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Museums in the Age of Neoliberalism: A Multi-Sited Analysis of Science and Health Museums.

Taren Laine Dailey

MUSEUMS IN THE AGE OF NEOLIBERALISM:

A MULTI-SITED ANALYSIS OF
SCIENCE AND HEALTH MUSEUMS IN THE U.S.

By

TAREN LAINE DAILEY

Under the Direction of Emanuela Guano, PhD

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I explore the variety of ways health and science museums operate in a neoliberal, global economy. I describe interactions between museums, people, governments, and money. These articles examine the different dimensions and connections between these discursive relationships, such as the ways in which museums *work for* and also *work with* governments, schools, tourists and local citizens in their communities. Additionally, I discuss my experiences as an anthropologist who is studying institutions controlled by elites. I use Laura Nader's (1969) theory of "studying up," to describe how anthropologists must be increasingly flexible when researching museums in the age of neoliberalism. I present findings that suggest people working in museums have a heightened awareness of the economy, and I show how they have a working vocabulary of "economic terms" that is ever present. Additionally, I discuss my assumptions that museum professionals no longer feel a sense of personal agency, instead they demonstrate feelings of being "controlled by the market."

INDEX WORDS: Anthropology, Museum, Science, Health, Neoliberalism, Consumption, Globalization

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A MULTI-SITED ANALYSIS OF
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> "The museum helps me. It helps me go to school. It is because of that I know English. If I did not have the museum, I would not speak English, and I would not be talking to you right now. I get paid to work and I get University. " --
> *Alessandra, a student working in a Brazilian museum*

A chance meeting with a 20 year old Brazilian student named Alessandra inspired me and influenced my research. We met during the summer of 2005. She was randomly assigned to assist me with translation while I conducted interviews with museum staff at a large health museum in Rio de Janeiro. Alessandra wore blue jeans and a bright orange T-shirt with the museum's name stamped across the front. This T-shirt signified her role as a member of the museum's mentoring program. This program offered students from Rio's shanty towns (or *favelas*) an opportunity for full-time museum work on the campus of the country's leading medical research facility in return for university tuition waivers. Although we were from different cultures, we found a harmonious common ground throughout the course of the day. We walked the campus and interviewed museum professionals and scientific researchers. I carried my camera and my field notebook, and while I scribbled notes, she asked questions about life in America; and in turn, I asked her about life in Brazil. We sparked in each other an enthusiasm for learning--about our different cultures and about each other. We also shared personal stories about our motivations for pursuing a formal education. It was striking how much we had in common. When I was 20, I, too, worked fulltime in a government medical facility which paid my college tuition. True, I was not from a shanty town, and I had not participated in a mentoring program, but I could relate to her desire for social mobility through education. Perhaps fate played a part in our meeting.

This personal connection with Alessandra allowed me to learn so much more about the social, political and economic climate in which museums operate in Brazil. My initial goals were to determine how health topics were taught in Brazilian museums and to learn how museum educators measure learning outcomes. I did not find complete answers to those questions; my stay in Brazil was much too short. However, this experience offered me a new research angle. It allowed me to see the many connections museums have with people, government and with the economy. I began to see the museum as fulfilling a social role tied deeply to the formal education system.

Learning about Alessandra's personal story encouraged me to consider issues of inequality among museum audiences in the U.S. It also encouraged me to view science and health museums as government intervention tools. In short, it forced me to look critically at connections between government and social responsibility, formal and informal science education and the economic environment in which these all exist. I returned to the United States with a new lens through which to view my research. In fact, my research moved beyond the walls of the museum and into the framework of neoliberalism.

I began to explore the variety of ways health and science museums operate in a neoliberal, global economy. I studied the history of U.S. museums, read the works of scholars who noted changes in our country and the correlated changes in government, financial markets, and social institutions--like schools and museums. I observed and interviewed museum patrons, workers, administrators, visitors—from children to senior citizens. I was determined to look objectively at the facts, map the changes, investigate the cause and effect—to question and to answer, both from the perspective of my informants in the U.S. and from my association with Alessandra. In short, I aimed to put a face on the market and provide a voice for museum workers and patrons.

By analyzing interviews and through observation, I was able to draw conclusions about the many ways neoliberal principles are reflected in the day-to-day operations of museums. My work provides an analysis of museums and the interactions they have with various sectors of society, including education, entertainment, tourism, and social responsibility. By framing my analysis within multiple theoretical discourses, I am able to understand the museums' connection to the world inside and the world outside the museum walls. It was also possible to see them as sites controlled by elites. By analyzing data, I determined that neoliberalism has influenced the museum industry greatly, and I explain that it is precisely neoliberalism that is responsible for insuring that museums are no longer an exclusively elitist manifestation.

I looked extensively at interactions between museums, people, governments, and money, examining the different dimensions and connections between these relationships. I investigated the ways in which museums *work for* and also *work with* governments, schools, tourists and local citizens in their communities. Additionally, I evaluated my own relationship, as an anthropologist, defining and establishing personal connections with museums in the U.S.

Questions answered through this research include: How does the economy affect museums? What is the government's role in museums? Who visits museums and why? How do museums interact with the school system? How does funding affect a museum's ability to offer outreach programs? How do science and health museums interact with the government? How do elites control access to museum field sites? How much flexibility is required of anthropologists who study elites cross culturally?

Through my research, I found ties to U.S. museums and neoliberalism and globalization, I explored connections between museums, people, government and the economy, and I investigated the social role of museums and the degree of social versus government responsibility. My research is presented as follows:

1. Theoretical Framework. This multi-sited ethnography provides an analysis of health and science museums in the U.S. This research is positioned among several discourses. It begins with Foucault's theory of museums as heterotopias, places of constant juxtaposition. Second, I present Harvey (2005) and Inda's (2005) ideas about neoliberal economic principles. I suggest that while neoliberalism might actually be responsible for opening museums to the middle-class, it also serves to reinforce some existing social boundaries. I apply Adorno (1967) and Canclini's (2001) ideas about citizens as consumers to demonstrate how the economy has created a group of culture consumers who desire the best "experience" when visiting museums. Third, I present ideas about globalization and discuss the many ways museums are affected by it.

   By drawing on my ethnographic data, I am able to support the notion that globalization is reflected in museums, not just by the exhibits, but also by the types of people who visit, as well as by the day-to-day activities of museum professionals. I suggest that museum professionals are working in a global environment, though they may not even realize it.

2. Methods and Research Design: This research was conducted from September 2004 to January 2006. It examines current linkages and connections between museums, governments, schools, tourists, and the economy. Research methods include participant observation, interviews, text analysis and an online survey. I observed inside museums, at community action meetings and at government meetings. I conducted a total of 28 interviews (structured and unstructured) which included museum professionals, k-12 teachers, tourists, a museum health educator, a school administrator, and people working for private sector companies which support museums. I conducted an Internet- based survey with science teachers and government employees and did a text analysis of marketing materials, such as brochures and websites.

By using a variety of methods, it was possible to provide a snapshot of the issues faced by museums affected by globalization and driven by neoliberal economic principles. And by positioning museums within the framework of globalization, it was possible to examine their role in the U.S., and then contrast them with the Brazilian museum where I worked with Alessandra (cross-cultural analysis). In the spirit of multi-site analysis, research participants were located by following "connections" in the industry.

This study looks at the ways museums respond to market influences such as decreased government funding and increased influence on the private sector. It also includes an examination of the connection between public school systems and museums. In addition to analyzing the above issues, the study also discusses issues of access to the field site. In both Brazil and the U.S., I faced challenges; they were different, and, in the U.S., almost daunting. This discussion of "access" is placed within the framework of Laura Nader's (1969) article regarding issues of "Studying Up." Through using multi-sited ethnographic methods, I reveal issues associated with gaining access to privately funded organizations

3. History of Museums: A historical perspective on museums is provided in an effort to orient readers to the field of museum studies. This chapter provides both an overview of museum development in the U.S and a historical account of the various themes in museum studies over the years.

4. Data Analysis: This section provides data from research conducted in the United States, at various museums across the country. It is divided into four sections.

- Conversations about Money. This section provides insight about the many ways museum officials obtain money for their museums. It also provides numerous examples of ways museum employees interact with money.
- Conversations about Government. I provide data regarding the many ways local and federal governments interact with U.S. museums.
- Conversations about People. This section provides a snapshot of the many ways people interact with museums. Data is provided from museum patron interviews, as well as observation data.

5. Conclusions: In this section I conclude that everyone who enters the museums is faced with immediate thoughts about money. Throughout their visit they are reminded about money. Visitors' experience is composed of exhibits that were developed by people who were keenly aware of money. Museum workers and volunteers have a heightened sense of awareness of funding. They have adopted a commonsense approach to discussing the museum in terms of money. I call the "museum money talk." Museum employees have done as Trouillot suggested, they have adopted the sense of market awareness as a moral value (Trouillot 2003).

CHAPTER 2:

THEORHETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Four main theories contextualize my research. They include Foucault's idea of museums as heterotopias, the theories of neoliberalism and globalization, and museum studies.

Foucault (1998:11) describes museums as places of constant juxtaposition where "all other real sites that can be found within a culture are represented, contested, and inverted." I am not the first to use heterotopias to frame a discussion of museums. Tony Bennett, a well known museum scholar, also uses heterotopias in his historical tracing of museums in the nineteenth and twentieth century. He uses it to describe the historical development of museums, along with that of community fairs and international exhibitions (Bennett 1995). In line with Foucault's idea about heterotopias, I found museums that reflect local and global places, as well as the economies that govern these places. Therefore, these museums appear to be reflecting local and global ideals. This can be seen by observing and talking with people who visit museums, as well as with those working and volunteering there. I suggest that by looking closely inside the museum, one can see not only things that exist outside, but one can also see examples of changing societal economic ideals. This idea was spawned by reading Richard Handler's work, where he suggests that most museum research has been done by ignoring much of what happens inside them (Handler and Gable 1997). By applying Foucault's theory that suggests museums represent other places, and by taking Handler's suggestion that museums should be studied from the inside, I present a new idea. I suggest that by observing behaviors and listening to conversations with people inside museums, one can learn a great deal about the social, political and economic environment in which these museums operate.

Neoliberalism

Next, I discuss the economy in which today's museums operate: An economy that is directed by neoliberal economic principles. Harvey describes neoliberal principles as deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provisions (Harvey 2005). According to each of my informants, the federal government has decreased its spending on the arts significantly over the past 5-10 years. When my research began, I had no intentions of framing my research within the economic arena. Through the course of my field research in the United States, however, a theme emerged. Each of my informants (mostly museum curators or educators) responded to the open ended question, "Please tell me about your job," with responses that mentioned money or funding. They talked about the challenges of working under pressures of budget cuts due to decreasing government funds, and they reported struggling with increasing pressures to "market" their exhibits to specific "audiences." They also talked frequently about pressures of obtaining private sponsorships and the associated frustrations of meeting demands from sponsors requiring them to quantify effectiveness. It seemed that much of their time was spent worrying about issues that are technically outside their traditional role and responsibility. They somehow felt responsible for finding funding or for contributing to funding efforts. They talked of newly formed exhibit planning committees where the marketing director and fundraising staff participated. Marketing staff wanted an exhibit that could "sell with fancy titles," and fundraisers wanted exhibits whose topics tied to local corporations' giving plans. It became clear that my informants were acutely aware of their museum's economic position. I was first surprised and then inundated by the frequent comments on and discussions about funding.

Further analysis allowed me to see more clearly what Harvey and Inda meant when discussing neoliberalism. Harvey wrote about the importance of flexible business practices that allow companies to maximize profits (Harvey 1989). Inda supported Harvey's argument that, in addition to flexible capital, *people* must also be very flexible (Inda 2000:86). Inda's argument was certainly substantiated in my research. In fact, at the end of one interview, my informant pulled out her purse, checked her appearance in her compact mirror and began applying make up. She looked at me and asked, "How do I look? Good enough for TV?" She went on to explain that the museum's public relations department arranged for a popular TV station to visit the new exhibit, so they could film the curator giving a special tour. We both laughed and agreed that she definitely had not trained or bargained for media tours. With that said, she was excited about the new opportunity; she understood that people meant profit, that exposure to a greater market meant more people, and she needed and wanted to be flexible in her job responsibilities. Hence, I found that both Harvey and Inda's discussions of flexibility tied in with my research. I was able to show that museum curators and educators demonstrated extreme levels of flexibility, for they were not only fulfilling their primary responsibility of designing exhibits, but they also conducted media tours and edited press releases. They were put on display when potential funders visited the museum and were often asked to work odd hours in order to accommodate special tours for potential funders. I also observed museum curators and educators working closely with marketing staff in order to develop exhibits that would “sell lots of tickets.” In addition, I witnessed museum curators and exhibit designers with more responsibilities than their “business” counterparts in the marketing and fundraising departments. Inda was right; museum professionals are, and, indeed, have to be, flexible multi-taskers.

During my research, I met a man working for the local cultural tourism board. He had seen me meandering through the museum and thought I worked there. He approached me and began his sales pitch: “I’m Jim from the cultural tourism board. This is a great exhibit! I’ll bet this is a great ‘draw’ for tourists.” I laughed and explained that I didn’t work at the museum and identified myself as a researching anthropologist. After a short conversation, I was invited to a local community meeting where museums and other “cultural” institutions discussed opportunities to build public/private partnerships. It was hosted by the local public broadcasting company. I thought immediately of my flexible curator/TV personality that I had previously interviewed, and saw first hand how money, marketing, and museums had joined ranks. I realized that my research had best be flexible, too.

In further evidence to support Inda’s idea of flexible people, I noted that museum staff discussed in depth their various “target audiences.” They explained that during weekdays, the museum is mainly filled with school children. Then on Saturday and Sunday, the museum develops special programs to lure families and tourists to visit. One informant asked me if I wanted to conduct participant observation at a high school prom, which was being held there. As any anthropologist would do, I said yes. The night of the prom it was as if the museum atrium had been transformed into a hotel ballroom. There were limousines parked outside, filling the spaces yellow school buses had taken just hours earlier. There was live music and fancy food. The prom-goers all but ignored the various artifacts arranged in glass cases; they simply walked around the artifacts that surrounded them. It was prom night, and the place where they partied meant money for the museum and elegance for them. Again, Inda was right about people being flexible; however, my prom-night experience permitted me to build on that idea and assert that museum space must also become flexible. Museum space in the age of neoliberalism changes to meet the needs of visitors (the market) and maximize profits.

One of the central assertions of my research is that today's museums are defined largely by their connection to the local and global economy. In order to draw this conclusion, it is necessary to gain an understanding of the global world in which they exist.

Globalization Theory

A discussion of globalization is necessary in order to understand the rapidly shifting economy. According to Erikson and Murphy (2003) globalization theory is useful for exploring "collision between the objective forces of the world system and the capacity of individuals and communities to construct their own cultural worlds socially and subjectively…" Other scholars have also contributed to the growing discourse on globalization (Appadurai 1996, Marcus 1998, Gupta and Ferguson 2002 {1997], Hannerz 2002 [1998], Inda and Rosaldo 2002). The concept of the global "core" and "periphery" was discussed by Hannerz. Drawing on Immanuel Wallenstein's world system theory, Hannerez describes the core as the Western nations, while the developing world comprises the periphery (Hannerz 2002 [1989]). Hannerz challenges the idea that there is simply a one-way flow of information and ideas from the west to the rest of the world.

Arjun Appadurai describes the global world in which anthropologists now work. He challenges anthropologists to look at our field-sites. He reminds us we are no longer bound by classical geographically bounded areas. He calls these larger areas “scapes”. In his book *Modernity at Large* (1996) he defines “mediascapes.”

Trouillot, in his book *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World* talks about neoliberal extremism. He describes it by saying that we are not only being asked to endorse an economic program, but also to endorse growth as a moral value (Trouillot 2003:56).

Consumption and Marketing Theory

This leads us to investigate neoliberalism in terms of consumption and citizenship. Adorno and Horkeimer are credited with coining the term “culture industry” in 1947. They dissect the role of the consumer in the culture industry, saying that,

> “The consumer is not king, as the culture industry would like to have us believe, not its subjects, but its object . . . . The masses are not the measure but the ideology of the culture industry, even though the culture industry itself could scarcely exist without adapting to the masses” (Adorno 1967:16).

Nestor Canclini, in his book *Consumers and Citizens*, analyzes many of the ways in which citizens have been transformed into consumers as a result of neoliberalism. He says, “Men and women increasingly feel that many of the questions proper to citizenship – Where do I belong, What rights accrue to me, How can I get information, and Who represents my interests? – are being answered in the private realm of commodity consumption and the mass media more than in the abstract rules of democracy or collective participation in public spaces" (Canclini 2001:15). Canclini takes this notion of citizens and consumers and dissects the heritage industry to show how patrimony is consumed and commoditized. This leads directly to today's much touted field of marketing.

Branding is a marketing term traditionally practiced in the private sector; however, museums have slowly adopted many of the practices, and now almost every museum employs marketing personnel. A historical look at branding tells us the concept originated during the industrial revolution. The production of goods in factories meant that not only were new products being introduced, but also old products, even basic staples, were appearing in new forms. The market was flooded with uniform, mass-produced products that were virtually indistinguishable from one another (Klein 1999:5). Sales people had to build images around a particular brand-name version of a product. This process began by assigning brand names to staples like sugar, soap and cereal. Then in the 1880s, corporate logos such as Campbell's Soup and Quaker Oats were introduced. Advertising began to reinforce these brands; they had specific placement for headlines, photos and short catchy phrases called taglines, which were used to further differentiate one product from another. Some examples of popular taglines include "Nike. Just do it" or "Coke is it." Today in product packaging and advertising, specific colors also brand products. All these elements contribute to what marketing professionals refer to as brand awareness. And could that apply to museums as well? How many citizens of the world would really know much about King Tut had his exhibit not been so "branded" and "marketed" around the globe? With that in mind, a discussion on heritage must follow.

Heritage and Museums Studies Literature

Handler (1997) describes heritage as properties that can be claimed to emanate from the collective individual or from human beings who constitute it. He goes on to claim that heritage can refer to places that have been selected to become symbols of national heritage or history. He suggests that heritage is a product of decisions made by elites. By looking at the definition alone, it seems difficult to speculate how heritage relates at all to neoliberalism. So a look back and a look forward are needed.

A brief historical look at museum literature does reveal some trends. In the 1960s scholars published articles about the politics of collecting. Scholars discussed the act of collecting. They were interested in the motivations for collecting and the politics involved. Also of interest it the 1960s, was the actual collector. Was this person male or female? How did gender affect the collection? Scholars were also interested in classification issues. For example, they questioned the taxonomy and systems of knowledge presented by the museum (Elsner and Cardinal 1994). From the late 1970s to 1980s museum scholars shifted their focus and wrote about the space in which objects are displayed (Sherman and Rogoff 1994). The editors of *Museum/Culture* point out that the increase in attention to museums in the 1980s and 1990s was partially due to the "museum boom" of the 1970s. During this time, society experienced an 'unparalleled increase in the number of museums throughout the world and an unprecedented expansion and diversification of their activities" (Sherman and Rogoff 1994:ix). In the 1980s and 1990s, another shift was evidenced in museum literature. Karp's book

Exhibiting Cultures is concerned with the “presentation and interpretation of cultural diversity in the museum” (Karp, et al. 1992).

Today, museum literature is again shifting. Literature continues to focus on the museum space and spatial politics. Scholars ask questions about who is being represented and how they’re represented. In addition, questions are asked about the curator’s role in choosing display techniques. More recently, within the last 5-7 years, an increasing interest in museum visitors has become popular. In fact, interest in museum visitors has become so popular that there is now a professional association dedicated to professionals who work in the area of “visitor studies.” Others are now writing about the changing role of museums in today’s society. Museum scholar Stephen Weil summarizes these changing museums by describing their focus as “chang[ing] from an inward concentration on collections to a newly articulated outward concentration on the various publics and communities they serve” (Weil 2004:284). As Weil suggested, museums are extremely focused on their publics. In fact, there is a growing body of literature that provides much debate about specific segments of visitors. For example, today one can easily find literature specifically addressing interactions between museums and schools (Faulk 2000) and tourists (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998).

However, it is not easy to find museum research conducted by anthropologists. I found Sharon McDonald, a British anthropologist, to be an excellent resource for linking me to anthropologists studying museums. MacDonald edited a book entitled, *The Politics of Display: Museums, Science, Culture,* which provides an excellent overview of science and technology museums. She emphasizes that “science displays are never, and have never been, just representations of uncontestable facts. They always involve the culturally, socially and politically saturated business of negotiation and value-judgment, and they always have cultural, social and political implications" (MacDonald 1998:1). Her book answered many of my basic questions such as, "Who decides what should be displayed? How is the aspect of objectivity handled in displays? Are certain issues "silenced" before they are included in an exhibit? And if so, how is this decision made, and by whom?" This book was crucial to my overall understanding of the field because it was done using a chronological, anthropological approach to examining the various social, political and economic aspects of museums. Contributors Bennett and Dias (1998) focus on nineteenth century museum issues – specifically the importance of understanding the views of curators who develop museum displays. Teslow and Allison-Bunnell (1998) consider museums in the twentieth-century and they provide a special emphasis on issues surfacing between 1988-1998 like "issues of 'realism' and 'nature', and the mediation of art, craft and types of science" (1991:18). Barry provides analysis of the development of interactivity in science museums. MacDonald writes about visitors as consumers and the public understanding of science. Harvey (1998) analyzes the Expo 92' and discusses the idea that multi-media based interactive exhibits have, "become part of a transnational competitive exhibitionary arena." (1991:18). Bouquet and Bennett write about the increasing trend towards reflexivity. They provide detailed recounts of their experiences developing science and medical exhibits that present science as a process, rather than a series of facts. The final chapters in this book focus are written by Arnold and Gieryn. They discuss "framing of debates about science representation in museums" (1991:19). They provide detailed discussion of issues related to museum displays that present science as truth.

Ivan Karp, in his book, *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture* presents ideas about the power of museum exhibits. He supports MacDonald's ideas about power, but adds that museums have another aspect of power. They are understood as representing the viewpoints of their sponsoring organization. He states that, "it is a truism in cultural analysis to assert that the selection and presentation of ideas, images and information can only take place within a context that imparts its own messages about power (Karp, et al. 1992:1). This is useful when trying to understand why the opening of the museum at a nationally known federal government health agency was delayed and has become such a politically contested space. The museum will represent statements endorsed by the Federal Government. Clearly, the government is acknowledging this element of power. No one group of people wants the responsibility of giving "the final approval." The museum will only be approved after a select group of officials, including policy experts and officials in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, reviews and approves the content. One museum staff member anticipates that, "when all is said and done, the content will have been reviewed by more than 100 people."

Many museums rely on government funds; therefore, I found it necessary to obtain a working knowledge of the government's role in the museum industry. I found among the numerous federal governmental departments the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). It is responsible for managing all issues related to museums and libraries. With the reauthorization of the Museum and Library Services Act in September 2003, the IMLS was charged with increased analysis of museum trends and needs (IMLS 2005). In response, an industry overview report was generated that has been quite useful. The report outlines many of the industry trends and challenges; it mentions public/private partnerships as areas that need more research, and it also identifies a need for museums to focus on a more diverse audience. Acknowledging that museum exhibits need to satisfy a diverse audience, the IMLS recommends that museums find innovative ways to increase their audience diversity. The IMLS does not provide a definition of "diverse," thereby leaving it open to interpretation. An additional issue facing museums is a need for economic impact studies. State, regional, and national organizations want to see how museums are contributing to their economies, whether it is through attracting tourists or educating school children and families. Oftentimes, this data is necessary in order to secure funding (IMLS 2005). Also related to funding issues is a growing demand to quantify educational outcomes of museum visits. Each museum professional (in the U.S.) that I interviewed thus far has mentioned a need to measure learning outcomes. They clearly understand the relevancy and agree it is a "good thing," However, one informant told me, "It is so difficult to quantify the impact of a museum visit."

After conducting several interviews where informants talked about their need to quantify a museum's effectiveness, I began searching for literature on the topic. I found a small but growing discourse. Articles are written by experts in a range of fields including psychology, history, behavioral science, biology, education and science education. Two authors who have published extensively and appear well respected in the field are John H. Faulk and Lynn D. Dierking. He conducted much of the Smithsonian's research. In *Learning from Museums,* Faulk frames his ideas around the concept of "free choice learning," which is how he categorizes museum education (Falk and Dierking 2000:13). Faulk explains that free-choice learning "tends to be non-linear, is personally motivated, and involves considerable choice on the part of the learner as to what to learn, as well as where and when to participate" (Falk and Dierking 2000:13). Faulk acknowledges that this type of learning is difficult to measure, but he does offer case studies and discussion about methods and outcomes. He also points out that free-choice learning is different from formal learning, and it should, therefore, be measured differently. Faulk believes that a person's prior experiences strongly affect their ability to learn, and his book provides case studies that support this idea. Faulk and Dierking have also conducted studies of family learning in museums. They note that museums can facilitate discussion among family members and that most family learning is evaluated by conducting intercept interviews when the family is leaving the museum(Falk and Dierking 2000).

One of my interviewees said she had found that many companies have written documentation approving donation of funds for "educational endeavors" or "educational institutions." However, she is often dismissed by companies because they do not consider museums to be in the 'educational' category. She said that when she explains how museums are informal or free-choice learning centers, company officials frequently go ahead and grant funding. Knowing and understanding how museums fit within the educational system has been useful knowledge.

According to Tan and Subramaniam (2003:413) "Science and technology are increasingly being recognized as instruments of socioeconomic development for nations . . .and have been instrumental in effecting improvements in the quality of the life of people."(Tan and Subramaniam 2003:413) This is further evidence of both the power of science and the place of science museums in a global economy. An article written by the Egyptian Ministry of Education focuses on the anticipated success of having a place for "hands-on learning" in their new museum *The Susan Mubarak Science Exploration Center*, located in Cairo. It states that,

> "A major schism between information and application in developing societies stems from a 'hands in pocket' or 'don't touch' approach, where children are not encouraged to use their hands to explore science; . . . however, in most poor societies it is often taboo for children to touch costly equipment" (Said 2000:31).

There is a limited discourse on science and health museums in developing countries and, in fact, these are the only articles I have yet to locate.

These various theories on museum education, globalization and consumption can be combined to provide an analysis of the many roles science and health museums are playing in a neoliberal economy. Foucault's discussion of heterotopias as places of constant juxtaposition certainly seem to define today's museums worldwide, for today's museums are not only positioned among multiple industries, like the culture and the tourist industry, but they also use their space to educate and entertain. Today, science is presented using the latest technology and hands-on approaches, as well as by the traditional presentation methods like preservation cases and historical timelines of events. As science museums begin to appear in developing countries, they serve as development strategies offering new experiences to their audiences. They are, indeed, heterotopias – places where old and new are conjoined, where learning and entertaining, marketing and big business are consumed and preserved.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

This multi-sited research project was conducted in various locations throughout the U.S. and in Brazil. Methodological inspiration was drawn from George Marcus's 1998 ideas regarding a need for multi-sited anthropological research. Marcus describes the changing methods of conducting ethnographic research. He describes an increasing trend where modernist ethnography uses juxtapositions to "compare the various discourses and constructs that are present (dominant, residual, possible and emergent)" (Marcus 1998:73). Marcus suggests that "there are at least three senses of comparative analysis embedded within a single project" (Marcus 1998:73). That was useful because my research is placed within several discourses including anthropology, museum studies and neoliberalism. Marcus also wrote of remaking the observers. He suggests that anthropologists who are aware of their role as observers and feel compelled to write about these experiences. In a sense, not did Marcus only validate my approach, but his work also helped me realize how the much the observer's own identity affects what and who can be observed. I agreed with Marcus' statement that "modernist ethnographies tend to foreground the comparative bifocality that is inherent in all ethnography but remains submerged in most" (Marcus 1998).

I discuss, in detail, my own field experiences as an observer. I do this by drawing on idea put forth by Laura Nader. By analyzing institutions of power, or as Laura Nader (1969) would say "studying up" I am better able to understand the dynamics of my field research which took place in various museums in the U.S. and Brazil. Nader discussed studying up by focusing on issues of access, attitudes, ethics and methodology. (Nader

1969:301). I suggest that when studying people and institutions of power in the age of neoliberalism, anthropologists must be increasingly flexible.

Throughout my field research, I also referred to H. Russell Bernard's book, *Research Methods in Anthropology* (2002) as resource. I used qualitative research techniques such as literature research, participant observation, unobtrusive observation, key informant interviews (open-ended, structured and unstructured interviews) and text analysis. Interview transcripts were analyzed manually and also using computer analysis software called *Nudist*N6*. I also conducted quantitative analysis of an Internet-based survey. This survey consisted of 258 respondents that included science teachers, government officials, and members of the general public. Quantitative analysis was conducted using SPSS software package.

Field Sites: My field sites included 10 museums in the United States and 1 museum in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I conducted a total of 28 interviews (structured and unstructured) which included museum professionals, k-12 teachers, tourists, a museum health educator, a school administrator, and people working for private sector companies which support museums. I conducted an Internet based survey with science teachers and government employees and conducted a text analysis of marketing materials such as brochures and web sites. I also attended several community action meeting sponsored by businesses that are financial supporters of museums. Consequently, my research dictated that I be flexible with my methods and be prepared to use appropriate methods for each situation.

Challenges and Limitations

Museums are public institutions owned by the government and by the private sector. Museums are all seen as institutions of power, and they are managed by high-ranking administrators who control access to the field site. I found that, in general, the difficulty of access varied depending on the country. Surprisingly, Brazilian museums were often easier to study than American museums. This could be because Brazilian museum employees were familiar with anthropologists studying their country, and appeared flattered to be included in my research; in the U.S, I instead, had to spend twenty minutes explaining why an anthropologist would be interested in topics other than archeology before I could ask for access. U.S. museum professionals wanted to know much more about me, my area of study, and the differences between archeology and cultural anthropology before they were comfortable starting an interview. I anticipated that my need for a translator in Brazil would pose challenges; however, I found that it actually worked quite well. People appeared comfortable talking through an interpreter and were usually impressed that my main interpreter was an American university professor. During my visit to US museums, I often felt that informants did not respect the role of a student. They were quick to cancel or reschedule appointments, and I felt they were not taking the interview as seriously as the museum professionals in Brazil. In Brazil, it is best to arrive unannounced, speak to the person at the front desk. Explain your project to this person and ask for an interview. This is in stark contrast to our U.S. custom of calling or emailing to schedule appointments. I found that in Brazil the woman working at the front desk was the gateway to obtaining an interview. She was always extremely helpful and provided as much information as possible before introducing us to a museum director or curator. I approached U.S. museums much differently. In order to obtain an interview, I had to leave voice mail, send emails with an outline of the questionnaire, and wait days or even weeks for a response. On one occasion, I did take the Brazilian approach in the US. I arrived at the museum, explained my situation and asked if I could speak with the museum director. After answering questions about my university affiliation, explaining that I was not an archeologist and providing a quick overview of cultural anthropology, the front desk woman said, “I’m sorry, but I can’t give out the names of the staff working here. You should go on our website, and click on the ‘contact us’ button to submit your request. I think someone should respond in 3-5 days.” I thanked her, tried not to laugh, and walked out of the museum.

The one challenge that I anticipated as a major problem was the aspect of using an unknown, native interpreter to conduct my interviews on Brazil. While it was difficult to participate actively in the conversation, this process worked well for me. The delay of waiting for a translation gave me more time to think of additional questions and responses. I liked having this extra time to process the informant’s comments, and my native interpreter was a wealth of information as well. I do prefer conducting interviews in person; however, I also enjoyed the experience of using an interpreter.

Overall, I feel that my mixed methods served me well. My resulting research provided me with a broad working knowledge of the subject and also allowed me to meet many of the people actively engaged in the field of museum studies. Conducting research in two countries was both challenging and rewarding.

Discussion of "Studying Up" Data Analysis

When trying to gain access to each museum, I submitted an original project proposal that included a request for interviews with museum educators, curators, and also school teachers who visit the museum. Gaining access in the U.S. proved to be quite complicated. Many hours were spent creating and submitting documentation to museum staff, in the hopes of obtaining full access to the museum. Luckily, my main informant in one particular museum was a curator who was also an anthropologist (archeologist). Her name (pseudonym) is Jane. She understood my need for access, and she was familiar with the process of obtaining permission from museum executives. She explained that several executives needed to review my proposal before granting permission. Her help was invaluable. After a series of negotiations over a period of a few months, I was allowed limited access and was closely monitored. I was allowed to observe programs, but not interview school teachers. I could interview specific museum educators, but not all educators. After a few months, I realized that the time I had planned to conduct research was actually spent going through the process of gaining access. I didn't realize it then, but this experience was invaluable and it broadened the scope of my research. It encouraged me to analyze roles of power both inside and outside the museum, and it helped me reconsider the methods needed to conduct a thorough study in the museum.

<u>Issues Associated with Access:</u>

During my research I found that I was constantly faced with issues when trying to obtain access to conduct research in museums. This made me reflect on Nader's work. Nader asked whether it is more difficult to gain access to the field when studying up, as opposed to a traditional field setting (Nader 1969).

Here is an excerpt from an email I received.

> "Dear Taren, I reviewed your proposal. If you could change [it] and show the science teacher interviews as an optional activity, then we might be more likely to get approval. Also, our director requested a copy of your resume. Please include a list of completed classes and any other information that demonstrates your qualifications to conduct this kind of research. I'm not sure if the board will approve you being here, but it's worth a shot. Thanks!"
>
> -- *James, Museum Educator*

While I found museum professionals to be extremely interested in my research, they did not understand why an anthropologist wanted to study what happens inside the museum because, traditionally, anthropologists were more interested in studying the collections. I explained that cultural anthropologists study living people and their interactions with their environment. The museum is an environment, and therefore, my interest in studying the museum was indicative of my field of study. I explained that my research would only help them further understand their audience. I was told that executives would need to meet and decide whether or not my proposal would be granted.

In contrast, when in Brazil, I was accompanied by my professor (translator) who simply asked the person working the front desk if we could interview someone. We were always treated with respect and were immediately offered an opportunity to interview anyone. In fact, one museum even offered to have an English speaking student assist me with conducting interviews. My own identity as a white Western researcher most likely helped me gain access in Brazil. Brazilians, because they live in a so called "third world" country, have been the subjects of many research projects. They are used to having researchers visit. Additionally, in Brazil the color of a person's skin has a tremendous influence on their place in society. Typically, people with lighter skin are members of the upper class. Therefore, my own skin color, combined with the fact that I am from the West, was most definitely beneficial.

<u>Issues Associated with Ethics</u>

It is crucial that anthropologists protect the privacy of their informants. Nader addresses the issue of ethics when "studying up." She asks, "Is there one ethic for studying up and another for studying down?" I found myself asking this same question as I conducted research both in Brazil and in the United States.

One example of a dilemma I faced is listed below. Here is another excerpt from my field notes.

> "Did you notice that almost all the students in that class were Hispanic? They're from Jimall County where there are a lot of chicken farms. I've heard that many of the kids' parents work on the farms. That school comes here every year. I know that for many of the kids, English is not their native language. I make sure to speak slowly because I want to make sure they understand me."
>
> -- Samantha, museum educator

This statement was made by a museum educator whose class I was granted permission to observe. I sat quietly during the class and afterwards, once the children had left the room, I walked over to the teacher and thanked her for allowing me to observe. During our brief 2 minute conversation, she made this statement about Hispanic children. Her comment gave me something to think about. I had been studying globalization, and I wanted to know how it influenced the museum industry. Her comment was an excellent addition to my research because it illustrated the fact that as people migrate to other countries, their children enter the school system. In turn, those children become involved in activities like museum field trips. It demonstrated how museums must be flexible and adjust their practices to accommodate these children. The museum educator seemed very concerned about the children and she wanted to make sure they enjoyed their visit. She seemed to be genuinely concerned about making sure the children felt comfortable in the museum. With that said, I was specifically told by the education director that I could not interview the other educators unless I was given special permission. I did not have permission to interview Samantha, yet her comment was key to my understanding of globalization's impact on museums. The next day I met with the education director. Samantha had reported that I made notes after talking to her. She was concerned about what I might have written down. The director said she wanted to ensure that I get the best information. She asked me to talk to her if I have any specific questions. She said, "I just don't want you to get anecdotal information which might not be factually correct. By the way, what did you write down?"

While I was very pleased to have access to the education director, I felt awkward about my interaction with Samantha. Why had she reported my conversation to her supervisor? What was she afraid of? And what was the museum director concerned about? Apparently, the same conversation that caused me to have an epiphany about the links between globalization, schools and the museum industry, had caused some concern for my informant. I was aware of a constant feeling of monitoring during my field work at this museum. While the museum staff seemed welcoming, at the same time they were suspicious of my intentions. I feel that the staff also felt a sense of constant monitoring, and perhaps this is why Samantha reported our interaction to her boss. She did not want to "get in trouble" for talking to me.

I was trying to be flexible by observing the class; however my lack of good access to the educator had kept me from building rapport through my usual strategies of making conversation and ensuring confidentiality. Is this an instance where I must be flexible? I also ask myself if this dilemma is any different from a traditional field experience (studying down). How much information do you take away from the field? I decided to use the information in my thesis after all. I have protected the identity of my informants by using pseudonyms, and I do not use any words that would reveal the name or location of this museum. Therefore, I feel I'm doing my job as a researcher – I'm reporting my findings, while also being mindful of my informants.

<u>Issues Associated With Methodology</u>

When gaining access to U. S. museums, I also found myself questioning my methods. While I was using interviews and observations, I was also quite restricted in my access to informants. Again, I reflected on Nader's work. She asked about the best methods for studying up (Nader 1969). Here's another excerpt from my observations in the museum cafeteria.

> Look at them. Humm. You can't go anywhere anymore and just see people that look like you.
> I know. I was at Target the other day and I was thinking the same thing.
> -- two anonymous women eating lunch in the museum cafeteria

During one of my cafeteria visits, I overheard two elderly white women, probably in their 70s, having a conversation at the table beside me. The ladies were both wearing hearing aids and talked very loudly. They sat beside a set of windows. Outside the windows sat a group of girls from a Muslim school. They were wearing head wraps, which made it easy to identify them as Muslim. They sat at a picnic table eating their lunch. It appeared that the women's conversation was prompted by the girls' presence. This event provided yet another "ah ha" moment. This also demonstrated that museums are spaces filled with people from various ethnic backgrounds. It allowed me further analyze issues of space and ownership of museum space. It seems that museum space is contested. Visitors from various backgrounds come together in one place. They all paid for admission, and therefore the museum welcomes their presence. However, once inside the museum space, patrons use and navigate the space on their own. This interaction allowed me to see that museum staff are challenged with the role of monitoring this space and trying to make it an enjoyable experience for all. They certainly did not want me to tell anyone what I heard at the museum.

Again, I found myself worrying about whether or not to include the comment in my research. Was this ethical? The women did not know I heard them. As I was relying heavily on my observation skills, I collected many notes about different conversations. In some ways I felt restricted by the limited access, but I also think it pushed me to sharpen my observation skills. It forced me to be flexible, even though it seemed I was going into the field with my tool box half-full. This conversation was another important link for me. Again, I connected the dots of globalization to this conversation. As various religions spread throughout the country, so do the people who practice them. Earlier that day, the museum educator had given an excellent lecture to this group of Muslim children. He asked the children questions about Ramadan and tried to make the children feel comfortable in the museum. I was impressed with the educator's flexibility, and yet I was saddened by the women's inflexibility to comfortably share the museum space with the girls. This comment made me realize what a contested space a museum really is. This made me ask myself a question. In a global society such as ours, who has the right to claim museum space as their own? Clearly, the conversation that I overheard sparked my interest and would prove beneficial in my thesis research. Unfortunately, it was obtained while observing and eating lunch. I did not gain consent from the women and I am quite certain that even if I had asked, the women would not have wanted their conversation repeated. I was conflicted. The museum executives decided that I should observe and not interview guests; therefore I was doing what I was approved to do – observe. I am reluctant to use the quote. I mentioned the conversation to one of the museum educators, and she seemed embarrassed. She said, "Yes, we have to deal with people like that. That [Muslim] school visits the museum quite often. We love having them here. Unfortunately we can't control what our other guests say. I'm sorry they said that, and I'm sorry you heard it." I decided that museum staff are charged with the task of making this museum space a welcoming place for everyone who has paid their entrance fee. They understand the power of negative comments and they certainly did not want anyone to know such comments were made in their space.

It has been my experience that we are addressing Nader's challenges by being flexible in our field work approaches. In the future, I will adjust my research timeline to allow for several months of time dedicated to gaining access. I would argue that, based on my experience, it is more difficult to gain access when studying up; however it is not an impossible task. In order to gain access, the anthropologist must plan ahead. It is important to have official documents like resumes and IRB copies. It is also necessary to ensure the informant's confidentiality and explain how the research will be used.

Informants can limit your access if they do not trust you. You must build rapport, and doing so in an environment controlled by elites takes time, planning, and patience. Laura Nader raised many good points in regards to studying up. Perhaps the most important issue she raised was a request for anthropologists to continue research in this area. This paper describes my journey into a science museum, an elite institution. I did not answer Nader's questions, but I do think I have learned from this experience. I believe I will be better prepared for future studies in institutions of power.

CHAPTER 4: HISTORY OF MUSEUMS

Most of museums' long-held assumptions and functions have been challenged over the last decade or so, and at the same time the boundaries between museums and other institutions have become eroded such that museum professionals can declare: 'The truth is, we do not know any more what a museum is'" (MacDonald and Fyfe 1996:1). In 1904 museum publications defined museums as, "a collection of the monuments of antiquity or of other objects interesting to the scholar and the man of science, arranged and displayed in accordance with scientific method." A definition provided in 1984 by the United Kingdom's Museum Association is, "an institution which collects documents, preserves and interprets material evidence and associated information for the public benefit" (McLean 1997:9). While these definitions are similar, the one from the turn of the century implies rather than states the functions of a museum. In 1904, they were collections of objects, and now museums also document, preserve and teach. And whereas museums were, in 1904, interesting to the scholar and the "man" of science, now they operate for the public benefit (McLean 1997:9). A helpful definition comes from Foucault who defines museums as heterotopias – places where "all other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault 1984:24). He also argues that the museum and the library were both heterotopias because they accumulated time; however, he also suggests that museums are peculiar to and characteristic of nineteenth-century Western culture, encompassing the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, and the desire to enclose in one place for all times. Foucault thought the whole idea of collecting, archiving, enclosing objects and making them unavailable to outsiders was an idea of modernity (Foucault 1986:26).

The earliest museums originated as repositories for curiosity cabinets to house the bourgeoisie's symbols of prestige. These collections were generally collected to serve as status symbols and, therefore, were never intended for "public" view. This compounded the social stratification of the period, where class, speech and manners marked the difference from one class to another.

In the 1890s, museums were struggling to differentiate themselves from fairs, festivals and sideshows. In order to differentiate themselves, they represented themselves to the public as a 'classifying house', and emphasized its scientific and instructional qualities. "This was as much a way of declaring that it was not a circus or a fair as it was a means of stressing its differences from earlier collections of curiosities" (Bennett 1995: 3). The collections of curiosities were items belonging to people from the bourgeoisie. These objects were symbols of prestige and served as a means of social stratification. These collections were generally collected to serve as status symbols; therefore, they were never intended for "public" view. About the time museums established their definition as a 'classifying house' in the eyes of the 'public,' museums later found themselves trying to differentiate themselves from newly introduced amusement parks. As in Foucault's definition of heterotopias, amusement parks served as a place where time stands still and where people's behavior was altered. The parks "provided visitors with opportunities to enact time by building it into performative regimes which regulated their itineraries" (Bennett 1995:6). This act of entertaining is what Canclini refers to when talking about citizens turned into consumers. People who attended amusement parks consumed the experience. Both museums and amusement parks had to consider their visitors as "minds on legs" (Bennett 1995:6) and had to organize their space in a manner conducive to walking and needed to ensure that messages were effectively communicated. Visitors' experiences were molded by an itinerary, a map and a self guided tour that ensured everyone had the same experience. Was the amusement park of the early 1900s just the precursor to today's Disneyfied experience?

While museums were continually working to define their role and differentiate themselves from other places, museums in the late 19th and early 20th century were also establishing their role with government, and vice versa. Bennett discusses the ways museums were being used as "instruments that could be enlisted in new ways for new tasks of social management" (Bennett 1996:6). The government began to use museums as places to offer programs that were aimed at reshaping general norms of social behavior. For example, in England in the late 19th century, the Select Committee on Drunkenness proposed a bill that would allow communities to use taxes to establish walks, paths, playgrounds theaters, libraries, museums and art galleries "so as to draw off by innocent pleasurable recreating and instruction, all who can be weaned from habits of drinking" (Bennett 1996:24). It was ideas like this that supposedly started the shift towards making museums open to the masses. This also illustrates yet another point in time where museums were remolding the definition of what it means to be a museum.

Another shift in governmental participation took place in the early 20th century when museums were established by municipal authorities, and during this period museums became an issue of regional pride and heritage. The Depression of the 1920s impacted the museum industry in many ways. Not only did it result in an under funded museum system, but according to McLean (1997), museums remained stagnant until after the World War II. Since WWII, museums have experienced many changes. A national framework for museums evolved and the establishment of many federally funded and operated museums have been established. During the 1970s and 1980s, many government operated museums were built in the United States. This is in opposition to the rise in neoliberalism in the West. While neoliberal economic plans were being pushed forward, somehow museums were escaping the ideology of decreased government involvement. One author writes about the increasing role of government after WWII by saying that the collection met bureaucracy. While museum sectors may vary in each nation, on average they are government-run (central or municipal), university-run, or independent.

Science Museums: Today's science museums are usually discussed in the context of science and technology. The role of science museums has changed since the 19th century, and modern science museums are trying to learn from the past while looking ahead to the future. They must not allow the authority of science or the authority of the museum space itself to alienate visitors.

Introducing technology and interactivity was a turning point in the history of the science museum. Nineteenth century science museums were visited by the bourgeois society. They were places where the success of the State was displayed and where the bourgeois could "see and be seen." Tony Bennett (1995) explains how the State used museums to promote self-regulation and self-education. During the early 19th century, the government encouraged citizens to visit museums, rather than visiting bars and establishments serving alcohol. They provided monetary incentives to citizens who visited these cultural institutions.

History of Science Museum: In 1969, Frank Oppenheimer opened the first interactive "Exploratorium." Oppenheimer, the nuclear physicist who had been blacklisted from practicing science because of his role in creating the atomic bomb, had several reasons for creating the Exploratorium. He did not want the public to fear science. He wanted to restore a public feeling of comfort and even excitement about the possibilities of science. It is reported that Oppenheimer believed that science had an aesthetic dimension and he saw no distinction between science and art. In addition to interactive exhibits, his Exploratorium was filled with color drawings. Visitors did not know whether they were created by engineers or artists.   He wanted to encourage visitors to touch and interact with exhibits so that they would be excited about experimentation. He hoped this excitement would distill feelings of scientific authority and create feelings of personal agency (MacDonald and Barry, 2000). While Oppenheimer's goal was noble, it is still not known whether interactive museum exhibits increase the understanding of science or personal agency. It is interesting to see that while Oppenheimer was trained as a scientist after the Enlightenment, he still saw the connection between science, nature and culture. Apparently, Oppenheimer was not the typical 20th century scientist. Many years later, museums experienced another shift. Various kinds of museums were building on Oppenheimer's decision to use technology in museums. Science topics and interactive technology began appearing in other museums, too. For example, the first health museum in the United States is reported to be the Hinsdale Health Museum, which opened in 1958 (Clark, et al. 1999) and is now named The Robert Crown Center for Health Education (Crown HEC). As of 2002, Crown HEC offers 31 education programs using state of the art technology. It also includes over 100 exhibits (Dinger, et al. 2002). This innovative approach to the traditional museum concept has become the prototype for the more than 40 health education centers (HEC) in the United States (Clark, et al. 1999; Dinger, et al. 2002). As my study included field sites that were health museums, it is important to see how they developed.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS

As noted earlier, Harvey (2005) pointed to some of the guiding principles of neoliberalism, which include deregulation of government services and increased reliance on the private sector [insert reference]. However, as U.S. museums increasingly operate in a global economy, it is also important to pay attention to connections. These connections-- money, government, and people-- are discussed in the following 3 sections:

1. **Conversations about Money:** This section discusses the ways museums are funded. It answers these related questions: How are museums funded? How were the museums in this study funded? How did these museums interact with the private sector?
2. **Conversations about Government:** As neoliberalism calls to decrease government involvement, it is important to discuss the many ways governments currently interact with museums. This section explains some of the ways museums work *with* and work *for* the U.S. government. The questions I asked are: How do museums interact with government? What kind of interaction do they have and why?
3. **Conversations about People:** As museums are placed in this neoliberal, global economy, it is necessary to look closely inside the museum, at the people who visit. It is also necessary to look outside the museum to determine who does not visit museums. Who visits museums? Why do they visit?

5.1 Conversations about Money in the U.S.

> As a non-profit, most of our money comes in the front door. We rely on ticket sales for a lot of our money – most of our money.
>
> \- *Museum Curator in the Southeast U.S.*

In order to understand how museums are influenced by neoliberalism, first I needed to understand how museums currently fund their operations. I prepared for interviews by collecting as much information as possible about the museums' financial status. I feared my informants would hesitate to explain the museums' financial structure; therefore, my plan was to explain what I already knew, and then let them respond. I discovered, however, that my fears were unfounded. Every interview that I conducted in U.S. museums included lengthy discussions of job pressures related to funding. For example, I found that many curators and educators mentioned funding in conversations about exhibit planning. It became necessary, then, that I develop an overview of general funding structures, detailing my findings, which indicated museum professionals have a heightened sense of money awareness, whether they realize it or not. I found, in fact, it was as if the rhetoric of economics had become part of their everyday language. Here are my findings:

In general, how are museums funded? There are four main categories of museums in the United States**:**

- Government Funded (Fully funded by federal, local or municipal governments)
- University Sponsored
- Privately Owned

- Non-profit (These museums often include a mix of public and private funds.)

How are the museums in this study funded? All but one of the museums included in this study of U.S. facilities are non-profit; one is federally funded. I found the non-profit museums to be quite resourceful in finding ways to generate funds. They obtained money in the following ways:

- Ticket Sales (Museum admission)
- Gift Shops
- Memberships
- School Field Trips
- Donations
- Endowments
- Special Events (Weddings, Proms, Corporate Parties, Children's Birthday Parties, just to name a few.)

In general, I found ticket sales to range from $3 to $21 per person, depending on the museum and program. School field trips ranged from $2-$17 per child. (Some museums have scholarship programs for schools that have children who cannot afford to pay the field trip fee.) Each of the ten U.S. museums included in my study charged admission. However, one museum offered free entrance to local residents living in the same county. Another museum offered free entrance to schools located in the surrounding county. Nine of the ten museums offered free or discount admission for teachers, if they attended on specific days (usually Wednesday or Thursday afternoons). Special events ranged in price, depending on the event. Overall, facility rental prices ranged from $100, for rental of a meeting room, to $9,000 for renting the entire facility.

Many museums offered to have gift shops open free of charge during special events; one museum charged $50 to open the gift shop during private events. All museums had a process for accepting donations, and they even provided interested donors with the correct verbiage to include the museum in their last will and testament.

One of the science museums I visited was in the process of raising money to expand the museum. Upon entering the museum, I was greeted by a large clear rectangular box. It was filled with dollars and coins. Above it hung a giant sign, which read, “Help us spread our wings.” It was promoting the capital building campaign. Beside the clear box was a poster which read, “Museum Expansion Project – Every Penny Counts,” beside which was a picture of a thermometer with a line showing how much money had been raised thus far -- $25,000. At the bottom of the sign was a logo for a large local company who apparently provided the clear donation box. As soon as I walked into the museum, I knew they wanted my money. I reached into my purse and dropped a handful of spare change into the clear box. I proceeded to the ticket counter to pay my entrance fee ($9 with my student discount).

Each U.S. museum had a gift shop, and some museums even had two. In the museums with two shops, one was placed near the museum entrance. In included more generic goods, like puzzles or science games for kids. It also included t-shirts, hats and memorabilia baring the museum logo. The second gift shop was usually located at the exit of a special or traveling exhibit. Most often, it was strategically placed at the end of the exhibit, so visitors would have to pass through the shop on their way out.

I walked with one family through a science museum’s traveling frog exhibit. The mother, Carrie, was in her mid-30s, and the daughter Ava, was 6 years old. We began by watching live frogs from the Amazon swim around in a glass tank. Midway through the exhibit, we stopped at an activity room for kids where they colored frog pictures and made Origami frogs out of green construction paper. As Ava finished the Origami frog, the volunteer said, “Now don’t forget. If you want to have a frog family at home, there are more frogs for sale in the gift shop.” The girl smiled and ran over to her mom. She looked up and said, “Mommy, Mommy, can we go buy a family for my paper frog? My frog needs a family. Please, please.” The mother replied, “Let’s finish looking at the exhibit, and then we’ll talk about a frog family. Ok?” From that point on the girl only wanted to visit the special gift shop; she was no longer interested in the exhibit. Once in the gift shop, I noticed toys were strategically placed on bottom shelves, where children could easily reach them. Carrie and Ava spent $26 and proceeded to the museum exit. As they passed another gift shop at the main exit, Ava cried, “Mommy, look more toys!” Carrie resisted entering the shop and coaxed the child outside the museum. In short, this family’s day began by paying admission fee, then visiting the exhibit, stopping in the gift shop, and passing yet another shop on the way out. The museum created multiple opportunities to collect money from visitors.

From this experience, I realized other connections. This particular frog exhibit, a traveling exhibit, was sponsored by another museum, which means the host museum rents it from another museum. Then, after its allotted time here locally, it is packed up and shipped to the next location. Along with the exhibit, the next museum receives the “advertising package.” This is a ready-made list of marketing materials that museums can easily use by simply including their own museum logo. Museums have displayed “exotic” items for years, even before the onset of globalization. However, it is interesting to note that globalization now provides museums with an opportunity to advertise for each other. The frogs, as well as the special frog gift shop items travel the country. And some of these frogs were taken from the African Rainforest and the Brazilian Amazon in order to educate and entertain visitors in the southeastern United States. How global it was--this connection between frogs from the other side of the world, museums from all over the country, and a kid from the suburbs of Atlanta! I met with Carrie and Ava about a month after their visit. I asked Ava what she remembered about the museum visit. Her first response was, “Wanna see the frog I got to bring home? Ribbit.” Everyone in the room laughed. I wondered how my Brazilian friend Alessandra would have felt about her native frog coming to America, and, even more, how she would have put that $26.00 to use in Brazil.

How do museums interact with the private sector? Today, in addition to collecting money through turn-stiles, I found that museums must connect to the private sector in order to generate money. Since one of the main elements of neoliberalism is to rely more on the private sector (market), I needed to determine how great a role the private sector played? I found these non-profit museums to rely heavily on private funds. Each museum had a development or fundraising department. I found most museums have sponsorship packages, and their websites solicit these corporate sponsorships by saying, “Through our Corporate Partnership Program, the museum looks to business leaders for critical annual support.” In return for a sizable donation, usually $10,000 or more, sponsors can expect “free” advertising in museum publications like newsletters**;** their company logo is added to promotional materials, and signs are usually placed inside the museum. They can sponsor things like temporary or permanent exhibits, as well as special events, such as summer camps for children or scholarship programs for children in underserved areas.

I found museum staff quite willing to discuss funding. When talking to one museum professional about the private sector, she commented:

> We're lucky because we can tie ourselves to science. Yes, we are technically a health museum, but many of the topics are considered science. And we can also sell ourselves to the tech companies, too…because of our interactive exhibits.

This comment was actually made by a museum educator. I was amazed at how easily she spoke of private sector funding. She used the word "sell," which was quite telling of the neoliberal environment in which museums operate. She knew that in order to "sell" companies on the idea of donating, museum officials must be flexible with their language and must make it sound appealing. Apparently, businesses buy science and technology more often than health.

When I asked another museum professional about funding, she responded bitterly by telling me she had worked in museums for 20 years. She was "appalled" at the decrease in government funding. She said,

> I'll tell you what I think about having to ask private companies for help. I don't like it. If you give me or anyone else in a non-profit five dollars, I guarantee we will spend it like it is $500. But if you give some executive at a big company $500, then they'll spend it like $5. When companies give us money, they think that earns them the right to control us.

She was passionate about the topic of funding, and provided a much needed historical perspective by explaining what her job was like before museums relied so heavily on outside funds. Apparently, her job was different. She explained that she "just researched and curated exhibits," and went on to say she never spent time going to fund raising dinners and "creating dog and pony shows" for wealthy donors. She lamented about the "good ole days." Clearly, she understood the current connection between U.S. museums and private funding. Apparently, museums in our country today no longer exist without that link--like it or not.

5.2 Conversations about Government

I'll give you money, but when am I going to see results?

Museum Curator, Museum located in the Southeastern U.S.

My research determined that an examination of the interaction between museums and government was needed. I found that there are several ways museums are connected to government. In the information that follows, first, I provide a brief explanation of the federal government's overall role in the museum industry. Next, are two examples of field sites: one a Federal museum currently under construction, struggling to justify government expense for its existence; the other a non-profit museum which generates all its own funding. I found their struggles to be quite different, though they have the business of "earning money" down to a science. These examples illustrate the complex set of relationships museums have with various levels of government. They also illustrate the many ways museums work with and for government agencies.

The primary source of federal support for 17,500 museums in the United States is provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). This Federal agency supplies the basic financial funding for museums and libraries (IMLS 2005). Through the Museum Services Act, the IMLS directly assists museums in many ways, some of which I have listed here:

- To encourage and support museums in carrying out their public service role of connecting the whole society to cultural, artistic, historic, natural, and scientific understandings that constitute our heritage.
- To ease the financial burden borne by museums as a result of their increasing use by the public.
- To support resource sharing and partnership among museums, libraries, schools, and other community organizations.

Now, having looked at the how and why of the federal government's side of this connection, the next step is to explore the museums' side.

Federal Museum

I began my museum fieldwork in 2004 while working with the federal government. They were planning to build a new 22,000 square foot public health museum. Museum officials needed to select the museum name, and I volunteered to conduct the survey. I hoped that by volunteering my time with the survey, I would be able to gain their trust, and would in turn be able to document the creation of this museum for my thesis research. The museum name survey included 248 science teachers, public health officials and members of the general public. The results of this survey would determine the museum name. Even though the new museum was scheduled to open in 2006, the building was not completely constructed. Museum officials needed a museum name to put on marketing and fundraising materials. There was much debate among officials regarding the need for this museum, more debate about the need than the name. I soon found myself in the middle of a political fight among government bureaucrats. After 6 months of careful planning and execution and after spending $10,000 to develop and analyze results, the survey was completed. We presented results to the agency's senior managers, and I quickly realized that this project was far from over. It seems that, despite the survey results, there was still debate about the name. Some museum officials wanted names like "Discovery Center" or "Odyssey," and the survey respondents chose simply, "Health and Science Museum." While I hoped that this survey would be the beginning of my thesis research documenting the creation of the nation's first interactive public health museum, it became evident that was not to be the case. In the weeks and months following the survey completion, the museum became a political hot-bed of controversy. I heard comments like,

> One of the Foundation donors doesn't like the word museum. Their company mission states they will support educational efforts. Using museum in the title makes it sound more cultural…and less educational.

They continued by saying this particular funder is one of the largest. They needed to secure that support, even if it meant going against the survey results and choosing another museum name. Other conversations revealed that the museum's building proposal stated that the government would fund the entire project, but would be responsible for recovering a significant portion of costs through private donations and fundraising efforts. During discussion about funding, it was mentioned that the museum was to have free admission. I heard comments like, "Why would we let people in for free? It just doesn't make sense; we should charge something," and other comments like "I don't see why we need a museum anyway. We are researchers. Are they taking money away from our research budget to build a museum? That's ridiculous." When I recruited science teachers for my Internet survey, I first made a presentation to a group of 100 who were attending a Saturday training class. Afterwards, I talked with a few of them about the museum. One teacher responded, "Wow! Did you say it is free to go there? Are you sure? Nothing is free…I'll definitely bring my 9th graders, that's for sure." Her comment was in response to an open-ended question: "What do you think about the new museum plans?" I expected her to respond with comments about the museum content or perhaps even that she would discuss the benefits of having a place for children to have hands-on science experiences. Instead, her first comment was about the associated costs. She went on to tell me how she does not have any money to take her classes on field trips.

> "We don't have the luxury of deciding what place would be best for the students. We have to start by looking at what is cheap. Then we can choose [from those options.] It always ends up that we go to the closest, cheapest place. I hate it but that's our reality."

Here, too, I noted that a hyper-awareness of funding issues. It was becoming apparent that funding issues were overshadowing the crux of many conversations. Even when my queries did not allude to money, informants seemed unable to respond without centering on it.

As time progressed, the clear connection to neoliberal globalization became more and more evident. Museum officials needed to "sell" the idea of this museum to funders, employees, executives as well as people who would potentially visit. They also needed to "sell" the idea to the agency's research scientists, because the latter were concerned about losing research funding for the museum. Clearly this was no easy task. As of today, the museum facility stands mostly vacant. An outsider would never guess its purpose, for it bears the name, "Visitor and Information Center." It boasts all of one exhibit, and the remainder of its 22,000 square feet echoes in emptiness.

In the case of this new Federal public health museum, it seems that the museum was part of the government, but not completely. In order to proceed, the government needed commitments from the private sector. In order to get those commitments, the museum's name must reflect companies' corporate giving missions. Apparently, government officials also needed to be "sold" on the idea of offering a free service to the community. All were not convinced that this was a worthwhile endeavor. Many of them feared money would be taken away from their scientific research in order to support the museum. It seems that this museum was juxtaposed between the government, people and money. At the time of this report, the museum had not yet opened, and I was told by museum officials that plans were "on hold due to funding issues."

Non Profit Museums: After my experience with the federally funded museum, I gravitated toward interviewing only non-profit museums. It seems, though, that their ideas about funding were not so different from my previous experience. I began to realize that many museums compete with each other to obtain grants from local government organizations. One museum professional explained her story like this:

> We have a new development director. When she worked for another museum she obtained funding for a science education pilot project. I hear she has lots of friends at city hall, and we just assume she'll bring the big money with her.

That comment surprised me, but it also made me understand more about the competitive environment in which museums operate. It also allowed me to gain a better insight into the political environment. Museums embody the capitalist doctrine; in true neoliberal style, they were vying for public funds rather than private.

Meanwhile, I received an email from one of my informants. He was sending a mass email, and the subject line read, “Arts action alert – contact Congress to increase National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) funding.” The letter read, “Americans for the arts, the leading advocacy organization for the arts and arts funding is asking that friends support increased funding for the NEA.” The email included an attached letter that I could send to my state representative. The letter even included a link to a website with a summary of my representative’s voting record, so that I could see if that congressperson had previously voted to cut NEA funding. My informant was even trying to build *my* consciousness about funding by encouraging me to contact my representative.

On another occasion, when talking with museum educators about their grant-funded programs I learned about the many stipulations involved. One educator explained,

> We got a government grant to start a summer science camp. The stipulations of the grant indicated we must measure science literacy rates of our summer campers. The only problem is that we have no idea how to measure science literacy rates. Ha! We have the money, and we’re planning this program, but that’s it. I don’t know what we’ll do about the evaluation piece.

This comment enriched my research on many levels. It indicated that museums rely on government funding, but that funding comes with strings attached. Many museum professionals said that government grants are increasingly requiring program evaluation. However, most museums I visited didn’t have anyone onsite with evaluation knowledge. Furthermore, they did not even seem to know who to call to hire an evaluator. One educator explained that one specific grant award indicated 6% of the funds were to be spent on evaluation. The money went unspent because the museum did not have the personnel or knowledge necessary to fulfill the agreement.

These talks about evaluation seemed to be reflective of neoliberal ideals. There is a need to quantify museum visits. By demonstrating what children learn during their visit, it was possible to justify the museums' existence to government funders. They could prove their worth. Tracking of expenses and also tracking learning outcomes seemed to be yet another way museums were tied both to funding and to government.

Still, other links to the government were revealed through analysis of museum school programs. Education directors proudly quoted statistics about local school participation rates. They were proud to offer "hands on science learning opportunities." One educator explained, "Schools are being pushed to increase science literacy. They're also told to do more hands-on activities. That's where we fit it." She went on to explain how the museum tailors school programs to the state's science and social studies curriculum. The museum also offers material on the websites for teachers to use in their classroom lessons. "We try to make the museum a resource for teachers. We know they need help, and they know we need their business."

I was, again, enmeshed in a link to the economy. I was forced to consider how many connections exist between museums, people and money. It was becoming more and more clear that museums are closely tied to both government and the private sector. They are constantly caught between the two, trying to balance the budget, taking money from anyone and everyone. In fact, even museums that work with and for the government are still somewhat at the mercy of the private sector.

5.3 Conversations about People

Finally, my research developed to the point that I could study people visiting museums. I felt that after so much in-depth interviewing of informants about their jobs and the way they do business, it was time to really begin observing in the museum. This was a turning point in my research. I was able to step back and contextualize the business of museums with the behavior of the people who fill them. Questions answered in this section include: Who visits museums? Why do they visit? Who does not visit?

There are many different groups of people who visit museums. They include school children on field trips, local residents and tourists. They have distinct "visiting patterns," reported one marketing director. For the most part, she explained, weekdays are filled with school children on field trips. At the same time, groups of retirees, stay-at-home moms and nannies with children come on weekdays. During the weekday evenings, many museums rent space for private parties, which are generally sponsored by local businesses. Weekends are generally filled with local families and tourists during the days, and in the evenings museums can be rented for parties, like school proms and black-tie cocktail parties. One museum marketer explained, "Yes, we are here to educate folks about science and health, but we also have to make money." This information was helpful, because as I was observing people, I could almost immediately categorize visitors, based on this information about visitation patterns.

Much of my field work was conducted on weekdays. In fact, some of my most fond field memories were of spending time observing school groups visiting on field trips. A typical day of observation, no matter what museum I visited, generally started around 9:00 a.m. I wore business casual clothes like black pants and a solid colored shirt, so I didn't look too "professional," but I also did not want to look too casual. I needed to blend in. As I walked into the museum, I could see school busses turning into the museum entrance. One after another, they swarmed into the parking lot, like a marching line of yellow ants. I arrived with my field book in hand, entered the museum, and began explaining to security personnel and volunteers at the entrance why I was there. They waved me through the turnstiles for free. I generally visited my museum contact's office to let them know I was there. Next, I headed for the cafeteria for a quick cup of coffee before the day began. I sipped my coffee and watched a few mothers and nannies follow their children around the museum atrium, and by 10:45 a.m. the museum lobby was filled with noise, as the school groups filed in the front doors. More ants! Some museums asked children to wear color coded wrist bands or name tags to identify them by school. First, teachers proceeded to the ticket counter to process payment. On one occasion, a teacher forgot to bring a check. The ticket counter staff called the manager, who in turn called the education director, who then called the museum director. It seems there was a new policy, "no money, no museum visit." In the end, the school principal brought a check to the museum, and the children were allowed inside. It was interesting to watch as everyone's visit began with an exchange of money. My own visit, which was free, began with spending money in the cafeteria.

Schools: Even though most museums restricted me from speaking directly with school teachers, I was intrigued by the amount of information I collected through observations. After a few months, I began to seeing visitation patterns in the types of schools. After talking with museum staff, I learned there are three main categories of schools:

- Private Schools
- Public Schools
- Public - Title 1: These are schools where the majority of children participate in a government sponsored free lunch program. I found that some museums offer scholarships for these schools. Often times, the money to pay for these schools was provided through scholarships funded through private companies. I thought again of Alessandra and her government scholarship. I thought of her and the museum in which she worked because under-privileged children always visited for free at her museum. I became increasingly interested in the relationship between the programs offered to "all" and the programs available to "some." It seems neoliberalism directly affects which schools visit and which do not. If museums can raise money for Title 1 schools to visit, then it meant a select few children could visit.

During the six month observation period, I noticed trends with these groups. Private school children always appeared wearing uniforms--girls wearing plaid skirts with knee socks or navy pants with a white shirt. Boys wore navy blue pants and a white shirt or sweater vest sporting an embroidered crest with the school name. Boys and girls were separated by gender to board their busses. Often times, they participated in the same museum program, but most of the time, the children were separated--girls from boys-- by one empty row of seats. There were always several parent chaperones, at least one adult per 3-4 children. For example, a group of 30 children was generally accompanied by 6-8 parents. The kids were very well behaved. They sat like little soldiers in their seats and raised their hands politely when they had a question. Parents sat quietly in the seats provided for them. On occasion, I noticed a parent falling asleep in the back of the room. Perhaps the most striking thing I noticed was that the private school children always came with existing topic knowledge. They always knew answers to the educator's questions, and on several occasions, I heard educators say things like, "You guys did your homework before coming to museum. I'm so impressed." During their lunch break, most of the children ate lunch from the museum cafeteria (Prices ranged from $5-$14/lunch). Some children brought their lunch from home. They ate quietly and returned to the exhibit areas after lunch.

In contrast, the children from the public schools provided me with a completely different set of observations. They arrived all on the same school bus; boys and girls were not separated. And the children also sat together-- no row of separation. Of the 28 public school programs I visited, only one of them had children wearing uniforms. The parent/child ratio for chaperones differed from the private school, too. I counted an average of 1 parent per 8-10 kids. However, these parents appeared engaged in the museum exhibits and programs, and they sat attentively listening to the lessons. None of the parents fell asleep. In fact, on several occasions parents asked questions about the lessons. The museum educator seemed happily surprised to get a question from a parent.

Of the public schools, I noticed greater differences among the Title 1 schools. These classes generally had no parent chaperones. A teacher introduced me to her "aid," Miss. Smith. She said, "Miss Smith is my life saver. I would not be able to handle these kids without her help. They should pay her more. That's for sure!" I looked around and realized there were no parents. I also noticed that many children were not familiar with the science topics. During a two week period, I observed two different museums teaching the same topic to 3rd grade students. The private school children were consistently more knowledgeable of the topic than were their Title 1 counterparts. I also noticed in two museums, a large number of Hispanic children. During the lesson, Samantha, the museum educator made a point to ask if everyone understood, and she also related Mexico to the subject she was teaching. I was impressed with her sensitivity to the kids. Afterwards, I complimented her. She responded, “That school comes here every year. I know that for many of the kids, English is not their native language. I make sure to speak slowly because I want to make sure they understand me.” It seemed that Samantha had a sense of compassion and understanding that enhanced her teaching approach. The children responded well and appeared to be engaged in the lesson.

These observations from school field trips were a turning point in my research. I began to see these kids as part of a larger social issue – the education gap. Social stratification was reflected in the children inside the museum. I noted that private school children had a better command of science topics than their Title one counterparts. And Private schools had, overall, a greater participation of parents. Children from immigrant families arrived at school and the museum, and tried to learn at the same rate as their native-English speaking counterparts. Parents from poorer neighborhoods were apparently absent from their children’s activities. I wondered where they were. Were they working and therefore could not attend? Probably. While money was not discussed during these observations, I felt strongly that many of the observed differences in school kids were inextricably tied to their individual family’s place in the neoliberal global economy. While neoliberalism has created a service class with money for vacations and museum visits, there are still many who cannot afford to go. If it were not for the occasional scholarship programs, the children in Title one schools would not be visiting. Clearly, their parents are not visiting.

Museums are connected to many aspects of society. As government funds are decreased, museums are forging new and deeper connections to business. They are striving to maintain their status in society and at the same time build relationships. Museum workers are aware of their changing job descriptions, as well as the museum's changing role in society. They seem to be embracing new opportunities to expand their jobs to adjust for market changes. I was impressed with the flexibility of these museum educators and curators. They gracefully balance the traditional daily demands of their job, as well as the new aspects of their work, such as marketing and fund-raising. They even manage to juggle demands placed on them by the museums' connection to globalization. I was especially impressed with their agility and ability to change their lessons to ensure that Hispanic children felt a connection to the lesson content. Museum professionals are quietly working behind the scenes of neoliberalism. They are flexible, conscientious, and completely immersed in the ideology of the market.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

Special Membership Discount

Bring this coupon to the Museum and receive $10 off a new membership – Family level or above.

Expires 9/30/06

The Health Museum

JOHN P. McGOVERN MUSEUM OF HEALTH & MEDICAL SCIENCE

MEMBERSHIPS DO A BODY GOOD

Museum members enjoy special benefits during the month of October

In appreciation of Member support at The Health Museum. We've named October MEMBER'S MONTH! During the month of October, the Museum will honors its members with special events at the Museum, reductions on their renewal rates, **discounts at local business** and much more! Check our web site soon for more details

Beginning at only $35 a year for a Plus One membership, all members of The Health Museum receive these exclusive benefits: Museum admission for one year from date of purchase

- One personalized membership card
- Reciprocal membership privileges at Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC) museums
- **Discounts on selected Museum-sponsored programs and activities**
- **15% discount on birthday parties at the Museum**
- A subscription to the Museum's premier publication Muse News

As this advertisement shows, U.S. museums today are all about business and marketing.

A historical look at museums reveals that they were once places where only members of the elite or bourgeois class visited. Now, U.S. health and science museums are places where people belonging to the middle or service class can purchase memberships for a nominal fee and visit often. These memberships provide privileges such as free museum magazine subscriptions, invitations to special events, and discounts on children's birthday parties, just to name a few. They can even provide members with discounts on purchases made at local businesses. Clearly, museums have become more than stuffy buildings where people simply stare at artifacts in cases. They are now sites where experiences are marketed, goods are sold, and money talks.

My research provides an analysis of museums in a neoliberal economy, where government funding is decreased and reliance on the private sector is mandatory. By researching museums within their economic framework, I learned about the many connections they have with local and global economy. I summarize these connections by discussing the museums' ties to people, government, and money. While most of my research was conducted in the U.S., it was a visit to a Brazilian museum that became the driving force behind my interest in U.S. museums' ties to neoliberalism. It was in Brazil that I met a volunteer, Alessandra, who attributed much of her life's good fortune to the fact that the museum mentoring program allowed her to learn English and attend a government-funded university for free. Upon my return to the U.S., I began looking for an outreach program like the one Alessandra participated in, hoping to find someone here, too, who had benefited from our government's museum programs. After two years of research, I found no museums with strong outreach programs, and I certainly never found anyone as passionate about their museum experience as Alessandra. Instead, I found museums with constant ties to a neoliberal market connected to the global economy. I uncovered a working climate where the mantra of economics is ever present in the minds of everyone in the museum – from curators, to directors, to educators, volunteers and even visitors. Countless museum professionals told me of their desire to offer outreach programs, but explained they “simply couldn’t offer them because of a lack of funding.” One museum educator explained, “We rely on every person who walks in the front door to pay admission. That’s how we pay our bills… through ticket sales.” I met museum professionals willing to offer outreach programs, wanting to offer them, but who seemingly felt as though their “hands were tied” – tied to money or the lack there of. I also found museums scrambling and competing for governmental funding – even those whose funding was supposed to be primarily provided by the government and should have felt no need to compete or “justify.” Additionally, I learned that researching in museums required quite a bit of flexibility on the part of the anthropologist. Since museums are still managed by elites, who report to board members and business supporters, their directors were not eager to have their institutions studied. My analysis is framed within Laura Nader’s concept of “studying up.” My research fits neatly within the discourses of anthropology, museum studies and neoliberalism, for I discovered that many of the issues discussed recently in this field, such as the changing role of museums, the changing roles of museum workers, and the focus on museum audiences, can be tied neatly together and framed within the discourse of neoliberalism. I heard the money talk.

Many of the museums in my study are considered “non-profit.” That is somewhat of a misnomer, though, for they must generate enough profit to support their entire operations budget. Most of these “non-profit” museums don’t receive any government funding, but if they do get funding, then it is generally in the form of a one-time grant for a specific project. One museum in my study was initially completely supported by federal funds, but was scheduled to raise a small portion of money through fundraising efforts. This museum, which was never finished, would have been the nations' first interactive public health museum. However, due to issues related to funding and government bureaucracy, it was never completed. This was where my research began, and my experience there led me down the path that is outlined in this document.

The neoliberal principle of decreasing government funding is ever-present in the consciousness of museum educators, visitors and volunteers. Museum staff were eager to tell me about the many ways they successfully generate money for the museum. They talked of conducting special tours for wealthy donors. They also talked freely about their need to create exhibits that would "sell" with "mass appeal" to the general visiting public. It seemed to me they were always thinking of a way to sell the museum to anyone who would pay admission. I found a common sense approach to talking about issues related to funding. Museum educators, curators, visitors, and volunteers all used the same vocabulary. I like to call this "funding vocabulary" or "money talk." I also found that my informants placed all their decisions within the context of funding. Museum educators and directors talked of "balancing the budget." One respondent told me, "We are here to educate, but we also have to make money." I noted, too, that the job description of a curator has been broadened to include activities like media tours and editing of marketing materials, such as newsletters and advertisements. One museum curator reported she is "happy to help market the museum because we need the money." Marketing staff and fundraisers participate in the process of deciding which exhibits will "sell" or have "mass appeal." Museum volunteers report working at the museum for free,

“. . . because they know the museum is struggling financially.” And when a school visited a museum and accidentally forgot to bring their payment, they heard the museum cashier say, “No money, no visit.” It seems that what Trouillot said about accepting growth as a moral value has become a reality in the U.S. museums that I visited. Museum officials justify their decisions by framing them within terms of the market. I argue that neoliberalism has created a heightened sense of awareness of money and has even created a hegemonic vocabulary that is accepted and used by museum officials.

I found that many museum educators, directors, and volunteers felt extremely pressured because of funding issues. While they seemed to readily adopt this mantra, they also seemed to feel a desire to reject many of the decisions they are “forced” to make because of funding issues. Many of them explained they do not like having so many traveling exhibits, but said it just makes sense, financially speaking. One museum educator said she felt like her job had shifted from curating to simply scheduling traveling exhibits and managing their installation. She explained, “I never get to do what I am trained to do – curate. It is so frustrating. Why do they even hire a curator?” I found still other museum educators who desired to offer outreach programs to schools where children cannot afford to pay the field trip admission price. One person said, “I’d love to offer programs to those schools. Unfortunately, they won’t let me develop any programs that do not directly generate money.” My research revealed that museums’ staff no longer feel a sense of personal agency. Curators no longer feel as though they can decide what exhibits are worthy of developing. Museum officials feel they are only “allowed” to develop programs that generate money. Museum curators and educators are being flexible in their roles and they are happily accepting new job responsibilities like fundraising and marketing. I suggest that by readily accepting these changes, they are also naturalizing the changes. They are serving as agents of change, but they do not even realize their own power. After hearing these comments, I am left with still more questions. Who is going to stop museum directors from developing outreach programs that seem to be for the good of the community? The market?

I also concluded that museums are inextricably tied to the global market. Museum officials and visitors oftentimes do not even realize it. When museums buy traveling exhibits that are created in one country and then shipped throughout the U.S., they are participating in the global economy. For example, visitors in my study viewed frogs that were native to the African Rain Forest, and then excitedly purchased a plastic frog replica from the museum gift shop. As tourism escalates, museums will find themselves marketing wares from all over the globe, as well as exhibiting history, culture and science from countries worldwide.

The research conducted in this study contributes to the growing discourse of museum studies. While many scholars have analyzed the changing roles, and even discussed many of the issues presented here, such as changing roles of museum professionals, this research is different because it places these changes within the framework of neoliberalism. My findings show that the economy has affected museums and is causing many of the changes evidenced by other scholars. I feel there is still work to be done, as this is just a beginning. If additional research could be funded, then it would be insightful to conduct a true cross-cultural analysis in a country where neoliberalism is not as mature. It would be interesting to learn about how government-funded museums in other countries interact with their various publics. Another interesting research angle could include analyzing the consumption experiences that occur in other kinds of museums, such art and history museums. Are these museums constructing visitor experiences around consumption, as they were in the museums in my study? Do museum professionals in art and history museums experience the same challenges that were faced by the museum professionals who participated in my research? This research will be helpful for museum directors, curators and educators. Museum directors and other high-ranking officials should look at their museums in a broader sense of the market, as well as examine their social responsibility to offer programs to local residents who cannot afford to pay admission. I suggest that if museum officials want to also address issues of outreach, then they need to begin tracking which schools visit and which schools do not. Otherwise, they will not be able to demonstrate where outreach is needed. I have drafted a sample evaluation plan, and it is included in the appendix of this document. I worked with several museums during my research, many of which wanted to provide outreach programs for local schools, but could not justify the expense of developing a tracking mechanism. The evaluation tool included in the appendix of this document provides museums with a simple way to establish a baseline indicating which schools are visiting, and also allows a closer look at those that are not. This research offers museum educators and curators a voice. It can be used as a tool of evaluation and a bridge from marketing and money to education.

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APPENDIX

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Discussion Guide for Interview

1. How did you choose to work in the museum field?

2. How long have you worked in the field?

3. Tell me about your job. What are your major responsibilities?

4. Can you tell me about the interaction between the museum and the school system?
   - How do you decide which school programs to offer?
   - Does the museum educator select the program topics or do teachers request specific topics?

5. Does the museum have any outreach programs? If so, then please describe the programs.

6. Does your museum receive any government funding? (Federal, State, or City funding) If so, please discuss these types of funding.

7. Does the museum evaluate the effectiveness of programs and/or exhibits? If so, please talk about these evaluation methods. (Surveys, interviews, etc.)
   - If the museum does conduct evaluation, then how is this evaluation data used? (Planning of future exhibits, justify grants or funding, etc.)

8. Since you began working in the field, have you seen any significant changes in the museum field? If so, please discuss.

9. What is the most challenging aspect of your job?

10. What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?

Taren Dailey
Georgia State University
Graduate Program in Anthropology
Proposal for Research in Museums

Increasing diversity in museum attendance is outlined in a report recently published by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The *Museums Data Collection Report and Analysis*, published in May 2005, recommends that museums work to measure the diversity of their audience, as well as to increase efforts to reach diverse audiences.[1] The report sites only a few studies conducted with art and Tribal museums. They include a study of Latino participation in arts activities [2] and another study of diversity in visitation trends in under-represented communities, which is highlighted in the Smithsonian's study on art museum practices. [3] A third study, funded by the IMLS, focuses on state and local Tribal museums.[4]

After reviewing both the report produced by the IMLS, as well as studies cited within it, I suggest that it is beneficial to look at the diversity among the kinds of school groups currently visiting museums. (The schools include public, public-title-1, private, charter and home schools.) This research proposal is different from the studies described in the IMLS report because it focuses on diversity among school groups, rather than diversity among ethnic groups. Museum officials could find this study helpful because it will provide an outline of the current school visitation demographic, and it might also be useful for future school program marketing and planning efforts.

Research Objective: The objective of this project is to examine school visits over time. Some of the questions answered through this research are as follows. Are there any trends in the kinds of schools that visit? Do some schools visit more or less than others? If so, then what factors might be influencing this? Has participation in certain counties or school districts changed over time? If so, then what are the influencing factors?

Research Methods and Analysis:
This research will be conducted using a combination of methods, including interviews, observation of education classes, and analysis of visitation data. Data analysis will allow me to use statistical methods to produce trend reports. Interviews are useful because they offer information that statistics can not reveal. For example, if allowed to interview museum staff, I might be able to determine reasons for differences in numbers of schools visiting. Comments from staff would be included in the final report and would validate the data being provided. Observing museum educators while they are teaching will help me to better understand the teaching process, and it will allow me to add context to my analysis.

Research Summary:

- Collect existing visitation data
  - Compare the number of public, public title-1, private schools, charter and home school groups. Compare the number of visiting schools to the total number of schools in a particular district. Compare changes over time.
- Interview museum educators
- Observe field trip programs
- Optional: If possible, interview teachers who bring children to the museum.*
  - Teachers could be interviewed quickly during their visit or by phone or email after their visit. *Note: This activity is optional. If the museum is not comfortable with me interviewing teachers or providing me with teachers' contact information, then it can be easily deleted from the research design.

Project Proposal

Data Needed:

The following data is needed in order to conduct the analysis. If the museum does not collect this specific data, then we can discuss new analysis options. However, a minimum of one year of data is needed.

- Number of public schools (1 or more years)
- Number of Title 1 public schools (1 or more years)
- Number of Private Schools (1 or more years)

Confidentiality of Information Collected:

Maintaining the confidentiality of research participants is extremely important. Individuals who participate in interviews will *not* be identified in the final written analysis. They will be assigned fictitious names (pseudonyms), and no identifying information will be presented.

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