from this study. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, since research documents are not protected from subpoena. If child abuse is suspected, confidentiality will be breached to report such instances.

**RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW:**

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your child may refuse to participate and still receive any benefits your child would receive if he/she were not in the study. You may change your mind about being in the study and remove your child after the study has started.

**QUESTIONS:**

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact:

Tory Inloes at [telephone number], available Monday through Friday (8am to 3pm).

If you have any questions regarding your child's rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Committee at (805) 893-3807 or [hsc@research.ucsb.edu](mailto:hsc@research.ucsb.edu). Or write to the University of California, Human Subjects Committee, Office of Research, Santa Barbara, CA 93106-2050.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW WILL INDICATE THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT IN THE STUDY DESCRIBED ABOVE. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A SIGNED AND DATED COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP. BECAUSE YOUR CHILD IS OVER THE AGE OF SEVEN, YOUR CHILD'S SIGNATURE IS ALSO REQUIRED IF HE/SHE WISHES TO PARTICIPATE AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT.

Signature of Child

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant or Legal

Representative: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Adult Participant Observation Consent Form**

The following consent form was circulated (with current dates) to a number of adult participants in the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 class of junior docents at the Pasadena Museum of History and to all adults participants at PMH who participated in an interview.

### **Junior Docent Program Research Study Consent Form**

#### **PURPOSE:**

You are being asked to participate in a research study. UC Santa Barbara Graduate student Tory Inloes will be observing the junior docent program at the Pasadena Museum of History as part of her dissertation research. The purpose of the study is to observe how children are trained to be junior docents, observe how children present history to others, and ask children questions regarding their experience in the program and other experiences with history and museums. Participating adults will be encouraged to reflect on their interaction with the junior docents, as well as, their previous experiences with this program, museums, and history.

#### **PROCEDURES:**

If you decide to participate, data will be collected by way of notes, photographs, and audio recordings. Observation, the asking of open-ended questions, and data collection will occur at the museum during the fall training meetings, tours given between November 2012 and June 2013, exit interviews conducted during the winter and spring of 2013, and any additional days as arranged by you and Tory Inloes.

#### **RISKS:**

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this research study.

#### **BENEFITS:**

This study will validate the importance of the junior docent program at the Pasadena Museum of History. As little literature has been written on the presenting of history by children, this study will help advance knowledge and raise awareness in the field of public history, as well as, museum studies.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Signed consent forms will be stored securely in the UC Santa Barbara History Department. Only with expressed, written permission will notes or direct quotes from this research be used in association with your name in subsequent publications. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed since research documents are not protected from subpoena.

**RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW:**

You may refuse to participate and still receive any benefits you would receive if you were not in the study. You may change your mind about being in the study and quit after the study has started.

**QUESTIONS:**

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact:

Tory Inloes at [telephone number], Monday through Friday (8am to 3pm).

If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Committee at (805) 893-3807 or [hsc@research.ucsb.edu](mailto:hsc@research.ucsb.edu). Or write to the University of California, Human Subjects Committee, Office of Research, Santa Barbara, CA 93106-2050

**PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW WILL INDICATE THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT IN THE STUDY DESCRIBED ABOVE. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A SIGNED AND DATED COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP.**

Signature of Participant or Legal

Representative: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix H: Example of Letter Inviting Junior Docents to Exit Interview**

May 1, 2011

Dear Parent(s) and/or Guardian(s):

My name is Tory Inloes and I am a PhD candidate in the joint public history program between UC Santa Barbara and CSU Sacramento. I have been conducting participant observation in the junior docent program since October 2010 as part of my dissertation research and distributed a parent permission / consent form at that time explaining the nature of my research. Thank you for allowing your child to participate in my research thus far. It has been a pleasure getting to know, work with, and learn from your child.

As the program is about to come to an end, I would like to invite interested junior docents to participate in a 20 to 30 minute exit interview. My dissertation examines the way in which museums present the history of children and childhood through exhibits and programming, as well as how modern children participate as visitors and volunteers in museum spaces. I am eager to represent the perspective of children within my dissertation, and would like to integrate your child's opinion into my findings.

All interviews will take place in the Giddings Conference room (where junior docent training was held) at the Pasadena History Museum. Interviews will be audio recorded with your child's permission, and audio files will stay within my possession and will not be turned in with my dissertation. Any quotes taken from the interview and published within my dissertation will remain anonymous. Anonymous transcripts of the interviews will be given to the museum.

Some of the questions that I am interested in asking your child may include:

- \* Before volunteering at the museum, where have you previously encountered history (school, other museum visits, television programming, etc)?
- \* Can you tell me about some of your favorite museums?
- \* Have you previously volunteered at museums?
- \* Why did you want to participate in the junior docent program?
- \* What was your favorite (and least) favorite part of the junior docent program?
- \* What did you enjoy most (and least) about leading tours?
- \* Is there anything you would change about the format of the training you received?

- \* Is there anything you would change about the content or layout of the tour you gave?
- \* Before each tour, did you do anything to prepare? If so, what did you use to prepare?
- \* Of the people you learned about, whom do you find to be the most interesting and why?
- \* Are there any people in Pasadena history you would have liked to learn more about?
- \* Are you interested in volunteering at museums in the future?

I hope we can find a time for your child to reflect on his or her contribution to the program, as well as, validate his or her perspective, opinions, and insight. Having time to speak one-on-one with **child's name** would be of great help to my understanding and analysis of this program.

If **child's name** is interested in participating in a 20 to 30 minute exit interview, please call me at [telephone number] or email me at [tswim@umail.ucsb.edu](mailto:tswim@umail.ucsb.edu) to set up an interview time (starting on either the hour or half hour) during one of the following blocks of time:

Monday, May 16: 3:30-5:00  
 Tuesday, May 17: 3:30-5:00  
 Thursday, May 19: 3:30-5:00  
 Saturday, May 21: 12:00-4:30  
 Monday, May 23: 3:30-5:00

All the best,

Tory Swim Inloes  
 History Department  
 University of California, Santa Barbara / CSU Sacramento  
 PHONE:  
 EMAIL:  
[tswim@umail.ucsb.edu](mailto:tswim@umail.ucsb.edu)  
 WEBSITE:  
[http://www.history.ucsb.edu/people/person.php?account\\_id=244&first\\_name=Tory&last\\_name=Inloes](http://www.history.ucsb.edu/people/person.php?account_id=244&first_name=Tory&last_name=Inloes)

## **Appendix I: Sample of Junior Docent Exit Interview Questions**

I began interviewing junior docents in May of 2011. Within my letter inviting junior docents to participate in an exit interview, I provided “Some of the questions that I am interested in asking your child may include:”

- \* Before volunteering at the museum, where have you previously encountered history (school, other museum visits, television programming, etc)?
- \* Can you tell me about some of your favorite museums?
- \* Have you previously volunteered at museums?
- \* Why did you want to participate in the junior docent program?
- \* What was your favorite (and least) favorite part of the junior docent program?
- \* What did you enjoy most (and least) about leading tours?
- \* Is there anything you would change about the format of the training you received?
- \* Is there anything you would change about the content or layout of the tour you gave?
- \* Before each tour, did you do anything to prepare? If so, what did you use to prepare?
- \* Of the people you learned about, whom do you find to be the most interesting and why?
- \* Are there any people in Pasadena history you would have liked to learn more about?
- \* Are you interested in volunteering at museums in the future?

As my familiarity and confidence with the program grew, and as my research questions became more refined, I added questions. I also edited or deleted questions as it became clear that they did not resonate with the children I interviewed. Below is a list of questions I took to each interview with notations to signify when I revised or added questions.

### ***Personal Background***

1. To get us started, can you tell me a little about your interests, such as, what subjects you like at school or what activities you're involved in outside of school?
2. Before volunteering at the museum, where have you previously learned about history (school, other museum visits, television programming, etc)?



3. Do you like learning about history?
4. Do you ever study the history of your family? **[added in 2013 for Year 3 interviews]**
5. What have you learned about the history of your family? **[added in 2013 for Year 3 interviews]**
6. Can you tell me about some of your favorite museums?
7. How would you define a museum? **[first asked in one Year 1 interviews to test out; adopted as a routine question Year 2 and Year 3]**
8. What do you think is the purpose of a museum? **[added in 2012 for Year 2 interviews and kept for Year 3 interviews]**
9. Have you previously volunteered at a museum? **[first asked in Year 2 (June 2, 2012) and then sporadically throughout until the remaining 8 interviews held June 18, 2013 through June 27, 2013]**

***Junior Docent Program***

10. How did you become involved with this junior docent program?
11. Why did you want to participate in the junior docent program?
12. What did you like most about being a docent?
13. Was there anything you did not like about being a docent?
14. Do you feel you gained anything from participating in this program?  
**[added/revised 2013 ]**

15. How were you trained for this program [**question revised 2013**]?
16. Was there anything you would change about how you were trained?
17. What was your favorite part of the junior docent program?
18. Was there any part of the junior docent program you did not like?
19. What do you think your role and responsibility was as a junior docent?
20. Did you like the format of having a senior docent accompany you? Why?
21. What are the themes that you tried to discuss on your tours [**revised 2013**]?
22. Is there anything you would change about the tour?
23. Before each tour, did you do anything to prepare?
  - a. If so, what did you use to prepare?
24. Who did you learn about through this program?
  - a. Is there anybody else?
25. During the tour, what people did you talk about?
  - a. Is there anybody else?
26. Of the people you learned about, whom do you find to be the most interesting and why?
27. Are there any people you would have liked to learn about more? [**revised 2013**]

28. Are there any people in Pasadena history you would have liked to learn about more?

29. How did you decide what you would talk about during your tour?

30. On the tour, did you notice if there were any items or topics that the children on the tour struggled to understand or relate to?

31. Are you interested in volunteering at a museum in the future?

**\*\*\* Questions added for interviews beginning Saturday, May 21<sup>st</sup> (Tour #6 & #7) in 2011**

32. Has this experience made you more interested in attending other museums?

33. Has this experience made you more comfortable to visit other museums?

**\*\*\*\* Question added for interviews beginning Monday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> in 2011.**

34. Has this experience changed how you think about museums?

**\*\*\* Question added around Tues, June 18, 2013**

1) What make a good tour?

2) What makes a good senior docent?

3) Do you feel like you had authority within this program?

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As cited throughout Chapter 4, I relied on ethnographic field notes, junior and senior docent manuals, annual reports and departmental statistics, interviews, teacher evaluations, and documentaries to understand the Pasadena Museum of History and its junior docent program. I also spent hours in the museum archives exploring their manuscript and archival collections. I am grateful to Pat Hamerle for allowing me to look through sentimental papers in her private collection that she has held onto from the days of her involvement with the junior docent program. I am grateful to Brad Macneil, Emily Leiserson, and Laura Verlaque who facilitated my research at the Pasadena Museum of History and provided access to the archives, institutional records, and documents related to the education department.

I also spent an afternoon exploring archives related to the *Children Collect for 2069* initiative at the Oakland Museum of California. I poured through object files and exhibit mock ups in my study of this collecting initiative and resulting exhibit. I am grateful to Nathan Kerr and Louise Pubols for facilitating my research visit, and to L. Thomas Frye for providing background information, via email, to the exhibit he curated in 1969.

At the New-York Historical Society, Alice Stevenson provided me access to not only the exhibits, but internal planning documents, programs, public events, and exhibit transcripts. These sources have been cited when appropriate in Chapter 5.

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I am very grateful for the many museum professionals and volunteers who took time to participate in an audio-recorded interview. Per the Chicago Manual of Style, interviews are noted as they are referenced throughout my research. Almost all names have been kept confidential for the following reasons:

1) Due to the close-knit nature of the California museum community, I soon realized the importance of keeping confidentiality and applying anonymity when analyzing and critiquing California museums.

2) Due to high staff turnover resulting from the economic crisis of 2008, my ability to have interviewees review and approve direct quotes became challenging at times as I could no longer locate the person, or, they no longer felt they had the right to comment on their institution as they had been laid off or moved to another institution.

My dissertation could not have been written without the expertise, experience, and guidance of the 110 adults and 42 children I interviewed.

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