MAKING THE NEGOTIATION BETWEEN NARRATIVES OF MUSEUMS AND A VISITOR:

EMPOWERING A VISITOR THROUGH NARRATIVE-MAKING

A Dissertation in

Art Education

by

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ABSTRACT

Even though interpretation is a central activity performed in the exhibition space at art museums, so far little research has been done on interpretive frameworks museum professionals incorporate into the exhibition for a visitor and how a visitor responds to those interpretive frameworks, when they interpret the works of art at art museums. So, there is little information on how a visitor interacts with the works of art, what elements influence the interpretive processes of a visitor, what messages the museum presents to a visitor, or how a visitor internalizes or rejects those messages. In this context, this study investigated my experience as a visitor at the exhibition spaces of the museums in order to explore how the art museum’s narrative influenced my interpretive experiences and also how I responded to the specific contexts of museum narratives when I interpreted a work of art. Namely, I investigated how the museum’s narratives and my narratives can conflict, resist, and compromise each other.

As a methodology to pursue this investigation, I incorporate an autoethnography, so that the research text emerges from my bodily standpoint. To explore the multi-layered intersection of the museums’ narratives and my narratives, this study investigated: 1) what narratives the museums made available to me and what my narratives were when I visited the three museums with my family and individually; 2) what strategies I used to negotiate my meaning-making processes; and 3) how I was transformed through the negotiation processes.

As a result, I discovered that there are three types of narratives at the intersection between my narratives and museums’ narratives—1) the at-a-glance narrative, 2) the
exhibitionary narrative, and 3) the hidden narrative. Developed from the at-a-glance narratives through exhibitionary narratives up to the hidden narratives, these narratives evolved as a spiral, re-inviting each other, and finally revealed their substance into its third stages—hidden narratives—when I revealed myself through investigation into my own folk psychology—my lived experience such as my behaviors, my working beliefs, my assumptions, and my deep-rooted painful memories. In particular, findings articulated through hidden narratives demonstrated how vague, incomplete, and inarticulate ideas, thoughts, and feelings residing at the stages of at-a-glance narratives and exhibitionary narratives actually had impacts on the interpretive experiences of a visitor in very subtle ways. Revelation into undercurrent but inarticulate emotions associated with interpretive experiences shows how a visitor is frustrated and encouraged, thereby implying ways to help visitors get more opportunities toward positive experiences.

As another finding through this autoethnographic investigation, I identified four strategies responding to the narrative of museums, when I was in troubling situations. These strategies for negotiation are: 1) passive resistance, 2) active inquiry, 3) subverting, and 4) disguising. This finding of the four strategies demonstrates that a visitor is not a passive person toward troubling museum’s narratives but an active agent to control a troubled scenario in her own ways. It also shows that the museum’s narratives and a visitor’s narratives do not need to be considered as separated, but permeable and negotiated, when a visitor interacts with works of art in a museum.

One available way for me to be an active agent was through narrative-making, which enabled me to be interested in my lived experience. The power released through
my revelation, as a result, enabled me to transform myself into a critical visitor who could read a hidden curriculum of the museums in the name of hidden narratives and helped me build more interests in looking at art works.

This study into the negotiation between museum’s narratives and a visitor’s narratives will provide museum professionals with an alternative picture of the interpretive experience of a visitor, thereby building in-depth understanding on cognitively, emotionally and socio-culturally diverse visitors and creating conceptually and physically empowered space in museums.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................ ix

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................ x

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .............................................................................................. xi

PROLOGUE .................................................................................................................. 1

  My First Visit to an Art Gallery .............................................................................. 1
  Working at the National Museum of Korea ............................................................ 3
  The First Semester at Penn State .......................................................................... 5
  Am I a visitor? I am a researcher! .......................................................................... 7

Chapter 1  INTRODUCTION ...................................................................................... 10

  Problem Statement ............................................................................................... 12
  Purpose of the Study ............................................................................................. 15
  Research Questions ............................................................................................... 18
  Defining Terms ....................................................................................................... 18
    Interpretation/Own Interpretation ................................................................. 18
    Lived Experiences of Visitors ......................................................................... 19
    Narratives ........................................................................................................... 21
    Interpretive Strategies ....................................................................................... 23
  Significance of Problem ....................................................................................... 24
  Nature of Study ....................................................................................................... 25
    The Socio-Cultural Approach to Museums ..................................................... 25
    The First-Person Narrative: Autoethnography ................................................ 26

Chapter 2  REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .............................................................. 28

  Interpretative Practices in Art Museums ............................................................. 29
    Traditional Views about Interpretations .......................................................... 30
    Interpretations in the Constructivist Museum ............................................... 31
    Re-Thinking Interpretation in Art Museums: Knowledge or Narrative? ....... 33
  Visitors’ Narratives ............................................................................................... 39
  Museum’s Narratives ............................................................................................ 43
  Visitor’s Identity Formation ................................................................................... 46

Chapter 3  METHODOLOGIES ................................................................................. 51

  My Resistance to an Autoethnographic Study .................................................... 51
  Autoethnography ................................................................................................. 54
  Research Design .................................................................................................... 59
Data Collection ........................................................................................................67
Data Analysis ........................................................................................................70

Chapter 4  AT-A-GLANCE NARRATIVES ..............................................................80
Inviting a Visitor to a City Garden ........................................................................81
Detour Experiences ................................................................................................87
The Less Intervention, the More Freedom? ............................................................95
Educational Programs with the Support of Physical Environments ..................103

Chapter 5  EXHIBITIONARY NARRATIVES .......................................................112
Minimal Information Represented .......................................................................112
Single Interpretation .............................................................................................120
Publicly Monitored Space ......................................................................................128
Disembodied Voices .............................................................................................139

Chapter 6  HIDDEN NARRATIVES .................................................................151
Art Museum-going as Pleasure and Pressure ......................................................151
An Art Museum as a Gendered Space ...................................................................156
Mother’s Identity Under-represented ....................................................................165
Modernistic Values Represented ..........................................................................176
Art Museum as Empowered Space ........................................................................187

Chapter 7  NEGOTIATION, NARRATIVES-MAKING, AND EMPOWERMENT ..........195
Strategies for Negotiation .....................................................................................195
Narrative Identity Formation ................................................................................200
Narrative-making as Empowerment .....................................................................205

Chapter 8  DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION ..................................................211
Summary and Discussion of Research Questions ..............................................212
  Research Question One ......................................................................................212
  Research Question Two .....................................................................................221
  Research Question Three ..................................................................................224
Conclusions ..........................................................................................................225
Significance of Study ...........................................................................................227
Suggestions for Further Study .............................................................................229

EPILOGUE ..............................................................................................................231
Entangled in the Skein of Thread ........................................................................231
Naming It!: Museum Pedagogy as a Detour ......................................................233
From Museum’s Authority to Narrative Authority of a Visitor .................. 234
Educational Recommendations ..................................................................... 236

REFERENCES ........................................................................................................ 239

Appendix  INFORMED CONSENT FORM ............................................................. 254

Vita
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Portrait of a Woman and Kneehole desk at the Carnegie Museum of Art... 142

Figure 2: Wall text of Portrait of a Woman and Kneehole desk at the Carnegie Museum of Art (label 1 and label 2). ................................................................. 144

Figure 3: Object label of the installation of “Al, Mo & Oh…” at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh (label 3). ................................................................. 146

Figure 4: Wall text of “Design is about making choice” at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh (label 4). ................................................................. 148
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Duration and Frequency of Visits. ................................................................. 62
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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PROLOGUE

My First Visit to an Art Gallery

I never visited an art museum or an art gallery throughout my kindergarten, elementary school, and middle school years. More precisely, I mean to say that my parents never took me to museums nor did I visit them on school field trips during this time. Instead, when I was in middle school, my parents bought me art books with pictures of masterpieces of Western art. In addition, in elementary school and beyond, I learned about Western art forms, such as oil paintings and watercolor paintings, and the various art movements throughout history, such as Impressionism and Cubism.

However, I attended my first art show when I was in the ninth grade, when I visited an exhibition of my art teacher’s work. The art gallery was located one hour from my town by public transportation. I did not visit the art show because my teacher asked me to; he just talked to us in class about how he was going to exhibit the original plates of the picture book entitled The Story on Mountain of White Head (백두산이야기), which he had both written and illustrated. At that time, I was very impressed with his art lesson, especially his ideas and his philosophy about a picture book for children. I thought he was a kind of pioneer in the field of picture books in South Korea twenty years ago when no one was interested in investing the time and energy to paint pictures for these types of books. However, he believed that children deserved to view quality illustrations, which in turn would allow them to develop their taste for art education.
Based on his belief, he was investing his personal money to produce quality illustrations, which his book publisher was not interested in doing because of the cost required to do so.

As a high school student, I was quite touched by my teacher’s enthusiasm for his picture book, which made me want to see his paintings. So, I asked my teacher for information about the gallery, where it was, and when his paintings would be on display, and I went to view his paintings by myself. Even though, at that time, the gallery was located in a place unknown to me, I later learned that the gallery was located next to Gyong-Bok Place and was one block behind a governmental office—the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Even now, I remember vividly how many times I had to transfer from the subway to the bus and how long I had to walk before I reached the gallery. I remember these details so well because it was my first experience to walk alone on a downtown street while looking for a specific place. I remember that the day was very long, but I cannot remember exactly what I felt when I finally reached the gallery. However, there is one thing that I can remember, even though it was twenty years ago: The paintings had bright colors of yellow and green representing mountains, and they had the rough texture characteristic of oil paintings. Before that, I never would have thought that the color yellow could be so bright and so varied: The yellow earth of Mountain of White Head has been with me since that day.

This story is of a day in the fall of 1988 in Seoul, South Korea, and of my only experience visiting an art museum or an art gallery during my school days. My first visit to an art gallery was initiated from my personal desire to look at my teacher’s paintings, not by my parents or by my school. However, after visiting my teacher’s exhibition, my
interest in majoring in art began to blossom. Before that moment, art was just one of the many school subjects that I was required to take, but, after that day, art became a part of my life.

**Working at the National Museum of Korea**

Since I majored in visual arts for my undergraduate degree and in art history for my Master’s, art museums became my shelter. I cannot count how many times I have visited art museums and art galleries. When I was depressed and felt lonely, I communicated with art works in museums, and they made me smile again. When I wanted something new and exciting, the museum provided me with interesting stimulations through exhibitions. More importantly, when I wanted to introduce the Korean culture to cultural strangers, the museum was a vast source of cultural treasures. Even when I just wanted to kill time, I found the museum to be a useful place for me. In other words, the museum was a sacred church, a magnificent palace, and a refuge for me. At that time, I thought that other art museum-goers had the same experiences and felt the same way as I did. This belief started breaking down when I worked in the Department of Fine Art at the National Museum of Korea as a contract curator in 2001. Only a few months after I started working there, I began realizing that general visitors seemed to confirm the sense of awe from the objects that the museum professionals were trying to deliver, but they did not seem to enjoy their museum-going experiences.

From my observation at the exhibition space, school-age children were busy writing information from wall texts or object labels. Such tasks were probably assigned to
the children by their school teachers as evidence of the children’s learning at museums. In addition, I saw the faces of two types of adults—bored faces and proud faces—and they seemed to be contradictory. Most adult visitors walked along the show cases and did not stop to look at the objects more closely or read the wall texts or object labels. They seemed to look at the objects with empty gazes, and they seemed to be very bored. Sometimes, I would pass by visitors who were talking to themselves, saying such things as “I don’t understand this” or “so what?” But, interestingly, most of them looked satisfied simply because they were there looking at something important. In particular, when a curator introduced a display in a session of “Talk with Curators,” visitors always nodded their heads in agreement when the curators explained the collections. They looked so satisfied when they were given more information about the works of art with which they were unfamiliar; they were completely satisfied with the national Korean tradition or the specific values that the curators provided. When they left the museum after participating in “Talk with Curators,” they seemed to be so proud of themselves for being at the museum. Even though I did not observe the whole “Talk with Curators” session, I knew what the curators had said to the visitors, as it was my job to say the very same things. They spoke about the collection as national treasures: how Korean cultural traditions have produced these kinds of fine works.

Even though it was just my own personal impression, I suspected that both the bored faces and the proud faces of the visitors could be compatible at the same time, but I did not have a reasonable explanation for it at the time.
The First Semester at Penn State

During the fall of 2004, my first semester, when I started to study art education at the Pennsylvania State University, my head was filled with fun activities to engage school-aged children who were tired of merely copying information and wanted to learn in more exciting ways. In addition, I believed that bored faces could be transformed into happy faces if I succeeded in developing an effective delivery system in a well-organized and engaging way. However, I could not articulate the issue I had with the proud faces I saw as a curator. Is this a problem? Being proud of our cultural heritage (including fine art) did not seem to be a problem. So, what was the real problem of these proud faces? My discomfort regarding these bored faces and proud faces could have been caused by the fact that visitors did not seem to enjoy looking at objects much: Instead, their pride simply resided within the boundary of the museums. That is, their pride was inspired and promoted by the curators, but it did not seem to be infused into the visitors’ lives properly. By observing visitors enjoying museums in their own ways during my studies at Penn State, I realized what initiated my discomfort: They seemed to be proud of objects that the museum displayed but they did not seem to enjoy them. Simply admiring art without enjoying art enables a visitor to alienate it from her/his actual life; in this case, art can become social capital, as Pierre Bourdieu proposes (1979/1984).

Enjoying something is fundamentally different from admiring something. On a basic level, enjoying something means playing with it. Playfulness can even occur on an individual and solitary level. When involving more than two people, playfulness can be achieved fully by the condition of less power structure or well-coordinated power
structure. However, when a person admires something or someone, which requires that the admirer share authority with that object or person voluntarily, people are willing to provide active obedience with the figures and objects that they admire. For this reason, admiring something might be compensated with enjoying something. Noticing this glimpse outline of thinking, I hoped to study what mechanisms enable visitors to choose active obedience in museum settings: What constitutes authority in interpretive cycles of art works?

In a narrow sense, the authority lies between the museum professionals and the visitors. However, more broadly, it is related to the philosophical, social, cultural, and political dimensions in which the museums are situated. The following questions relate to these various dimensions: Who decides what knowledge should be circulated in specific museums? Who decides if something is important or less important? What “truth” can be displayed in a museum? Who are the owners of museums? All of these questions deal with issues of power relationships among visitors, museum professionals, the museum itself, and society in general. Through my dissertation, I hoped to investigate how to deconstruct this kind of power structure and how to empower visitors who are forced to feel in specific ways. Even though my interest in this shared authority was initiated by and grew from a single moment in the National Museum of Korea, during my coursework for my doctoral studies, I have seen my concerns reflected in other researchers’ work, such as Eileen Hooper-Greenhill (1992; 1999; 2000; 2007), Lisa Roberts (1997), Ivan Karp (1991; 1992; 2006), George Hein (1998; 1999), Stephen Weil (2002), and Gail Anderson (2004), who have worked for museums in many other
countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom. I am not alone with my concerns.

Hooper-Greenhill (2000; 2007) recently proposes the concept of the “post-museum,” criticizing the interpretive hegemony that modernist museums have controlled. Based on the framework of visitor-centered museums, Roberts (1997) and Hein (1998; 1999) discuss how constructivists can contribute to building visitor empowerment through the knowledge systems and learning models circulated in museums. Weil (2002) and Anderson (2004) call for a paradigm shift in museum practices, criticizing the superficial transformation of museum practices toward visitor-centered museums. In particular, the series of books written and edited by Karp (1991; 1992; 2007) provide the reasons why museums have attempted to deconstruct the power structures imposed on them, considering a large array of museums: community museums, university museums, national museums, and metropolitan museums.

Am I a visitor? I am a researcher!

In the middle of my struggle to find ways to deconstruct the power implicit in the interpretive process, I confronted an unexpected question. It was the second question of my comprehensive exam that I had to pass in order to continue my studies as a doctoral student at Penn State. My committee asked me to respond to the following question:

In your response, reflect on the process of identity construction, reinterpretation, etc., as you yourself have experienced it (and perhaps seen it experienced or recognized it in other published accounts). Macdonald quotes Arjun Appadurai’s assertion that ‘while we can make our identities, we cannot do so exactly as we please,’ suggesting that in order to seek empowerment, one must first recognize and navigate
sources of power already at work in constituting our identities, powers that may require our resistance. In this regard, as you write this reflection, explore the use of the autoethnographic narrative form, described by Mary Louise Pratt (2000) as… Write from your perspective as a Korean engaged in a transcultural negotiation with Western forms of institutional power, and undertaking the kind of identity work you are proposing for museum visitors. Throughout your response, draw heavily upon the Macdonald article and the Roberts book for reference citations, but also feel free to cite other published accounts that you recognize as testimony to the kind of experience you are interested in documenting (emphasis made by me).

The title of the proposal I had to develop for my committee members’ pre-committee meeting prior to this exam was “Questioning Interpretive Authority in Art Museums: Empowerment, Narratives, and the Construction of Identity for Visitors.” As you can guess from the title of the proposal, the question asking me to “recognize and navigate sources of power already at work in constituting our identities, powers that may require our resistance” was reasonable. However, I was seriously challenged by this question asking me to reflect on my experience as “a Korean engaged in a transcultural negotiation with Western forms of institutional power” because I had always excluded myself in every empowerment process that I had proposed. I thought I did not need an empowerment process because I was not un-empowered by any authority. Even though I had argued that visitors need to be empowered, I did not think of myself as a visitor. I was always a curator, an educator, or a researcher, not a visitor. Because I could not make something up that I did not recognize as being true, I wrote about experiences that I had in different classes and applied this theoretically to museum settings.

After completing my comprehensive exam, I felt that I had excluded myself in all of the research that I had conducted, acting as if I were an emancipator who could empower visitors: I was invisible in all of my research and discussions. I thought of
myself as being a more knowledgeable person than the general visitor due to my prior knowledge in art history and as a more critical person than the general visitor as I was informed by the critical studies and critical pedagogy. I had positioned myself as having a more advanced status than the general visitor.

Under the same venue of my interest in shared authority in interpretive circles, this dissertation started in a totally different way than I had initially thought it would. The incorporation of an autoethnography into my study enabled me to look at museums through the eyes of a visitor. I kept track of my experiences as a visitor and researcher as I interpreted the works of art at different art museums. It was not easy; I initially resisted incorporating this methodology in my study, which I will discuss in chapter 3. Resistance, resistance, resistance… Without the discovery of my attitude, however, I would not have chosen this particular method to investigate authority in museums but would have probably chosen a safer, less painful method.

For this reason, the title of my dissertation was changed from “Questioning Interpretive Authority in Art Museums: Empowerment, Narratives, and the Construction of Identity for Visitors” to “Making the Negotiation between Narratives of Museums and a Visitor: Empowering a Visitor through Narrative-Making.” This dissertation is a record of my journey in museums: how I connected with objects in museums, the museums themselves, and the society in which the museum was located. Namely, this dissertation is a record of one Korean female international student’s navigation of the personal, social, cultural, and political sources of power in the interpretive processes at art museums.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Since the first art museums in the United States opened their doors to the public in the late 19th century, they have optimized conditions for visitors to interpret works of art and have essentially made the process unobtrusive, enabling viewers to be more contemplative in their interpretive processes (Mayer, 2005; Williams, 1994; Zeller, 1989). Such museums assume that viewers have a certain level of cognitive competency and that their pure emotional involvement with the works of art is concerned with interpretation. The reason behind these assumptions is based on museum professionals’ and researchers’ beliefs that visitors become cognitively involved with works of art easily when they adopt quiet and contemplative modes of thinking rather than playful and instructive modes. However, they only believe this to be true for visitors who are initially knowledgeable enough to be involved with and understand the works of art independently. For the general public who are rarely exposed to art and have fewer opportunities to look at art, museums have provided educational programs and educational materials to help facilitate their understanding and appreciation of art (Zeller, 1989).

When the first art museums were established during the late 19th century/early 20th century, there were two types of museum venues in terms of interpretation: One emphasized active intervention by museum professionals that provided additional materials or interpretive frameworks with educational purposes, while the other emphasized minimal intervention, which has become the standard of today. The former
can be summarized by the ideas of John Cotton Dana, the librarian and director of the Newark Museum, and by George Brown Goode, the assistant secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. The latter can be summarized by the ideas of Benjamin Ives Gilman from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and by Sherman Lee, an art historian and director of the Cleveland Museum of Art (Zeller, 1989; Stankiewicz, 2001).

Comparing science museums to schools and art museums to temples, Gilman (1923) believe that "Where the sphere of education begins, the sphere of art ends" (as quoted in Zeller, 1989, p. 30). Lee (1977) reiterated Gilman’s philosophy, insisting that “merely by existing—preserving and exhibiting works of art—it is educational in the broadest and best sense” (as quoted in Zeller, 1989, p. 31). Both of these scholars believed that a work of art speaks for itself when it is displayed in an appropriate manner in an art museum. This idea became a long-standing belief in American art museums until recently (Cherry, 1992; Mayer, 2005; Williams, 1994, 1996, 2007; Zeller, 1989).

However, recent research shows that interpretive processes in museums have been influenced by a third party that is separate from the dimensions of visitors and the works of art. Hein (1998; 1999) argues that interpretive work in museums is influenced indirectly by an art work’s physical context and directly by the conceptual context implicit in exhibition displays, tours, and educational programs. Falk and Dierking (2000) propose that learning in museums is a product of three components of the museum-going experience: the personal context, the physical context, and social context. Lisa Roberts (1997) also problematizes the neutrality of interpretive acts conducted in museums and points out that these interpretive processes are partly controlled by the logic of the cultural politics surrounding museums.
In other words, it has been currently reported that the act of interpreting objects at museums is situated in the more complicated geography of visitors, the objects, the physical contexts, and the conceptual contexts implicit in museums as well as the social and cultural dispositions of the museums.

In this regard, my dissertation explores the complicated geography of interpretation in art museums and what these current theories can tell about art museum practices. How is the interpretation of works of art in an art museum situated among the visitors’ personal contexts, the context of the objects that the visitors are looking at, the museum’s contexts through which the visitors are walking, and finally, the broader contexts in which the museum is situated?

**Problem Statement**

While the primary concern of object-centered museums is to preserve, collect, and exhibit objects and while museum professionals in this kind of museum typically focus more on objects than on people, the visitor-centered museum identifies itself as an educational institution and focuses on visitors as equally as on objects (AAM, 1992). Although definitions of the visitor-centered museum show a very broad continuum of practical translations, these kinds of museums share two major qualities: They encourage visitors to reach multiple interpretations of objects and to experience their own meaning-making through their museum visits (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000).

However, although most museums in the United States have identified themselves as visitor-centered museums and have tried to develop visitor-centered museum practices,
their transformative trials tend to focus on offering visitor-friendly events and workshops, and on developing evaluation strategies. Nevertheless, such museums have not yet delved into the interpretive practices that museum professionals facilitate for museum visitors and those that visitors have actually used for their meaning-making in interpretation.

According to Hooper-Greenhill (1999a), however, “it is the interpretive strategy that determines the meaning of the objects and in many ways determines how the object is seen and what counts as the object in the first place” (p. 50.). Interpretive strategies are not merely theories or practices that museum professionals select to create an exhibition or that educational programs can simply borrow but are conceptual frameworks that help generate fundamental questions: What objects will museum professionals display? Why do they display these specific objects? What exactly do museum professionals do in a museum? For this reason, Weil (2002) and Anderson (2004) emphasize that the interpretive framework might entail a paradigm shift in terms of all the work that is done inside of museums.

However, only a few researchers have investigated the interpretive frameworks that art museum exhibitions incorporate (Czajkowski & Hill, 2008; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999a; Vogel, 1991). As Hooper-Greenhill (2000) insists below, the exhibition space is the most important place for visitors to be engaged with art in museums.

Museum pedagogy structures the narratives produced through the display and also through the style in which these narratives are presented. Many museums also use methods other than those of display as part of their educational provision; these might, for example, include dramatic events and workshops for children and families. Frequently, these methods are very creative and successful; however, for most visitors most of the time, it is the exhibition and display that make up the educational experience of the museum. (p. 124)
However, as Hooper-Greenhill points out above, the exhibition space has been rarely investigated in terms of pedagogical strategies embedded through display, as museums have focused on providing extra educational programs or events outside of exhibition spaces. In today’s art museums, educational programs flourish more now than they ever have, but ironically, educational elements embedded in the interpretive frameworks in exhibition spaces only seem to be investigated minimally (Stainton, 2002).

The main problem with this issue is that little research has been done concerning what visitors actually experience when they interpret works of art in an exhibition space or what varying interpretive strategies emerge as visitors partake in interpretive processes. Even though there are a number of studies that investigate visitors’ general experiences in various types of museums (Bitgood & Patterson, 1993; Falk & Dierking, 2006; Hein, 1998; Screven, 2004; Serrell & Adams, 1998), these studies do not describe the entire stories behind visitors’ interactions with museum exhibitions but generally focus on specific hypotheses related to the visitor experience. Namely, museum professionals have little information of what visitors actually experience when they interpret works of art in an exhibition space: how they interact with works of art, what elements influence their interpretive processes, what messages the museum presents to visitors, and how they internalize or reject those messages.

Furthermore, recent research suggests that visitors’ experiences need to be understood as a whole; that is, researchers argue that visitors’ experiences are interconnected with one another in specific locations (Falk & Dierking, 2000). Even though my focus lies in the exhibition space, in this regard, the interpretive process in
exhibition spaces cannot be studied separately from the visitors’ experiences in the whole museum.

Based on these problematic situations, therefore, this study explores what visitors actually experience when they interpret works of art in exhibition spaces—how they interact with works of art; what elements influence their interpretive processes; what messages the museum presents; and how visitors internalize or reject the messages—and pursues a specific and comprehensive understanding of visitors’ interpretive experiences.

**Purpose of the Study**

By investigating these kinds of visitor experiences, this study confronts substantial problems that need to be resolved in order to understand visitors’ interpretive processes in art museums. First, this study needs to have a visitor as an informant, to whom the researcher has full access—physically and conceptually—in order to track his/her actual experiences in the exhibition setting. To address this issue, this study incorporates autoethnography as its research methodology in order to investigate my experiences as a visitor. Autoethnography is a qualitative research methodology through which the researcher investigates a group or research setting by exploring her/his own individual experiences, thus revealing her/himself in the settings. I chose to use autoethnography as my research methodology because it uses the researcher’s bodily experiences as its primary research evidence. According to Spry (2006), the autoethnographic method essentially gives the researcher “narrative authority” over the experience and makes the researcher “the epistemological and ontological nexus upon
which the research process turns” (p. 189). This study is designed so that the research text emerges from my bodily standpoint. Accordingly, it seemed to be the most appropriate way for this kind of research to be done because I have full access to my experiences as a visitor and a researcher.

Second, encounters with works of art in exhibition spaces are a primary topic in my study, but there are also many other components that indirectly impact visitors’ experiences. For example, sometimes curators explicitly express their goals through art exhibitions, but in most cases, the curator’s intentions are implicit in the display patterns, wall texts, and object labels they create or in the broader contexts of the museum. The curatorial intent implicit in how art work is displayed is particularly important. Displaying objects in exhibition spaces is more than merely arranging and placing objects; rather, the museum presents its representational message through the exhibition display. Namely, it forms a narrative—a kind of story presented by museum professionals but embodied through the experiences of individual visitors. Accordingly, this study needs to consider not only the works of art as texts to be read but also needs to consider the museum as a text to be read.

Finally, because this study could be more valid if I examined my experiences with a more critical exploration, I have incorporated multi-layered research settings, which help me reflect on my experiences with different perspectives in different positions. This exploration is done in the following two ways: by extending my personal experiences to those of my family and by comparing my experiences at an art museum with those at different types of museums—a natural history museum and a children’s museum. Namely, this research investigates three different types of museums—The Carnegie
Museum of Art, The Carnegie Museum of Natural History, and The Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh—through individual and family visits, as I walked through the museums alone and with my family and talked about the various objects.

The primary reason for my family involvement revolves around my multiple identities as a researcher, an educator, an international doctoral student, a female, a mother, and a wife—all of which are revealed when I visit the museum as a member of a family group rather than alone. This enables me to locate my position as a researcher within a more complicated network of relationships, which is necessary for me to reflect on my experiences more critically. Additionally, I chose this method because most museum visits involve groups, such as families, couples, or friends. The incorporation of non-art museums helped me experience two different types of museums in a less privileged position than that of my family members because the two museums appealed to their strengths: While my expertise lies in art, my husband’s expertise lies in natural history, and my six-year-old daughter’s expertise lies in playing at the children’s museum. Such a disadvantage might help me to reflect on my experiences on multi-layered levels.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate my autoethnographic experience as a visitor and a researcher, both alone and through family involvement, while I am engaged in interpretive processes at the three different museums, focusing more on my experiences at the art museum, in order to explore how the art museum’s narrative influenced my interpretive experiences and also how I responded to the specific contexts of museum narratives when I interpreted a work of art.
Research Questions

Three research questions guided this autoethnographic study. Primarily, I investigated how I negotiated between the museums’ narratives and my own narratives at the three museums when I experienced the museums as a family member and alone. More specifically, my research questions are as follows:

1) How did the narratives inscribed in the three museums’ exhibitions and related programs encourage or discourage me to create my own interpretations from my lived experiences? What narratives did the museums make available to me and what were my narratives when I visited the three museums with my family and individually?

2) What interpretive strategies did I use to confirm or refuse the museums’ narratives? What strategies did I use to negotiate meaning-making?

3) How was I transformed through the negotiation process? How were my identities constructed through these negotiation processes?

Defining Terms

Interpretation/Own Interpretation

Traditionally, art museums have permitted visitors to have only one single interpretation of objects as prescribed by experts, such as art historians or curators, and it is given to visitors as something to be understood and mastered in museums (Hopper-Greenhill, 2000; Zeller, 1989). However, Hooper-Greenhill (1999a) refers to interpretation by hermeneutics as “the mental process an individual uses to construct
meaning from experience” and “the process of constructing meaning” to make sense of the worlds around them (p. 51). While in her conception of the hermeneutic theory Hooper-Greenhill (1999a) suggests that the agency of interpretation is an interpreter, she criticizes the current interpretive practice done in museums, which is less considering the agency of an interpreter. That is, she criticizes that interpretation is something that is done for visitors by museum professionals, not by the visitors themselves.

What I mean by “interpretation” in this study entails the hermeneutic implications of understanding works of art and making meaning about them, rather than being prescribed meaning. Narrowly, it refers to the whole response, be these cognitive and emotional, that the encounter with the work of art directly arouses in visitors. But, in the broader sense, it is the whole process that an interpreter goes through to construct meanings from her/his museum-going experiences when she/he interacts with the museums. Interpretation is the process of building up an interpreter’s self-knowledge: why she/he responds to an object in a specific way and what meanings she/he constructs from the encounter.

In this regard, “own” interpretation refers to interpretation initiated from one person’s perspectives, concerns, and interests, which is not necessarily bound to understanding experts’ views or getting prescribed meanings.

**Lived Experiences of Visitors**

So far, most research studies have considered visitors as idealized, undifferentiated, and ahistorical recipients of information (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000;
Zeller, 1989). However, currently, some researchers have argued that visitors do not enter museums as blank slates but rather bring with them well-formed interests, knowledge, opinions, and museum-going experiences (Doering & Pekarik, 2000; Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hein, 1998; 1999; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). Falk and Dierking (2000) refer to this as personal context, and Doering and Pekarik (2000) refer to it as entry narratives. The personal context or entry narrative represents the sum total of personal and generic history that an individual carries with him/her into a meaning-making situation, which includes a visitor’s motivation, expectations, prior knowledge, and prior interests. But these personal histories are developed based on what visitors can express and recognize consciously about them. However, in my research, a visitor’s lived experience refers to more than just an individual’s consciously recognized thoughts and beliefs; it includes ambiguous, uncertain, and complex conditions of an individual’s personal context.

While personal context or entry narratives are concepts that museum professionals may contemplate as they try to determine what visitors might bring to museum contexts, lived experiences is a concept perceived by the visitors themselves as they try to determine who they are, where they are, what they do in museums, and what they have done throughout their personal histories. So, by nature, the lived experience is inceptional, immature, and unclear at the beginning and even while it is being made, but it becomes increasingly articulated through the narrative-making process.
Narratives

A narrative in a general sense refers to “the representation of a series or a sequence of events” (Rundrum, 2005, p. 196). It is a sub-category of discourse, or verbal communication, and is the most general category of “linguistic production,” such as speaking, writing, and listening (Brockmeier & Harré, 2001, p. 42). When a discourse is related to social and cultural dimensions in a broad sense, Gee (2005) categorizes it into little “d” discourse and big “D” Discourse, referring to little “d” discourse as “language-in-use or stretches of language,” such as dialogue, conversation, or stories—as Brockmeier and Harré (2001) define above—and “D” Discourse as something designating “language plus ‘other stuff’” (p. 26). Gee (2005) defines Discourse as:

Such socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, valuing, acting, and interacting, in the right places and the right times with the right objects. (p. 26)

Like big “D” Discourse, when discourse is defined not only linguistically but also socially and culturally, it embraces communicative activities, cognitive activities, and expressive activities more holistically. Brockmeier and Harré (2001) state:

A full scale study of the linguistic and cultural basis would include communicative activities such as conversation and other symbolic forms of face-to-face interaction (like the telling of old and new folk tales along green storylines in local contexts), cognitive activities such as argumentation and reasoning, expressive activities such as singing and praying, and the production and reception of electronically mediated texts. (p. 42)

Even though my positioning for a narrative is somewhere between the linguistic domain of discourse and the socio-cultural domain of Discourse, I question the strict definition of narrative as “the representation of a series or a sequence of events,” as
proposed by Rundrum (2005, p. 196). Paraphrasing Wittgenstein’s words, Rundrum (2005) insists on considering a narrative as a family of language games. For him, language games are specific ways of using language that are inextricably linked to specific ways of acting and specific forms of behavior, stressing the socially situated nature of narrative communication. Brockmeier and Harré (2001) also emphasize the discursive aspect of narrative practices beyond the definition of them being linguistic or literary. They write:

> It should rather be conceived of as an expression of a set of instructions and norms for carrying out a variety of practices of communication, ordering and making sense of experiences, becoming knowing, giving excuses and justifications, and so forth. (p. 50)

In this sense, a narrative offers us a particularly “open and flexible structure” (Brockmeier & Harré, 2001, p. 52) to reflect on our life experience and actions, rather than one made up of subcategories of discourse (or Discourse) with strict boundaries. That is, “the term narrative names a variety of forms inherent in our getting knowledge, structuring action, and ordering experience” (Brockmeier & Harré, 2001, p. 53).

Accordingly, my term “visitors’ narratives” refers to a variety of forms initiated and inherent in the processes where visitors get knowledge about themselves and art works in museums through museum-going experiences, structure their action there, and order their experience, based on visitors’ lived experiences.

In the same line of thinking, museums’ narratives refer to all communicative acts the museum has with visitors as embodied through a visitor’s experience when she/he interacts with works of art, object labels, the layout of the exhibition space, the building’s architecture, the curatorial message, and so on. By defining museums as texts to be read,
Ravelli (2006) emphasizes the communicative aspects of museums: “the way a whole institution, or an exhibition within it, makes meaning, communicating to and with its public” (p.1). In this study, I studied not only texts within museums but also museums as texts, which has tremendous impacts on interpretive processes.

Finally, in this study, visitors’ narratives evolved and were articulated through narrative-making, while encountering the museum’s narratives. So, I refer to those developmental processes of visitors’ narratives as the “narrative identity” of visitors because that development was through narrative-making and, as its outcome, visitors’ identity transformation was performed, even though it was not fundamental transformation of one’s identity.

**Interpretive Strategies**

In this study, interpretation is something to be situated between the museum’s narratives and the visitor’s narratives. Therefore, this study needs to define more clearly the interpretive strategies that emerge as visitors partake in interpretive processes because visitors actually experience negotiations between the museum’s narratives and their own narratives to make meanings.

In this sense, this study basically considers the interpretive processes as the negotiation processes and the interpretive strategies that visitors actually choose when they interpret the works of art and museums as texts to be read as the strategies for negotiation.
Significance of Problem

This study positions a visitor’s “interpretation” in art museums as something to be situated between the museum’s narratives and the visitor’s experiences. This kind of interpretation is radically different from the prescribed interpretation provided by experts, such as art historians or curators. While the prescribed interpretation may make a visitor become a passive observer of meaning, investigating the situated interpretation provides a visitor with the agency to construct meaning because both the museum’s narrative and the visitor’s experiences are filtered through the visitor’s own embodied experience.

Constructivist museums envision a visitor as an agent of the meaning-making process (Hein, 1998; 1999). However, in discussions about constructivist museums, visitors have been portrayed as people who actively construct given meanings, not as active agents who construct meaning through their experiences. According to Louise Silverman (1995), the term “meaning-making” has a broad continuum of definitions. Silverman argues that visitors can construct any meaning, even when they transmit the prescribed knowledge from experts. By investigating situated interpretations, this study attempts to portray a visitor as an active agent in the meaning-making process, partly influenced by the museum’s narratives but also partly controlling the impact on her/his experiences.

Additionally, this study provides a critical examination of the attitudes of researchers who are engaged in museum settings. By employing a critical self-understanding of my experiences as a visitor and researcher at different museums, this study is expected to reveal the researcher’s subjectivity as an agent: what attitudes I
assume, what privileges I take, and what disadvantages I risk. Critically reflecting on my own behavior and assumptions is also expected to shed light on a new path of research methodology that can be incorporated into the field of museum education. This alternative research methodology shows how a researcher’s reflexive self-awareness can contribute to making a museum more inclusive, thereby empowering visitors, which is another important contribution of this study.

Nature of Study

The Socio-Cultural Approach to Museums

This study takes on a socio-cultural approach to learning in a museum. Falk and Dierking (2000), in their Contextual Model of Learning (now referred to as CML), theorize that learning in a museum is influenced by the following three dimensions—the personal context, the socio-cultural context, and the physical context. Learning done through the interpretive process includes the interplay of a visitor’s personal context as a learner and the physical and social context of the museum-going experience as Falk and Dierking (2000) propose in their Contextual Model of Learning. According to Stainton (2002):

Seeing a museum through a socio-cultural lens considers the visitors as people who are in conversation, literally and figuratively, with the art work on display and with the curatorial intent, not as the uninitiated who come to the museum to have curatorial information inserted into their heads, a view of the visitors held by some art museums. (p. 214)
Furthermore, the socio-cultural approach extends to the museum itself—to its architectural impression, curatorial intent, written texts, interactive hands-on exhibitions, and human recourse—as defined by Ravelli, thus making it a broader sense of text (2006). Ravelli considers museums as texts representing “the ways in which elements of design, layout, content selection and so on contribute to the overall impact of an exhibition or institution” (p. 2). This study considers museums as socio-cultural texts that can be read and interpreted by visitors, thereby situating learning in museums in the process of negotiation between the museum’s narratives and my own narratives.

**The First-Person Narrative: Autoethnography**

Because this study focuses on the intersection where my personal narratives meet, collide with, and confirm the narratives of museums, this study by nature depends on first-person narratives as the main research evidence. Identifying a clear difference between autobiographic texts (or personal stories) and autoethnographic texts, Jones (2005) and Spry (2006) emphasize the provocative power of autoethnographic texts in social, cultural, and political transformation. When personal stories deal with private history or private events residing in a personal dimension without investigating how that dimension is conditioned by a social dimension, the personal stories tend to become autobiographical texts, highlighting the life story of one individual. However, an autoethnographic text tries to capture how the private dimension can be interwoven with the social dimension and how private history can be conditioned in social environments.
It highlights the belief that one tiny action, event, or behavior can have social, cultural, and political facets.

By writing an autoethnographic text about my experiences in a museum, I will investigate how my personal experiences as a visitor are intermixed with the social, cultural, and political dimensions of the museum, as well as of my life. Through autoethnography, this study is expected to highlight my lived experiences as a visitor and researcher as a main research resource, weaving my personal dimension into various social, cultural, and political dimensions.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To explore how the art museum’s narratives influence my interpretive experiences and also how I respond to the specific contexts of museum narratives when I interpret a work of art, I begin with a brief overview of interpretation in art museums. It first includes traditional views about interpreting art works in art museums. In particular, I weigh heavily on examining the interpretive practice in constructivist museums because it not only has currently been the most prevailing interpretive model in the museum practices but also shows promising theoretical constructs for future directions. As the next part of review of interpretation, I am questioning which knowledge system inscribed in art museums is more appropriate for understanding art in the contexts of art museums in order to look for ways of implementing the limitations shown in the interpretive model of constructivist museums. So, the first part of this chapter will discuss the limitations of traditional views and prevailing views about interpretation as well as present some possible new approaches.

As the second part of the literature review, the notion of visitors’ narratives will be discussed. Because current practices and theories favor more rationally grounded and officially accepted interpretation, it is necessary to embrace all of what visitors go through in interpretive processes as a whole, no matter how immature, inarticulate, and vague it is. By focusing on visitors’ folk psychology as an object of inquiry, the second section of the literature review will theorize how visitors, whose personal history,
experience, and desires are distinct, construct their own virtual texts in the name of visitors’ narratives.

While visitors’ narratives are a totality of what they experience during interpretive processes, all communicative acts that the museums make available to visitors also need to be provided as a whole. So, the third section of this chapter will discuss this in the notion of the museum’s narratives. Considering museums as well as works of art as texts to be read, discussion about museum narratives will demonstrate how various components might influence visitors’ interpretive experiences.

Finally, up to this point, visitors’ identity work in museums has been rarely researched, which undermines the presence of visitors as an agent of constructing meanings actively in the in-between space of the museum’s narratives and visitor’s narratives. So, in the last section of literature review, I will discuss the relationship between visitors’ narrative and visitors’ identity construction in the notion of narrative identity.

**Interpretative Practices in Art Museums**

In the first section of the literature review, I will discuss briefly the traditional views of looking at art works and talking about them in art museums and then will move on to introducing the interpretive model proposed in constructivist museums. Next, I will address its limitations and promises, when it is applied to practical contexts. As a way of looking for alternatives to its limitations, finally, I will examine interpretations in terms
of the knowledge system where knowledge related to the works of art is created and consumed.

**Traditional Views about Interpretations**

Traditionally, in object-centered museums or modernist museums, as named by Hooper-Greenhill (2000), the pedagogy of the art museum for interpreting the works of art incorporates the universal law that anyone can be taught in the same way regardless of the contextual conditions in which learning is provided (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). This attitude confines visitors to the role of passive guests during their museum visits and envisions visitors as people to be filled with proper information (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). As an interpretive model for this kind of deficient visitors, the museum prefers to facilitate transmitting the fixed meaning of objects:

Objects in museums are subjected to curatorial procedures of registration, documentation, and classification which have, in the main, resulted in their allocation to a fixed physical and conceptual position within the collections, which in turn has tended to generate a fixed meaning. This single fixed meaning, almost always relating to an academic discipline, has seemed the correct and only way in which the object should be interpreted. (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, pp. 124-125)

As articulated by a curator, this single-fixed meaning seems to be correct to visitors and is also often perceived as the only way that the object should be interpreted. Moving away from the idea that the meaning of objects can be transmitted easily, however, the focus has moved toward the subtle tension between visitors and objects, where visitors’ prior knowledge and experience can be considered valuable.
Interpretations in the Constructivist Museum

Recently, Hein (1998; 1999) proposes a constructivist museum which considers the prior experience of visitors as an essential part of making new meaning and encourages visitors to construct their own multiple meanings. A constructivist museum refers to a museum in which “the viewer constructs personal knowledge from the exhibit, and the process of gaining knowledge is itself a constructive act” (Hein, 1999, p.76). For Hein (1998), a constructivist museum envisions two ways to engage visitors with meaning-making—providing many opportunities for a visitor to construct meaning and connecting unfamiliar things with familiar things. As two substantial steps for constructivist museums, Hein (1998) suggests building both physical access and conceptual access to museums by transforming physical spaces into places for learning and enjoyment, and by trying to guarantee conceptual access for the visitors’ intellectual and emotional comfort. By trying to build physical access and conceptual access in museum settings, “the constructivist exhibition would be likely to present various perspectives, validate different ways of interpreting objects and refer to different points of view and different truths about the material presented” (Hein, 1998, pp. 35-36).

Toward the ultimate goal of the constructivist museum—meaning-making—the museum must encourage multiple perspectives, support its legitimacy, and create its local story as opposed to a universal truth.

Finally, as the most important core principle of the constructivist museum, Hein (1998) emphasizes posing visitors as conclusion-makers and exhibitions as subversive spaces, by allowing the space to concede conclusions to visitors. For Hein (1998), this
means that visitors can construct their own interpretations from their different vantage points in combination with their diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. To help visitors with different backgrounds and perspectives to interpret the work of art from their own vantage points, however, museum professionals might need to be ready to validate a variety of visitor responses. Such responses could be highly emotional responses or even highly personal narratives, which may be different from what is more rationally grounded and officially accepted. Actually, in the initial stage of forming these kinds of responses, visitors may be connecting a memory with works of art, ambiguous feelings, or initial non-organized ideas. Furthermore, for visitors who have diverse social and cultural backgrounds, validating multiple interpretations also entails museum professionals preparing themselves to respect the perspectives from socially marginalized groups.

However, currently, emotional or personal interpretations are considered less important than rationally grounded or officially accepted interpretations. Actually, many researchers report that supporting social and cultural diversity in an art museum is reduced to mere staff responsibility for caring about diverse audiences or creating events celebrating diverse cultures (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999b; Mesa-Bains, 2004). In particular, this consideration about socially marginalized groups at a museum is often reduced to the inclusion of special museums, such as specific ethnic museums or gender museums (Lagerkvist, 2006; McClellan, 2003).

In an art museum, positioning visitors as conclusion-makers or co-constructors is a matter concerning cultural politics—the geo-political location in which the art museum has been situated, which is not the simple matter of cognitive ability. There seems to be a tension between traditionally accepted and newly emerging ideologies. Roberts (1997)
suggests that a museum is an ideology-driven place, not a neutral space. Criticizing museums for catering to the dominant culture, Roberts (1997) demonstrates how the museum has shaped “the knowledge it presents through interest-laden acts of selection, interpretation, and presentation” (p. 78).

Hein’s (1998) emphasis on accessibility entails museums providing attractions that motivate visitors to come to museums by creating environments that are responsive to visitors’ interests and desires. However, his approach does not ensure the ways to validate visitors’ responses that are different from rationally grounded and officially accepted. In addition, this approach does not convey how socially and culturally marginalized groups can be encouraged to express themselves. Both conditions need to be considered to make visitors conclusion-makers.

Consequently, his constructivist approach is reduced to scaffolding visitors so as to make them more knowledgeable through the mastery of well-organized content but does not proceed to develop visitors as co-constructors or conclusion-makers, even though it was not the intended purpose of his work. The substantial vision of a visitor as a conclusion-maker is revisited in Lisa Roberts’ book Knowledge to Narrative: Educators and the Changing Museum (1997), which will be discussed in the following section.

Re-Thinking Interpretation in Art Museums: Knowledge or Narrative?

Bruner (1986) suggests that there are two modes of thinking: paradigmatic and narrative. Paradigmatic thinking refers to logical reasoning in the pursuit of finding the truth, while narrative thinking refers to story-making in the pursuit of building
verisimilitude or lifelikeness. Bruner’s (1986) ideas have a tremendous impact on balancing science-catering modes and humanity-devaluing modes by weighing heavily on the narrative mode of thinking which the field of humanities is engaged in. For Bruner, the narrative mode of thinking refers to the paradigm of looking through the worlds that human figures are facing and belong to.

In the same line of thinking, Spiro and his associates (1987) illustrate two versions of a knowledge system: the well-structured domain and the complex and ill-structured domain. According to them, the well-structured knowledge domain is found in disciplines such as science or math, in which scholars find general concepts or key principles to apply to many various cases. By contrast, ill-structured knowledge, which is found in law, medicine, the arts, and the humanities, depends on multiple cases rather than on general principles. Efland (2002) argues that knowledge related to art or art criticism corresponds to the complex and ill-structured domain because “judgment must be made in the absence of rules or generalizations that apply to numerous cases” and “different art viewers will interpret a given work of art from various alternative perspectives” (p. 84). From this perspective, the knowledge appreciated in art museums seems closer to the complex and ill-structured domain as opposed to the well-structured domain.

Consequently, while in science museums each object is an example of a general principle or scientific law, in art museums, each object is unique and is not meant to be an example of any abstract notion. So, in art museums, individual visitors need to be encouraged to construct specifically grounded meanings as a response to unique objects, rather than to grasp general concepts or key principles while interacting with them,
because art objects are totalities of what are created in a complex and ill-structured domain basis. I am not arguing that people should view art without understanding factual information about the work. Definitely, understanding art can be easier when contextual information is provided, such as the art historical context of the piece, artist information, and expert opinions. Rather, I argue that the mastery of only factual information or contextual information about art is not enough to understand art. That is, museum professionals basically pay attention to proper information presented to help a visitor understand art in art museums. But, more than that, they also need to pay attention to how information should be presented and how a visitor digests the information.

In Roberts’s 1997 book, observing the interpretive practices in a botanical museum, she criticizes museums for attempting to keep the idea of absolute and universal “true knowledge.” She argues that even scientific principles that were considered for centuries to represent truth have been proven erroneous but that museums have been wary to allow alternative knowledge construction. According to Roberts (1997), all academic disciplines have been notified that this kind of belief in one universal true knowledge is a myth, but ironically, “museums—whose very business is the generation and the communication of knowledge—have been slow to consider its implications for exhibits and the exhibit-making process” (p. 55). Extending her criticism into other types of museums including art museums or art galleries, she emphasizes that the objects displayed in museums are not the absolute version of true knowledge but are merely one version of true knowledge. In the same line of thinking, she proposes that the focus of museums’ work should be shifted from truth-chasing to meaning-making. She argues:
“Experience” refers to new ways of thinking about the basis for knowledge. With the legitimation of multiple ways of knowing and the acknowledging of the role of context in shaping understanding, language about “knowledge” has shifted to language about “meaning.” What we know, in other words, is based less on the nature of the objects than the manner and context in which it is experienced. As a result, traditional criteria of “meaningfulness” based on measures like the “reality” of the objects or the authority of the museum interpreter now include other considerations that take into account the context and character of visitors’ responses. (p. 132)

For her, the true knowledge that should be mastered in museums gives room for visitors’ experiences and the contexts in which the objects might be understood. “By defining knowledge in relation to the larger social historical context,” she argues, “visitors are being ‘empowered’ to know and to speak in ways that are meaningful to them” (pp. 131-132). Understanding art in museums not only entails scientific and objective involvement but also includes personal, social, and cultural involvement.

In other words, interpretation in art museums needs to be considered not only as mastering the knowledge related to works of art, through getting the knowledge, but also building personal, social, and cultural involvement with art. That is, museum professionals need to try to provide information as much as they can, and in as many various ways as they can in order to help visitors understand art works. However, more importantly, information needs to be incorporated in a way that encourages visitors’ active and personal engagement with art. It would be an alternative way art can be consumed according to its unique quality as a complex and ill-structured domain in art museums.

In this way, the notion that what are presented in museums are narratives and not a truth makes more room for the possibility for more holistic and flexible interpretation.
For example, Housen’s aesthetic developmental theory and Visual Thinking Strategies curriculum (now referred to as VTS), which is based on Housen’s developmental theory, show its ambition and limitation to the possibility for more holistic and flexible interpretation at the same time. After conducting the aesthetic development interview (ADI) with art gallery visitors who are given an image and are asked to talk about the given image, Housen (1987) proposes a five-stage aesthetic developmental theory, especially for museum settings.

Her theory is developed according to the degree of exposure a person has to art works and art experience, not according to biological age. Her five stages include the following—accountive viewers (I), constructive viewers (II), classifying viewers (III), interpretive viewers (IV), and re-creative viewers (V). Housen (1987) encourages museum professionals to design museum environments and select images very thoughtfully considering the needs and experiences of each developmental stage. The developmental data further help to clarify messages about educational programming. In an actual museum setting, according to Housen (1987), the majority of visitors are in stages II and III. As such, thoughtful museum program design should focus on promoting learning from stage II to III and from stage III to IV. For example, Yenawine (2003), who is the co-producer of VTS Curriculum with Housen, suggests that educators select images thoughtfully for visitors at stages II and III to avoid art works that might challenge visitors, including the following:

- Historical, religious and mythological, and ethnic-specific subjects;
- Illustrations, most photojournalism, cartoon, and advertisement;
- Images depicting violence, specific political stances, specific religious imagery, nudity, over sexuality and sensuality and grotesque or macabre subjects.

(p. 10)
As such, learning in museums is structured carefully according to developmentally appropriate procedures and image selection. Housen (1987) also suggests effective ways to increase knowledge moving from one stage to the next stage in order to build visitors’ visual literacy. A core principle of this approach is apparently different from traditional methodology that transmits a prescribed body of knowledge to visitors: It recognizes visitors as subjects of meaning-making and tries to scaffold visitors through guided conversational tours. For example, it asks about visitors’ prior knowledge and their visual literacy in terms of observing works of art carefully—what do you see; what’s going on here; and what do you see that makes you feel this way—to confer a visitor the status of making meaning from their encounters with works of art (Yenawine, 1993).

However, these approaches seem to focus on knowledge of art in the “well-structured” domain rather than the “complex and ill-structured” domain, which is opposed to Efland’s (2002) proposal. The reason is that visitors are encouraged to discuss their feelings or any clues they notice—what kind of story the art tells to a viewer and what the viewer can read within the work—in a well-organized way by incorporating their logical and critical reasoning skills. Such approaches favor scientific, rational, or logical responses, but, as Bruner (1986) puts it, “much of experience is not [of] this order” (p. 110). In this sense, allowing visitors to bring their interpretive experiences as they are—however humble, chaotic, and incomplete—would be a good way to appreciate art as it is. This idea is coined in the concept of visitors’ narratives in the following section.
Visitors’ Narratives

Even though this type of developmentally appropriate approach contributes to empowering visitors by positioning them at the center of the act of interpreting, this perspective only partially empowers them. However, by highlighting what viewers (or visitors) experience during their interpretive processes, whatever it is, at art museums and offering them the space to tell how they transact with a text, this approach allows visitors to empower themselves by telling their stories in that space.

In this regard, we need to ask “not only a morphological question about the actual text, but also a question about the interpretive processes that are loosed by the text in the reader’s mind” (Bruner, 1986, p. 7). Bruner (1986) describes the transactional reality constructed in a reader’s mind when he reads an actual text but actually creates a virtual text:

As our readers read, as they begin to construct a virtual text of their own, it is as if they were embarking on a journey without maps—and yet, they possess a stock of maps that might give hints, and besides, they know a lot of journeys and about mapmaking. First impressions of the new terrain are, of course, based on older journeys already taken. In time, the new journey becomes a thing in itself; however, much its initial shape was borrowed from the past. The virtual text becomes a story of its own, its very strangeness only a contrast with the reader’s sense of ordinary. (1986, pp. 36-37)

The idea that a reader creates a virtual text while reading an actual text weighs heavily on the presence of an interpreter who makes interpretive acts. That is because, in a place where a virtual text is created, the interpreter becomes a main text of inquiry. In this context, all interpretive acts that a visitor constructs—namely, what is being constructed by a visitor—become the visitor’s narratives.
In any other sense, considering the visitor’s whole interpretive experience as a virtual text that a visitor creates while reading an actual text might contribute to building self-knowledge in its initial stage, because this approach focuses more on the interpreter. However, building self-knowledge by transacting with the text can become an entry point for on-going learning; namely, the encounter becomes motivation to further learning, which encourages the reader to seek contextual information concerning the work, the author, and the social settings.

In other words, building self-knowledge through interpreting art plays a role in providing intrinsic motivation to on-going dialogue between texts and viewers: It enables viewers to be active learners who seek more information and more meaning out of texts.

Furthermore, according to Stuart Hall (1980), considering viewers as active agents in their meaning-making process raises viewers to a status in which they can finally construct oppositional meanings of texts. For Hall, constructing oppositional meanings to an image (or a text) does not simply mean that viewers construct anti-messages (or negative messages) toward an image (or a text); rather, it means that viewers understand their own local situations as well as the broader situations in which the image (or a text) was created and circulated. It also means that viewers can create specific messages (namely, their own interpretations) that reflect their specific needs and ensures their full of understanding of the image (or texts).

Hall (1980) explains that viewers can gain this cultural reading ability by completing the following three steps: the dominant-hegemonic code, the negotiated code, and the oppositional code. At first, viewers can decode a text’s message in terms of dominant cultural order, or the dominant-hegemonic code. According to Hall, viewers
who decode an image (or text) through dominant–hegemonic reading receive the dominant message of it as if it were “‘natural,’ ‘inevitable,’ ‘taken for granted,’ about the social order” (p. 175) without raising any doubt. At this moment, the viewers play passive roles when decoding messages: the viewers actually receive a prescribed message in an unquestioning manner without generating any further responses.

On the contrary, viewers can also decode the message of an image (or text) through oppositional code by “de-totaliz[ing] the message in the preferred code in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference” (p. 175). Hall argues that only viewers who recognize the dominant-hegemonic messages and struggle with them in order to adjust the messages into their alternative framework of reference can generate oppositional reading abilities. Paying attention to the role of viewers’ potential struggle in this process, Hall emphasizes the negotiated code of a message as the following:

Decoding within the negotiated version contains a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements: it acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions to make the grand significations (abstract), while, at a more restricted, situational (situated) level, it makes its own ground rules—it operates with exceptions to the rule. It accords the privileged position to the dominant definitions of events while reserving the right to make a more negotiated application to ‘local conditions,’ to its own more corporate positions. This negotiated version of the dominant ideology is thus shot through with contradictions, though these are only on certain occasions brought to full visibility. Negotiated codes operate through what we might call particular or situated logics: and these logics are sustained by their differential and unequal relation to the discourses and logics of power. (p. 175, italics in the original)

The “negotiation” (or “struggle”) step is the preliminary step needed before viewers can generate oppositional reading, which is conditioned from viewers’ local situations and is based on their contextual understanding of texts as well as their textual understanding of
texts. Actually, if viewers step into the negotiation process, it does not matter if they obtain the oppositional message of the text because the act of negotiation is a part of the oppositional reading process.

At this point, we meet another question: even though building self-knowledge through interpreting art can contribute to providing visitors with the motivation to seek more contextual information and to enabling them to develop oppositional meanings, what else can visitors gain from this experience, and is it rewarding for them to do so?

In Bruner’s words, this investigation is about understanding a person’s own folk psychology (1990; 1996); namely, in this approach, the visitor’s own folk psychology becomes the object of study. Bruner (1990) defines folk psychology as follows:

The organizing principle of folk psychology [is] narrative in nature rather than logical or categorical. Folk psychology is about human agents doing things on the basis of their beliefs and desires, striving for goals, meeting obstacles which they best or which best them, all of this extended over time. (pp. 42-43)

In this sense, visitors’ folk psychology is not obtained by merely investigating their self-knowledge. Instead, as Bruner (1990) continues to explain, “the folk psychology of ordinary people is not just a set of self-assuaging illusions, but the culture's beliefs and working hypotheses about what makes it possible and fulfilling for people to live together, even with great personal sacrifice” (p. 32). That is, investigating viewers’ individual interpretations of texts entails more than just investigating what types of viewers respond to specific texts and how they do so in terms of general reception theories; it is about investigating the viewers’ working hypotheses.

In brief, beyond the traditional view of stressing the maker of a text (or the intentions of the maker of a text) and the text’s prescribed meaning by experts and
beyond the relatively contemporary view of considering a text as a site of meaning-making, by focusing on the visitors’ folk psychology as an object of inquiry, visitors can be considered actual visitors of distinct personal history, experience, and desires, and not as idealized, undifferentiated, and ahistorical recipients of information.

**Museum’s Narratives**

When curators display works of art at a show, they might want to represent certain messages through the exhibition. The most fundamental and easiest format to illustrate the curator’s intentions for the exhibition is through a storyline (Serrell, 1996). Storylines can be put together by chronological order, thematic grouping, the demonstration of art historical importance, or highlighting the connections between objects. Basically, the conceptual and visual relationship between neighboring works can be considered as a storyline because objects are rarely perceived in isolation from the other neighboring works in museum settings (Carrier, 2006).

At the exhibition space, the conceptual relationship between neighboring works, the storyline that penetrates the whole exhibition, and the messages delivered through the storyline are all important factors that have a tremendous impact on visitors’ meaning-making processes, even though they are all implicit in physical contexts as “unseen figures” (Serrell, 1996, p. 241).

In other words, by displaying objects in its exhibition spaces, the museum presents its representational message. Namely, the exhibition display is more than the arrangement and placement of objects; it forms a narrative—a kind of story presented by
museum professionals but embodied through the experiences of individual visitors—which, in most cases, is hidden. However, the narratives of a museum as hidden curricula have tremendous impacts on visitors’ perceptions and behaviors by covertly shaping their physical viewing patterns and by providing visitors with only a few conceptual ways to interpret objects.

For example, Louise J. Ravelli (2006) demonstrates well how the pathway to an exhibition controls visitors’ behaviors, thereby confining their perceptions. By providing only one pathway for visitors to move from the entry to the top floor via an escalator, the Natural History Museum of London’s exhibition entryway plays a role in controlling visitors’ experiences by making them begin on the top floor, delivering the message embodied in a giant globe, that the earth as a geological structure is the beginning of natural history. Visitors should ride the escalator and experience the exhibition in that way whether or not they want to, Ravelli explains. Even though visitors may experience the space in the way the museum professionals designed it to be experienced, Ravelli (2006) still argues:

Such a message is not a ‘fact’ which is simply conveyed by the exhibition, but a version of history which is constructed by the exhibition, through semiotic resources such as the placement of exhibits in relation to each other. In this way, the shaping of the space also contributes to representational meanings: to a sense of a particular content to be attributed to the elements or the exhibition and to the exhibition as a whole. (p. 126)

The investigation of physical settings is theorized more thoroughly by Falk and Dierking’s (2000) idea of physical contexts from their interactive learning model for museum education—the Contextual Model of Learning (now referred to as CML). They emphasize that learning in a museum is influenced by the interplay between three
dimensions: the personal context, the socio-cultural context, and the physical context.
The personal context represents the sum total of the personal and generic history that an individual carries with him/her into a meaning-making situation, including a visitor’s motivations, expectations, prior knowledge, and prior interests. Falk and Dierking (2000) also note that the degree of choice and control over meaning making also affects visitors’ meaning making. The socio-cultural context refers to museum visitors being strongly influenced by the interactions and collaborations they have with individuals in their own social group. Finally, they argue that meaning making always occurs within the physical environment in which the visitors are involved.

Among these three contexts, the physical context is more exploitive in forming a museum’s narratives than the other two. The physical context includes, for example, “advance organizers, orientation to the physical space, architecture and large-scale environment, design and exposure to exhibits and programs, subsequent reinforcing events and experiences outside the museum” (Falk, 2007, p. 421).

The messages implicit in an exhibition and its physical context are all important factors to be considered in regards to a museum narrative’s ability to influence visitors’ meaning-making processes. However, the meanings visitors might construct through their museum-going experiences need to be understood in a broader sense—in terms of the museum’s communicative acts. By defining these communicative acts as museums being texts to be read, Ravelli (2006) envisions museum narratives more holistically: “the way a whole institution, or an exhibition within it, makes meaning, communicating to and with its public” (p.1). According to Ravelli:
As texts, museums are powerful, communicative resources; all their constitutive practices—the written and verbal texts that take place there, the choice of exhibits and method of their display, the activities that are made available to visitors, and more—make meanings in multiple ways. (p. 119)

All communicative acts that the museum as a text generates in the process of an enactment with visitors can be viewed as the museum’s narrative: Namely, a museum’s narrative consists of its communication resources and communication acts with visitors.

Visitor’s Identity Formation

Until recently, the idea of “visitors’ identities” has rarely been recognized in the field of museum education. The term is typically used (if at all) to point out visitors’ demographic information, such as their age, level of education, race, class, and gender (Leinhardt & Firnberg, 2002). Recently, Leinhardt and Knutson (2004) discussed a visitor’s identity as being more than demographic information, including the “roles, relationships, positioning, and enactments within specific physical contexts” (p. 50). Their approach addresses not only aspects of personal identity, such as an individual’s membership categories, but also examines the aspect of socially and culturally constructed identity. The idea of socially and culturally situated identities in the museum settings was recently developed more thoroughly by John Falk (2006; 2009).

Falk (2006; 2009) categorizes visitors’ identities into five groups according to their motivations to visit museums: explorer, facilitator, professional/hobbyist, experience-seeker, and spiritual pilgrim. An explorer is a visitor driven by curiosity; a facilitator is a visitor who is interested in assisting another’s learning experiences (e.g., a
parent); a professional/hobbyist is a visitor who seeks advanced professional knowledge in specific disciplines (e.g., a teacher); an experience-seeker is a visitor who seeks a typical experience through museum-going (e.g., a tourist); and a spiritual pilgrim is a visitor who is looking for a sense of awe or a sense of wonder. Using these five identities, he asks museum professionals to provide services and programs tailored to each identity’s needs.

According to Falk (2006), visitors’ identities are not fixed to specific individuals, are often transitory, and are almost always situated in their social relations. What he emphasizes in his idea is that a visitor’s learning for each particular day depends on what identity he/she brings at the time of a specific visit. In addition, he suggests that the outcomes of visitors’ learning depend heavily on what identities the visitors bring in their visits rather than what the visitors actually do during museum visits. His argument does not state that it is not important what a visitor does at the museum; instead, he argues that museum professionals need to be aware of what actual visitors try to get from museum-going experiences rather than pushing a certain body of knowledge that museum professionals assume visitors should know.

More recently, Rounds (2006) constructed theoretical and philosophical frameworks for identity work in museums that go beyond designating demographic information. Like Leinhardt and Knutson (2004), Rounds (2006) considers the self as “an agent who formulates intentions, and who chooses and initiates actions” (p. 136). In addition, he locates the agency of an individual in the tension between confirming and challenging existing structures. To choose one structure is the task of an individual’s
agency. For him, the museum is a place where a visitor can navigate another world safely and confirm the world that a visitor originally belongs to.

In this way, the museum becomes a “neatly ordered” miniature representation of the real world and confirms “ontological security” (Rounds, 2006, p. 141). There are few places for fragmented, contradictory, and partial selves. Namely, selves are not questioned in that space. Rounds tries to affirm ontological security by doing identity work in museums. However, what Rounds envisions as doing identity work in museums does not seem to include what I coined in the previous section as visitors’ narratives—the totality of what a visitor might bring in her/ his museum-going experience.

In addition, according to Holstein and Gubrium (2000), the storylines in the discourses the institution presents are usually very controlled by institutional voices. Accordingly, unless museums are interested in listening to visitors’ voices or their multiple stories, visitors might only confirm this ontological security of the beliefs and practices established by the museum.

Using Holstein and Gubrium’s (2000) perspective on identity construction, Rounds’ approach to the visitor’s identity is about the issue of who I am, because a visitor needs a clear-cut self-definition as an isolated self in order to respond to the question of who I am. Holstein and Gubrium (2000) argue that this type of self definition as being clear-cut is possible when envisioning a self as an isolated entity opposed to complex postmodern realities. Recognizing the complex network which one individual is related to and the presence of multiple selves attuned differently to different situations, instead, they propose that our identity needs to be considered as the relationship of how,
where, and what we are, beyond simply who we are. In this sense, I want to pursue the questions of where, how, and what, when exploring visitors’ identities in art museums.

For example, we can ask ourselves questions such as “where are you; what are you doing here; and how can you talk about it?” The question of where you are may seem like a silly question because the answer is “I am here at the art museum.” However, it could be a starting point of inquiry. I start this research by questioning if an art museum is a space where narratives are constructed, controlled, or articulated through interactions and then by asking how visitors’ identities are narrated in these interactions.

Furthermore, Holstein and Gubrium (2000) further compare the relationship of power between institutional voices and personal voices with the relationship of storytellers and story recipients. When storytellers tell their stories, story recipients can respond by keeping silent, by showing minimal response, or by responding actively. Sometimes, silent responses make storytellers stop telling a story and change the story’s plot or manners. Sometimes, strong responses by the story recipients that emphasize selected aspects of the story can craft the storytellers’ next move and also control their narrative direction (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). As storytellers tell a story to an audience, they attune themselves to the audience, sometimes being constrained by the mood in which the story is told and sometimes actively weaving their own story with others’ stories.

In other words, constrained to specific conditions around them, storytellers are controlled in their storytelling. However, sometimes, storytellers “artfully pick and choose from what is experientially available to articulate their lives and experience” and “actively craft and inventively construct their narratives” (p. 103). If the narrative control
allows only one way for storytellers to tell their stories, storytellers cannot be active storytellers in that space. In this kind of space, storytelling is created, but the stories created are limited in range and depth (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000).

In the same way, if institutional control allows only one way for visitors to tell their stories in a space, visitors cannot be active storytellers and can only tell the version of their story that is allowed to be told. In these interactional frameworks between museums and visitors in art museums, interpretation is situated. In this interactional conversation with storytellers and story recipients, interpretation is articulated. This is why we consider interpretation in broader social and cultural contexts in which visitors’ narratives are shaped and mediated through the narratives of others. In this context, visitors’ identity construction can also be considered as a kind of interactional framework—namely, as narrative identity.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGIES

My Resistance to an Autoethnographic Study

I thought that autoethnography might be the best way to explore my research questions but I was initially reluctant to incorporate autoethnography into my research methodology: This was the start of my actual struggle with conducting the research for my doctoral dissertation. My struggle did not come from the disqualification of autoethnography into my research methodology: I trusted it would be the best way to answer my research questions. My struggle came from my perceived incompetence as a researcher to conduct autoethnographic research, for I did not believe that I could write as beautifully as other autoethnographers usually do. So far as I knew when conducting autoethnographic research, I assumed that the author had to be fluent enough in English to deliver her/his delicate ideas using various forms of writing, such as poems or creative writing pieces, through which the author could express her/his delicate ideas powerfully.

However, those kinds of writings were far beyond my abilities; in particular, I thought it would be especially difficult for me to do such work in English because English is my second language: I am an international student who has only used English for my graduate studies in the United States. I wondered how I could express my feelings, thoughts, and rewards from my experiences in ways that readers for whom English is their first language could understand. Even if I wrote as vividly and
specifically as I could, I thought my writing would seem dry and skimpy to native-English speakers. My writing style is dry and analytical—a far cry from creative writing.

Even though none of the literature that I read specifically stated that an autoethnographic text should be written in that specific way and though my committee highly praised my thoughtfulness in the previous writings, I was still worried about using this methodology. One of my committee members told me that thoughtfulness is one of the primary aspects that an autoethnographic text should reveal; however, I was concerned that I might fail to engage readers in my research due to my dry writing and improper English. Ellis (2004; 2008) suggests that the primary purpose of doing autoethnographic research is to pull readers into research in very provocative ways. But completing this goal has always come with the emphasis on the “aesthetic sensibility and expressive forms of art,” asking the researchers to “tell stories that show bodily, cognitive, emotional and spiritual experience” (Ellis, 2004, p. 30).

I was afraid that I would be unable to accomplish this task. For this reason, autoethnography was the last methodology I wanted to incorporate into my research, even though it enabled me to realize something in myself that I had never realized before, as was discussed in the prologue. Autoethnography seemed to be the best way for this kind of research to be done, as my committee recommended, but it seemed to be too difficult for me to use both technically (e.g., my English issue) and emotionally.

Another reason I was uncomfortable using autoethnography in my research was that it is a marginalized research methodology: Autoethnography is currently an emerging research methodology and has not been accepted yet as a mainstream research methodology. Some researchers do not consider autoethnography to be a qualified
research methodology (Coffey, 1999; Ellis, 2004; Sparkes, 2000). Holt (2003) illustrates this suspicion well by describing a scene when her autoethnographic manuscript was reviewed by peer reviewers. Some criticized her manuscript too self-indulgent and narcissistic and others questioned if using oneself as the only source for data-collection would make the findings both credible and valid. In addition, Garratt and Hodkinson (1999) examine how criteria developed for general qualitative research methodology might fit in autoethnography. It was an extremely new methodology to be fully and easily recognized by mainstream researchers.

I wanted to use a broadly accepted research methodology in order to avoid criticisms like those that Holt (2003) experienced during the peer review process. As I was already from a non-mainstream cultural group, I did not want my research to be defined as research that was done from a socially marginalized group or minority group because I painfully knew what it would mean if my research was labeled as so. Honestly, I wanted to enter my scholarly career using mainstream research methodologies, such as grounded theory or discourse analysis or at least ethnography. Those methods are closer to the axis of “being objective” on the qualitative research methodology continuum. But, autoethnography is a very new methodology and is still emerging. Namely, it is located on the extreme axis in the continuum among the qualitative research with grounded theory being the other axis.

Even though Ellis and Bochner (2003) argue that “autoethnography wants the reader to care, to feel, to emphasize, and to do something, to act” (p. 433), I still hoped to use another research methodology—one that was more positivistic or objective—in order to persuade my readers. I did not want to be labeled as a researcher coming from a
different culture or a marginalized group because I incorporated a research methodology that is not yet fully incorporated into the mainstream research tradition. I hoped to conceal my cultural origin by conducting objective research where both my cultural background and I could be hidden and erased. However, despite my discomfort and hope to disguise myself, I finally decided to use autoethnography as my research methodology. However, it was not until I discovered my veiled assumptions as a researcher (which will be discussed in chapter 6) that I started to trust autoethnography as being the best possible methodology for my research.

Autoethnography

According to Reed-Danahay (1997), in the term autoethnography, ‘graphy’ represents a research process, ‘ethnos’ represents culture, and ‘auto’ represents self. In that sense, an autoethnography is literally an ethnographical writing about a self. In a general ethnographic research study, the researcher visits a specific research site and makes participant observations of the site, focusing on her/his feelings and thoughts about that particular situation. The success of ethnographic research depends on how an observer is engaged in the participatory setting while she/he seeks a deeper immersion (Glesne, 1999; Golafshani, 2003). To pursue a deeper immersion into the research site, an ethnographer needs to invest an appropriate amount of time to become knowledgeable about the site and to contact informants on multi-layered levels and seek meaningful encounters with them (Emerson et al., 1995; Glesne, 1999). In ethnographic research, the researcher ideally becomes a friendly outsider who learns as much about the informants
as she/he can through a critical examination of the analytical data that she/he collected from the research site and informants.

However, in autoethnographic research, the researcher becomes both an informant and an analyst at the same time. Reed-Danahay (1997) argues that even though the researcher can make different emphasis on autoethnography—separately graphy (i.e., the research process), ethnos (i.e., culture), or auto (i.e., self)—the researcher investigates her/his own experiences, connecting the personal to the other broader issues.

Ellis and Bochner (2000) define autoethnography as “autobiographies that self-consciously explore the interplay of the introspective, personally engaged self with cultural descriptions mediated through language, history, and ethnographic exploration” (p. 742). While Ellis and Bochner (2000) emphasize the self rather than the research process and culture, Chang (2008) focuses on the cultural aspect of autoethnography. Chang (2008) distinguishes descriptive and performative storytelling from autoethnography, arguing that “mere self-exposure without profound cultural analysis and interpretation leaves this writing at the level of descriptive autobiography or memoir” (p. 51). Her emphasis on cultural analysis centers on how the personal can be transformed into the cultural, the social, and the political. She argues that “Autoethnography is not about focusing on self alone, but about searching for understanding others (culture/society) through self. Thus, self is a subject to look into and a lens to look through to gain understanding of societal culture” (Chang, 2008, pp.48-49). At this point, Chang (2008) argues that autobiography can become autoethnography.

While identifying a clear difference between autobiographic texts (or personal stories) and autoethnographic texts, Jones (2005) and Spry (2006) also emphasize the
provocative power of autoethnographic texts in social, cultural, and political transformation. If personal stories deal with a private history or private events in a personal dimension without investigating how that dimension is conditioned in a social dimension, the personal stories might simply become an autobiographical text, highlighting the life story of one individual. However, an autoethnographic text tries to capture how the private can be interwoven with the social and how a private history can be conditioned in social environments.

The clear distinction between autobiography and autoethnography is fully developed by Leon Anderson (2006), as he names his approach to autoethnography as analytical autoethnography. He groups his idea of analytical autoethnography with Ellis and Bochner’s idea of autoethnography as evocative autoethnography. According to Anderson (2006), evocative autoethnography is closer to the tradition of autobiography, emphasizing the development of the self, while analytical autoethnography is mainly based on the realist tradition of analytical ethnography. Anderson (2006) argues that the so-called evocative autoethnography is concerned about what is going on in a researcher’s personal life. Researchers who belong to this tradition are not interested in pursuing generalizations through theoretical analytical weaving: “analytical autoethnographers are not content with accomplishing the representation task of capturing of ‘what is going on’ in an individual life or social environments” (2006, p. 387). Additionally, Anderson believes that evocative autoethnographers like Ellis and Bochner criticize his approach to making generalizations in autoethnographic research as an effort pursuing “undeniabletable conclusions” (p. 388). He also argues that his analytical efforts are totally different from the generalizations that positivist researchers try to
achieve. Through his analytical autoethnography, Anderson wishes to perform analytical work toward generalizations that move beyond the descriptive task of the evocative autoethnographer. He argues that “the definitive feature of analytic autoethnography is this value-added quality of not only truthfully rendering the social world under investigating but also transecting that world through broader generalization” (p. 388).

If Anderson were interested in making broader generalizations through his approach, they would undoubtedly differ from those of evocative autoethnography through which researchers try to evoke sympathetic responses from readers and encourage them to respond to multiple ways (Ellis, 2004, 2008; Ellis & Bochener, 2006). However, Anderson’s argument cannot be used to justify that only analytical autoethnography is pursuing analytical tasks through generalizing what the researcher found out. In autoethnographic study, analytical tasks would refer to weaving the personal into the social, cultural, and political rather than pursuing generalizations. Evocative autoethnographic research can also involve analytical tasks, even though the researchers in that tradition seem to be the least interested in pursuing generalizations.

Making generalizations and weaving the personal into broader contexts are distinctly different acts. As Reed-Danahay (1997) outlines, autoethnographers generally focus on only one aspect of autoethnography (the research process, culture, or the self) depending on their particular research. Nevertheless, each type of autoethnography shares the belief that one tiny action, event, or behavior can have social, cultural, and political significance.

In particular, my dissertation focuses on more cultural aspects: as a visitor and researcher, I try to analyze myself and the culture of museums when I walked through the
museums and attempted to interpret the works of art. However, I do not try to generalize what I discover, even though I accept the fact that all of my behaviors and interpretations are based on value-laden activities. Instead, I try to analyze what these value-laden activities mean to me with the help of theories. But, the primary purpose of my analytical task is not to provide more theoretical generalizations but to gain an in-depth understanding of my culture and various museums’ cultures.

In this regard, this study is not about investigating my whole experience as a visitor through my life but concentrates on my physical and interpretive experiences in three museums. Namely, I read, interpret, and analyze the culture of the museums, thereby enabling me to read, interpret, and analyze myself as a visitor. This is possible because my study focuses on the intersection at which my personal narrative meets the museums’ narratives. I will describe the three museums’ cultures, but I will refrain from taking on the position of omnipresence or of objectivity. Specifically, my identities as a female, mother, researcher, former curator, Korean, art-oriented person, intrapersonal individual, and international student will reveal important information about myself as I experience the three museums.

Therefore, this dissertation is not about the ethnographic text on auto (or self), but about the interaction between auto (or self) and ethno (or culture), while the auto investigates the ethno. Therefore, one axis of my study will be analyzing the culture of the three museums and the other axis of my study will be my discoveries about myself as a visitor and a researcher when I interpret these museums’ cultures. Ellis defines (2004) this kind of autoethnography, which focuses on the interaction between a researcher and
informants, as narrative ethnography, suggesting that “this approach offers insight into how the researcher changed as a result of observing others” (p. 48).

In my research, participants were neither other visitors in the museums nor museum professionals. I did not interact with them directly: I did not interview them as a researcher to discover what they felt and thought about their museum experiences. Instead, I interacted with the whole museum culture to which other visitors and museum professionals belong. Because my family accompanied me on my visits to these museums, they also became a part of the museum cultures. In addition, I even became a part of the museum cultures that I studied because I was not outside of the settings that I studied. Ellis (2004) refers to a researcher who takes on this kind of insider’s perspective as a "complete member researcher," or one who becomes a complete member of a research setting (p. 49).

In other words, through autoethnography, this study is expected to highlight my lived experience as a visitor and a researcher by analyzing the museum cultures that I experienced and weaving my personal narratives into the social, cultural, and political narratives of the museums.

**Research Design**

In essence, this research was designed to keep track of my experiences in an art museum. However, because this study is more valid if I critically explore my experiences, it is developed to incorporate multi-layered research settings, which help me reflect on my experiences with different perspectives in different positions. This strategy
is performed in the following two ways: by extending my personal experiences to those of my family and by comparing my experiences at an art museum with those at different types of museums—a natural history museum and a children’s museum.

When examining possible research sites for this study, I looked for a museum that was convenient based on three conditions: 1) located beyond my comfort zone—I looked for museums that my family and I had never visited, so we could experience them with fresh eyes; 2) allowed for multiple visits—the possible museums should be located in an area that I could visit more than once and be close enough to where I live to be reached conveniently; and 3) facilitated shared authority—each of my family members could initiate their museum visit based on their strengths at least once.

Based on these three conditions, I selected three museums in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, as possible research sites. Pittsburgh is located within three hours by car from where I currently reside, State College, Pennsylvania. The three museums I chose are listed below:

Carnegie Museum of Art

Carnegie Museum of Natural History

Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh

In other words, this research investigates three different types of museums —The Carnegie Museum of Art (now referred to as CMOA), The Carnegie Museum of Natural History (now referred to as CMNH), and The Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh (now referred to as CMP)—through family and individual visits, as we walked through the museums and talked about the various objects.
I decided to involve my family in this research because my multiple identities as a researcher, an educator, an international doctoral student, a female, a mother, and a wife would be revealed when I visited the museum as a member of a family group rather than alone, thereby locating my position as the researcher within a more complicated network of relationships, which would require more critical reflection on my part. Additionally, I chose this method because most museum visits involve groups, such as families, couples, or friends.

The incorporation of non-art museums helped me experience two different types of museums in a less privileged position than that of my family members because the two museums appealed to their strengths: While my expertise lies in art, my husband’s expertise lies in natural history and my six-year-old daughter’s expertise lies in playing at the children’s museum. Such a disadvantage might help me to reflect on my experiences at multi-layered levels. Technically, all personal narratives that I delved into while visiting the three museums with my family and alone were typed up using Microsoft Word, and the list of stories with agenda will be provided as appendices at the end of this dissertation for others to suggest alternative explanations. These three strategies help ensure the plausibility of my accounts.

Including the visits with my family, I planned to visit these museums more than twice. The schedule for each visit was as follows: July 6-8, 2007, for the family visit and July 9-14, 2007, for the individual visit. I stayed at the three museums for 28.5 hours and: 13 hours at CMOA, 10 hours at CMNH and 5.5 hours at CMP. I visited the CMOA six times and the CMNH and CMP twice—once for the family visit and once for my
individual visit. I spent 14 hours on family visits and 14.5 hours for my individual visits. Table 1 shows duration and frequency of visits.

Table 1 Duration and Frequency of Visits

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<td>CMNH</td>
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<td>CMP</td>
<td>3.5 H</td>
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During the family visits, we walked through exhibition halls, talked about objects on display, and participated in activities offered in the spaces. In addition, we participated in any family program that the museum offered for their regular family visitors on the day we were there and explored all museum facilities, such as the museum shop, resource centers, and restaurants. During the individual visits, as a regular visitor, I also looked at objects on display, thought about those objects, and participated in activities offered in the spaces. In addition, I participated in any museum programs offered for regular adult visitors and collected available materials posted on websites or displayed in the information centers or the visitor resources center. For two cases, I wrote field notes, recorded my monologues and my family conversations, and took pictures (and/or video-taped the visit).

At this point, it seems to be useful to reconsider my research questions to see how each question could potentially be answered. This research was guided by the following primary question: How did I negotiate between the museums’ narratives and my own
narratives at the three museums when I experienced the museums as a family member and by myself? More specifically, this study investigated the following research sub-questions:

1) How did the narratives inscribed in exhibitions and related programs of the three museums encourage or discourage me to create my own interpretations from my lived experiences? What were the narratives that the museums made available for me and what were my narratives when I visited the three museums with my family and individually?

2) What interpretive strategies did I use to confirm or reject the museums’ narratives? What strategies did I use to negotiate meaning making?

3) How was I transformed through the negotiation processes? How were my identities constructed through these negotiation processes?

Question 1 concerns how the museums’ narratives influence my experience, while question 2 concerns how I respond to the museums’ narratives. The primary question synthesizes question 1 and question 2, while question 3 is the result of this synthesis.

To investigate the museums’ narratives in the most technical manner, I wrote field notes and recorded my ideas and several family conversations on a digital voice recorder and took pictures when appropriate. Whenever I wrote field notes or recorded a comment, I focused on observing the physical and conceptual contexts that the museum made available to me and my family. Informed by Hein (1998) and Falk and Dierking (2000), I basically investigated the museums’ narratives in terms of their physical contexts, such as the first impressions that visitors may have when entering the museum, information arrangements, or service facilities that take care of visitors’ needs, and by the
conceptual contexts implicit in exhibition displays, tours, or educational programs (Hein, 1998; 1999). The investigation of the physical and conceptual contexts provided a solid foundation to understand the narratives that the museums make available to me and my family.

For its conceptual framework, this study was designed to focus on narratives or storylines implicit in the exhibitions: When curators display objects in exhibitions, they have something to show or deliver through the exhibition. They may simply wish to display the objects, or they may have specific goals to deliver through the exhibition’s storyline. Even though I did not know what the curators intended to represent (I did not ask the curators and the exhibition was not designed to provide such information), I could explore what it meant to me. Namely, I analyzed these storylines based on my interpretations as a visitor and also on informants’ interpretations. As a researcher, observer, autoethnographic writer, and visitor, I wrote about how I interacted with objects at the museums through the narrative-making process.

Another narrative that the museum makes available to visitors can be seen through written texts found in the museum. Each museum displays written materials, such as wall texts under each object, explanation panels, signs, flyers, brochures, advertisements for programs, and web-based information. I will investigate these written materials using document analysis, as advocated by Hodder (2000). He argues that our everyday material environment covertly tells about its context, even though we easily overlook it. Along the same line of thinking, Holstein and Gubrium (2000) argue that what is untold in written materials might conversely represent what the institution, the system, or the individual does not care for. Consequently, an analysis of what is missing
and what is expressed in written texts in museums might reveal what the museum does and does not make available to visitors.

Specifically, this study was designed to include two kinds of field notes: initial observations and reflective writings (Emerson et al., 1995). Notes on my initial observations were designed to become a record of what I observed, felt, and thought directly at the three different museums. On the other hand, the reflective writings were initiated from my initial observations and became a text of my experiences of the present intermingled with experiences of the past, weaving between the boundary of the past and the present. The reflective writings became a good source for my autoethnographic writing because they provided me as a researcher with the analytical perspective for interpretation on my experience as a visitor. Writing autoethnographic field notes maximizes the tension of a researcher as an observer and participant across the boundary of projecting oneself into the research site (Erikson, 2004). Consequently, my study was designed to reveal my being as a female Korean international student born and raised in Korea and studying in the United States for a doctoral degree, as mentioned earlier. In particular, conducting research with family members not only revealed my individual identity as a female international student but also my relational identities as a mother, wife, and daughter. In this way, revealing my multiple identities makes room for me to contextualize my presence and to specify it in my research settings and research text.

However, during the initial stage of this study, I could not conjecture what types of my identities could be revealed or how they would be revealed. As a visitor and a researcher, I wanted to enter the museums without having a definite analysis or outline about myself because the purpose of this study is to reveal myself as a whole individual
(as a visitor and a researcher) who has a specific personal history when interacting with specific museum narratives. As much as I could, I tried to experience the museums without prioritizing myself. For example, whenever I plan to visit any type of museum, I usually look at the museum’s website to get information about what to see and where to see it as well as to obtain visitor information, such as admission fees, parking information, and hours. But for these research trips, I did not look at the museums’ websites for any information other than for operation hours in order to allow me to enter the museum with fresh eyes. However, this study was designed so that I would be revealed as a visitor and a researcher in the stories that I wrote based on my experiences in the three museums.

In this regard, the first research question—the investigation into my narratives and museums’ narratives—was explored in the intersection of my narratives and museums’ narratives, which was organized in the way that my personal identities were revealed when my narratives intersected with the museums’ narratives.

The second research question—the investigation into my interpretive strategies—was examined through the meta-analysis on my written stories about the intersection of my narratives and museums’ narratives. Specifically, I looked into moments which made me frustrated or encouraged my viewing activities and examined what behaviors or what emotional responses I had at the moments and how I behaved to confirm or to refuse the museum’s narratives.

In particular, I also focused on what I newly gained from my museum experiences—how I was changed from those experiences and what those experiences mean to me—through the meta-analysis on my stories, to answer the third research
question. To prompt this investigation, I kept a record of what I was before going on these museum trips: I wrote my impressions of and formal experiences with the three types of museums, as I will explain in more detail in the Data Collection section.

Yet, this study was not designed to presuppose what I might experience during my research trips to Pittsburgh. Instead, it was supposed to describe my status as a visitor and researcher at the moment when I initiated my research and what I had experienced and assumed prior to that point. This study was solely based on the experiences I had on the museum trips, so I was unable to predict what types of experiences that I might have.

**Data Collection**

During my research trips to Pittsburgh, where I stayed for ten days from July 6 through July 15 of 2007, I spent six days visiting the museums and four days arranging field notes and writing reflective notes. Additionally, before going on my research trip to Pittsburgh, I wrote retrospective accounts of my museum-going experiences to the three types of museums—the art museum, the natural history museum, and the children’s museum—which were used as comparisons with my actual experiences as written in my field notes and reflective notes. Even though I did not intend to write these retrospective accounts in a very abstract way, these accounts were very abstract compared with the actual stories.

At the research sites, I jotted down memos about my thoughts, feelings, and ideas and took photos. When writing these was inconvenient or not possible, I recorded my voice so as not to miss them. Sometimes, I also tried to record family conversations,
which happened at unexpected times, making it difficult to record the whole conversation. Usually, I started recording these discussions in the middle of the conversation, so many of the conversations are incomplete, thus making it difficult to use them for conversation analysis. For this reason, I decided to use the recordings of my personal thoughts as references to write my field notes.

In addition, this study was designed to incorporate photographic interviews, as proposed by Sara Pink (2007), as I let my daughter and husband take pictures of whatever they wanted to. However, taking pictures proved to be difficult technically, even though each of us was prepared with a digital camera. We entered the special exhibition at the CMOA and tried to take pictures, but we were told not to do so because the CMOA does not allow visitors to take pictures of special exhibitions. My six-year-old daughter, who was very excited to own her own digital camera and take pictures, was very disappointed by this rule and refused to take pictures when she was encouraged to do so later in the permanent gallery, except for one occasion in the CMNH. As a result, I was unable to collect enough data to include photographic interviews and had to exclude them from my study.

After visiting the various museums, I tried to write reflective notes back at the hotel and include as many details about each day as I could. However, I could not seem to write complete stories about my experiences during the research trips. After my trip to Pittsburgh, I participated in the conference of the International Society of Education through Art (now referred to as INSEA) in Seoul, Korea, during the middle of August. I stayed in Seoul for more than a month, and I did not write any of my stories during that time. After coming back to State College in early September, I started to write each of my
stories using the field notes and reflective notes that I had taken while in Pittsburgh.

These stories are the original stories that I wrote without any further inquiries into factual information or historical contexts. Then, I extended the original stories by adding further information. I started to collect information about the Carnegie Museums and the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh through their websites and various books. I also referred to photos taken during the research trips in order to visualize what I saw in more detail.

Finally, these extended stories became the raw sources for me to use as an analyst outsider to write the autoethnographic next—namely, how my personal stories (the original stories and the extended stories) can be connected with the other social, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions of the three museums. While I wrote the extended stories, I wrote memos that reminded me of past memories from museums and from my personal life. As I will explain in the next section of this chapter, Data Analysis, my writing of these autoethnographic texts was accompanied by the analytical work necessary for me to write the extended stories, while writing both types of stories was done as descriptive accounts of my experiences.

However, it needs to be noted that my analytical work is different from what Anderson (2006) considers in analytical autoethnography. He argues that even autoethnographic studies need to provide analytical foundations for the author’s argument in order to provide generalization. But, in my study, I needed analytical frameworks to renew my awareness for my experiences and to gain an in-depth understanding of my interpretive processes but not for generalizations, because I was so familiar with art museum settings that I could not go further beyond descriptive writing without analytical
analysis. The analytical frameworks to be incorporated in this study will be discussed in the following section.

Data Analysis

My research topic and design were somewhat different from other autoethnographic research studies. The other studies that I referred to were all about the self of researcher—how the self was formed and maintained in a culture and society where the researchers are located. However, my study was not merely about my self. Instead, it was about how my self interacted with museums during a specific time frame and in the specific places. As such, stretching my study into an autoethnographic exploration of my whole life as a visitor was not appropriate for study. As well, building self-knowledge about me as a visitor even in museums was not appropriate data for this study, either. To make my stories appropriate data for my autoethnographic study, the stories should tell how my experiences as a visitor were interwoven with the social, cultural, aesthetical, and educational aspects of museums and the implications for me and to the museums as well. I need an analytical means by which I can view the layers of my experiences.

The search for an analytical method was done in the following three ways: First, I looked for studies which were done as a first-person narrative in the museum education field. Margaret Lindaur’s article The Critical Museum Visitor (2006) was the only research paper I found written in that way. She described her experiences as a visitor at the exhibition entitled A Revolution in the Making: The Pottery of Maria and Julian
Martinez, which was held at the Heard Museum in Phoenix. However, Marstine, the editor of the book, identifies Lindaur’s research as an autobiography (Lindaur, 2006). Above all, her study was guided and pre-outlined by the concept of a “critical visitor” (Lindaur, 2006, p. 203). Lindaur seems to hope to demonstrate how a critical visitor could think and look at the museums. Yet, my study approaches a visitor’s experience as if it were without any expectations: It is much broader and not pre-conditioned.

The second way that I searched for analytical methods was through open coding and thematic coding methods that are generally used in qualitative research. Open coding is about labeling and categorizing a phenomenon, and based on this open coding, I tried to use thematic coding to determine any emerging themes, as suggested by Glesne (1999). The themes that did emerge were sorted into three categories—my experiences, museums’ narratives, and negotiation process—in order to answer the three research questions. However, even when I used these three categories, I realized that the stories had a similar structure and could be classified in all three of the categories: my experience, the museums’ narratives, and my negotiation process. I decided to categorize the stories according to which category was most represented in each story. However, this research does not investigate the basic structure of my museum-going experiences: The most compelling part of my study is about how my experiences vary in specific environments or contexts. Yet, my use of open coding and thematic coding did not help me articulate these varying experiences. In my case, the success of the autoethnographic study depends on the point where autobiographical description transitions from my personal experience to the social, cultural, and political dimensions of my experience—how well I articulate the intersection at which my personal characteristics meet the
cultural and social areas of the museums. However, most of the categories that I developed using open coding and thematic coding did not reveal any insightful moments of this type of interplay.

As the third way to search for analytical methods, I looked for two other methods using narratives as the main data—narrative analysis as proposed by Riessman (1993; 2007) and narrative ethnography as proposed by Holstein and Gubrium (2009). In her 1993 work, Riessman proposed three types of narrative analysis methods—life story analysis, core narrative analysis, and poetic narrative analysis—and in her 2007 work, she proposed five additional methods—the thematic, structural, dialogic, performance, and visual analysis methods for narrative analysis (some of the latter methods overlap with the first three methods). From these methods, I realized that a few of these methods fit well with into my approach. Riessman (1993) explains that core narrative analysis (similar to structural analysis) illustrates identity transformation between linked stories of pre- and post-interviews, and, the poetic narrative analysis method (similar to dialogic analysis) helps a researcher understand how an interviewee understands her/his world.

Nevertheless, I realized that there is a fundamental difference between how I wished to use these methods and how Riessman suggests using them. Riessman (1993; 2007) focuses on the analysis of the internal organization of stories, which is based on accounts typically elicited in interviews; however, my data are not based on interviews but are the stories about my experiences. The least applicable element in the method of narrative analysis in my study is that the method does not investigate “the situated practices of storytelling”—where and how the narratives are narrated, as Holstein and Gubrium (2009) point out about Riessman’s work (p. 19). However, my study focuses on
the places—namely, the museums—in which my narratives were told and on the situated identities of those places.

Holstein and Gubrium (2009) propose another way to analyze narrative data, which they call “narrative ethnography” or “the ethnographic study of stories” (p. 22). This type of analysis emphasizes the situation in which the stories were told and suggests that the interplay between the story, the storyteller, and society cannot be revealed solely through textual analysis. They say:

In systematically observing the construction, use, and reception of accounts and textual material, we have found that the internal organization of narratives, while important to understand in its own right, does not tell us much about how stories operate in society. (p. 25)

However, “narrative ethnography” (as defined by Holstein and Gubrium) was not also applicable to my study because that method is less interested in the researcher’s self issue. The object of investigation for “narrative ethnography” is “the narrative practices of the people and circumstances ethnographers study” (p. 25). Interestingly, the object of investigation in this method is similar to my research, as my study focuses on the cultural analysis of the three museums. For example, my work connects to their idea through the following quote: “The narrative practices of the people [e.g., me as an informant] and circumstances [e.g., the museums’ narratives] ethnographers [e.g., me as an analyst] study.” However, “narrative ethnography” incorporates a “naturalistic, ethno-methodological, conversation analytic impulse” (p. 24) among interviewers and interviewees and observers as researchers in Holstein and Gubrium’s (2009) approach. But in my study, the three—interviewers, interviewees and observers—are one: I am a researcher, an informant, and an analyst. And the urgent problem for me at this stage of
writing was that I could not clearly explain complicated conversation among the three. As mentioned before, for me, all three of these aspects were revealed separately and did not seem to be related to one another, even though the three were one. All stories including my experiences were at the surface level and seemed to be flat.

As a result of the struggle to gain an in-depth understanding of my stories, I came to conclude that I needed a framework that could refresh my experiences that appeared to be so flat, rather than trying to use other coding frameworks for analysis. So, I started to reread some of the books that I looked at during the initial stage of my research. Again, I looked for something that influenced the formation of my research design. I started to undergo an archeological study of my memory and knowledge formation. I reread Joe Kincheloe (2005a; 2005b; 2007), Maxine Greene (2001), Hooper-Greenhill (1992; 2000; 2007), and Jerome Bruner (1986; 1990; 1996).

It was through rereading the book *The Culture of Education* (1996) by Bruner that I faced the real problem that I had. *The Culture of Education* is neither about museum education nor aesthetics or learning theory. It is about a learner’s folk psychology. Folk psychology, according to Bruner, is “about human agents doing things on the basis of their beliefs and desires, striving for goals, meeting obstacles which they best or which best them, all of this extended over time” (pp. 42-43). When I designed my study during the initial stage of my research, my study was about investigating my own folk psychology as a visitor and researcher as I tried to interpret the works of art in the museum settings, as informed by Bruner (1990; 1996), even though it was not labeled in that way: The purpose of my research is to investigate my working hypothesis of what made me choose to read the object labels, what made me be more curious about what I
saw, or what made me exit the museum earlier than expected. I realized where and how
my study was initiated. The most important thing that I was able to do through these re-
reading processes was to gain the ability to trace how I initiate my research, thus enabling
me to find the framework that would be most beneficial to look through my experiences
in different directions.

Bruner (1996) suggests classic ways to awaken the unconsciousness of people as
a tool to reflect on their own folk psychology in different perspectives. To achieve
consciousness of our repeated actions and behaviors or habits, he recommends that we
pay attention to different responses from the same events or situation. According to
Bruner, we can initiate this consciousness by “listening to two contrastive but equally
reasonable accounts of the same event” (p. 147), which Bruner names “contrast.” With
the help of the concept of contrast, I started to look at my experiences more critically as
compared with my husband’s experiences: I started to pay attention to my experiences
that responded differently to the same objects or the same situations in the different types
of museums, and I started to look for any differences between my experiences in different
social contexts—namely, family visits and individual visits. I did this job during the first
stage of writing my autoethnographic texts: I compared the retrospective accounts of my
museum-going experiences (named as R1, R2, and R3) with the extended stories from the
three different museums. Although I was unable to make any kind of systemic
comparison between works, Bruner’s approach provided me with the “how” and “why” I
made this kind of contrast.

The second way that Bruner recommends awakening the unconsciousness of
people is through confrontation. Bruner explains confrontation in the following manner:
Confrontation is a strong but risky medicine for unawareness. Its active ingredient is thwarted expectation, finding that your narrative version of reality clashes with what subsequently transpires or with the reality of claims of others…Indeed, confrontation is more likely to arouse anger and resentment than to raise consciousness. (p. 148)

Bruner explains that when we have an unexpected encounter with various incidents, often we cannot figure out what it means to us but merely recognize these kinds of encounters as weird feelings, thwarted expectations, anger, or resentment. So, I started to pay attention to my unarticulated emotions or anger, and began making a list of my emotions. Through this articulating process, I was able to identify what these encounters tell about the narratives of museums and ultimately about me.

The last antidote that Bruner suggests to awaken the unconsciousness is metacognition. He explains the role of metacognition as follows:

Metacognition converts ontological arguments about the nature of reality into epistemological ones about how we know. While contrast and confrontation may raise consciousness about the relativity of knowing, the object of metacognition is to create alternative ways of conceiving of reality making. (p. 148)

For Bruner, meta-cognition plays a role of construing alternative ways to figure out reality, which is veiled at some point but is finally revealed through alternative ways of understanding our reality. For my study, meta-cognition plays a role in the triangulation of my data, enabling me to construct alternative reality.

In this alternative reality, I could see myself in different ways, which enabled me again to find out the narratives of the museum—its complicated layers. The more I revealed myself in the museum environments, the more layers I could see there. At the intersection of my narratives and the museum’s narratives, the layers of narratives were
initiated, evolved, articulated, and finally identified as the three types of narratives—at-a-glance narratives, exhibitionary narratives, and hidden narratives.

In the first stage of the intersection, I got at-a-glance narratives. The at-a-glance narrative was telling what I felt, thought and discovered initially when I visited the museum. It became entry points from which I and my family experienced the museums. The at-a-glance narrative includes my first impression about the museum, the first contact with museum professionals, the first reaction with an encounter with art works at the gallery space exhibition, or the overall tone of visitor services. Namely, it would be my initial responses on those museums’ narratives.

However, the more I visited the museums, the more I found out different narratives from what I first identified as at-a-glance narratives, even though I sometimes confirmed the same narrative. The second-thought narratives were identified as exhibitionary narratives in this study. Logically, it would be better to name them the second-thought narratives but they were named exhibitionary narratives for the following two reasons. First, because this study focused more on exhibition space and related programs, all detailed analysis on on-going experiences was conducted within the exhibition space. Second, even though they were telling about physical contexts such as signs, wall texts, or seating areas in exhibitions, if they resulted from the direct interaction with encounters with art works, they were named exhibitionary narratives. For those reasons, all my second-thought narratives, which resided in the boundary of the exhibition space, are specifically named exhibitionary narratives. In this way, the exhibitionary narrative was built and layered upon the at-a-glance narratives.
However, there was something that I could not clearly articulate but substantially existed there in my experiences. It revealed its substance as uncomfortable feelings, frustration, or blaming throughout the at-a-glance narratives and exhibitionary narratives but I initially did not notice them. Through reflection on my thinking of ways and my pattern of habits that made me uncomfortable, frustrated, and blaming, I could articulate what it was about. Namely, it revealed itself later through further analysis and reflection on it and was hidden when I experienced the narratives.

For this reason, the third narrative was identified as a hidden narrative, which refers to what is rarely noticeable both at the first place and at the on-going experiences in the museums, but is undercurrent in those experiences and articulated later through further reflection.

The three narratives could not be shown as clear-cut but overlapped at some points. At this point, it should be noted that the categorization of the three narratives was not lineal, as time passed by, but spiral. The categorization was based on how and when I noticed them as a visitor. Seemingly, the categorization seemed to be organized according to a time process. But it was not based on the order of what I actually saw and felt and heard, but based on the order of what I noticed as its substance from my experience. I noticed first the at-a-glance narrative, which was developed into the exhibitionary narrative, which I noticed secondly. Lastly, I noticed the third narrative, named as the hidden narrative, which was undercurrent but invisible through at-a-glance narrative and exhibitionary narrative. The three types of narratives will be presented and interpreted in the next three chapters.
Interestingly, the more I revealed myself in the intersection, the more I could articulate clearly the intersection in the same way that my personal identities are revealed when I introduce myself to others from initial experiences, through on-going experiences, and up to the in-depth experiences. Probably, when I meet a person for the first time, I might introduce my name and my job (or major) or nationality. At the second stage of the relationship, I might talk about what I am personally interested in with other people. If rapport is built up enough at a certain point, I might talk about my invisible scars and my painful memories.

In the same way, I can sort out stories into the three types of narratives—-at-a-glance narratives, exhibitionary narratives, and hidden narratives—as if I told my experiences with the museums to other people in the same way I told my personal stories to other people.
Chapter 4

AT-A-GLANCE NARRATIVES

This chapter discusses my investigation of how I initially experienced the museums through exploration into at-a-glance narratives: how my narrative was intersected with a museum’s narrative initially. Namely, at-a-glance narratives refer to my initial responses to those museums’ narratives including the first impression of museums, the first contact with museum professionals in museums, the first encounter with the physical contexts, and conceptual contexts.

The first impression was usually made by its outer appearance such as architectural style and the availability of physical access to the museum such as parking lots. Sometimes, it was crafted from the easy and clear access to visitor information such as visiting hours or admission fees. In this study, particularly, all family visits were ahead of individual visits. So, most of them were filtered and conditioned through family experiences.

These narratives will be re-invited into the exhibitionary and hidden narratives, but evolved and articulated more. Especially the experience in educational programs, which was written as the fourth section of this chapter, was displayed as an only at-a-glance narrative, because it was experienced once.
Inviting a Visitor to a City Garden

My first contact with Carnegie Museums was initiated from the encounter with the museum building—classical architectural style—and from parking lot information on the first day of museum visits.

At the entrance of the Carnegie Museum of Art

I saw the whole building, approaching from the Music Hall toward the Carnegie Museum of Art in a car. The route gave me the first short impression that the whole building was built in a very classical way, not in a modern way. This impression was developed a little bit differently when I passed by Music Hall and the Carnegie Museum of Natural History and arrived at the Carnegie Museum of Art. Approaching the Carnegie Museum of Art, I first noticed the large and colorful sign advertising the current exhibition, “ViVA Vetro,” not the gate of The Carnegie Museum of Art. The gate was placed under the sign, but it was not visibly noticeable. Actually, the gate I entered through was not the gate seen in the building I passed by. Because I had to park my car in a parking lot, I entered through the parking deck, which was connected to another gate where I entered the Carnegie Museum of Art. The landscape that I saw coming out of the parking deck was not the classical style museum building, unlike the impression I had.

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1 The extended stories, which were written, based on my experiences in the museums during July 6, 2007 through July 14, 2007 and searched information later, became the raw sources to write the autoethnographic texts, interpreting and analyzing the stories. To show how I actually experienced the museums and how the experiences became autoethnographic texts, I designated the extended stories in italics.
when I first saw the whole Carnegie complex; rather it was a garden-like space—named the Outdoor Sculpture Court—and was equipped with monuments, fountains, tables and chairs. The space was framed in a square surrounded by the museum buildings and the wall between the museums, and the garden-like space was made of transparent glass through which I could see the inside of the museum. It was a slightly different experience from what I had when I visited the Philadelphia Museum of Art with its countless stairs that I had to mount. However, it was the same feeling I had when I entered the Carnegie Museums of Art the next day through another gate placed under the colorful sign and near the bus stop, toward the street, approaching the museum using public transportation. The other gate faced directly up the street and also welcomed visitors, and it was also designed with a water fountain and a transparent glass wall. The whole impression these gates made was one closer to intimacy rather than imposition, a park in a city rather than a palace or temple. This was probably caused by the garden-like atmosphere that the water fountain gave me and the modern architectural style with its transparent glass (instead of traditional material like bricks or marbles), through which the museum visitors can see the inside of the museum (Family visit to CMOA on July 6, 2007).

The Carnegie Museum of Art consists of the Heinz Architectural Center that was opened as a part of the museum in 1993; the Hall of Architecture for cast collection; the Hall of Sculpture, the Scaife Galleries and the Paper Gallery for permanent collections; the Heinz Gallery for special exhibitions; and the Outdoor Sculpture Court. The Carnegie Museum of Art is physically connected to the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, the Carnegie Free Library, and the Carnegie Music Hall. Because these four facilities are
connected to each other, they seem to make up one complex. The Carnegie Institutes complex is L-shaped and made of sandstone with the statue of Shakespeare at the Carnegie Free Library and the statue of a dinosaur at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Architecturally, it is a temple form, typical of late 19th-century classical architecture that growing cities across the Western world at the time reserved for their places of civic importance, such as institutions of learning and theatres of high culture (“History”).

Because what I saw first in the Carnegie complex was Carnegie Music Hall and the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, the cathedral-like architectural style made me expect to have the same experience as that when I visited the Philadelphia Museum of Art climbing through the seemingly endless stairs a few years before. At that moment, I remembered that I felt as if I had climbed a mountain and I stayed at the top of the mountain when I arrived at the museum. I expected to experience similar things when I saw the first two buildings. My expectation of what this type of architectural style might release to visitors is actually well documented in articles of Carol Duncan (1995) and Duncan Cameron (2004).

Traditionally, art museums have been compared to sacred temples where visitors can relax spiritually or to store-houses of publicly sanctioned artistic treasures (Cameron, 2004; Hooper-Greenhill, 1995; Zeller, 1989). In such settings, visitors may feel as though there are precious treasures that release new power to them. They might also expect to experience a sense of awe by entering grandiose museum buildings emulating Greek temples and Renaissance palaces (Cameron, 2004; Duncan, 1995; Giebelhausen, 2003; Ritchie, 1994).
In particular, Duncan (1995) describes that these kinds of visitor expectations arise because they perceive the museum as a space for ritual. According to Duncan, the museum becomes “the achievement of a marked off, liminal zone of time and space in which visitors, removed from the concerns of their daily, practical lives, open themselves to a different quality of experience” (p. 20). Duncan perceives all efforts to order the disorganized world as individuals constructing microcosms as a ritual, irrespective of their religious lives or belief systems, and considers the art museum as a space to enact ritual.

She comments:

Museums of all kinds are excellent examples of such microcosms: art museums in particular—the most prestigious and costly of these sites—are especially rich in this kind of symbolism and, almost always, even equip visitors with maps to guide them through the universe they construct. (p. 8)

Both regular visitors who directly use museums and potential visitors who do not use museums directly see art museums as a space for ritual. Interestingly, however, the art museum image as ritual space is propelled by potential visitors rather than regular visitors. Merriman’s (1989) study demonstrates this tendency. For non-visitors who do not visit museums, the museum is most frequently seen as the image of a “monument to the dead” (p. 158) in the following list: library, church or temple, school, community center, department store, and monument to the dead. However, for regular visitors, the image of the museum is generally seen as a library.

In Merriman’s study (1989), there are other markers relating how visitors and non-visitors view the image of the museum. Visitors agree strongly that museums have a pleasant atmosphere, while non-visitors are much less likely to agree with this statement; however, they are more likely to agree that museums are too middle class. Merriman
(1989) concludes that non-visitors have strong impressions that museums favor specific groups, like the middle-class, and that the museums create an unwelcoming atmosphere toward them. Even though non-visitors do not actually visit the museum, they do consume the museum as a specific image—a negative image toward them. But the actual enactment of a museum as a ritual space happens initially through the first impression that the museum building gives to visitors. According to Hein (1999), a cathedral-like museum building gives both visitors and potential visitors a feeling of being in an overwhelming atmosphere unlike other familiar public buildings (Hein, 1999).

However, my first impression of the Carnegie Museums was a little bit different from this general perception of museums, even though the Carnegie Museums were built in a cathedral-like classical style. What caused this difference? Mark Fenech (2003) suggests that there are two types of art museum models: the city museum and the park museum. He pays special attention to the importance of the museum’s physical engagement as a place with visitors.

Fenech (2003) first points out the geographical location of an art museum and whether the museum is located in the middle of city or in an idyllic park. According to him, the art museum as the city museum is a “busy and active place, a venue where individuals and communities coalesce dynamically, where there is noise and hustle and bustle, as one would expect in a large city,” while the art museum as a park museum is a “respite, a recreational place for quiet contemplation” where people come to “think, reflect, and make judgments” (p. 48). Fenech suggests these models because visitors approach a park museum, not through the busy hustle of a city street, but through a calm and open area or a yard that gives them room for contemplation.
Which category does the Carnegie Museum of Art fall into? In the light of geographical location, the Carnegie Museum of Art falls into the city museum category because it is located in the busy city of Pittsburgh. In addition, the Carnegie Museum of Art is seen as the symbolic emblem of the city among the citizens of Pittsburgh, which Fenech suggests is one of the characteristics of the city museum. However, the presence of the garden-like space framed by the Carnegie Museum of Art blurs the line between the city museum and the park museum, even though the museum visitors might indirectly experience this by merely recognizing the presence of a garden without moving through the space to the museum itself.

In other words, the Carnegie Museum of Art seems to be a good example of a city museum that tries to incorporate a garden-like space that is representative of a park museum for its visitors to enjoy. As a result, even though the garden-like space played different roles during my entire museum visit (which will be discussed in the fifth section of the chapter 6), I am certain that the Carnegie Museum of Art did not provide an overwhelming atmosphere with its Outdoor Sculpture Court in spite of its cathedral-like architectural style. Perhaps this lack of overwhelming atmosphere was caused by the fact that the garden-like space was open to the public irrespective of them purchasing admission tickets to the Carnegie Museum of Art.

Consequently, I felt that the Carnegie Museum of Art was inviting visitors and potential visitors by incorporating visitor-friendly entrances and un-intimidating pathways to the museum through this garden-like space.
Detour Experiences

My positive impression about the Carnegie Museum of Art continued until I entered the entrance and moved up through stairs toward the information desk, because I was informed clearly where to go to start my museum visit due to signs that stood next to the entrance. And, another reason was that my family found signage telling us that we were at the art museum, which made us feel refreshed. It was a sculpture of one person who was playing (or standing) on a wire in the air across the stairs. My six-year-old daughter first found it in the air above her and shouted. As Psarra (2005) and Wolf (1992) emphasize the presence of clear orientation as one of important spatial characteristics to secure visitor’s comforts, the Carnegie Museum of Art succeeded in providing a clear way-finding sign system and signage in order to establish visitors’ comfort and give them a sense of control over the space at the entrance of the museums.

However, those positive impressions started to disappear quickly when I experienced the following three cases at the first places—at the information desk, at the detour, and with the encounter of the up-side down stuffed birds. Because I most seriously experienced it, when we were lost in a detour, the section was named symbolically as the detour experience. The first case at the information desk was followed by the encounter with an excellent signage.

At the information desk

Climbing the stairs, I saw a museum shop in front of the stairs and to the left there was an information desk where admission tickets were sold. We, my family, applied for a
one-year membership and were informed about the benefits of membership. I got three temporary orange tickets for my family. The lady at the information desk explained that we, as members of the Carnegie Museum, could enter four different museums—the Carnegie Museum of Art, the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, the Science Center, and the Andy Warhol Museum—for free. In addition, she added we should be issued new tickets whenever we visited the museum. That’s all that I heard from the lady who completed our membership application. As usual, I collected all brochures and flyers which were arranged in the front of the desk. I started to look for special events on Friday afternoon or family programs for Friday. Because we arrived at the museum around 3:00 p.m. and we had just two hours before the closing time to look around the museum, I hoped to use this little amount of time effectively to look around the whole museum briefly or for my five-and-a-half-year-old daughter to be engaged in the museum programs actively for repeated visits in the future. But at a glance, I could not find exactly what I wanted to find out—a special feature flyer for Friday. So, I asked another staff member who was sitting on the left side of the information desk, “Are there any family programs to participate in today?” But she seemed not to understand what I asked her. Because I was always aware of the fact that my pronunciation as an ESL learner could be perceived incorrectly by native speakers, it did not matter that she seemed not to understand what I had said. So, I asked again with the same question, “Do you have any worksheet or program to work with young children for today?” She showed a similar look of confusion but offered one brochure to me, saying “There are a lot of programs.” It was a summer camp packet. But the summer camp packet was not the kind that I was looking for. I told her again, “It is about summer camp. We just want events or programs
to participate in today.” She did not respond instantly to my question. So, I added an additional verbal explanation: “Today, I brought my six-year-old daughter. Do you have any programs or museum tours that she can enjoy?” She instantly provided a blue flyer about Saturday events which I could not get at the information desk and gave an appropriate explanation of what I was expecting to hear from her. She said that tomorrow, on Saturday, there would be an art activity near Scaife Hall from 3:00 p.m. but today, Friday, there were no programs. So, I asked again, “Where is Scaife Hall?” And then she responded, “Go to the stairs over there.” Because I hoped to search for more information for the next time and hoped to avoid a time-consuming conversation like that the next time, I asked her, “So, if I want to get that kind of information, what flyer should I refer to or what page should I look at in the pamphlet?” She could not respond instantly to my question and I got tired of repeating the same kind of conversation with her even though it was caused by my poor pronunciation. I was not inclined to make more inquiry or attempt to get the information on what I wanted. After just saying thank-you to her, I started to move toward the stairs to check the place where the activity would be held the next day, calling to my husband and daughter. They were next to me when I first asked the woman my question, but they moved to another place because the conversation seemed to take so long. So, I then called to them again and explained that today there were no family programs or events that we could participate in. And then, I asked them to move toward the stairs to check the place but Sunny asked me to go to the dark room—the forum gallery—first. Because I valued her interest more than my interest in something specific, I wanted to encourage her. So, we entered the room where she wanted to explore (Family visit to CMOA on July 6, 2007).
The first thing to be noted is that the information presented at the information desk was clear in general but was just not articulated well enough for the needs of a specific visitor who wanted to get information about experiences for families with children. Consequently, the staff sitting there and talking with me was not informed of what information parents like me wanted to get. But, it should also be noted that I as a visitor did not care much about the disqualification of the staff at the moment: I thought it was a very minor thing that could happen at museums as usual; I was neither irritated nor frustrated much. And, actually, the accident did not influence my overall experience of that day. But, it became a starting point, however minor and tiny it was, for me to get a sense of the physical context of the Carnegie Museum of Art and how the physical context intersected with my narratives, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 6.

The second occasion came from the experience of my husband, Lee. When we made the second family visit to the Carnegie Museums, after looking around in the Polar World exhibition and then the Carnival exhibition at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, we got out through a different door from where we entered the room. The Carnival exhibition was held at the R.P. Simmons Family Gallery that had two different doors through which we got out. So, we used two different doors when we entered and when we came out. We did this as we were in a hurry to return a backpack which we borrowed from the discovery room and had a two-hour limitation on using it.
We are lost in the Carnegie Museum of Art

From the carnival, to return the backpack down to the discovery room in the basement, we had to pass through the hallway. We could not identify what the hallway was, because we were lost in the museums. There wasn’t any information to direct us to the discovery room or any room in the basement. But, the walls still displayed something in the incomplete form. We did not know whether the hallway was exhibiting something or not. This kind of discomfort made us very tired and nervous. Anyway, we found the right route at the end of the hallway. Actually, it was the right route. Just as Lee had recognized the route where we passed through as the right route, however, he began to be a little bit upset. From that moment on, Lee started to make complaints; when we passed a construction site inside of the museum, he criticized the inconsiderateness of the museum professionals who were working with this construction project, due to their lack of providing advanced notice (Family visit to CMNH on July 7).

As described, the place we were lost in was a kind of detour from the R.P. Simmons Family Gallery to the discovery room, which is located in the basement of the natural history museum. And, the natural history museum did not consider the hallway space, a part of the detour, as an exhibition space or an exposed place to visitors. It was evidenced by the fact that we could not see any sign through the hallway. As well, we did not see any sign either when we approached another door to get out of the R.P. Simmons Family Gallery. From those experiences, I can sense that Carnegie Museums has not incorporated the repeated sign systems in order to establish visitors’ comfort and give them a sense of control over the space, as recommended by Hein (1998). Even though the
repeated sign system can be considered redundant, Hein (1998) still argues its importance:

Overcoming visitors' fears and uncertainties requires extensive orientation signage using redundant, overlapping means to let visitors know where they are, where all the services are, and where the rest of their group is likely to be. (p. 161)

It is because it helps to secure the comforts of visitors and confers visitors a sense of control over the space. After that moment, Lee seriously expressed his discomfort in the following two things:

**Complaints initiated at the Carnegie Museums**

*When he saw the stuffed bird displayed in the showcase upside down, he felt that museum professionals did not pay attention to what visitors thought or how they felt about that kind of mistake. He said, “They do not care for a general visitor like me.” I explained that the upside-down bird could be intentionally designed for visitors to investigate the other side of a bird more. But, he did not accept my idea. Another thing that made Lee irritated was the two showcases that displayed all kinds of snakes and butterflies. These were collected without any context. He said to me, pointing out the two showcases, “Why are they presented together, because these are snakes or butterflies? What should I feel from the cases? Oh, there are various snakes or butterflies? Look, is it right that the museum professionals do not care about anything?” (Family visit to CMNH on July 7, 2007).*

Interestingly, I found opposite examples in the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh, where I saw information about the museum in many places displayed clearly and
conveniently. There were noticeable signs to direct me and to explain where I was. In addition to the presence of signs, the most remarkable thing about the sign system was that the signs were repeated. The following story shows how my experiences at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh were different from those of Carnegie Museums.

Repeated signs at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh

I saw repeated signs all over the place telling me of specific directions. The distance between two signs was very short. It seemed like two pages of one book. I did not see this kind of sign at the Carnegie Museum of Art or at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. At a certain angle, I could see two signs simultaneously. So, this repeated sign system seemed to be redundant. However, for me, the idea appeared to consider visitors who approached a location from different directions, so they would not accidentally pass the area. This reminded me of Hein’s theory of how repeated signs make visitors comfortable. I felt that the museum professionals in the CMP were concerned about visitors becoming lost in the museum or about visitors wasting their time trying to find proper signs (Family visit to CMP on July 8, 2007).

What I sensed from the museum professionals’ idea of repeating the same information at the CMP was their consideration toward visitors. The following story shows how the visitor-friendly information encouraged my learning at the CMP.
A cozy-looking sofa at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh

To rest, I sat in a cozy-looking sofa when Sunny was playing with the interactive installation. The first thing that I did was read the information piece placed on the bookshelf next to the sofa and glance at the titles of the books displayed. It said “Please feel free to sign out a book. It may be returned to any library in Allegheny County or to the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh. If you need help, please see our staff for information. This is a joint effort of the Carnegie Library and The Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh” (emphasis in original). Even though I had no intention of borrowing a book from the CMP, I felt as if I were invited to use the museum’s service at my convenience (Family visit to CMP on July 8, 2007).

Here, I saw that my learning was encouraged in the CMP even though I left the museum without borrowing any books. It was a kind of invitation to that space and to see the possibility that the space was connected to other spaces—outer spaces. Imagine if there were no information piece on the bookshelf: Most visitors who were interested in reading a book would probably use a book in that space and then put it back on the bookshelf without considering the possibility of borrowing it. If there were no sign, some visitors who hoped to borrow the book might ask the staff if they could borrow the book or not. Some of them might actually take books home if borrowing is possible. What then is the difference between offering rich information and offering minimal information? If there were no notice, imagine a visitor who wonders if one can borrow a book or not and how long it would take her/him to find out if s/he can borrow the book. Also, imagine how many visitors would place the books back on the shelf without inquiring. Rich
information presentation and minimal information presentation control the behaviors of visitors in this way.

In brief, getting the sense of being neglected through the physical contexts played a role in letting visitors feel themselves as unimportant beings in services and programming, thereby creating negative learning effects.

The Less Intervention, the More Freedom?

The conceptual context, being different from the physical context which a visitor can directly experience and which is explicitly shown to a visitor, is implicit in exhibition displays, tours, or educational programs (Hein, 1998; 1999). The first thing that I found out was that the Scaife Gallery is outlined as a clear vision to show art collections—namely, chronologically.

At the Scaife Gallery at the Carnegie Museum of Art

On Monday, July 9, 2007, the first day I made my individual visit to The Carnegie Museum of Art, there was a poster advertising an exhibition for “Masters of American Drawings & Watercolors” in front of the gallery allotted for the permanent collections display. The gateway of the gallery was titled “Scaife Galleries.” When I stepped into the gallery, what I first saw was a written introduction to the Scaife Gallery’s collections. It read “What you are about to see...present[s] the museum’s collection in chronological order beginning...” and that the goals of this exhibit’s collections are “shown together to
suggest the rich variety of artistic style, mediums, subjects and forms that coexist or clash in any historical period.” In particular, the museum’s collections embody the principles of its founder, Andrew Carnegie, who set out to create an art museum for the citizens of Pittsburgh. Carnegie proposed to build a collection with purchases from an annual international exhibition of contemporary art. This strategy, he reasoned, would produce a collection made up of “the old masters of tomorrow, the best art of its period.” What I first thought after entering the room and reading the inscription on the wall was that the museum was now clearly making it known that the display would follow CHRONOLOGICAL order. Additionally, I was surprised to be informed that not only did Carnegie provide financial support for collecting the objects and building the Carnegie Museum of Art but also that the museum tried to embody the principles of Carnegie—trying to collect the old masters of tomorrow—when the followers assembled the collection. After I read this information and entered the gallery to view the watercolor works, I felt a sense of relaxation. I felt very relieved entering this room. It was not the type of feeling that I usually have at the beginning of a gallery tour (Individual visit to CMOA on July 9, 2007).

This story primarily tells about the level of my prior knowledge about the Carnegie Museum of Art; the founder and philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie; and its affiliation with the city of Pittsburgh. I intentionally tried not to research these details before I actually experienced the museum because I was concerned about having a sort of pre-conditioned prejudice about those elements of the Carnegie Museums. For this reason, all I initially knew about the Carnegie Museum of Art, Andrew Carnegie, and Pittsburgh was that Andrew Carnegie earned money in the steel industry when Pittsburgh
was at the peak of the Industrial Age in the late 19th century and that he donated his fortune to society, especially, the city of Pittsburgh. If I had been educated in the United States since I was a child, or if I lived in Pittsburgh, I might be more knowledgeable about this topic. But, I am an international student and live outside of Pittsburgh. For this reason, I was surprised when I came to know that Carnegie provided some of the principles that direct the museum as well as the financial support for the museum and that his followers have also tried to embody his beliefs. According to information on the CMOA website, “While most art museums founded at the turn of the century focused on collections of old masters, Andrew Carnegie envisioned a museum collection consisting of the ‘Old Masters of tomorrow’” (‘History’). Namely, his vision was to experiment with contemporary artists, communicating with the present and the future. The introductory panel tells about how his experimental spirit became the motto that has penetrated the CMOA since its foundation.

At the second level, the fact that I was relieved after reading the wall panel and in entering the Paper Gallery, the first section of the Scaife Gallery, implied that at least at the moment I was very positive and in a good mood. At the same time, as well, it implies that I felt an opposite feeling, a kind of pressure, for my other art museum-going experiences, which will be discussed in chapter 6 in detail, because it only revealed itself later through reflection. Just one thing that I can identify surely at this point is that I was relieved, which formed a positive mood when I looked at works in the Paper Gallery. Framed through my clear expectation—chronological order—how the art collections at this gallery would be displayed, under the relieved mood, the following narratives show
how I was going through the gallery: when and from what I was hooked to look at the works.

**Looking at works by Abbey and Glackens**

I saw drawings by Edwin Austin Abbey and William James Glackens respectively produced in the late 19th century, because the one by Abbey seemed like an illustration of the novel Huckleberry Finn, which I read in my childhood. The drawing depicted naughty kids who were sitting on stairs and giggling. At first, the drawing reminded me of Albrecht Dürer’s print because of the strong contrast of black and white, but soon I realized the drawing was softer than Dürer’s work. In the drawing, I could see curved lines and scribbles. Also, in the drawing, written text was inserted, which reminded me of Huckleberry Finn. So I became curious about the work. I moved toward the object label. But the object label described something different from what I was expecting. Then, I moved to the next one, a drawing by Glackens. In his drawing, the sharp and, in a sense, soft line of pencil made me light up as the facial expressions were exaggerated. So, I conjectured it to be a cartoon. I read the object label, but I could not find related information. And then, I moved to the work next to Glackens’ work (Individual visit to CMOA on July 9, 2007).

This story shows that I was drawing from personal memories in my childhood, prior knowledge about Albrecht Dürer, and visual components that were appealing to me. What other components would be there?
Looking at works by Kenyon Cox

One object entitled Scale Drawing for the Contemplative Spirit of the East caught my eye. It was a series of drawings by Kenyon Cox. I stood for a long time in front of the work. The work was hung with the series of sketches of the final version of the work. On the same wall, there was one finished version and four drafts to depict the detail of the finished one. Each draft was depicted in detail. I could sense the fine craftsmanship.
Actually, at that time, I focused on the visual connection between the finished one and the drafts instead of reading the wall text about Kenyon Cox and the works. Owing to a series of drafts and the final one to show how the work was developed, I was able to imagine how the painter had worked to create one image. Five works hanging on the wall were related to each other (Individual visit to CMOA on July 9, 2007).

Kenyon Cox was a leader of the American mural painting movement that flourished in the late 19th century and early 20th century and a great advocate for the Renaissance classic (“Kenyon Cox”). His work was commissioned as the lunette for the entrance to the Minnesota State Supreme Court (“Scale Drawing for the Contemplative Spirit of the East”). But, while I was enjoying his work, that information was beyond my interest, so I passed it by. Instead, I was just interested in appreciating how the works were produced—their progression from the initial drafts to the completed versions.
Focusing on how the series of works that shows their working processes—how the works were created—I could more easily understand the progression of the work. I did not appreciate at all what the title Scale Drawing for the Contemplative Spirit of the East meant or how importantly the status of the work referred to the Carnegie Museum of Art.
I was only attracted to view the procedure of the art-making process when I spent a considerable amount of time looking at the work. Additionally and very interestingly, my lack of notice to Cox’s reputation and my being engrossed in his style and fine craftsmanship show how I, as a foreign visitor and an alien to contemporary American history, was getting a sense of these galleries. So far, the stories narrated above are telling about how I was basically attracted to look at works more due to their visual qualities as well as prior knowledge and personal memory. Slightly differently, the following story tells how the specific subject matters affected my viewing experience.

A sense of awe

The paper gallery is adjacent to the first room in a series of 17 galleries, which is numbered as room 1 and for European religious art from 1150-1600. When I entered the room 1, I could feel a sense of order as I looked at the religious paintings and sculpture. There were pietas describing Saint Mary’s sadness and the death of Jesus Christ on the Holy Cross. Even though I did not read any object labels and written text, I felt a sense of awe. Even though I could not tell what feelings I had exactly, I felt as if I were surrounded by religious atmosphere—a kind of awe or sacredness. I stopped at that moment to look around (Individual visit to CMOA on July 9, 2007).

I guess my feelings and my sympathy came from my personal religious background of Christianity. Without any visual stimulants and with the appeal only to the subject matter of Christianity, I was observant in that space. It seems like I was ready to
be moved by any works depicting matters of Christianity. I felt as if I were surrounded by a very special atmosphere. Interestingly, however, I discovered myself a little bit detached in the continuous story such as:

**Still a sense of awe but a little bit detached**

I felt as if a kind of string were connected to all the art works that hung in the section of the European religious art. Because of that imaginary string connecting each work, I felt as if the spot where I stood was a part of the exhibition, even though I was not connected by the string with the works of art (Individual visit to CMOA on July 9, 2007).

The experience demonstrates that I was ready to be moved by the subject matter of Christianity, and yet somehow I was a little bit detached from the touching moment. The reason was that I had felt something that hindered my flow experience from the beginning, as shown by the following incident.

**At the paper gallery**

The first room that I entered whenever I visited the Scaife Gallery was the Paper Gallery, where watercolor works were displayed during this visit. This was the third time I had passed through this gallery, twice with my family and once alone. The room was very small and long, shaped like a rectangle and equipped with wooden brown tables and chairs in the middle of room. On it, books were arranged neatly. The color of the wall was red, and the room was a little dark. Every time I passed this Paper Gallery, I paid
attention to the desk, even though I did not realize this fact until my third visit. I remembered I had not seen that the books were open. During my third visit, I noticed that the desk looked the same whenever I made visits: The table was very clean and the books on it were closed. The chairs were arranged uniformly toward the inside of the desk and the books on the desk were always arranged exactly so, forming two or three layers of books. The books were not for sale and the table settings were for visitors to look at. The significance of the books on the desk and the desk itself seemed to lie in its showing, not its use. The scene of the desk seemed to tell to me, “No one has talked to me.” As if I had encountered a faultless person who is too perfect to joke with, I did not feel like rummaging through the books on the desk. I could not find any evidence that visitors had ever sat on the chair or opened a book even once. It made me pass on it, too. Probably visitors had never opened the book; and had they done so, the security guards might have had re-arranged the desk (Individual visit to CMOA on July 9, 2007).

Interestingly, the story above shows that something other than the artwork’s and the viewer’s contexts can influence my viewing activity, specifically, the existence of the desk, the chairs and the books, that is, the environment of the museum space. That I felt the existence of a “faultless person who is too perfect to talk with her/ him with a light joke” prevented me from being immersed in the experience of viewing, even though I felt this space was warm, neat, and pleasant.

At this point, two things are clear. First, I responded to what I was reminded of (i.e., the connection with the novel of Huckleberry Finn), what appealed to my prior knowledge (i.e., Albrecht Dürer’s print), visual qualities (i.e., Kenyon Cox’s Scale Drawing for the Contemplative Spirit of the East), and subject matter that I was interested
in (i.e., Christianity). In addition, I did not actively read the information written in the object labels, unless I needed to confirm something. My viewing activities resided in my boundary. This implies that my viewing activities sorely depended on the capacities of my personal memory, my prior knowledge, and interests: neither being bothered by anything nor being encouraged to do something. Conversely, this means that no other thing can help me do something. Namely, there was no active intervention for me to do something.

Second, there are conditions to consider in interpreting the artwork in the art museum setting other than the artwork’s context and viewer’s context, and that is the museum’s context. Namely, the conceptual context implicit in display was explicitly shown in the physical context of the space.

**Educational Programs with the Support of Physical Environments**

Educational programs that we participated in were art activities for special exhibitions at CMOA and CMNH. Actually, at the CMOA we used a worksheet in the exhibition of ViVa Vetro but the experience that utilized the worksheet was introduced at the other section. In addition, at the CMNH, we visited the discovery room, which is designed for hands-on experience, and dropped by discovery tables and the archaeological lab. Here, I will discuss what narratives were appreciated through art-making activities at the three museums. Educational programs were daily-basis events, so we could not participate in them several times. So, I cannot investigate how the same experiences were confirmed or changed. For this reason, I included stories about the
educational program in this chapter. The following describes an experience when my family was participating in the special exhibition about glass entitled *ViVa Vetro* at the CMOA.

**ViVa Vetro art activity at the Carnegie Museum of Art**

*After coming out of the ViVa Vetro exhibition, Sunny was walking around the activity desk. There were two tables shaped as a rectangle. On the long side of the table, there were two chairs to sit in and on the short side there was a chair. One staff member was assigned to a table. One table was occupied by some children and the other was empty. But Sunny was just loitering around the table and did not sit on the chair to work on the activity. Sunny seemed to be shy in approaching the staff. So, I told one of the staff that my daughter wanted to do the activity. The staff then asked Sunny if she wanted to work with it. Sunny nodded. The staff member showed her six different colored pieces of clay and asked her to choose her favorite one. Sunny chose the blue and green colored clay. As soon as she chose her colors, the staff member cut the clay into three chunks using a plastic knife. Each chunk was put on the table and was rolled into a long string with two hands. After this demonstration, the staff asked Sunny to work with it in the same way. Following the instruction of the staff, Sunny made some chunks of blue and green clay. And then, she made something stringy from the clay. The staff showed the next step. She made one thick string in the mix of blue and green strings. In the middle of it, there was a blue string, which was surrounded by several green strings of clay. And then she put the thick string on the table and rolled it again with two palms of hands and*
cut it very slightly. Each thin slice of clay was put on the outside of a transparent plastic cup. Suddenly, I was very curious as to whether or not she understood the rationale behind this activity since the staff members were constructing figures without any sort of verbal interaction. So, I asked Sunny if she knew the reason why she was making this craft. She responded that she did not. So, I asked the staff to explain why she was making this. The staff explained very kindly that it was a technique to produce some glass displayed at the special exhibition. I inquired as to what the technique was called and they said it was ‘coiling.’ Until that point, Sunny was working alone at the table but suddenly many children were approaching the table. The staff were busy explaining to them how to make it. Sunny seemed to have difficulties in flattening the piece of clay without help from the staff, so her father approached her and helped her complete the cup. Sunny seemed to be satisfied with her final product and took care of it afterwards (Family visit to CMOA on July 6, 2007).

After touring ViVa Vetro, I thought this activity was successful because the exhibition focused on the technique of glass-making and it made a good connection between the exhibition and the educational program. My daughter’s positive experience was evidence of this. She looked very satisfied with her experience and outcome. However, not all experiences were as focused as the one just mentioned. Consider the experience below:
Carnival art activity at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History

When we approached the activity table, it was around lunchtime. There were two tables and two staff members. The two tables were placed in a row and each staff member was sitting on the long side of a table. On the opposite side of the table, children were having to squeeze in to get comfortable in their spots. The working tables were crowded with children who wanted to participate in the activity, which was making a three-sided light cover with a piece of paper—something actually used at carnivals.

Sunny and I found a spot at the working table and were ready to make the light cover. Even though the staff member on our side seemed to be very busy working with other children, I asked what it was about. She told us it was about making a light cover. Even though I asked the staff member what it was about, the information was not communicated as effectively as I would have liked since they were preoccupied with helping the other children as well. Even though I waited for a while, conversation could not be yet initiated between the staff member and me. Sunny could not start her making process. I asked her again as to how to start and she finally explained the making process. Sunny and I ended up working together because she could not get proper instruction from the staff on how to make it. After we made the three sides of the light cover, we needed it stapled. So, I gave it to the staff, because the staff member had the stapler. When I gave it to the staff member, she was busy talking with another staff member. She then automatically stapled the three sides of the light cover and gave it to us without any verbal and eye contact. Sunny seemed be very proud of her final product (Family visit to CMNH on July 7, 2007).
To the same degree as with the previous experience, Sunny looked satisfied. However, I was uncomfortable when: 1) the delivery of the explanation for the activity was not done well; 2) the large number of children present resulted in an understaffed activity; and 3) the staff members were chatting amongst themselves without extensive interaction with the children. At the very least, I expected to be informed of the background of why they were making this craft and what the children would see in the exhibition. But, the craft-making seemed totally independent from the exhibition.

The categories of my evaluation seemed to be influenced by the connection between the activities and exhibition—not how the contents of the activity are connected to the exhibition but how the staff organizes the connection between the activity and exhibition. Namely, I observed the activity as one unit of the art lesson. A good lesson plan needs to be organized in such a way as to provide students with the rationale of the lesson and the specific procedures to engage students with the learning under that rationale. However, I actually cannot understand why this activity is provided in relation to the ViVa Vetro exhibition, even though the contents itself show a good relationship with the exhibition focusing on techniques. So, I asked the staff to give a reason for making this craft and she did. She detailed this explanation as a clear lesson with easy-to-follow instructions. In contrast, recalling the activity at the special exhibition Carnival, the same question was posed but a different delivery resulted because of the chaotic (or busy) nature that the staff members were placed in. In addition, in the Carnival activity, the attitude of the staff might add one layer of my negative experience. In any educational activity, every teacher-student interaction, however small, is extremely important in constructing meaningful outcomes.
Another component to be considered is the physical setting of the educational program. Both cases were assigned as two tables staffed with two individuals and multiple students. During the activity for ViVa Vetro, the table was rectangular and was designed to have at least four people and six people at most. So, a staff member had the responsibility of dealing with three to five students or more at a time. So, it was physically difficult for a staff member to explain both the goal of the activity and the instructions of the activity when students do not have that much time to complete the activity. Additionally, since the staff members were sitting on the long side of the table and the children were actually situated on the other side, one-on-one interaction or conversation with the children could not be achieved. This physical setting seems to be different from one in the CMP.

Art activity at Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh

After making our first round on all the floors, we asked Sunny where she would like to visit again. She wanted to visit the Art Studio again and so that is where we went. There were four to five stations for art-making including silkscreen, paper-making, and easel painting. All stations had clear instruction panels of how to make it. The instruction panel that hung from the ceiling had illustrations and instructions as to how to proceed. When we entered the Art Studio, she paused at the entrance for a while and proceeded to walk towards the silkscreen station. As she approached, the staff member assigned to that station asked, “Do you want to do this?” to which my daughter replied, “Yes.” She then
listened as the staff member instructed her on how to start (Family visit to CMP on July 8, 2007).

Basically, the CMP is a children’s museum. This means that the main targeting audience has been set and all the activities and exhibitions target special age or school groups in a developmentally appropriate manner. In this regard, the instruction was very clear and the step-by-step procedures were shown more clearly. Along with clear instruction, the most impressive aspect for me was the physical setting where the educational program was done. Even though I let Sunny participate in an activity of her choosing, I could indirectly participate in her art-making process through just looking at her progress and being informed by the hanging panels that explained the procedure as a brief three-step process. Another component featuring the physical setting was the one-to-one interaction between staff and children. All processes were initiated by the staff and the staff could focus on one child’s craft-making process. To be assisted by the staff, children sometimes should wait their turns. But all learning processes were organized and controlled by the staff. And parents were informed of what their kids were about to do. Actually, this way of informing was initiated at the moment a family entered the room. Specifically, visitors can survey what each station would provide when they were entering the room. This clear organization of information seemed to give a type of control into the space, as Hein (1998) puts it. Csikszentmihalyi (1995) also emphasizes a sense of control into the specific place with which the museum provides visitors a sense of comfort.

I would not deny that there is a basic difference in the two cases: While craft-making activities in the CMOA and the CMNH were an extended program from a special
exhibition, art-making activities in the CMP were designed to be done at the permanent gallery for activities. So, the stations in the CMOA and the CMNH were not permanent but temporary and auxiliary.

However, in the CMP, the learning process itself was structured to be supported by the physical environment rather than depending on the ability of the staff to deliver the instruction. That is, all physical environments were designed to support the learning of children by providing individual interaction, by indirect invitation to parents, and by giving a sense of control into the space and a sense of comfort. On the other hand, in the CMOA and the CMNH, the physical settings did not seem to play a supportive role in providing a positive learning opportunity.

However, it should be noted that the status of these three activities was different. The CMOA and the CMNH provided other educational programs such as summer camp for preschool school-aged children, adult studio classes, or special lectures throughout the museums. In this context, an arts-crafts station seems to be closer to the temporary events rather than educational programs. On the contrary, at the CMP, art-making activities were placed on the first floor and structured as a permanent facility. Instead, other opportunities for hands-on art-making were relatively fewer than at the CMOA. So, this art activity was more than temporary events. The relationship of each activity in each museum was different.

Rather, what I point out is that a more structured educational opportunity with a support of physical environments might provide more positive learning outcomes, whether it is a temporary event or an educational program designed with educational purposes.
Chapter 5

EXHIBITIONARY NARRATIVES

The second type of narrative was exhibitionary narratives, which mainly cover how display patterns, the installation of media kiosks, the environmental settings in an exhibition space and written materials such as flyers, signs, wall texts, and object labels influenced my interpretive experience directly—emotionally, intellectually, and physically.

Minimal Information Represented

Personally, I like paintings that convey narratives, especially those that can generate a complex story plot with many characters, various actions, and the exchange of the eye contact. The more I look at a work like this, the more I can find the stories, for example, why the character in the painting raises his hand and what he is staring at. In my first encounter with the work, I could not find any clue as to how to retell the stories. However, it was like solving a riddle. Coming out of the watercolor gallery in the museum, I encountered this narrative kind of work, in a piece attributed to Giovanni di Ser Giovanni Gudi (1406-1486) and titled Triumphal Return to Rome of Scipio African, produced around mid-15th century in tempera on panel. Being different from my usual expectation, however, I could not concentrate on viewing the work entitled Triumphal Return to Rome of Scipio African. This was due to the following two reasons: one from
cognitive impediment and the other from physical constraints. From now on, I will discuss how cognitive impediment was employed in me and what physical elements worked as constraints when I interpreted the works of art in museum space.

*Encountering my favorite type of art work*

I would have liked to have read the plot of the painting to find out what was going on. However, despite my desire and even though I tried, I could not concentrate on reading the story of the painting. When I focused on looking at the work, the two portraits above the painting of Triumphal Return to Rome of Scipio African interfered. I looked at the two portraits and read the titles of the two, Portrait of a Young Woman and Portrait of a Young Man. The two portraits seemed to have no relation with the work Triumphal Return to Rome of Scipio African, but they hung there. I read the wall text next to the Triumphal Return to Rome of Scipio African. But I could still not find any relationship among the three. Probably, the two portraits of a young woman and a young man and Triumphal Return to Rome of Scipio African were produced in a similar period because the room was displayed in chronological order [actually, Portrait of Young Woman, oil on panel, was painted in 1505 by Vicenzo Catena (1480-1531, attributed), and Portrait of Young Man, on panel, was from the early 16th century by Domenico Paligo (1492-1527, attributed)]. But so what? Were these three works displayed to demonstrate the various outcomes of the similar time period? If so, that’s enough. There was no reason to continue to look at the three works simultaneously. However, in spite of all these reasons, if there had been a chair to bring to look at the work for a while, I could have sat on the
chair and continued to look because it was one of my favorite types. But there was no
chair to sit on. I did not feel inclined to look at the three works because I was tired of
standing. I quit looking at the Triumphal Return to Rome of Scipio African and moved
slowly toward other works (Individual visit to CMOA on July 9, 2007).

The story above shows that even though I started the conversation with the art
work of Triumphal Return to Rome of Scipio African, I could not maintain that
conversation because I was bothered by the presence of two portraits hang above
Triumphal Return to Rome of Scipio African, in the first place. And, second, it seemed
quite silly that the presence of the chair was an important matter for me at that point, as I
will discuss in more detail in the next section.

The two portraits were produced in the same time period in the mid-15th to the early 16th century and were created with the same medium of oil painting. Probably, the curators might have hung the two portraits merely to fit the chronological order. Plus, in size, the frame of Triumphal Return to Rome of Scipio African is a wide rectangle, while Portrait of Young Woman and Portrait of Young Man are square. Interestingly, the total size of the two portraits is equivalent to Triumphal Return to Rome of Scipio African. So, the hanging of those two might have been related to the fact that the three works were created during the same time frame and the physical frame through which the works could be nicely fit with each other. So, it was reasonable to display the works which belonged to the same time frame on the same wall, even though they were not put side by side, which is the usual way to display paintings in the Carnegie Museum of Art and in general since the 20th century.
However, the problem was that I was seriously bothered by the presence of three works together. One of the reasons, I guess, would be that I was so familiar with looking at the art works in the way that contemporaries in the 20th century looked at the works in the white cube, as O'Doherty (1986) theorizes in his book, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*. In the 19th century and before then, artworks were displayed, physically fitting themselves to each other densely from the bottom up to the top of the wall. For example, the Carnegie Museum of Art held the densely fitting display pattern for 19th century art works. But, before going to the Carnegie Museum of Art, I had never seen the original display pattern which was popular in the 19th century and before then. Even though I visited other European museums and saw works created in the 15th century, all were hung independently and not in the way that original paintings were displayed. So, I might have been bothered by this unusual way with which my eyes were not familiar; moreover, my bothersome feeling was exacerbated after I realized that there was no relationship through my inquiry of searching for some clue of relationship. Being very familiar with the concept of white cube, I took it for granted that three works which occupy the same space and are not displayed independently should be related to each other.

My cognitive impediment was caused by the discrepancy between my expectation of what the museum should be and might be, and the unexpected practice of the museum, whether it was intended or not by the museum professionals. In any other sense, unexpectedness can be a good source to refresh routine experience. But, this discrepancy was propelled in a negative direction with a conjecture of minimal information presentation practices. For example, when I encountered the densely arranged display in
the Carnegie Museum of Art followed by looking at *Triumphal Return to Rome of Scipio African*, I would have liked to have confirmed what I already knew from my prior knowledge about the display pattern. But, on the spot, I could not find out any relevant information about the display pattern, which made me very exhausted. When I visited the Scaife Gallery again on the next day and looked for the proper information again more carefully, I could find one file book in the corner of the gallery, which contained information stating that “the paintings in this gallery are displayed in a manner that recalls art exhibitions and some public and domestic interiors of that period: they are closely grouped and hung in multiple rows along the walls.” The presentation of the information in the museum is not enough just in its presence but in the way that it is presented—how it is encouraged to be used in a visitor-friendly way and how visitors can obtain it when they need it.

For visitors, uninformed unexpectedness might summon a sense of embarrassment rather than freshness or rule-breaking and, even in the case of novice visitors, it seemed to be serious. The following story about my husband (now referred to as Lee) was observed and written by me. He is a person who rarely visits art museums voluntarily, and he does not have a “proper” background in art or art history.

*Looking at the empty frame: The first encounter*

*While exiting the gallery for European and American art from the 16th and 17th centuries and entering the gallery for European and American art from the mid-19th century, Lee asked curiously what the empty frame hanging in the middle of the display*
wall was. On a red-colored wall, there was one empty frame that did not contain a painting. At that time, instantly, from my prior knowledge, I told Lee that the painting might be on loan to another museum exhibition or that it could be being repaired. While talking to Lee, I looked for any explanation as to the exact reason why the frame was hanging empty. But there was no explanation. And my answer did not satisfy Lee. I noticed from his facial expressions that he could not make any sense of my answer. Lee said, “If so, there should have been an explanation or an excuse posted.” Because his comment also made sense to me, I could not make any further comment. He seemed to be very disappointed (Family visit to CMOA on July 8, 2007).

Interestingly, I have also experienced the same frustration that Lee had. The following story is about my journey to look for information about why the empty frame was hanging there.

**Looking at the empty frame: The second encounter**

When I made a second individual visit to the empty frame, I thoroughly looked to see if there was a sign explaining the empty frame. Instead of having a verbal sign, I noticed that the empty frame had an assigned number. So I looked into the white file folder that was placed at the end of the display wall, but again no extra explanation was provided, except for a record that said the frame was made of aluminum. I was disappointed. Does the frame have any historical importance? The fact that there was no way to solve my curiosity made me very frustrated. However, fortunately, I found the solution from an unexpected resource at the museum. While frustrated, I looked again at
my surroundings to get additional information. And in that environment, I noticed that there was an additional security guard. Desperately, I asked the security guard if he knew the reason why the empty frame was hanging on the wall. To be polite, he asked me to wait a little bit and ran across the gallery to inquire about my question. After a while, he came back with the answer that the frame itself is a piece of art work—it was the first aluminum frame work—but I did not hear from whom he got the information. My curiosity, which went a long time without finding a suitable answer, was suddenly resolved by the help of the security guard. The unexpected experience made me reflect on the conversations that I had with the security guards I met during my research trip to Pittsburgh, reflections which finally brought me to have mixed feelings about museum workers as personal beings separate from the museum and as part of the museum (Individual visit to CMOA on July 12, 2007).

In my conjecture, the museum professionals might have expected to expand the categories of objects that hung in the art museum by including the frame itself. Or they might have expected that visitors had fresh eyes, through which they recognized that the frame itself was an art object beyond their ordinary conceptions of art. However, I can say that museum professionals whom the security guard consulted about my question might not have known that a visitor like me would struggle to look for the reason why the empty frame was hanging among the paintings, and they might not have known that a visitor like Lee was very upset because the empty frame hung without any explanation.

Peter Vego (1994) explains that museums have tried to reduce verbal text as much as they can to secure pure vision between viewers and artworks, because too much verbal text interferes with sight between a visitor and a work of art. For this reason, an art
museum usually provides an audio guide, a docent-guided tour, or a gallery talk, as well as wall texts, to help visitors to interpret artworks at the exhibition space, even though the audio messages—audio guide, a docent-guided tour, or a gallery talk—hinder the cognitive process more seriously than visual interference. The reason is that three types of audio messages do not occupy the exhibition space, do not subvert it, and do not engage visitors in transforming them as the subject of interpreting. Rather, these are designed to exploit this space minimally without leaving any trace in the pursuit of visual purity. Vego (1994) writes:

In the minds of many exhibition-makers, demonstrating or explaining such things [additional materials] via the medium of the exhibition is simply anathema, because any such didactic aims are held to be incompatible with that silent, purely private dialogue between artist and spectator in which the work itself functions solely as vehicle for the communication of emotional states—a dialogue which it is the role of exhibition to facilitate. (p. 152)

In this context, let’s revisit the story entitled as “Encountering my favorite type of art work.” At this point, it is noteworthy to clarify how I felt at that time. When I encountered this unexpected moment without being informed what it might be, I felt a kind of helplessness—cognitive impediment. It is similar to the feeling that Gary Evans (1995) refers to as “cognitive fatigue,” which he defines as “barriers to accessibility for the disabled or the frail may induce or accentuate feelings of helplessness” (p.121).

Minimal information, which is secured through visual purity, in one sense, creates the opportunities through which my intrinsic interests in subject matter, my personal memories, and favored style were hooked to be developed further in the conjunction with the context of art work, as described in the third section of the chapter 4. However, in another sense, it seems to deprive me of my sense of control and creates a sense of
helplessness. A sense of control over the looking activity, as educational psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Kim Henderson (1995) also maintain, becomes a basic condition for securing the “flow experience”—a kind of aesthetic experience (pp. 69-71). However, this type display made me frustrated when I wanted to decode the artwork with the assistance of the museum. This type of frustration deprived me of my sense of control—a basic condition to secure positive learning outcomes.

**Single Interpretation**

The lack of control over viewing activity was also created through the presentation of lineal information in the exhibition space, when I could not get further access to additional information. What I found out there was that information was presented as a single form. For example:

**I would like to know more…but…**

*On my first individual visit to the Carnegie Museum of Art on July 9, 2007, when I entered the exhibition gallery, I stood for the first time in the front of the work, Portrait of a Man Holding a Book, produced by Ambrosius Berson (1519-1550). It was the first time that I stopped walking in order to look at a work more closely. When I turned toward another room away from the watercolor and paper gallery, I saw three portraits hung in the same way. I passed the first one and the second one, but I stopped in front of the third one. I did not pause because the third work was attractive to me; rather, I stopped*
because an element in its background, the stream winding through a green field, was so familiar to my eyes. It reminded me of the background of the work, Mona Lisa, produced by Leonardo da Vinci. Certainly, the left part of the work was similar to that of Mona Lisa, even though I could not remember if the right part of the work was similar or not. For a while I looked at it and went back to see the other two portraits. I repeated this back-and-forth movement between the first, second, and third pieces several times to observe the three in detail. Meanwhile, I read the object label of the third piece and found when it was made—1530! The work was made in 1530! The Mona Lisa was painted around 1500! The two works could have been generated in the same time period! Another similarity I found was that the two portraits depicted the upper half of a character facing ¾ toward the left. When I noticed that similarity, I became curious and wondered if that way of producing backgrounds was a popular trend during the time when Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) worked, rather than his unique idea. But I could not solve my question regarding whether the stream in the background was painted related to the Mona Lisa or not. More specifically, I wasn’t sure if it was a popular trend of the time or the unique creation of Leonardo da Vinci for the Mona Lisa. So, I read the object label again, but there was nothing except the artist, period, and materials. So, I looked for other sources near the work, such as a sign from the audio tour, a reference book to get additional information, or media kiosks, but I could not find anything. So I asked the security guards to get additional information online for the specific work. But they had no idea about that. It made me very frustrated (Individual visit to CMOA on July 9, 2007).
Before I looked at *Portrait of a Man Holding a Book* and before my curiosity was prompted by the work, I simply saw other works, identifying their subject matter and confirming what I already knew. The experience described above was somewhat different from what I had before: My curiosity was initiated and I wanted to know more beyond the level of confirming what I already knew. However, when my curiosity was sparked by the work (i.e., because the work’s background reminded me of the background of the *Mona Lisa*—when my new knowledge conflicted with my prior knowledge), I stopped walking and sought new information to solve my conflict, staring at the work and ready to read the entire label. But, the only problem, at that point, was that my curiosity was not anticipated by the museum’s professionals. I came to know their expectations from the label that they offered, which did not contain any of the information that I wanted to know. Yet, I was not disappointed by the lack of information that I was looking for because my question was very specific and was probably not frequently asked. However, what made me frustrated was that there was no way to get advanced information about the painting, except for what the museum professionals provided on the object label. My curiosity and interest could not be developed beyond the boundary that the museum professionals set.

As soon as I realized that all further access to the work was blocked, I was sincerely frustrated and discouraged. I initially thought that the space, my walking pace, my sight, and my viewing were totally controlled by me, but I came to realize that all of those things were actually controlled by someone else or some other party. The space was no longer an open space that could be connected and stretched to other spaces. Rather, at that moment, I sensed that the space was tailored for purposes different from my own.
What is the other purpose supposed to serve? Who set the standard and range of knowledge that was circulated in the museum? Who controls the space and who controls the knowledge production? By what standards are inclusions and exclusions set? Why was I looking at the work even though my curiosity could not be satisfied by uncovering any clues for a resolution? Why did the museum only provide one option to approach the work on the label without providing any further access? What might be the underlying assumption to provide information in that way? Might the museum professionals at the Carnegie Museum of Art have paid little attention to the fact that some visitors might be interested in getting additional information?

Even though my viewing activity was troubled with the form of linear information presented, I tried to find out information I wanted to know, going back and forth between these two pieces by comparing them to the other neighboring works. In the place where my prior knowledge conflicted with the new knowledge I gained, I became mentally active but my learning could not develop and I was finally bothered when I could not access the information further.

From that point, I started to view the space in a new way: It was a space where only one single piece of information was presented and where multiple layers of information were erased. As a result, only limited information was circulated, thereby, limiting visitors’ cognitive access to the objects. Some may say that I could have found more information about the Carnegie Museum’s art collection on the Internet after returning home if I was so desperate for more information. Yes, I could have found further information after returning home; this is one alternative strategy. But, what I argue is that my learning was hampered and even discouraged when I found that I could
not obtain further access to the work. In other words, my interaction with the information that was provided for visitors at the exhibition—mainly, what I was able to do at the exhibition—had tremendous impacts on my learning process, making it difficult for me to engage with the works. On the other hand, I remembered that my learning was promoted positively when I did obtain access to the additional information that I wanted at several other museums, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum in the United States and the National Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, and Victoria and Albert Museum in the United Kingdom.

When I returned home to get additional information about the collection on the Carnegie Museum of Art’s website, I found that it did not provide any further information regarding the pieces that I had questions about. I saw the very image of the painting and its object label by clicking the title and name of the artist on the website. As far as the information that I was able to get is concerned, the same information was provided on the website as that provided at the museum itself. Namely, my level of engagement in the collection search on the website consisted of my clicking a button and reading the same information that I saw at the exhibition. Roderick Davies (2001) describes this as a “passive experience” through technology, as follows:

The predominantly linear presentation of such programme has often resulted in media productions where the only form of engagement required by the user is to ‘click’ buttons to move the programme along the paths determined by the programmer/designer (Livingston. 2003; Thomas, 1998), and concomitantly, a passive experience for them. This type of media presentation does not exploit the potential of the technology to allow the user to interact with the programme fully. (p. 287)

Davies (2001) critically lifts his voice about the media kiosks by simply providing a lot of information and images and makes a clear point that the media presentation in the
museum is not “creating an electric catalogue of the museum’s holdings” (p. 288). Rather, he envisions media presentations that can provide specialist visitors with further access to additional information at exhibits and can contribute to creating strong visitor engagement with the collection by providing a clear overview of and orientation to the overall collection.

Providing a visitor with further access to multiple and additional information does not simply mean that a visitor can get information on what they wanted to get. More than that, it implies that the museum envisions a visitor as an agent of decision-making in its interpretive works. The reason is that the museum professionals symbolically show that they are encouraging visitors to have multiple interpretations which might be different from what museum professionals consider appropriate by providing sources about multiple and additional information. Under the situations where multiple interpretations are presented, only visitors themselves can decide what information they might refer to. Davies (2001) emphasizes the importance of enabling a visitor to set an individual agenda by letting a visitor “decide where to go, what to expect, and where to find those rooms” (p. 294).

In the same line of thinking, the following story shows how well I was actively engaged with the recommended activity, when I was considered as a decision-maker. Even though a museum professional encouraged me to perform some activities (e.g., working with a worksheet in the following story), the museum staff considered me an agent of decision-making, providing other alternatives.
One possibility for multiple choices at the special exhibition at the CMOA

As my family was wandering in the front of the special exhibition gallery, a staff member extended her hand to give me the worksheet for the special exhibition and asked if we were interested in looking around the exhibition using the worksheet, while offering information about the worksheet. After listening to the staff member explain the worksheet, I explained to Sunny, my daughter, what I had heard—we could search for objects arranged on the worksheet and, later with it, we could do some art-making activity after completing our round in this gallery—and I asked if she wanted to do the activity. She nodded and we got the worksheet. I led the movement of our family into the gallery for the special exhibition, ViVa Vetro. Lee and Sunny followed me when I walked into the gallery. Sunny asked me what the paper was (Family visit to CMOA on July 6, 2007).

On the other hand, the next story, which relates an experience that happened at the Leeum, an art museum in Korea, also shows how well that suggestion or recommendation without the alternative given plays a role to regulate a visitor.

You are watching me!

The museum Leeum has two main exhibition areas for traditional Korean art and contemporary art that is internationally recognized. Quickly skipping the first sections of traditional art to prevent my daughter’s boredom, my daughter, Sunny, and I moved to the second section of internationally-recognized contemporary art. The staff member who checked our tickets recommended that we look through the exhibition from the top floor
down to the first floor and kindly showed us where we could take the elevator to the top
floor. We followed her instructions and stood in front of the elevator on the first floor.
But we found out that there was one fascinating art work that attracted Sunny’s eyes. For
a while, we spent time talking about the work on the first floor. The moment we decided
to move up through the elevator, a staff member approached us and asked if we had seen
the exhibition from the top floor. I answered no. She recommended looking at the art
from the top floor down as the other lady had. Because I also thought we would move up,
I simply responded yes and moved up. Finally, we arrived at the top floor, which was an
exhibition about Korean modern artists. When we stepped into the room, a staff member
standing next to the elevator door recommended that we start looking at the exhibition
from the right, pointing out the arrow on the floor. At this moment, I was very curious if
there was any special reason to recommend specific directions to look through the
exhibition. So, I asked her if there were special reasons to do so. She said to me that even
though there was no special reason for the directions, if you look through the exhibition
starting at the right and following the arrows, you can see the works chronologically
from modern to contemporary. Even though I could not hide my feelings of frustration of
being pushed to follow their rule, I responded yes and followed the directions. However, I
became upset when I got another ‘recommendation’ from the staff. Since we arrived there
for a limited time of one-and-a-half hours before closing time, covering the whole
exhibition was not our goal. On the top floor of the second section, I found something
interesting that Sunny would find interesting. So, we spent most of the time before closing
talking about the works on the top floor, sometimes drawing some paintings and
mimicking the gestures in the paintings. Twenty or thirty minutes before closing time, a
security guard approached us and asked us if we had looked around the rest the
exhibition, pointing out that we only had a limited amount of time before closing and
suggesting what we could see in the rest of exhibition. I did appreciate her
recommendation as being a kind offering to remind us of the time. Honestly speaking,
however, I was very embarrassed when I heard that kind of recommendation. The reason
was that I actually realized that we were watched by her for no particular reason
(Reflection on the visit to Leeum in Korea on August 31, 2007).

Engagement is ensured by neither pre-planned activity nor prescribed scripts. It is
an outcome of interplay between thoughtfully organized curriculum and human resources
such as museum professionals and visitors.

However, I can say that one way to increase the level of engagement for an
advanced visitor who is looking for further information is to ensure further access to
additional information, providing the agent of searching information and making
decisions for their choices. It is not an issue of acquiring information that a visitor wants
to get, but an issue of envisioning a visitor as an agency of museum practices in
interpretation. Regulating visitors by providing limited access and too much pushy
behavior into what museum professionals think reduce the level of engagement of visitors
with objects displayed.

Publicly Monitored Space

Many research studies address the importance of the museum as a public space
(Bradburne, 1999; Paul, 1999; Stephens & Sandweiss, 1999). In particular, when they
address this issue, they are interested in the social responsibility of the museum as well as in embracing social minorities or multiculturalism. But, the way the public internalizes a museum as a public space is somewhat different from outcomes of mainstream research. What I realized in an exhibition space was that visitors are usually not informed of what they can do, while they are usually informed of what they can NOT do. Analyzing the ways I internalized about what to do and what not to do, I realized there is a not-to-do list on museum behaviors which was available to museum visitors. And, visitors seemed to execute this not-to-do list voluntarily, because it seemed to be a common public rule for everyone to follow. Next, I will describe how I have internalized the common public rule voluntarily and how the tacit internalization has influenced my interpretation process. 

When I viewed Triumphal Return to Rome of Scipio African, as described in previous section, I could not continue looking at it not only because of cognitive fatigue but also for the simple—and biological—reason of my inability to continue standing: I needed a chair to sit on but I could not find one, which resulted in my stopping the viewing activity. Generally, museums are encouraged to facilitate seating areas for visitors to relax during their visits and be relieved of their physical fatigue (Goulding, 2000; Hood, 2004; Maxwell & Evans; 2002). Even in an exhibition space, museums are also encouraged to facilitate seating areas for social interaction and for contemplating the object in the display (Taylor, 2006). Vergeront (2002) explains the merit of seating areas in the exhibition space, as follows:

Seating near interesting objects, before expansive review, or close to exhibit component allows visitors to choose different ways to be engaged: to alternate among walking, sitting, and standing; to observe others as they explore and experiment; or to interact with family. (p. 10)
In the CMOA, I noticed a big sofa in a lobby between Scaife Gallery and the special exhibition gallery. I also saw a café and a restaurant which were placed in easily accessible locations and I also remembered a seating area inside the exhibition space. In that sense, my asking for a chair could be difficult because the place where I needed a chair was at the start of the whole Scaife gallery: It was just room #1. My asking was prompted by my personal need because at that time, actually, I was pregnant, which made me become tired very easily when I walked through the museum. In addition, it was around 4:00 p.m. and I had already spent all day at the museums.

Despite what I discussed above, I actually did not try to find a permanently attached seating area or cozy-looking sofa. I actually looked for a portable folding chair, which I could use frequently like the ones I used at the Victorian and Albert Museum in England that I visited one month prior to the research trip to Pittsburgh. Reflecting on the experience at the Victorian and Albert Museum in the United Kingdom (now referred to as V&A), I remembered that other people were sitting on the floor and I also remembered I did not think about that experience at the CMOA. The difference made me reflect as follows:

**Why am I reluctant to sit on the floor?**

*If it is difficult to stand up to look at a work of art, then I could actually sit on the floor. It was possible to sit on the floor, but I didn’t. Would it be so hard if I did sit on the floor? Well, honestly, I don’t know. I never thought about it before. So, have I sat in the museum? Yes. Definitely, I have sat on a chair or on a sofa that was placed in the gallery*
hall, lounge, lobby, café, or restaurant. But, I have never sat on the floor. So, did I see people sitting on the floor in the museum? Yes, I especially saw many children sitting on the floor in the National Gallery of London and the V&A Museum. Can I remember sitting on the floor of a museum when I was young? No. Never. I don’t even have a memory of going to museums at that age. But, my daughter, Sunny, who is a five-and-a-half-year-old, used to sit on the floor when we went to museums. Even though I have never sat on the floor, I did not restrict her behavior. I even encouraged her to sit on the floor so that she could have more time to look at the paintings or installations.

Yes. I have never sat on the floor in the museum, even though I wished to. But so what? Is it a problem? It is a kind of social rule or manner, even though it is not enforced; it is an unspoken agreement in the social discourses for museum visitation. In any society, with any social group, there is a so-called “common sense,” a kind of tacit consent. A museum is a public space and is actually an institution that often requires stricter rules than any other places because it preserves artworks or artifacts which demand extra care. There are inappropriate or bad behaviors that are not recommended in a museum. For example, it is recommended that one speaks quietly and does not make noise, that children do not run or touch the objects except for in hands-on exhibitions, and that in many cases one does not take pictures. But sitting on the floor is not a kind of behavior that is not recommended. It could be possible (Reflection on sitting on the floor).

But reflecting on this issue—why I was hesitating to sit on the floor, I can finally elicit one piece of past memory about sitting on the floor in a museum:
**Haunting memories of sitting on the floor at museums**

I had once sat on the floor in a museum when I joined a tour at The Palmer Museum of Art at the Penn State University. An undergraduate student who took A ED 440 led the tour as a part of her class project. I had to sit on the floor with the other visitors who were comprised of Art 001 students. The tour leader asked us to sit on the floor in a circle, and we followed her directions without any hesitation. And I remember that I observed children sitting on the floor when they got a tour of the Palmer Museum of Art and the National Gallery and V&A Museum. On the contrary, when I led a tour with my Korean friends, I remember that they all wanted to sit on chairs, even though I encouraged them to sit on the floor. The difference might come from the age difference between twenty-year-olds and thirty-year-olds. At the same time, I did not see adults sitting on the floor in the museum. It might be the museum’s unspoken narrative or social tacit, even though I am not familiar with that agreement, for example, that children can be asked to sit on the floor but adults cannot, because children are expected to be comfortable sitting on floors, less concerned about dirt than adults, more physically flexible, less concerned with dignity, and less constrained by some types of clothing such as skirts. And many times, I observed that adults use folding chairs for their museum educational programs or tours (Reflection on sitting on the floor at museums).

This could be a coincidence or by accident. But realizing this gap made me think that this gap could be caused by cultural differences between Koreans and Americans. Furthermore, I found that I am very sensitive to what attitudes or behaviors are appropriate to a specific place or social group. Why am I so sensitive to follow standard
social practices? I started to look back on the past again. I recollected two episodes related to my personality.

The first one is about my identity as a Korean female who lived for thirty years in Korea and was brought up with Korean values. The Korean traditional culture is patriarchic, or a very male-dominated, society. There are certain rules to be followed. Living as a woman in Korean society means that I have to be very sensitive to what is accepted and what is not accepted (or reluctantly accepted). I have been brought up to be sensitive to discern what the social norms are. After deeply understanding the norms, I have to decide on which side I will stand—what norms I will select.

John Ogbu (1994), in his cross-cultural research, distinguishes between a high-context culture and a low-context culture. In a high-context culture, he explains, everyone knows what to do in a specific social situation, while in a low-context culture the exact expectation is not clear. So, in a low-context culture, it is expected that the guideline for behaviors is considerably flexible. Ogbu gives the example of Japan as a high-context culture and the United States as a low-context culture. Demonstrated in my story (#R4), I, as a Korean female, was very accustomed to discerning what the social standards were. Similar to Japanese culture, the Korean society is a high-context culture that is sensitive to expected social rules. In sum, because I was familiar with a high-context culture, I might tend to look for accepted social behaviors.

The second possibility is about my situated identity as an international graduate student for five years in the United States. My pattern of social behaviors that have accumulated in a high-context culture seems unchanged in a low-context culture in the past five years. Rather, my high-contextual tendency is more sensitive to adjust itself in
new environments to see what is socially accepted or not. For example, when I arrived here five years ago, the American culture was totally new for me. All of its practices were not naturally embodied in my body but were replanted into my skin. To replant another culture into my skin, I needed to observe what the dominant practices or mainstream culture was. At a specific setting, grouping, or place, I needed to know what manners were permissible and what were not. Even if I paid little attention to inquiring about currently circulated practices for a specific culture, I frequently felt that I was out of place.

Ogbu (1994) also provides reasonable explanation for my efforts to adapt myself into new environments. He explains “a cultural frame of reference,” which refers to “the correct or ideal way to behave within a culture” (p. 83), into two types of minority group’s cultural behaviors—voluntary minorities such as the immigrant population and involuntary minorities such as black Americans and Native Americans. He explains that voluntary minorities follow “the cultural frame of reference of mainstream white Americans in the selected domains” to adjust themselves into the mainstream culture, trying to block social malfunction from emotional discord with new cultural frames. On the contrary, involuntary minorities do not usually think that “barriers to their economic and social well-being are due to their not knowing how to behave like mainstream white Americans in school and workplace” (p. 84). Involuntary minorities consider that following mainstream of white Americans “requires that they abandon behaving like minorities, an action that may result in a loss of their minority cultural identity” (p. 84).

Returning to the act of sitting on the floor, it seems to be a boundary behavior, wandering the edge of what is accepted and what is not accepted. For me, there are three
categories of behaviors in museum settings—favorable ones, unfavorable ones, and those in between. Sitting on the floor is in the third category—it is not favored, but it is fine to do so. I came to know that sitting on the floor could be accepted in the American culture by observing many other practices, especially those at The Palmer Museum of Art, but my friends had never seen it and seemed to mind sitting on the floor. For me, even though I knew that sitting was accepted at The Palmer Museum of Art, I was not sure if it would be in other museums such as Carnegie. So, wandering the boundary made me tired, created an uncomfortable atmosphere, and constrained my behavior.

In addition, through my experience of years of museum-going, I had embodied knowledge of what to do and what not to do; what is favored or not favored. While I did not remember if I was encouraged to do something to be favored in museums, I definitely knew that if I were to behave unfavorably in a museum, I would be promptly deterred not to misbehave anymore. For example, I saw all of the places in the art museum with signs that said: “Do Not Touch” or “Do Not Take Photos” but I did not see any sign of “Please Talk,” “Please Touch,” or “Please Take Photos.”

The experience of being oppressed at museums

_I would have liked to write my feelings and thoughts I had at the National Gallery of UK when I encountered a fascinating work. But I could not catch up with the speed of my thoughts and feelings as they developed, so I used my digital voice recorder. I could not take photos because the gallery prohibited picture-taking. I started to describe the colors and characteristics of the details at first. From previous experiences and common_
sense, I already knew that talking in a loud voice could bother other visitors. So, I spoke as quietly as I could. My voice was at the level of a whisper with friends or kids who might accompany other visitors. But not long after I started to record my voice, one security guard came to me. And then she said to me, “Here, you are not supposed to take pictures.” She mistook my voice recorder for a digital camera. I thought this kind of mistake could happen. So, I explained it was not a camera, but a voice recorder. “Can’t I use it here?” She said to me, “Yes, you can use it.” And then she disappeared. Until that point, everything was fine. But not long after, she came to me again and asked me if it was a cell phone and asked me not to use it in this gallery. So, I again explained it was not a cell phone but a digital voice recorder. I asked her again if it was prohibited or not. She answered that it was fine. She nodded and disappeared. With her second notice, I became very uncomfortable. Again, shortly after that, another security guard came to me and asked the same question that the previous guard had asked me. Even though I answered all her questions, I did not want to continue to look at the paintings anymore. I quit recording my thoughts and feelings and consequently left the gallery. I saw in that space that there was no one else who was recording his/her voice like me. Some people were writing notes. But there was no one like me. But was it problematic? I did explain I was recording my voice, and the level of my voice was not beyond whispering. If anything was bothersome, it would have been that I continuously moved my mouth, murmuring things and moving around the painting to look closely (Reflection on the visit to the National Gallery, London, on June 22, 2007).

I thought that recording my voice would be acceptable in the museum, namely, corresponding to the first category. But, actually, to museum professionals, it was in the
second category—unfavorable behaviors. In other words, my embodied knowledge about favorable/unfavorable patterns of behaviors in a museum resulted from a mixture of tacit social rules and my experiences of my personal museum-going. Here, in the story given above, somebody just refers to one specific type of person, a security guard. Actually, the security guard is just one of the people who enforced the museum’s policy. It even seemed that I had a conflict with one person in the museum, a security guard. However, she is one part of the museum’s narrative rather than an independent individual who is separated from the museum’s narrative.

Through years of experience visiting museums, I know that I will be watched by others, particularly by security guards directly inside the museum. As I said, the act of sitting on the floor could be fine, even though I am not sure. It is not in the category that is prohibited and it could be the third category between the favorable and unfavorable patterns.

But why did I hesitate to sit? Actually, the real problem for me not sitting on the floor is that no one else sat on the floor when I was there. I even knew that I would not be deterred in the same way in the V&A museum but I also knew I would be watched, because sitting would not be favored in the same way in the V&A. I would not dare to do it if no one else did. Actually, there is no fascinating reason to do so, compensating my unwillingness (I might be watched by somebody). There is no reason for me to dare to have such uncomfortable and vulnerable feelings because of doing certain behaviors that might not be favored by museum professionals.

Most researchers dealing with a museum as a public space focus on the museum’s social responsibility, community engagement, social justice, social inclusion or public
access (Bradburne, 1999; Paul, 1999; Rassool, 2006; Stephens & Sandweiss, 1999; Wilson, 1999). However, these kinds of approaches tend to neglect another point of a museum’s public space—that a museum is a publicly monitored place. The museum as a publicly monitored place plays a role in regulating visitors’ behaviors by letting visitors internalize common beliefs about museums through inactivating any actions against the common beliefs: No one pushes to internalize the common sense about the museum as a public space and the visitor generally knows how to act—common tactics. Namely, visitors believe that they can contribute to building the social good in museums by following public rules—what might be allowed for museums, thereby making visitors the docile bodies. Making visitors docile bodies seemed to be supported by not advertising what they can do or by confining visitor’s choices by removing the alternatives.

I am not asking to see the explicit signs like “You can sit” or “Please sit on the floor” everywhere my eyes can go. I even knew my asking for a chair was based on my special physical need as a pregnant woman rather than that of a general visitor. Through the reflection stretched from that moment, however, what I realized is that a visitor is usually not informed (or encouraged or advertised) what she/he can do (e.g., you can sit) or that a visitor is less invited to do something. Instead, the museum maintains the tacit common sense (or public rule) in the ways that visitors just internalize, and thereby, allowing visitors to exercise their public selves. For example, by exercising my public self in a public place in a well-disciplined manner, I can belong to (or settle down to) the very public society. But, at the same time, it is possible to lose the opportunity to maintain my personal self.
Specifically, in the name of public space, silencing a visitor’s personal agenda can be done through spreading disembodied voices. This type of disembodied public voice plays a role to restrain a visitor from making an active input into exhibitions: It makes one be silent. Silencing a visitor’s personal agenda in an art museum can be done in a very deliberate way in the disguise of objective and scientific voices—mainly in the name of public space.

Disembodied Voices

The written texts, such as object labels and wall texts, at the Carnegie Museum of Art were didactic rather than interpretive. The didactic labels and texts, which seemed to aim to deliver factual information, were delivered in the form of disembodied voices and impersonal tones. They increased my level of knowledge through a delivery of information but were not effective in engaging me in the exhibition more—reading the labels more, reflecting more about the works, and creating my personal responses more, as Beverly Serrell (1996) emphasizes:

Interpretive labels speak to visitors in an appealing voice—not preachy or pedantic, but not simplistic or condensing. They encourage visitors to start to read, to read aloud to others, to read all the way to the end, and to remember what they read. The best kind of interpretive labels will also be useful and meaningful to visitors. (p. 83)

In other words, the labels and wall texts effectively delivered factual information, but their disembodied voice and impersonal tone made it more difficult for me to become engaged in the exhibitions than those of the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh. I was impatient to read through all lengthy and didactic information. For example:
Toward exits

After looking at Triumphal Return to Rome of Scipio African, I could not avoid focusing monomaniacally on the disconnection between the objects. Instead of enjoying their beauty, subject matter, visual stimulants, techniques, practical purpose, maker’s ideas, social background, or any other things related to those objects, I could not avoid being in a monomania about discovering the (dis)connection between the objects. When I walked through room 1 of the gallery, I cast the following questions without reviewing the wall texts or labels: “Umm...why is this furniture displayed with those dishes? They do not seem to bear any contextual similarity.” Looking around the room, I was continuously murmuring, “Why is this piece of Chinese ceramics placed with the modern style table?” The furniture and dishes had object labels identifying themselves and the Chinese ceramics displayed on the modern style table had wall texts next to themselves. I guessed that the piece of Chinese ceramics and the modern style table might be related to 17th century European tradition because I had prior knowledge from my studies of art history that Chinese ceramics were frequently imported to European countries during the 17th century as European people cherished them as a kind of exotic luxury. But, I did not try to confirm this idea by reading the wall text next to the two objects. I was a little bit uncomfortable in my museum-going experience thus far. So, I was not inclined to read anything in addition to what I already had. Instead of reading the object label and wall text, I was still walking and began asking new questions. When I was looking at the showcase which was filled with different types of objects, I was asking, “Why are those objects, which are obviously different from one another, put together in one showcase?”
When I saw a young woman’s portrait, above all, I wondered why the portrait of a young lady was hung over the silver inlaid table. And then figuring out the relationship of the two, I was asking if this showed that the class to which the sitter in the painting belonged might have used that kind of table. The thing that finally bothered me was a painting of Jesus Christ hanging between two popes. I was asking myself, “Why is the painting of Jesus Christ hanging between the human beings?” Actually, in the middle of questioning, I looked at the portrait of the young lady and the silver inlaid table and tried to read the wall text next to them (Figure 1). After I read the first sentence of the wall text, I did not read anymore. Instantly, I lost my desire to read on. I just walked through the hall for a minute more and finally walked quickly toward the exit (Individual Visit to CMOM on July 9, 2007).

In most cases, I tried to read the labels and the wall texts, looking for reasonable answers to my questions, but the previous experience in that particular room made me skip the offered information. Through reading all the written information that I had skipped at the moment later, I concluded that some of my questions that I mentioned in the story narrated above could be answered if I read the information carefully, while some of them were still not solved. This means that if I had read the wall texts more properly and more carefully, I would have found reasonable answers to at least some of my questions.
But the point I want to make now is that it would have required that I make an extra effort: Sometimes I did not even try to read these additional texts, while other times I actually stopped reading after the first or second sentence. Considering Serrell’s (1996) point that the purpose of labels does not lie in letting visitors understand the contents of the works but in encouraging visitors to continue reading through the entire label, the labels and texts at that moment seemed to fail in engaging me.

To make a visitor more engaged in reading, Serrell (1996) recommends writing labels of different lengths and not exceeding more than 30 words in word counts because sentences that are the same length or longer than 30 words make a visitor lose attention.
Instead, a variety of lengths of sentences and paragraphs intermixed with short sentences that consist of 2-3 short paragraphs and small chunk, personal voices as well as first-person narrative, help a visitor to be engaged in reading the written texts. Paying attention to the emotional responses of visitors, Serrell (1996) states, “Labels that look too long discourage, overwhelm, and frustrate readers” (p. 89).

My frustration when I was reading the wall text for labels and texts might have been partly caused by my previous experience of not being able to get access to additional information. Additionally, according to Serrell, my frustration might come from the frequent use of long paragraphs (e.g., more than 30 words in word counts) and the same length of sentences without any variation. Figure 2 shows the original images of wall texts, referred to as label 1 and label 2 in this study. Label 1 consists of 87 words and label 2 also consists of the set of two paragraphs of 80 words and 39 words. There is no part that consists of 2-3 short paragraphs and small chunks.

The goal of a wall text’s paragraph, Serrell (1991) argues, does not lie in the literal input of the information but in creating pauses between the information and between the verbal texts and the objects. In other words, the information put in the wall texts and the object labels not only bears the didactic purpose for instruction but also the playful purpose of enabling visitors to go back and forth between objects and texts. On the contrary, there was another occasion for me to be engaged in reading without any frustration. The following is a story about the sculpture installed in the parking lot of the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh and the label that I read in the parking lot is shown in Figure 3 and referred to as label 3 in this study.
Figure 2: Wall text of Portrait of a Woman and Kneehole desk at the Carnegie Museum of Art (label 1 and label 2)
Hearing whispering from conversation between a mom and a daughter

Searching for a spot in the parking lot, one cannot miss the three giant fish moving slowly according to the wind. Actually, I did not notice that they were moving at first and merely thought they were a funny-looking sculpture. It was not until I read a label about them later that I realized they were moving. I thought the sculpture could appeal to the children’s interest because of its colorful and funny-looking design—a kind of symbol to attract children. So, I was not interested in getting information about it. When we passed the electric entrance of the parking lot, I noticed something there by the information for parking fees. But we were busy parking, so I just passed it. After parking, when we moved out of the parking lot, I got the chance to look at it again. What I first saw were the words “Al, Mo & Oh...”. Actually, I did not know what the words “Al, Mo & Oh” meant, but the presence of “…” gave me a feeling of fun. So, I continued to read another line and another line. It was information about the installation placed in the parking lot. According to the label, the installation was the product of the collaboration between a mother and daughter. They designed these three giant bass turning with the wind to celebrate their personal memory about fishing. The installation did not cause me to recollect any memory about fishing, in spite of their hope to do so. Instead, I could come up with an image of a mother and daughter who were discussing three fishes (Family visit to CMP on July 8, 2007).

According to Serrell (1996), a first-person narrative voice is a powerful source for engaging visitors by its ability to deliver emotions effectively. I heard from the label the personal voices of the mother and daughter that may have created the image of a mother
and daughter discussing fish in my mind. On the other hand, label 1 and 2 are missing personal voices, which are taken away in the pursuit of objectivity. In these two labels, I could not sense an individual’s hopes or concerns. It is true that someone had to create those objective voices. Absolutely, there are real people who work hard to write those labels. For example, they might have struggled with the inclusion and exclusion of information, but I was still unable to hear the voices of real people who were struggling.

Figure 3: Object label of the installation of “Al, Mo & Oh” at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh (label 3).
Another point to think about regarding the label is its location. Label 3 stood next to the notice that provided information about the parking lot, not next to the installation itself. The label could be placed next to the installation, but then only visitors who are interested in the installation and are looking for more information would see it. It seems that the museum professionals presented this information in a noticeable way to inform general visitors. Providing information through the label is not its ultimate goal. The information is not hidden, and it is revealing like the parking lot information. While the label in the CMP seemed to be readable, subjective, and personal, the label in the Carnegie Museum of Art seemed to be unreadable, objective, and impersonal.

After the incident in the parking lot, I heard personal voices from the labels attached to other art works at the CMP. In a sense, the labels did not provide any suggestions as to how to look at the works; rather, they seemed to be cut from an author’s notes or personal journal. They were about the artists’ personal approaches to the works or their memories related to the works as opposed to factual information about them. Some were very simple and some were very compelling. They hardly provided me with new insight or new knowledge about the work in general, but the most important thing that I gained from these labels was a sense of intimacy with the works. This sense of intimacy contributed to building a positive attitude toward the museum because it chose to provide information in that specific way. And it can help relieve visitors of museum fatigue and build comfort by ensuring their psychological safety, which is directly connected to learning (Evans, 1995).

Another characteristic that the written texts in the CMP exhibited, which is the most compelling aspect for me, was the way they chunked information. The wall text
below was placed next to the lockers in the hallway from the art studio to the lobby. It is referred to as label 4 in this study and shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Wall text of “Design is about making choice” at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh (label 4).

This wall text told about the concept of changing design according to the trends of the time period. Accordingly, the label writer could have chosen a simple title, such as “design,” to create a more neutral tone, but the label writer chose the title based on the writer’s main idea—“Design is about making choices.” According to Serrell (1996), self-sufficient and informative paragraph titles (or subtitles) in a text or label keep a visitor’s attention because a visitor can quickly catch the big idea of what is going on in the next section through informative titles. She continues to emphasize that informative titles or subtitles can contribute to advancing a museum’s narratives. This means that the title
itself, if it is written in a self-sufficient way and is related to other texts, can play a role in further engaging visitors.

On the contrary, what I saw in the labels and wall text of the Carnegie Museum of Art was all about subject matter without implications for delivering messages; these were disembodied; these were not meant for advancing narratives.

Even though the labels and wall texts of the Carnegie Museum of Art effectively delivered factual information, their disembodied voice and impersonal tone made it more difficult to engage visitors in the exhibitions than those of the CMP. While a visitor is often willing to question, confirm, or articulate the narrative of a museum, the museum does not always have an open structure that enables visitors to question, confirm, or articulate its narrative. Rather, “the institutionally authorized text is only one disembodied voice in the mix when a visitor actually makes sense of an exhibition” (Livingstone, 2003, p. 13). In light of sentence and paragraph length in addition to these embodied voices, the labels and wall text at the Carnegie Museum of Art were not written for visitors’ engagement but these seem to be for the experts’ input to the professional world.

As my stories show, a lengthy verbal explanation in texts can contribute to extending visitors’ knowledge but seems to show weak engagement with the visitors. Beverly Serrell (2006), in her book *Judging Exhibitions: A Framework for Assessing Excellence*, quoting the comment from a participant, Matt Sikora, at her workshop for assessing exhibitions, addresses a critical point that an art exhibition without efforts to engage visitors is not an interpretive one:
If subject matter is merely displayed in and of itself with no suggestion of a larger context, no encouragement to make personal connections, or no avenue for engaging in discussion, then the primary thrust of the exhibition is not interpretive. In such cases, too much responsibility is placed on the visitor to do all of the work without assistance, limiting the chance of a change taking place. (p. 86)

In this sense, the museum’s narratives created through object labels and texts in the exhibition seemed to fail to engage me with reading the labels more, reflecting more, and creating my responses more, even though I could sense their efforts to provide educational contents through didactic wall texts.
The third type of narrative that I identified is hidden narrative. It was something that I could not clearly articulate but substantially existed in my experiences as uncomfortable feelings, frustration, or blaming. Through reflection on my ways of thinking and my pattern of habits that made me uncomfortable, frustrated, and blaming, I can articulate what I named as a hidden narrative, which refers to what is rarely noticeable both at the first place and at the on-going experiences in the museums, but is an undercurrent in those experiences and articulated later through further reflection.

**Art Museum-going as Pleasure and Pressure**

In the third section of chapter 4, I was talking about how a clear outline stating the chronological order in the Scaife Gallery created a mood of relief for me at the spot, which continued in a positive mood of that moment. In addition, the experience let me think of the possibility of feeling, namely, the opposite feeling up to that point, a kind of pressure, for my other art museum-going experiences. Usually, an art museum is a place that I like to visit. What made me feel this kind of pressure?

This search made me remember another feeling that I sometimes have when museum-going—discomfort—even though it is not exactly the same as pressure. As I mentioned, there have been times when I was disappointed because I was easily bored
with the exhibition; thus, when I come out of a museum without getting any personal meanings, I usually feel a kind of discomfort, meaninglessness, even a little bit of anxiety toward myself or toward a nameless person without having logical reasons for the discomfort. In this case, I used to doubt myself in my abilities to appreciate the art works in appropriate ways. My doubt seems to have been based on the idea that I cannot get any meaning from the work because I appreciated the art works in an inappropriate way: That is, my approach to the works was wrong and I lacked the proper knowledge to understand those works. This was the source of my discomfort.

However, the fact that the Carnegie Museum of Art clearly outlined their intentions for displaying the collections and the fact that their intentions are reduced to one person’s principles created a proper distance or space for me to abandon my burden of finding something meaningful for me in the art. The room’s collections were assembled according to Carnegie’s taste, so his taste had no relationship to me. I had no reason to feel anything. It was fine that I was not touched by the collections because they are based on Carnegie’s taste. It made me feel relieved. So what if I did not feel anything? There was nothing I had to care about. It is just one person’s taste. I know that I might have taken the wall text quite literally without inquiring about the issues surrounding why the Carnegie art collections are in fact currently exhibited and interpreted through the framework of Carnegie’s principles of taste. However, the important thing is that I unconsciously tried to refer to the fact that the Carnegie art collection was created according to Carnegie’s principles—to one person’s tastes—and, therefore, I was relieved, creating a safe distance between those works and myself.
The safe distance created a safe space, where I could be relieved. At this point, I cannot avoid saying that the relationship generated between those works and me usually seems to form a power structure that positions me as an anxious visitor who is sensitive to eliciting something from the objects. This is why a subject can become either an active meaning-maker or passive meaning-maker, while the objects remain the same. In other words, a subject can feel fruitful meanings from the objects, if one is ready to find something meaningful, or a subject can get nothing from the objects, if one is not ready to find something meaningful. So, if I cannot get anything from the objects, it would be my fault, my un-readiness, because the work is always hanging there and people move around to seek meaning in conjunction with their lives. The objects will always be there, and the object will always possess some kind of meaning that I can construct. Based on my readiness or my ability to actively be engaged in the meaning-making process, accordingly, I would get the meanings or I would fail to get meanings: The act of getting meaning depends on my competence. My tension was created by that mechanism—I tried to elicit something meaningful from the objects because I did not want to leave the museum with nothing, which would mean that I was less competent to get meanings or that I approached the work in an inappropriate way. My discomfort was an undercurrent and it displayed its substance when it encountered the proper opportunity to be released.

The objects hanging in the museum form a kind of power based only on the fact that the objects are hanging in the museum (Macdonald, 1998; O’Neill, 2002). This does not mean that the objects do not have power for other reasons. Rather, it means that the objects displayed in the museum have power to visitors because displaying objects is a
value-laden act. Duncan (1995) says that an art museum as a ritual space has power to change everyday objects into works of art:

In the liminal space of the museum, everything—and sometimes anything—may become art, including fire extinguishers, thermostats, and humidity gauges, which, when isolated on a wall and looked at through the anesthetizing lens of museum space, can appear, if only for a mistaken moment, every bit as interesting as some of the intended-as-art works on display, which, in any case, do not always look very different. (p. 20)

Even though visitors may think that it is just a fire extinguisher, a thermostat, or a humidity gauge, in a museum space, visitors are not expected to say that opinion without any hesitation first. This is the very power that the museum’s wall has. The art museum as a public space has an institutional power that defines the aesthetic standards of a society and selects objects of high quality to be discussed for the social good.

For example, it is different for a visitor to look at an object at the museum and the same object at home. But, we frequently think the two viewing acts are the same due to the fact that we are looking at the same object even though the setting is different. The relationship generated in an art museum depends on three conditions—that of a visitor, an object, and the museum, not merely on the two conditions of a visitor and an object. For example, when I look at a painting at home, I do not need to consider how my private self and my public self function. But when I look at the same painting in a museum, I might refer to both selves: my private self—a visitor interacting with the work of art individually—and my public self—a visitor negotiating my response to the work of art in a public setting.

In other words, looking at art in a museum is different from looking at art at home because a museum is a public space associated with aesthetic judgment with authority.
So, unless there is any device to reduce the pressure in a museum and if a visitor has internalized the mechanism unconsciously, it is reasonable for a visitor to be pressured. Interestingly, my anxiety to elicit something from the encounter with art was reiterated from the narrative of the museum, even at-a-glance narratives: The presence of minimal intervention means that a visitor should cope with all responsibility to interpret the collections, while it means that a visitor can wield her/his authority to interpret them. So, did I feel empowered when I was given the authority to interpret them in the minimal intervention space?

It has been reported that visitors and non-visitors are more easily overwhelmed at art museums than at other museums not only because of their classical architectural appearance and imposing atmosphere but also because of art museums’ exclusivity—the narrow scope of the intended audience. Generally, museum professionals assume that art museum visitors are elite, well educated, middle class, and white (Duncan, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999; McClellan, 2003; Zeller, 1989; Zolberg, 1994). In this context, Zolberg (1994) points out that art museum professionals’ tendencies are based on the specialty of art museums. She argues:

As a rule, science, natural history, and history museums are much more oriented to the general public than to professional scientists or historians. They devote a great deal of attention to educational programs and, until recently, less to collecting “genuine” specimens. Art museums, on the other hand, appeal to artists, art historians, collectors, and a well-educated public because they display “authentic” works. (p. 51)

In light of Zolberg’s statement, my position as a visitor is situated in the intended audience category for art museums. I majored in art history for my M.A. degree, I worked at museums for some years, and I am currently pursuing a Ph.D. in art education.
In other words, I am well-educated and well-equipped with knowledge related to art and art history. I have taken advantage of this position as a privileged visitor outside of the general public. However, my experience at the CMOA shows how even intended visitors can experience art museums in a very limited way—often being slightly intimidated and pressured.

Once again, the presence of the art museum as a powerful public space with an authority was ironically noticed through my relief and evidenced by the presence of narratives of minimal intervention. It conversely shows how an art museum can be a place not only for pleasure but also pressure, even for intended visitors, and how the intended visitor can also internalize the two doubly-coded beliefs.

Briefly, the art museum ascribed the most responsibility to interpret the works to each visitor’s competence, which created an invisible pressure about the art museum-going experience, even though the presence of pressure was not explicit to the visible museum narratives and was not easily noticeable by a visitor.

An Art Museum as a Gendered Space

The authority at an art museum seemed to be exercised strongly within the experience of a female visitor. For example, when my husband, Lee, found out something that did not satisfy him, he expressed his discomfort through verbal expressions. But, I chose not to express my discomfort, while Lee chose to express his. Rather, I preferred to distribute all responsibility upon myself, while Lee attributed his discomfort to the
museum or museum professionals. This realization made me reflect on the difference between me and my husband.

Considering that all other variables are those we have in common (cultural, religious background, socioeconomic status), differing personalities seem like a good candidate to account for our different perspectives in the same kind of situation. The noticeable differences between me and Lee are these: While I am an aesthetic individual who is majoring in art and have an intrapersonal disposition, Lee is an individual who is majoring in science and has a practical sense and an interpersonal disposition. With respect to our previous careers, I worked as a curator, an educator, a coordinator, and a researcher, while Lee just worked primarily as a scholarly researcher. This difference might be a strong candidate to explain why Lee and I, who had a similar cultural, socioeconomic, religious background, felt differently when placed in the same situation.

Looking for more common ground to this different response beyond the level of personality, however, I paid attention to the basic difference between me and Lee—gender difference. More specifically, why did I attribute blame to myself when I encountered the lack of enough information shown at the CMOA? What is the mechanism of my response? Yes, I blamed myself when I encountered something wrong or something missing. My attitude is totally different from Lee’s, who did not blame himself when he was dissatisfied with the museum experiences. When I made my first individual visit to the Carnegie Museum on July 9, I saw this attitude again.
Why do I blame myself about missing information!

Turning left toward the stairs, I found another stand holding one flyer which read “Pardon our dust.” The flyer explained that as a result of the ongoing construction of a new exhibit, there was no dinosaur to be displayed. The new exhibition for dinosaurs would be held during the fall season of 2007. I remembered the moment Lee complained that there was no notice to ask the visitors to excuse this inconvenience when he passed the construction zone. Remembering that moment, I felt a sense of guilt; if we had paid careful attention to the flyer or notice, we might have found out that the brochure informed visitors about their excuse. If so, he might not have criticized the lack of effort of the museum professionals. Actually, it could have been our responsibility to notice the flyer! I regretted that I did not pay enough attention to look at the flyer that the museum displayed (Individual visit to CMOA on July 9, 2007).

The story above describes what the mechanism is like. I tend to attribute all missing information to my carelessness, not to the museum professional’s inconsideration. When Lee had even complained at that construction site, I explained to him there was information to pardon the problem, pointing out the top of the blue flyer where they informed visitors that they could not see dinosaurs until the fall of 2007. However, even at that time, Lee argued that they should have constructed a detour to connect all the exhibitions. This would have created a sense of fluidity in the exhibits so that the museum-going experience would not be bothered by passing through a construction zone. As I said above, my point does not lie in whether his argument is reasonable or not. Rather, my point is to discern why I reacted differently compared with
Lee with respect to the carelessness or incompetence of museum professionals. What made me do this? Was it caused by my personality? Or was it caused by Lee’s personality? Was it caused by a gender difference? Basically, I believe that a broad influence from different personalities, different work experiences, and a gender difference might result in the two totally different responses.

In a sense, my blaming-culture might be partly caused by my work experience as a curator at a previous museum. As a museum insider, when I heard Lee’s complaints, I wanted to make reasonable excuses on behalf of the museum professionals, even though I was not a museum professional at that time. I might have been playing the role of a moderator between a complaining husband as a visitor and the insensitive museum, even though I was a visitor, too, not a museum professional at that setting.

In another sense, my blaming-culture might have been influenced by a gender difference—my personality as a female. A gender difference is not the discourse determined biologically but the culturally, socially and politically constructed discourse. If so, do females frequently blame themselves more so than the males? This tough question can be elaborated as the following question: Is the female culture structured socially to blame herself? Or, is the female easily exposed to the social structures which attribute social problems as the female’s problem?

Nancy Berns (2001) points out the public discourse to push women to find a solution to the structural social problems such as rape, abuse, or family violence within themselves. When they are troubled with them, Nancy Berns (2001) points out, they are told the following message: “Change your personality; Increase your self-esteem; Take control of your life; Refuse to be a victim; You have the power to end the abuse” (p.
These messages imply that a woman is troubled because of her personality, the lack of her self-esteem, the lack of her self-discipline, and her powerlessness to refuse to be a victim and to face the abuse. I do not want to argue whether a woman has responsibility of her own, if a woman is troubled. Instead, I am arguing that there is a tendency to blame women, even though women can be victims on occasion, concealing the presence of an actual perpetrator or the structure that caused the problem.

For example, women who are struggling with painful experiences such as being raped, being battered, or being abused are easily exposed to social discourse to attribute their suffering of their personal dimension in congruence with a way to obscure men’s violence and to place the burden of responsibility on women. Specifically speaking, in those situations, suffering women cannot find out the exit or keys to the problem except for accusing herself (Bell, Kuriloff, & Lottes, 2006; Berns, 2001; Kingree, 1995, Schmitt & Martin, 1999). If it is a dominant social discourse to attribute the problem of the troubled women to their own problems while obscuring men’s violence and social structure to generate this kind of problem, then women have no choice except to internalize the dominant social rules. The dominant social discourse is that if you are troubled, it is your problem, not society’s.

The social system reducing socially structured problems into one individual problem is applied to the problems of social minorities such as the homeless and immigrant groups. Susan Wright (1993) criticizes the culture of blaming victims in the hegemony of the dominant—social discourses reinforcing the tendency to blame the victims of social problems for their conditions—and asks researchers to seek the framework investigating the private dimension of the troubled into historical
circumstances and social structure that create the problem. When social minorities can become victims, we are so accustomed to the social habit to reduce all faults to the social victim. As Berns puts it, we are so accustomed to “engendering the problem and gendering the blame” (2001, p. 262).

In this regard, my blaming-culture might be the result of internalizing the social discourses of “engendering the problem and gendering the blame” (p. 262) as a part of socially structured gender discourses. When I discovered the lack of information, I tended to attribute the blame to myself; but when Lee discovered the lack of information, he tended to attribute the fault to the museum. I thought, “Actually, it could have been our responsibility to notice the flyer! I regret that I did not pay enough attention to look at the flyer that the museum offered,” instead of criticizing their insensitive attitude and minimal presentation of information, blaming it as my fault—my rare attention.

More interestingly, this blaming-culture seems to be performed in a very subtle way by both museum professionals and visitors. For example, on the first day of the visit to the Carnegie Museums, I actively asked the staff to get proper information but I actually did not get the information that I wanted to get. But I did not notice what could be wrong and what I could ask of the staff. But three months after we visited the Carnegie Museum of Art, when we made a family visit to the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, I noticed what was wrong at the Carnegie Museum of Art. It was a two-hour visit to the museum as a part of a trip to Washington, DC, for a one-day round trip. Because it was an unplanned part of a visit to Washington, DC, I had no time to search for information through the website. It was different from the case of the Carnegie Museums. For the Carnegie Museums, I intentionally did not look for information. No matter what
the intention it was, the situation of not having any background for the museum-going was the same. So, I performed the same procedure as when I first visited the Carnegie Museums, except for purchasing the one-year membership for admission, because the admission to the Smithsonian Museum of American Art was free.

I don’t blame myself, because…

At first, as usual, I collected brochures and flyers at the information desk. After collecting some information, however, I hesitated a little bit about whether I should ask the same question that I had asked in the Carnegie Museum of Art or just pass without making any inquiry about the family events, because I came to know it would be a time-consuming effort from the previous experience in the Carnegie Museum of Art. But, I decided to do it one more time and asked the same question, “Do you have any worksheet to work with young children?” As soon as I asked the staff member who was at the information desk, she provided one small booklet without any hesitation or further questions. The booklet had some pictures and questions in a children-friendly graphic and text version. While I was glancing at the booklet, she gave another piece of paper to me and explained that my family could participate in that program on the third floor.

Because I could not understand the whole content at a glance, I asked to have the copy. However, she told me that she had only one copy of it. So, she could not give it to me but she added again that I could get it on the third floor. After looking around the exhibition on the first floor for one hour and subsequently skipping the exhibitions on the second floor, we moved to the third floor to participate in the program that my daughter
repeatedly asked about. It utilized a kind of worksheet for treasure-hunting called “Monster Track,” if I can borrow my daughter’s word “treasure-hunting” for that activity. We spent one hour looking for seven monsters through the rack of collections without being bored. We had to pull her out from the room after one hour to fit the time to return home. Along with her engagement with the activity, Lee and I were also excited to find out about the database access to the information about the objects that she found through the activity. The database access facility was the first for Lee, while I was very familiar with it from the experience at the V&A museum and National Gallery and National Portrait Gallery. He was very satisfied to have additional information about the objects she had found through searching the database that was offered from the museum (Reflection on the visit to the Smithsonian Museum of American Art in October, 2007).

The point that I want to make is not a comparison of two different museums. The point is that even though the woman had told me that there was no art craft event on Friday at Carnegie Museum of Art, when we got there to check the place for Saturday, there was an art craft event for a special exhibition for glass, ViVA Vetro. This means that she did not know that the Carnegie Museum of Art offered an art craft event on Friday. If so, the gesture she showed me—as she could not understand what I was asking—showed her disqualification as a staff member working at the information desk. It was not my fault. She should have been able to provide the information about the art craft offered on Friday as a part of the family program of Carnegie Museum of Art.

The most important thing is that it was not until I visited the Smithsonian Museum of American Art and had an instant response to my question without any hesitation from the staff that I started to ask why the staff at the Carnegie Museum of Art
did not respond instantly and why she could not give the information which the museum staff at the Smithsonian Museum of American Art could give quickly. Did I make progressive development in my pronunciation in the previous three months? As I told before, actually, I did not recognize well that it could have been the museum staff’s fault. Even though I felt ill at ease when the staff exhibited the gesture that she could not understand what I was asking, I just thought it could be the issue of my pronunciation rather than the issue of the level of preparation for the museum staff. At this point, however, I do not want to discuss why one museum can prepare visitor-friendly information arrangements while others cannot. There might be numerous reasons for this difference, from micro conditions such as the personality of the museum staff to the macro condition of the final structure of the museums or status of the museums—national museum and city museum. The size of the museum and the number of visitors expected daily could also be factors, as well as expectations for the number of international visitors. Instead, I would like to focus on my attitude toward two different responses.

A museum can present its information in at least two ways—minimally present or actively present through repeated appearance, oversized, multiple points of view, or engaging multiple entry points. The two ways seem to influence at least two different types of individuals: my husband and me. My disposition or my reaction to the museum settings probably is a mixture of my cultural identity, gender, and my personality. However, it is important to note that an individual like me is seriously disempowered when I am confronted with troubled situations such as minimal information presentation or disqualification. Minimally presented information and messages play a role in reinforcing the structure of marginalizing oneself, like me who is bound to get personal
meanings from the works of art, who is marginalized culturally (or vigilant to being marginalized), and who has a relation-oriented personality. Accordingly, my blaming-culture might be a mixed product of my female identity internalizing the dominant social rule of blaming women and social minorities when they are troubled, and museum’s insensitiveness to the need of museum visitors.

**Mother’s Identity Under-represented**

Among my experiences at the CMOA, as an adult female visitor, I have not experienced being deterred by androcentric bias as reported by Rececca Machin (2008), even though my female identity has also not been encouraged to perform. Examining how gender bias can be performed at the exhibition of a natural history museum, Machin (2008) reports the dominance of male specimens to female specimens in number and the hierarchical order of male specimens to female specimens—namely, male specimens are positioned higher and posed more erectly than the females in their displays. Finally, she addresses that the unique characteristics of female specimens are diluted with and generalized into characteristics of male specimens.

In a similar way, my overall female identity was not discouraged by those variables, except for my blaming-culture, as I reported in the previous section. In regard to another identity of mine, a kind of sub-identity of my female identity, when I performed my identity as mother, however, I experienced that the mother’s identity was bothered and deterred by the museum’s narratives. But, in the same way of noticing my blaming-culture generated in the mix of gendered space, its realization was not done in
the first place. While I compared my experiences with my husband’s experiences, I came to realize there were some differences that could not be explained as differences in personalities, dispositions, or gender. The following story demonstrates how well my female identity was transformed into a mother’s identity in a family visit accompanying a six-year-old kid. Specifically speaking, how my independent female identity disappeared into the mother’s identity caring for relation between family members and caring for my child as a parent.

**Disappearing, disappearing, and still disappearing**

When I heard from the staff about the worksheet, I explained to Sunny what I had heard—we could search objects arranged on the worksheet and, later with it, we could do some art-making activity after completing our look around this gallery—and I asked if she wanted to do the activity. She nodded and we got a piece of worksheet. I led our family into the gallery for the special exhibition, ViVa Vetro. My husband and my daughter followed me when I walked into the gallery. Sunny asked me what the paper was. I responded to her that it was the list of objects displayed inside the gallery. She asked me to read the whole list of objects written on paper, because she could not yet read English well enough. So, I read loudly the first item listed first in the top left, “silver snake.” As soon as I finished the word, silver snake, from my mouth, she started to wander the gallery here and there ahead of me and I chased after her. However, we could not find the silver snake or anything similar to the silver snake. Finally, she started to be irritated because she could not find what she should find out. So, I told her there
were “red shoes,” “house,” and “octopus,” in addition to the silver snake, and encouraged her to find them, calling out loudly the rest of the list. Meanwhile, we found red shoes and moved toward the red shoes. But it was difficult for us to find the other items written on the worksheet. Lee disappeared when we entered the gallery. I thought I could not handle her in this way. So, leaving the gallery, I asked again the staff member who gave the worksheet to us if the worksheet was arranged in the order of display in the gallery with the specific beginning and specific ending or arranged randomly. She responded to me that the worksheet was arranged randomly. So, I read loudly the whole list of the objects—there were 13 objects on worksheet—and asked to find them randomly. We started to wander from place to place in order to find the objects listed on the worksheet. Sometimes, I found objects ahead of her and sometimes she found them before me. Sometimes, instead of finding the listed objects, we stood in front of something that looked funny and unusual. Questioning her, “what do you think it is?” or “what does it look like?,” I induced conversation that was more productive or more educational. For example, I told her, “Look at that, Sunny, this shoe looks different from what we usually wear.” She said, “well…” I told her again, “Look here! Do you think you can wear that on your feet?” She responded to me, “Well, mommy, I don’t know…um….” I asked her again to look more carefully: “Look inside it carefully. The neck of the shoe is closed. You cannot put your foot inside the shoe.” Finally, she responded to me, “Oh—mommy, I got it.”

Checking objects and calling to me, she moved about the gallery energetically. The special exhibition was divided into three sections physically; if I make an arbitrary arrangement for the sections, I will call the sections room 1, room 2, and room 3 for
video-showing. When Sunny and I arrived at the boundary of room 1 and room 2 from room 1, I saw Lee in room 2. So, we moved toward room 2. Lee was exclaiming and looking at a chandelier made of glass. I talked with Lee a little bit about the elegance and the beauty of the chandelier on the right side of room 2. Because I saw Sunny standing alone on the left side of room 2, I instantly moved toward Sunny. Physically, my position at that time was in the middle of the space between my husband and my daughter. She was staring at one work and asked what I thought about it. She told me, “Mom, what do you think it is?” Instead of giving my opinion, I asked her, “Well, what does it look like?” She replied to me, “Mom, I think it is like a silver snake.” Because I knew she was looking for a silver snake listed on the worksheet, I gladly said to her, “Sounds great. I think so too.” And then, I proposed to check the title of the work and we looked at the title of the work. But the result of our inquiry was different from what we were expecting. So, I told her, “Uh-oh. The title says something different. It is not a silver snake. This time, your guess seems to be wrong. It says ‘Fume’. Well, by the way, let me think, what is “Fume?” While I was thinking over the meaning of the word fume, a security guard, who might have been listening to our conversation, suddenly interrupted our conversation and informed us that the word fume means smoke in Italian. So, I explained more to her. “Sunny, Fume means smoke in Italian. You know, when we went to the park and ate meat with friends, you could see the smoke. White smoke. Do you remember? The work expresses the smoke. Do you think it is like smoke? But she still disagreed, “No. I still think it is like a silver snake.” I concluded, “That’s fine, if you think so. In a sense, it looks like a silver snake meandering. By the way, the title is smoke.”
While Sunny and I talked, Lee called out from room 3. Even though we still stayed at the entrance of the room, he already seemed to be looking around in room 2 and room 3. He asked us to move into room 3 in order to look at the video clip. He explained that the video clip showed how to make glasswork step by step and that it was very exciting. We—my daughter, my husband, and I—together watched the video-clip. He explained step-by-step procedure more in detail, using his prior knowledge (Family visit to CMOA on July 6, 2007).

At the beginning of the story, I led the tour as an independent adult female who was interested in visiting an art museum; that is, I was a leader among my family members at the beginning of the tour. However, the initiative of the tour was given over to my husband at the end of the story, as you can see in the last sentence of the story. While the initiative was taken over by my husband, Lee, I had followed Sunny’s steps as a guardian and I had sometimes asked her some questions as a facilitator for her learning. Based on Falk’s (2006) definition, at that moment I was performing the identity of a facilitator. While I was performing the facilitator’s identity, Lee disappeared and came back to us taking on the identity of an experience-seeker. While I was spending visiting time with Sunny, he had already looked around the gallery and he had already obtained information about the exhibition.

During his disappearance, my identity was transformed from a leader to a mere care-provider, and relatively my other identity as an independent adult visitor such as an experience-seeker, a hobbyist, a professional, or a spiritual pilgrim, had been oppressed. On the contrary, my husband, Lee, in his disappearance maximized his learning outcomes. I actually do not think it could have resulted from a gender difference. Rather,
it could be based on which gender would be a primary caregiver. At that time, I, as a mother, was the primary caregiver, and so a mother’s identity was revealed.

When I visited an art museum individually, my identity showed the characteristics of a professional/hobbyist, as Falk (2006) refers to one who seeks advanced professional knowledge in specific disciplines. But when I visited it with family members, the identity of a professional/hobbyist was rarely invited. In fact, it was suppressed. Instead, the facilitator’s identity was frequently invited. This means that a female’s identity as a professional/hobbyist can be incompatible with the identity of a facilitator under a specific condition of an art museum.

In other words, if it is not the case in which a visitor actively chooses to perform the facilitator’s identity—namely, the visitor would like to perform the other identities but the visitor cannot help but perform the facilitator’s identity because of the social setting where the visitor is situated—her other identities do not have the opportunity to be performed. For mothers who cannot be free from their gendered roles, the identity of a facilitator might be forced.

Falk’s five identity groupings seem to apply well to a female adult who visits the art museum independently and who even visits it with social groups such as friends and children, if her goal is to facilitate a museum-going experience within social groups. However, my story and analysis about it so far shows another possibility: Even though a female visitor who brings her children as a mother or a primary caregiver would like to transform her identity as facilitator into another identity such as professional/hobbyist or spiritual pilgrim, she cannot do it. I can say that the same situation can happen to a male visitor when he visits the museum as a primary caregiver. Imagine that it is a mother or a
female caregiver who usually brings her children into the museum, Falk’s five identity groupings seem to fit well to male visitors who are relatively free from involuntarily becoming the primary care-giver.

In this context, Falk’s perspective seems to under-represent variables of female visitors, who are usually the primary users of family programs and children’s programs in an art museum. Little consideration of the gendered female role in family social settings seems to be reflected in Falk’s identity categorization; thus, it needs to consider and elaborate on the female’s gendered role in museum visits.

In addition, Falk (2006) also argues that the kinds of motivations visitors bring to an exhibit—namely, their identities—play a more important role in their learning processes at museums than what they actually do in the exhibits. Accordingly, it is not his point that museums do not need to pay attention to what visitors do in exhibits; rather, he suggests that museum professionals need to pay more attention to the visitors’ needs and learning styles as opposed to merely concentrating on what they want to teach visitors. In this regard, he recommends that museums provide programs or services that fit visitors’ identities so they can engage with the exhibits more effectively.

Falk seems to suggest that visitors’ identities are already set according to their inner motivation to visit the museum, even though the motivation can be variable at times. However, a female’s identity in a museum seems to be situated in the physical conditions as well as the social conditions of the museum experience rather than nested in one identity. The following story shows how physical conditions can affect my identity transformation in the same social setting of a family visit.
Switching my identity from facilitator to professional

I found that Sunny’s interest was different from my interest as a parent. She liked to do the puzzle with bones, but I thought it was too simple and had few educational benefits. Instead, I thought the story-making was creative and fitting for an educational goal. But, she had no interest in the story-making activity. Seeing that she had no interest in story-making, we did not force her in doing the activity. Instead, to promote what she was interested in, Lee started to explain the various forms of bones. But Sunny was also not interested in listening to her father. She seemed to want to move about according to her instant curiosity. So, we let her do whatever she wanted. So, as soon as I realized that she did not need me in that space (that is, I didn’t need to do any kind of educational intervention in that space), there was nothing for me to do, because I was not interested in science or discovery as I mentioned earlier. So, I started to search for something different such as good strategies or good activities to use in my future classroom (Family visit to CMNH on July 7, 2007).

In the discovery room, Sunny was fully engaged in her own activities of viewing and doing. So, she did not need me as a facilitator. Her free discovery made me transform my identity as a facilitator into the identity of a professional. But, even in the same museum of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, the Polar World exhibition resulted in a different experience.
I, as a mother, got stuck

But, unlike the discovery room where she could find many things to manipulate and touch, in the Polar World exhibition gallery, she became bored easily. Although we tried to imitate the gestures of the stuffed animal in the showcase to engage her in the exhibition, it was difficult to engage her. Even though we borrowed an educational backpack from the discovery room for her to use in the Polar World exhibition area, she was not engaged in the puzzle. She told us, because there was no working table for puzzles, she could not do the puzzle. We asked her to work in the chair, but she did not think it was an appropriate place for puzzling. So, she became bored easily and consistently asked to get out of the exhibition. Nonetheless, we asked her to stay at the exhibition and look at the display more. Meanwhile, Sunny and I saw an igloo in the middle of the exhibition space and we entered it. There we could see the inside of an igloo. There were miniatures of the Inuit people: We could see how they saved food, how they were, and how they lived in the igloo.

While I did a kind of play inside the igloo with Sunny, Lee really enjoyed the exhibition and loved explaining things to me, when he came back. He told me why he was excited: He could find the principle of the top of the arrow and how it hooked the fish. I could easily understand Lee’s explanation and the information given. But anyway, we had to get out of the exhibition due to my daughter’s complaints and went to another exhibition, Carnival. It was a special exhibition for CMNH (Family visit to CMNH on July 7, 2007).
Actually, because I was a little interested in learning about the works displayed in the Polar World exhibition, my identity as a facilitator was not forced but voluntarily chosen. Otherwise, I might be a mere experience-seeker watching what’s going on at the Polar World exhibition. Failing to engage my daughter with learning at the Polar World exhibition as a facilitator and with little interest in the works displayed, I just came out of the Polar World exhibition without generating any positive meaningful experience. In the same social setting of a family visit and in the same level of my personal interest in the works displayed, the following story shows a more positive experience at the CMP.

I even became interested in science!

The special exhibition on ‘How People Make Things’ provided contextual information and surroundings. The exhibition was sectioned according to the steps of making some factory products by means of molding, deforming, and assembling. The three subject matters to be covered in the exhibition were specified through some hands-on activities. Because Lee and Sunny were fully engaged in doing the suggested activities, I was allowed some time to wander around the working stations even though I did not participate in the activities. As I mentioned before, I am not interested in subjects such as science or engineering. Honestly, I have no interest in how people make things. Usually, I became a spectator at the children’s museum as an adult learner when Sunny was fully engaged with her own learning processes. But the space engaged me in a kind of learning as an adult learner when I noticed that the surroundings of each topic were directly related to each subject matter. Actually, at a glance, I thought these were simply
wall decorations. At first, the surroundings attracted me as visual stimulants when I was wandering around the exhibition in my free time. Looking closer, I noticed the objects displayed were the kinds of products used for molding, deforming, and assembling. The doll and kitchen items were the products of molding some materials and then deforming (Family visit to CMP on July 8, 2007).

Many researchers report that hands-on components or interactive frameworks at the exhibition space play important roles in engaging children in learning (Davidson, Heald & Hein, 1999; Kamien, 2000; Martin & Toon, 2003; Semper, 1990). But from what I found out through my experiences, interactive and hands-on elements not only help children learn more but also help caregivers have their own free time, which can be positively invested in their own learning activity. In other words, including some activities for children to be engaged in into the exhibition space might make a room where adult caregivers can invest their free time into their learning.

Holstein and Gubrium (2000) argue that what is untold in written materials might conversely represent what the institution, the system, or the individual might not care for. Consequently, the analysis of what is missing and what is expressed in the museum’s narrative as texts might reveal what the museum makes and does not make available to visitors. Along the same line of thinking, if there is nothing to support a mother’s experience (or primary caregiver) at an exhibition space, the lack of consideration plays a role in oppressing other identity performances. This means that the exhibition space is prescribed as a hidden curriculum favoring male dominant discourses. In brief, at the CMOA, a female’s identity does not seem to have any barrier to be displayed but a mother’s identity as a forced gendered role seems to be under-represented.
Modernistic Values Represented

So far, I have discussed how I noticed the hidden narratives from what is missing in the museum’s visible narratives. More specifically, I could find out what was untold in the museum’s narrative by investigating what was told in the museum—what the museum made available to me. Through further reflection, I could notice it because it was veiled but undercurrent in my experiences and because it was not yet articulated as clearly as to say it but present in my experiences.

However, what I am describing as the fourth hidden narrative here was visible everywhere in the Carnegie Museums but I could not notice it at the first encounter and even at the second encounter because I was so absorbed in the very narrative of what I was telling—modernistic value, which renders western cultures as centers and others as margins, thereby generating an uneven power relationship among cultures. It was seen everywhere at the Carnegie Museums but I could not clearly discern it because I was comfortable with it at the surface level and I also did not want to reveal my discomfort which was deeply rooted in my mind. I did not want to dig inside, which might result in a controversy, a dilemma, or a conflict inside me—kinds of bothersome feelings.

From this point on, I will describe how the modernistic values served for one of the hidden narratives and how I could notice it with the intersection of my in-depth experience. The desire for building good citizenship through uplifting modernistic values was first intersected at the exhibits of African Art and Art Before 1300 in a very complicated way, when I observed the exhibits in haphazard order, being deviated from chronological order that was expected. And the encounter with an emphasis of the
modernistic values was noticed in the Hall of Sculpture, which represents the Parthenon in Greek and the Hall of Architecture, the exhibition of replicas of Greek and Roman works.

**The bizarre encounter with the collection of African Art and Art before 1300**

I walked through the two sections several times to identify what the collections were actually about. In the same space, there were statues of religious gods that came from India, such as the statue of Buddha, and a sculpture of a human body that came from Greece. In addition, there was a doll for incantation and a display of decorative crafts, along with a lamp and a teapot that seemed to be for practical purposes. In addition, the dates for these objects varied from the 5th century to the 20th century, even though the room was called Art Before 1300. Walking through the gallery several times, I actually realized that the objects produced around the 20th century were a part of the section for African Art, not the section for Art Before 1300. So, there was no problem with the titles of the sections themselves. However, the whole room was nominally sectioned as two sections, one for African Art and one for Art Before 1300, but there was no physical boundary between the two. Even though the pieces of art were grouped as objects from Africa and objects from Asia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome produced before 1300, my first impression of the room was a chaotic one—that of mixed feelings with the haphazard order of poorly matched sculptures and statues without any consideration for chronological order or a thematic approach. I was confused about what the entire room
was supposed to represent: Was this room for art, ritual, crafts, religious worship, or something else? (Individual visit to CMOA on July 9, 2007).

Because the collection was set up in chronological order, I expected that the display would build a strong foundation for visitors to understand the overall transitions of the collection. As the chronological ordering in display usually makes visitors trace the stylistic transitions among the objects and clearly identify their time periods, visitors feel that the collection is easily accessible. I expected that this display pattern would not initially seem to be difficult. However, when I entered the section for African Art and the section for Art Before 1300: Asia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, I was abruptly hampered in identifying what I was seeing.

My first impression of the room was that the room was haphazardly arranged, as described above. However, the acute realization of my real feeling, which will be discussed in the latter part of this section in detail, was disguised in the name of confusion when I encountered the feeling as written above. The chance for me to confront my real feeling came when I visited another gallery—the Hall of Sculpture. Actually, I visited the Hall of Sculpture twice for my individual visits but, for my first visit, I did not relate my experience at the Hall of Sculpture to my previous experiences in the sections of Art Before 1300 and African/Asian art. I thought the visitation to the Hall of Sculpture was a kind of invitation toward bright light. It was a very strong, positive experience. When I entered the Hall of Sculpture, located physically on the first floor of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History and a part of the Carnegie Museum of Art, I saw a set of stairs surrounded by Greek sculptures. The first thing I noticed about the room was its irresistible light.
Encountering dazzling light at the Hall of Sculpture

I cannot describe my feeling about this space with just one word. The impression that this space gave me is beyond description. I felt lured and overwhelmed when I stepped into the room. The room was surrounded by Greek sculptures on the second level of the room, and there was a set of stairs to climb up in the middle of the room. All was white, bright, and dazzling. I saw a light that filled the whole space. The light seems to be reflected from the white walls and the white Greek sculptures. Probably, the ceiling, which was covered with glass, played an important role in making the space lustrous. Above all, what took my breath away most in the space was the set of stairs placed in the middle of the room. These stairs invited me to reach it and then to climb it. Physically, I remained at the entrance of the Sculpture Hall, but my spirit had already moved up the steps. Spiritually, I stood up at the top of the stairs and stretched my two arms toward the main source of light, just as Greek heroines had worshipped at the Greek temples. My chin was up, and I embraced all of the light into my face and body. There was only me, and I lost myself in an ecstatic state (Individual visit to CMOA on July 12, 2007).

I was immersed in the power that the space released. I cannot tell if this was the intention of the designer who created the room, or if it was the programming of the museum. However, what I can clearly say is that I lost myself for a few seconds in the space. I felt as if I were a part of the space, and I responded positively to the invitation from the space.

However, while I was writing my reflection notes after returning from the museum, I remembered looking at a similar type of Greek sculpture in the room for Art
Before 1300. Why does the museum display the same types of statues in separate rooms?

Through the process of questioning, I started to weave my experience from a few days before into my newly gained experience. The former was about my unpleasant feelings, while the latter was about my impressive encounter with light. These memories revealed a clear contrast. Was the contrast caused by the objects? The unpleasant feeling was caused by the museum’s tendency to pour all collections related to African and Asian art in one place. But, when I wrote my field note (as reflected in the story entitled as “The bizarre encounter with the collection of African Art and Art before 1300”) I disguised my unpleasant feelings as being confused or chaotic, taking on the position of a spectator. I thought this museum was not the place for featuring non-western art. So, this kind of display could be possible, because, unsurprisingly, it seems to be the general pattern of displaying Eastern art in Western museums. One passage from the book Museum as Skepticism (Carrier, 2006) demonstrates well how Eastern art is often treated in the Western museums.

Walking clockwise around the main floor of the Cleveland Museum of Art, you trace the history of art from the Egyptian and Greeks, on through the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. And then after passing the original main entrance, you arrive at the Baroque gallery and go on to modernism and contemporary art in a trajectory that takes you back to your points. European tradition is thus presented in one continuous narrative. But that is not the whole story presented in Cleveland…Cleveland’s collection is downstairs in part because there is no ready way to fit Indian sculpture and Chinese scroll paintings in the narrative of European art. Walking through European galleries, coming across an unfamiliar painting, you see where it belongs in this sequence. You see the history of art unfolding. But when you enter Asian galleries, then probably your experience is different. Is this obsession with progress, a European ideal, a way of marginalizing non-Western art? (pp. 126-127)
In reflecting back to these experiences—why the same statues were displayed in the two different places—I found out the gallery of African and Asia before 1300 is unnumbered in the floor plan such as:

**Unnumbered room for the collection of African Art/Art before 1300**

*It was a map of the gallery, numbered from 1 to 17. But there was an unnumbered room. It was the African Art/Art Before 1300: Asia, Egypt, Greece, Rome section. It was displayed separately from the mainstream gallery. Was it a thematic section? Actually, it was not. All things related to African and Asian art were collected and preserved from ancient to contemporary times. In a sense, it broke the flow of the exhibition, which displayed works according to the time period. I could not avoid thinking that they just wanted to display what they collected related to other cultures. I looked again at the titles of the other numbered rooms. They were about European and American Art. Yes. I could not avoid feeling bizarre from the unnumbered room, which did not appear to be respected, nor cared for by the museum professionals. Were there any objects that seemed broken or uncared for? No, never. The room was clean, and the display was neat. All of the objects were hung and placed in an eye-pleasing manner with labels. I believe that no one else felt as I did about the room. However, I cannot avoid saying that I felt uncomfortable in that room. Honestly speaking, I felt offended (Reflection on the unnumbered room).

At that moment, my feelings developed from being confused into being offended. I felt the room was unnamed. I felt as if the collections in that room were nameless*
objects. At that moment, my eyes were neither the universal ones, nor the eyes filtered through the Western culture. I looked at the room through acculturated eyes from a Western culture with a background originating in the East. I projected my cultural background onto the room. This projection made me look at the room differently, even problematically. Did any of the objects there originate in Korea, my home country? My answer was no. The objects displayed in the section of African Art and Art Before 1300 were not directly related to me or my cultural background. Geographically and periodically these are very distant from both me and the Korean culture, in general.

However, the sense of being marginalized from others created my sympathetic feelings for the geographically periodically distant cultures represented in that room. I projected my position as once being marginalized into the room, and I felt as if my culture and I were treated in the same way as those objects in that room. Why were they dealing with other cultures in that insensitive way? I felt as if I were one of the objects considered unimportant in the room.

Interestingly, it was not until confirming the unnumbered room that I disclosed my unpleasant, uncomfortable feeling as being an offense. At this moment, I am not a spectator. I accepted the problem of the unnumbered room as my problem—my concern. I felt I was offended. Actually, I was able to identify the intention of the Hall of Sculpture when I visited the space again the following day. The following story shows the large contrast between my first and second visits:
The dazzling light is not dazzling anymore

I looked at the Hall of Sculpture again and got a slightly different kind of invitation from it. I felt myself a little bit more detached than I was yesterday. Yesterday, unconsciously my spirit ran out up to the top of the stairs. However, today I (my spirit) walked slowly and was wandering around the stairs. Physically, I was closer to the stairs than yesterday. When I stood at the top of the stairs again, I did not stretch my two arms toward the light. Instead, I hoped to be higher than yesterday. I hoped to reach as high as a human being could reach in that space. I hoped to be compatible with the gods and goddesses that were placed on the second floor of the room. Physically, I was walking around the stairs and found that there were not any steps to climb up to the other top of the stairs. Instead, there was a slippery incline, the opposite side of which shows the steps descending down from the top to the bottom. There, my spiritual journey stopped. My discovery of the slippery side connecting the first top and the second top made me keenly realize my status as a human being who is different from the gods and goddesses who possess unlimited abilities. The slippery side was not supposed to smoothly connect the world of human beings and that of the gods, which created an unfavorable invitation to human beings who step into the world of the gods and goddesses. The spot was meant for a hero or a heroine with super powers. What is meant for ordinary people is to conduct human business in a very human position, including expressing awe to the gods/goddesses and a more fundamental source of awe to the light, as I did yesterday. There were four hierarchical levels to this particular space: the bottom where I physically stood, the first level where I stretched my arms yesterday, the second level that
I could not reach today, and the bright ceiling through which the light came. This space was designed for ordinary people who stand at the bottom to elevate their spirit to the first level and to the second level toward the bright light. But at the same time, there is a clear boundary between ordinary people and heroes/heroines. Ordinary people can become heroes/heroines; however, they need to overcome the obstacle—to climb the slippery side. Through elevating the spirit of the humble human to the noble gods, the human being can be noble spontaneously, and finally s/he can possess the noble power to control the human world. Actually, I (my spirit) could climb the slippery side just as a climber mounts the Rocky Mountains, but I did not want to. Honestly, I could jump from the first top to the second top because it was an imaginary journey, but I did not want to do that either (Individual visit to CMOA on July 13, 2007).

In other words, the pattern of display between the Hall of Sculpture and the section of the African Art and Art Before 1300 showed a clear contrast: The difference was not caused by the objects themselves but the way they were displayed. There seemed to be a definite reason for displaying the same types of Greek sculptures in a separate gallery. The Hall of Sculpture might have been designed to promote a modernistic approach to spirits, such as the subjectivity of human beings as an agency to make a decision. The Hall of Sculpture seemed to ratify the Greek and Roman cultures as its spiritual origin.

I could also identify the Carnegie Museum’s intention to uplift the Greek and Roman spirit in the Hall of Architecture displaying the replica of Greek and Roman architecture. I visited this exhibition on the last day of my research trip and saw wonderful examples of Greek and Roman architecture and sculptures on a reduced scale.
The Greek and Roman cultures are not the Others’ cultures but are a source of Western culture that the Carnegie Museum wished to restore through presentation and exhibition. The desire for building good citizenship through uplifting modernistic values was reinforced through the exhibition of replicas of Greek and Roman works. However, interestingly, nowhere in the Carnegie Museum of Art was the direct desire for building modernistic values revealed.

It was hidden overtly. So, I could not identify it clearly when I experienced it in the museum. However, I now know that it was an undercurrent of my whole experience, even though I did not identify it clearly at the beginning. Only repeated visits made me realize its presence. Particularly, my discovery of the unnumbered room and the discrepancy between the unnumbered room and Hall of Sculpture made me see the big gap between the rooms on my second visit to the Hall of Sculpture. Through these experiences, I started to look at the same physical space in a new way. On July 13, the last day of my research trip, I made a final visit to the Scaife gallery after visiting the Hall of Architecture, in which I had a new insight about the sofas in front of works of Monet and Matisse. The story below tells what I newly gained from this final visit.

_I can see the invisible now_

_There were two sofas facing the works of Monet and Matisse. I could see the sofas, which were located in the middle of the room. Based on the location and direction of the sofas, I noticed what the museum professionals designed. The direction and_
location of the sofas were designed to give comfort to visitors who were looking at the two masterpieces by Monet and Matisse (Individual visit to CMOA on July 13, 2007).

I explained how the absence of chairs hindered my viewing ability in the third section of chapter 5. How can I otherwise explain the fact that cozy and comfortable sofas were placed in front of the masterpieces that the Carnegie Museum of Art attempted to highlight? The presence of the sofas showed what the museum considered important for its collections and suggested how these look to visitors. The sofas were beyond being mere physical objects that had a practical purpose in that space. These were symbolic: These were invitations to visitors for that space. The presence of the sofas told me, “Hello, Sunghee, why don’t you enjoy the work of Monet and Matisse, resting your feet on these comfortable sofas. These are great and actually need some time to look at. If you miss the opportunity to appreciate them in the Carnegie Museum of Art, you will probably regret it.”

Even though I addressed the problematic situation of the non-Western objects displayed at the art museums in this chapter, I do not want to argue how non-Western objects should be displayed or what better ways of doing so would be. Rather, I argue that all spaces in that museum should provide an invitation to each visitor in a way that appeals to their cultural backgrounds and multiple entry points rather than providing special invitations to selected visitors in those ways that convey what museum professionals consider important for the collections available to visitors.

Modernistic disposition, which is rendering Western cultures as a mainstream of cultures and standard of world culture, thereby, marginalizing other cultures as Others, was inscribed in some places of the Carnegie Museum of Art but it was performed as a
hidden narrative in a very subtle way. Whether visitors are keenly aware of it or not, when they encounter it at the first place, however, the modernistic narratives as a hidden narrative would be inscribed in visitors’ memories, which might be unnoticed at the moment but might be embodied into other forms or be actualized into real feelings later, just as it did for me.

In brief, the modernistic value as a hidden narrative which objectifies Others as marginalized and creates value-laden contrast between a center and margins was not identified at the first place but was revealed when my marginalized identity as an Asian who was once colonized was activated to perform. Namely, the hidden narrative was not to be invisible because it was originally hidden but it became invisible in the collaboration with a visitor who was not interested in confronting it.

**Art Museum as Empowered Space**

Even though there was no surveillance system in the art museums, the visitors seemed to create a self-surveillance system by choosing to perform their public self. Other visitors looked at me and I also looked at other visitors in the same space, because I was a part of the whole visitor group as well as an individual visitor and a member of my social group. I knew my behaviors would be objects to be observed by other visitors, just as I observed other visitors’ behaviors. The notice of this kind of self-surveillance system might let me look for the space where I can be free from a self-surveillance system and I would be relaxed.
For example, I felt as if my choices were already determined by other parties,
when I realized that there was no alternative choice for me to choose. Otherwise, I have
sometimes felt a kind of pressure, anxiety, or discomfort or frustration. The presence of
these negative emotions seemed that I was looking for a space where I could be relaxed
emotionally.

Consequently, those emotional needs seemed to create aspiration toward the space
where I was not watched and free from the public mode of my behaviors. The following
story shows how I found the space which disarmed my self-surveillance system and
created emotional relaxation.

*In the garden*…

*The place where I am sitting now is so cool. Windy. Shadowed. There is no one to
restrict my behavior, no matter what I am doing. Relaxed. It is a kind of park. Over there,
there is a construction zone. An excavator is working. The workers are working hard.
The sound that the car is making seems to be very loud. But it does not bother me. The
sound is not too noisy for me. Is the machine operating under reduced noise? Or
temporarily, am I deaf? Am I sleepy? Oh, I got it! The sound of the waterfall, on the other
side, compensates for the noisy sound of the construction. All the sounds are mixed. Here,*

*2* I wrote this story in the middle of my family visits and individual visits at the Outdoor
Sculpture Garden at the Carnegie Museums, while other stories were first written partly
in the middle of trips as forms of notes and memos and then written completely after all
the visits. So, this story was written in present tense, while others were written in past
tense. To deliver what I actually experienced at the moment vividly, I quoted the story in
present tense.
is a space in the middle. The place where I am sitting is blocked from any noise and from any time-going space. The place is time-free and noise-free.

In this space, people eat, read, relax, laugh, talk, and wait. There are tables for one or two people, and tables for four people. The trees are making shadows. Under those shadows, in the hot summer, I feel the wind, and I feel cool wind passing by me. Windy. Windy. I can see inside the museum through the transparent glass window. I can see people who are walking inside the hallway of the museum, and I can see the artworks, which are displayed inside the museum. Even though I am supposed to enter the space through the glass entrance, to walk through the hallway like those people and to look at the works of art displayed in the hallway later, even though I will be a member of the museum and I will be a museum visitor, now I belong to the middle space. I am sitting in a buffer zone separated from the everyday real world and the special world inside the museum. I am meditating in the middle of the two.

Absolutely, this space is separated from the museum and the real world of people working busily. I can have an isolated space of my own, but I do not feel any loneliness. Instead, I feel a kind of freedom. It is because right now I make my own time separated from my family, while my family has gone toward our home and I have just left. I have no responsibility for my family as a mother or wife. Am I now enjoying my own time without family duties? Does it make me feel free?

Oops, I did not notice these sculptures yesterday. There are five sculptures. Even though I passed by the same space three days ago on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, I did not notice that the garden contained five sculptures. Even on Sunday, when we ate our lunch and I said to Lee, “This place is really cool and I like that,” but I did not notice
that this place had sculptures. I just thought it was a fine place to eat lunch because no one interrupted our eating... I just thought, “This place allows us to do something freely.” Actually, this is the reason why I started to write something here. I thought it would a good place to do something freely. I thought it would be the right place to do something that is not museum work or like a museum trip. (Individual visit to CMOA on July 9, 2007).

Why do you think I felt this way at the Outdoor Sculpture Court? Due to the blowing wind and cool shadow, did I feel a kind of freedom? Actually, I did not notice when I wrote this piece at the garden what I felt exactly. But, through reflection and analysis, I realized that I continuously sought to be relieved and comfortable beyond the pursuit of appropriate manners. The experience at this garden space became a turning point of my whole experience at the Carnegie Museum of Art. Now I can locate this piece of writing in the map of my narrative identity—how the experience was related to other experiences and what I did. Even though I did not notice it before, my experience as a member of a family at the Carnegie Museum of Art, the story reflects, shows that I was looking for a space where I was not watched and free from the public mode of my behaviors. This space of the garden became for me a kind of safe space or middle space of the real world and the museum where I could not be watched even though it belonged to the museum. As I wrote in the story above, because I felt that “It was a fine place to eat lunch because no one interrupted our eating.” I internalized the message “This place allows us to do something freely.” So, when I need some space to relax, I used this garden space for my own purpose and I could successfully achieve my goal. Probably, the positive environmental mode that I got through the invitation of the museum as a city-
garden at the beginning of the museum visits would be reinforced for me to use the space for my relaxation.

In other words, one of the hidden narratives in the Carnegie Museum of Art is to provide space where a visitor can be free from the public mode and be relaxed physically and emotionally. As a result of being endowed of this free space, I could start to initiate making my own interpretation of art works. At the moment when I wrote my reflection notes at the Outdoor Sculpture Court, the place became an empowered space. I could freely talk about what I felt within the boundary of the museum, even though it was a middle space between the real world and the museum. As a result of narrative-making at the empowered space, this kind of freedom made me become interested in the sculpture that occupied that place. I really became interested in the tile of the sculpture and the subject matter. Finally, I started to view one sculpture near me with my eyes and my own words. In other words, in this empowered space, when I looked at the work of art, I could initiate defining it myself with my words, not their words, beyond being defined.

I was telling about the work of art through my concern and my interests

I looked at one head-down female sculpture next to me for a long time. Even though I don’t know the title of the work, I cannot avoid asking, “Does it fit this space?” What space? This space? If I were the curator or if I were responsible for this place, I might place sculptures whose subject matter would be about thinking, laughing, dreaming, and talking. The sculpture here now is nodding her head between her two legs and seems to struggle with some suffering or unpleasant memory. She looks very tired.
and exhausted. She does not seem to be relaxed in that space judging from her gesture. She needs space to raise her head up and needs someone to talk with her. If I could make her lie down in a soft bed, and if I could present her with a soft armchair to make her relax, if I could let her be relaxed with a mild smile….Oh no….It would be fine, if she did not show a smile for me and if only she could show her face and look at someone who can talk with her (Individual visit to CMOA on July 9, 2007).

In this way, I subvert the museum’s narratives. The reason why I can say that I was subverting the museum’s narratives is due to the following discovery on the designated purpose of the Outdoor Sculpture Court, which is different from what I expected in the first place.

Intrinsic motivation toward getting more information initiated

I started to wander around this space to see the other sculptures installed here. I was curious about the titles of the sculptures. What was the title of that one? Why was it displayed here? Does it have a specific reason? What is the purpose of the Outdoor Sculpture Court? Was the practical use of this space for museum visitors or community people? I was approaching each sculpture and started to appreciate them, taking pictures of them. Meanwhile, I realized that I could not find out the titles of each sculpture. I looked at other sculptures. Those did not have any titles either. I was so curious about the non-titled sculptures. It was an unusual sight in a museum setting. I was starting to guess why they were not placed there. Intentionally, do the museum professionals omit the title to make the sculpture become a part of the Garden rather
than positioning independent installation pieces installed in the Garden? Umm...they might have intended for the visitor to guess the titles or that the visitors fill in their own blanks. Umm...there is the sign “Do Not Touch.” If they place the sign “Do Not Touch” and do not place the title or object label of the sculpture, it would be the intention of the museum. What could it be? Otherwise, if they forgot to place the object labels by the objects, it might be too negligible. I just tilted my head in confusion/wonder (Individual visit to CMOA on July 9, 2007).

At the end of my research trip to the Carnegie Museums, I found the answer to my curiosity and wrote the following piece below. At the moment I found the information panel in the hallway between the Carnegie Museum of Art and the Carnegie Museum of Natural history and realized that it was placed indoors. This may seem that they were not too concerned with visitors who were enjoying this outdoors as they would not have seen the information panel hidden inside.

**One-way communication even through transparent glass**

Today I got my answer to what I was curious about. I was wondering why the sculpture did not have the object label displayed. Walking down the hallway between the Carnegie Museum of Art and the Carnegie Museum of Natural history, I looked at the Sculpture Garden through the transparent glass window. There, I could see the information panel about the sculpture installed in the Garden. The letter size of the information panel has titles of each sculpture and materials and artist—basic information as object label. However, what I realized was that it was placed toward the
inside of the museum. If I were outside the Garden, I could not read the letters. It was designed for visitors who were looking at the sculpture from the inside. The communication through the information panel was designed to be a one-way physical mode of communication. I remember that the museum hours were placed on the outer area of the entrance so that visitors coming from the outside could read it while entering the museum. If we follow this logic, then the information panel placed toward the inside means that it was intended for visitors walking along the hallway and looking at the outside display from that standpoint. If so, the intention of the Sculpture Garden was for neither outside to inside or, as I guessed, the middle space or safe space, but inside to outside—for visitors who were looking at the outside from the inside. The transparent glass window was the perfect device for a two-way mode of communication between the insider and the outsider. But it was useless here, for they did not seem to show any consideration for communication in that way (Individual visit to CMOA on July 13, 2007).

Even though the original goal of the Outdoor Sculpture Court was slightly different from what I noticed about that space, the presence of the Outdoor Sculpture Court physically created the middle zone between the museum and the real world, where I could be relaxed emotionally and could initiate empowering myself. Its hidden role was to help me perform my private self, beyond the level of creating visitor-friendly environments which was noticed in the at-a-glance narrative. For me, the Outdoor Sculpture Court was an invitation to the city garden and an encouragement to perform my personal agenda within the museum.
Chapter 7

NEGOTIATION, NARRATIVES-MAKING, AND EMPOWERMENT

So far, I have described the narratives of the museum, focusing on the intersection with my narratives. Specifically, I discussed how I as a visitor who has an international background and who is a female, a former curator, a mother, and a doctoral student, had experienced the museums. The previous three chapters are descriptions of my struggles to make sense of the discrepancies between the museum’s narratives and my narratives. In other words, these are the records of negotiation between the two.

Now, I will discuss the strategies I have used to negotiate my meaning-making process. I will look for the strategies for negotiation for me to incorporate in order to confirm, to refuse, or to subvert the museum’s narratives. In particular, I will also investigate what I gain through these negotiations and what it means to me as a visitor who has an international background and is a female, a former curator, a mother, and a doctoral student. Finally, at the end of this chapter, I will discuss what enabled me to construct my narrative identity and how it helped me empower myself at the museums.

Strategies for Negotiation

Many researchers report that museum fatigue causes a specific behavioral pattern called exit-oriented behaviors (Evans, 1995; Hein, 1998; Schouten, 1987). The exit-oriented behaviors are explained as follows:
The longer they stay in a museum, the faster they move towards the exit and the greater the length of time visitors spend in the galleries, the less attention they pay to the displays. (Schouten, 1987, p. 259)

More recently, David Dean (1996) has reported that visitors increase exit-oriented behaviors such as looking for the exit or paying little attention to what they should look at near the exit, when they are not physically and intellectually comfortable. In a general sense, exit-oriented behaviors imply a negative emotion while touring in the exhibition. It is assumed that visitors might experience an overwhelming emotion that they cannot manage properly, thereby letting them decide to find exits. To reduce exit-oriented behaviors, researchers investigate the ways visitors can spend more time in the exhibition preventing early exit-oriented experiences. Exit-oriented behaviors connote negative experiences.

However, in any other sense, if the exit-oriented behavior can be viewed from the perspective of the individual visitor, it can tell an alternative story. It can be viewed as evidence of the control over the museum’s narrative in the perspective of the visitor, even though it is very minimal.

For example, storytellers choose their topics and their mode of storytelling, attuned to the context where one is telling, to the type of audience and to the level of audience. In the same way, visitors as storytellers can choose the mode of storytelling and their reactions, when they construct their stories through their interaction with the museum. If storytellers (or visitors) feel that the audience (here, the museum) is welcoming them to tell their stories, they can actively tell their stories, considering a way that favors the audience’s interests, concerns, the level of knowledge and the level of engagement, as explained in chapter 2. On the contrary, if storytellers feel that the
audience (here, the museum) is reluctant to invite them to speak, they can also choose their mode of telling, reflecting its unwillingness to invite them. They might choose to respond to the audience in the same level of invitation—nominal invitation—or switch their mode of telling, looking for strategies to engage the audiences more actively.

In the same way, visitors can choose to do exit-oriented behaviors as a response to negative experiences. Visitors might choose to move out of the exhibition gallery or skip what they are supposed to look at in the situation where there is no choice for visitors to express discomfort except for exiting the situation so as not to look at it further. In this sense, exit-oriented behavior can be viewed as a kind of active action to control the museum’s narratives.

In my stories in the previous chapter, I stopped looking at the work and moved on towards another work when I got bothered by the insensitivity of museum professionals (see the section Detour Experiences in chapter 4). In addition, my early exit was also the result of failing to get what I expected out of the exhibit (see the sections Minimal Information Represented and Disembodied Voices in chapter 5). My behaviors of exit-oriented experiences describe my negative experience of the museum but at the same time it could be only one alternative way for me to express my discomfort. That is, I chose to exit and stop looking when I was not satisfied with the museum-going experience. This was a type of active action to express my discomfort.

One of my strategies to negotiate between my experience and the museum’s narrative was not participating actively in the museum’s narrative that museum professionals provided and structured for museum visitors. However, this strategy was
the final way for me to choose in order to express my response—very passive resistance. I actively chose not to continue my looking and participating.

Another strategy to enable an active negotiation process was to look for all possible sources to use when I got into problematic situations. Even though I was disempowered by internalizing the museum’s narrative as a gendered space with my blaming-culture (that is, I was shaped by the museum’s narrative of gendered space) when I was situated in the minimal information presentation practices (see sections Detour Experience in chapter 4 and Minimal Information Represented in chapter 5). I looked for all other available sources to get appropriate information such as a security guard or a docent or other museum staff.

In this context, my second strategy to negotiate discrepancies between my narratives and the museum’s narratives is to inquire actively what I wanted to get — active inquiry. Even though I was partly shaped by the museum’s narrative, blaming myself continuously, I was continuously seeking missing information by actively looking for available sources for my inquiry. My strategy to seek appropriate information continuously was maximized and I reached a meaningful outcome when I had an opportunity to maneuver possible narratives for my own purposes in socially accepted manners. This means that I was not a visitor who was constantly passively shaped to the museum’s narratives, even though I was sometimes. The story told in chapter 6 (see section Art Museum as Empowered Space in chapter 6), which I wrote in the middle of a research trip to the Carnegie Museum of Art on the first day of the scheduled individual visit, shows how well I maximized the opportunity to be free from the pressures on museums as a publicly monitored space, as described in chapter 5. I actively constructed
my narratives by choosing three strategies—passive resistance, active inquiry, and subverting narratives in socially accepted manners—into each context in which I was situated. Through my choices, I could manage the museum’s narratives even though I was strongly influenced by the museum’s narratives.

Finally, I found another interesting strategy of my own to negotiate the narratives of museums. When I encountered a narrative that was too overwhelming to manage, I chose to evade it. I tried to avoid confronting the narrative because unconsciously I did not want to confront the truth that came out of it. The truth that I encountered in the African and Asian section was the marginalization of my cultural background in the mainstream western culture. But my feeling of marginalization and the feeling of being offended were disguised as a sense of confusion. In the first place of encountering overwhelming narratives, I chose to evade my honest feeling because the confrontation of it was too painful for me.

According to Albert Memmi (1965/1991), the marginalized tend not to accept their marginalization because it causes them to recall painful memories. So, they usually choose not to disclose marginalizing experiences, just as I concealed my helplessness in the disguise of being confused during my first encounter with the African Art and Art Before 1300 room. However, I could finally admit my marginalization through the narrative-making process. This starting point will become more critical and I will detail it in the next section of this chapter.

Briefly, I have incorporated four strategies—passive resistance, active inquiry, subverting, and, finally, disguising—to confirm or refuse the museum’s narratives. When I encountered narratives that were too overwhelming, I chose to disguise my real
feelings. If it seemed manageable with a little extra effort, I invested my time to figure it out. But when my efforts proved to be futile, I chose the exit-oriented behavior of not actively participating in the designated route of a museum tour even though it was passive resistance. Finally, my strategy to seek proper information with my extra time investment was maximized when I got an opportunity to subvert possible narratives into my own purposes in socially accepted manners.

**Narrative Identity Formation**

Through the four strategies that I incorporated, I could adjust myself to the narratives of the museums, sometimes being influenced by narratives of the museums in both positive ways and negative ways and sometimes shaping my narratives strongly against the narratives of the museums: I was sometimes swept into the flow of narratives of the museums, being unaware of what it meant to me, and I sometimes did something, even though I did not know the meaning of what I was doing, while I sometimes actively inquired about what was untold and was not available for me.

For example, I should say that I did not clearly identify what the intention of the Hall of Sculpture’s design was meant to convey—I was an ambiguous visitor at the beginning of touring. My first impression about the Hall of Sculpture was totally shaped by the designers’ intention of the Hall of Sculpture and by my modernistic disposition. However, at some points, I started to articulate its hidden meanings. How was it possible for me to see the hidden narratives of museums?
Margaret Lindauer (2006) referred to a visitor who can identify a museum’s hidden curriculum or unspoken narrative and who can identify who is privileged and who is marginalized from the display as a critical visitor:

The critical museum visitor notes what objects are presented, in what ways, and for what purposes. She or he also explores what is left unspoken or kept off display. And she or he asks, who has the most to gain or the most to lose from having this information, collection, or interpretation publicly presented? (p. 204)

Lindauer (2006) also argues that museum visitors need to become critical visitors because it is the only way for visitors to make changes in market-driven museum practices.

Towards the democratization of museum practices, she seems to pursue not the top-down approach but the bottom-up approach through the demands of museum visitors. Doing so, she emphasizes that visitors are critical as agents of transformation.

In her terms, my second experience in the Hall of Sculpture falls in the category of the critical visitor because I could identify hidden messages inscribed at the Carnegie Museum of Art and clearly identify who was gaining dominance and who was marginalized through the display as mentioned in the previous chapter. However, as mentioned before, I was not a critical visitor at the beginning of the tour, when I visited the Hall of Sculpture and internalized the logic of modernism that the Hall was conveying. At that moment, I did not see the hidden curriculum of the space. It was not until I recalled the experience I had in the unnumbered room and connected it to the experience of the Hall of Sculpture that I started to look at the space critically. So, what made me become a critical visitor? How was I transformed into a critical visitor?

Let’s re-visit the moment when I found out the information about the unnumbered room before I made the second visit to the Hall of Sculpture. The day before, when I
entered the room of the African Art and Art before 1300, even though I felt that the
display pattern of the rooms distracted me a little bit differently from the other rooms, I
did not make any extreme emotional responses. My actual emotional response was
disguised at the moment under my consciousness, because revealing the emotion itself
was painful for me. There were some negated memories that I was reluctant to recall: I
was still reluctant to honor my memory of marginalization and I still kept a desire to
 evade the encounter with the memory. The negated memories oppressed one side of me
in an unconscious level.

However, the memories started to be disarmed when I consciously tried to make a
contrast, as recommended by Bruner (1996), through my narrative-making processes.
Noticing that the same kinds of objects were displayed in different ways in the two
different spaces, I made a sheer contrast between the two sections of African Art/Art
before 1300 and the Hall of Sculpture. In particular, a disarmed emotional response came
out when I confronted what was beyond my level of tolerance. Under the disguise of my
real feeling of being uncomfortable, I continuously persuaded myself that the museum
was not a place that should feature an Eastern Art collection. However, when I
confronted what I could not figure out, my disarmed real feeling came out in the form of
being upset. According to Bruner (1996), my outburst of feeling of resentment is a very
reasonable process, when I got a “thwarted expectation” (p. 148). My discovery of the
unnumbered room and the discrepancy between the unnumbered room and the Hall of
Sculpture, however, provided me with room for the direct upspring of my emotional
response and my concern.
Finally, I reacted to the unfair treatment of non-Western objects with resentment: I was not consciously aware of the unfair treatment of non-Western objects but I reacted in the form of resentment, as explained by Bruner above. At that moment, I was not detached from the museum’s narrative. Rather, I made a personal connection with the museum’s narrative. At that moment, I embraced my marginalized experiences, and my hibernated metacognition started to be ignited. And finally, I realized it and accepted it—the fact that I was once marginalized and the memory of marginalization was still in me: I am ambivalent as a cultural mixture. I believe that the acquisition of this ambivalence could contribute to generating a positive power that makes me more critical.

It is often said that being critical is related to the cognitive ability to explain some phenomenon using a reasoning process of a clear cause-effect relationship. As seen in the first person narrative that Lindauer (2006) writes, being a critical visitor features a detached person who is not observed in the museum-going experience, keeping herself out of being tamed in dominant narratives, both social and cultural. In her terms, a critical visitor seems to be vigilant of social justice, unspoken message, prejudice, or marginalization and seems to be in need of being objective enough to make some judgment.

However, in my case, revealing my marginalization seems to be a starting point for me to become more critical: The marginalized admit that they are in fact being marginalized. It is at such a moment that the marginalized can recognize their situation more keenly and their imagination starts to be stretched out in order to intermix the museum’s narrative into their lived experience or vice versa, beyond confining their lived experience in the area of their personal identities alone.
Through closely connecting their personal identities with environments where they are related, they start to enlarge their personal dimension more holistically. When Maxine Greene (1995) asks us to perform an imaginative exercise, she sees the possibility that aesthetic sensibility can be and should be put into social, cultural, and political dimensions beyond the cognitive dimension through releasing our imagination. Without intermixing, negotiating, and transforming the narrative of a museum and that of visitors, visitors can merely repeat someone else’s words. In the same way, when a visitor interprets art work in museums, one can merely repeat someone else’s words, if one does not try to negotiate between the narrative of a museum and that of visitors, and transform one into the other.

In brief, through the processes of negotiation which allowed me actively to navigate the intersection between the museum’s narratives and my narratives, I could construct my narrative identities. What I mean by narrative identity in art museums is the construction of negotiation by connecting their personal identities with environments where they are related—objects, museums, and societies. As a result, I could be more critical and more empowered, which will be discussed in the following section in detail. What made me critical originated from the moment when I admitted my painful memory from the African Art and Art Before 1300 sections.

When I accepted the problem of the unnumbered room as my problem—my concern, my feeling of being offended—I could become a critical visitor. Likewise, I believe that visitors can be more critical when they can reveal themselves, their concerns, and their interests with their affiliation with the objects because revealing myself had me confront my concerns and my interests using my own words.
Narrative-making as Empowerment

Technically, revealing myself became possible through the act of writing of the incident, which facilitated the deepening of my metacognition. In a sense, I was not a strong decision-maker of my behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. However, I was an active agent of my thinking, behaving, and feeling through writing processes: In my autoethnographic narratives, I observed how I had acted in some specific situations; I reflected on what I had actually thought and felt; I actively connected experiences that I had at the three museums with the previous ones at museums; and, most importantly, I was willing to reveal my personal stories.

Through autoethnographic narrative-making, I gain the conceptual space to think about myself and reflect about my experiences. Narrative-making is a way for one to admit the raw source behind her/himself—emotions, ideas, impression, or thoughts—positively, and thereby to nurture its body: The raw source is integrated, amplified, and finally embodied through narrative-making. As Bruner (1996) argues, narrative-making enables one to transform the complex, ambiguous, and chaotic encounters with contexts into manageable or understandable accounts. He suggests that through the narrative-making processes a person can “convert the raw Trouble into a manageable Problem that can be handled with procedural muscle” (Bruner, 1996, p. 99). According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the narrative-making process is one way to transform what one finds puzzling, ambiguous, uncertain, or complex into something more orderly.

However, this is not possible until each individual can actively engage her/his present life with the past and the future. In other words, narrative-making enables people
to “tell remembered stories of [themselves] from earlier times as well as more current stories. All of these stories offer possible plotlines for [their] futures” (p. 60). According to Roberts (1997), “Just as literary texts can be written in a way that invites readers’ participation in their composition, exhibits can be developed in a way that engages visitors in constructing narratives about what they see” (p. 143).

In other words, this process requires two conditions: revealing oneself and weaving individual personal narratives with the social, cultural, and political narratives of museums. Weaving personal narratives with museum’s narratives enables an individual to position him/herself in a rhizomatous map, which I call a narrative identity, in the in-between space among visitors, objects, other people (such as museum staff and other visitors), and museum discourses.

For example, the story about the Outdoor Sculpture Court in section of Art Museum as Empowered Space in chapter 6 shows well how I could empower myself through the narrative-making process. At the moment when I wrote my reflection notes at the Outdoor Sculpture Court, the place became an empowered space. I could freely talk about what I felt within the boundary of the museum, even though it was a middle space between the real world and the museum. As a result of narrative-making at the empowered space, this kind of freedom made me become interested in the sculpture that occupies that place. I really became interested in the title of the sculpture and subject matter. Finally, I started to view one sculpture near me with my own eyes. Namely, in this empowered space, when I looked at the work of art, I could initiate defining myself with my words, not their words, beyond being defined.
Charles Garoian (2001) considers “the relationship between the museum and its visitors as [a] dialogic process that enables a play between the public narratives of the museum and the private narratives of the viewers” (p. 234) and asks visitors to deconstruct institutional power by implementing five performative strategies — performing perception, autobiography, museum culture, interdisciplinariness, and performing the institution—thereby, finally empowering them. He emphasizes that visitors can “learn to expose, examine, and critique the public dominant culture as they perform their private memories and cultural histories” (p. 247). Here, their private memories and cultural histories refer to their own agendas. This means that visitors are encouraged to reveal their personal concerns, interests, and preferences in the performative sites of the museum in order to obtain empowerment.

Particularly, his emphasis on performing visitors’ subjectivities is well represented in his second performative strategy—autobiography. Unlike a third-person narrative, which is generally told to undifferentiated visitors but is de-personalized and dis-embodied, Garoian (2001) argues, autobiography, which is a first-person narrative, has the power to make a visitor write not-yet-being-said personal narratives, which are otherwise ignored and finally contribute to fostering multiple voices heard in museum cultures.

In the same line of thinking with Garoian, I would add an additional strategy to enable me to empower my self-narrative making, through which I was able to create better self-knowledge to discover my ambiguous impressions, feelings, or thoughts about those issues that I could not initially identify clearly when I negotiated with the museum’s narrative. In any sense, it is other side of the same coin of autobiography
which is proposed by Garoian (2001) above. That is because he focuses more on the perspective of museum professionals who provide performative strategies to visitors, while I focus more on the perspective and experience of a visitor who is performing herself within museum cultures—in my terms, negotiating between the museum’s narratives and my narratives.

I believe that the negotiation process starts in the empowered space first. Without empowerment, a visitor is controlled by the narrative of museums or a visitor would be a total guest or passer-by or spectator who is not making any meaningful outcomes from the museum-going experience. Here, meaningful outcomes mean the meaning-making process working with the inner source of the visitor as well as the outer source of the knowledge system. A visitor can be shaped by the narratives of museums but, in any sense, the act of “being shaped” itself is also a part of the museum visitor. But if empowerment is not given, the only thing that the visitor can get from the museum experience is what the museum makes available to them.

Empowerment at the museum space does not start from the distance from visitors. In addition, in my context, it is not the opposite word for oppression in the general meaning. Empowering visitors means activating their passivity and personalizing them from anonymity of the undifferentiated mass. This means the departure from depersonalized voice-making. In other words, it is the encouragement to reveal their “private memories and cultural histories,” as Garoian (2001, p. 247) argues, or contextualizing visitors in their personal histories in the relationship with the museums. These kinds of personal engagements are the first steps needed in order to engage visitors to narrative-making processes and turn them into active storytellers.
According to Holstein and Gubrium (2000), an active storyteller is a person who might construct her/his stories, articulating to her/his audiences, plots, and settings for narrating. Likewise, an empowered museum visitor as an active storyteller is a person who constructs personalized stories, however tiny, however immature, and however personal these are, and who continues to build her/ his stories more articulately toward the objects displayed by constantly editing, adjusting, and revising narratives of the museum.

Narratives grow out of one’s lived experiences but lived experiences are not the same as narratives. Narratives do not naturally burst forth from one’s lived experiences. Rather, narratives are constructed from one’s lived experience, when a visitor as an active storyteller shapes interactional relationships between the museum and their own by articulating their personal story. Specifically, in order to make these engagements possible, visitors can tell their own lived experiences, which can be the sources articulated by visitors through interaction. Through the act of shaping, the storytellers interpret what they construct. Finally, through the act of interpreting, storytellers construct a better understanding of their narratives.

In brief, it is possible for them to construct their narrative identity in their own ways from their own lived experiences, when they can be active storytellers, editing, controlling, and selecting the narratives that were generated in the museum experiences.

In the light of finding invisible messages told at the exhibition place, the empowered visitor seems to be the same as the critical visitor described in the previous section of chapter 7. However, the two are different at the starting points. Empowered museum visitors start their journey with their interests, their standpoints, their concerns,
and build that relationship with objects displayed in museums and any components that consist of museum works. Sometimes their journey leads to gaining critical insights in museum display and museum practices but sometimes it ends up in a different direction—namely, sometimes it leads to incomplete questions, the confirmation of a personal statement, or bizarre confusion.

In brief, there are many ways to become a critical visitor. One of the ways is to encourage a visitor to build a personal agenda in a public museum world. This way of encouraging helps a visitor notice what her or his interests, concerns, and working beliefs are. Delving into one’s folk psychology negotiating with the narratives of museums helps a visitor to become empowered through narrative-making processes.

In this context, if a museum encourages a visitor to narrate what one experiences at the empowered safe space conceptually and physically, the empowered museum visitor would imprint one’s narrative-making experience on its memory at the moment of telling. The moment of narrative identity construction at an art museum does not tell about what one can get from the experience of telling on the spot, but it would tell something in the future in the same way that I discovered the hidden narratives of museums.
Chapter 8
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

So far, I have investigated my autoethnographic experience as a visitor and as a researcher, both alone and through family involvement, while I was engaged in interpretive processes at the three different museums, focusing more on my experiences at the Carnegie Museum of Art in order to explore how the art museum’s narrative influenced my interpretive experiences and also how I responded to the specific contexts of museum narratives when I interpreted a work of art. Namely, what I have investigated so far was the museum’s narrative and my own narrative. Specifically speaking, it was the intersection of these two narratives and the negotiation between them.

In chapters 4, 5, and 6, I narrated my stories of how I have negotiated between two narratives with my analytical interpretation, and in chapter 7, I discussed what the stories meant to me. In this chapter, I will first discuss three research questions that guide this study, as well as the implications of my findings. And I will conclude with a discussion of the significance of this study in the field of art education and museum education. Finally, I will suggest implications for further research directions which might be developed more elaborately in the future. The three research questions guiding my research are restated below.

1) How did the narratives inscribed in the three museums’ exhibitions and related programs encourage or discourage me to create my own interpretations from my lived
experiences? What narratives did the museums make available to me and what were my narratives when I visited the three museums with my family and individually?

2) What interpretive strategies did I use to confirm or refuse the museums’ narratives? What strategies did I use to negotiate meaning-making?

3) How was I transformed through the negotiation process? How were my identities constructed through these negotiation processes?

Summary and Discussion of Research Questions

Research Question One

To investigate the narratives that the Carnegie Museum of Art made available to me, I wanted to trace my lived experiences as a visitor. Getting objective narratives which were available for everyone was not the goal of this research. Instead, I planned to inquire about the narratives of museums, as I experienced them.

I narrated three types of museum narratives: the at-a-glance narrative, the exhibitionary narrative, and the hidden narrative. The narratives were organized from the first impressions of the Carnegie Museum of Art into specific and in-depth knowledge about exhibitions, which were identified as at-a-glance narratives and exhibitionary narratives respectively. The final layer of the narratives was identified as hidden narratives because I had not noticed them at the first places and I had also not noticed which part of my identities was intersected with the hidden narratives at the first place. It was like a deep-rooted scar which was invisible even to me, because I had tried to hide it
and I believed that I could hide it. In this way, the hidden narratives were performed in a very subtle way but had tremendous impacts on my perceptions and behaviors in museums.

**At-a-Glance Narrative**

What I first found as an at-a-glance narrative was the general impression that the CMOA created. The CMOA stands with a very imposing look in the classical architectural style. Unlike the informed research of Duncan (1995) on what the classical architectural style might provide visitors, the CMOA did not impose an overwhelming atmosphere to me because it was inviting a visitor and potential visitors by incorporating a visitor-friendly entrance and un-intimidating pathway to the museum through a garden-like space. In this sense, the Carnegie Museum of Art seems to show a good example of a city museum that tries to incorporate recreational spaces that the park museum can hope to provide to the visitors.

What I first noticed about the physical context was that the museum professionals’ attention to the needs of a visitor was limited in the range of the service and in the depth of service. I did not have any problem at noticeable places such as the entrances in finding my way or the needed information. However, there were some neglected areas where visitors could not feel considered in services and programming. My stories in this section showed how minimal information controlled the behaviors of visitors, while rich information encouraged a visitor to get a fresh experience.
The third at-a-glance narrative was that there was little intervention for my viewing activities at the exhibition space: neither encouraged nor bothered. The conceptual context employed at the exhibition space was to be taken over solely by my capacities to remind me of my personal memory, my prior knowledge, and interests. Interestingly, the conceptual context implicit in the display was explicitly shown in the physical context of the space. Another at-a-glance narrative was investigated through educational programs offered to an exhibition or pertinent to it. The learning environments, which are little supported from the physical structure and depend much on the ability of human resources, seemed to perform their educational goal smoothly.

Thus far, I have described at-a-glance narratives according to the first impression of the museum, the physical contexts, and the conceptual contexts and educational programs to be involved. The presence of at-a-glance narratives is important because these were my initial responses to the museum’s narrative that the museums made available to me. This type of narrative might be one that visitors who visit the museums the first time or visit the museums on a yearly basis might bring quickly and spontaneously with their museum-going experience.

A visitor in this stage seems to have ambiguous and inarticulate feelings about what one gets. That is, even though a visitor experiences something, it may be unclear exactly what it means to her/him. For this reason, instead of defining it as a grounded experience for a museum visitor who visits the museum for the first time, it would be more appropriate to see how these initial experiences would be articulated and connected with other experiences when a visitor makes repeated visits into exhibitionary narratives,
and finally how these at-a-glance narratives, even though these were not articulated and vague at the beginning, became the undercurrent in the hidden narratives.

**Exhibitionary Narratives**

The second type of narrative was the exhibitionary narrative, which mainly covers how display patterns, the installation of media kiosks, the environmental settings in an exhibition space, and written materials such as flyers, signs, wall texts, and object labels influenced my interpretive experience directly—emotionally, intellectually, and physically.

What I discovered first in the exhibition was the minimal information arrangement in the art exhibition display, which seemed to be in the pursuit of visual purity. While it might help a visitor build her inner dialogue between the work of art and a visitor according to her personal interests, this type of display made the visitor frustrated when she wanted to decode the artwork with the assistance of the museum. This type of frustration deprived me of my sense of control—a basic condition to secure positive learning outcomes.

The lack of control over the viewing activity was also created through the presentation of lineal information in the exhibition space, when I could not get further access to additional information, which became another narrative that I discovered at the exhibition space. In particular, an advanced visitor who is looking for further information might be frustrated when there is no access to it. Actually, it is not the issue of acquiring the proper information that a visitor wants to get, but the issue of envisioning the agency
of a visitor as a stakeholder of museum practices. Regulating visitors by providing limited access and pushing a visitor’s behavior into what museum professionals think reduces the level of engagement of visitors into objects displayed. In the same way, ensuring further access to additional information is a way of providing the agency of searching information and making decisions for their choices. In other words, providing a visitor with multiple accesses to further information is the act of envisioning the visitor as the agent of interpretation.

However, what I noticed as exhibitionary narratives is closer to the counter example of envisioning a visitor as an agent of interpretation. For example, silencing visitors’ personal agendas, which is what I found as the third exhibitionary narrative, is to envision visitors the docile bodies of publicly monitored places. This process seemed to be supported by not advertising what they can do or by confining visitors’ choices by removing the alternatives through disembodied public voices. This type of disembodied public voice plays a role in refraining a visitor from making an active input into the exhibitions: It makes one be silent. Silencing a visitor’s personal agenda in an art museum can be done in a very deliberate way in the disguise of objective and scientific voices—namely, in the name of public space.

The written texts including object labels and wall texts at the Carnegie Museum of Art, which were didactic rather than interpretive, are another good example of envisioning a visitor as an observer of new knowledge offered in the exhibition space through the disembodied voices. The didactic labels and texts, which seemed to aim to deliver factual information, were delivered in the form of disembodied voices and
impersonal tones. This increased my level of knowledge through a delivery of information but was not effective in engaging me in the exhibition.

Throughout investigation of exhibitionary narratives, I had to cope with one consistent topic—the lack of control. The Carnegie Museum of Art facilitated me to lose my control over my viewing activity through a minimal and linear information arrangement, my collaboration toward publicly monitored places, and disembodied scientific and objective voices delivered in written texts. As Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1995) explained, acquiring a sense of control over viewing activity builds confidence, which becomes a basic condition for securing positive learning, as demonstrated in my stories. Building comfort, through which confidence is built in visitors, creates a safe space for visitors to reveal their personal agenda within the museum’s narratives. This could be the first step to turn away from disembodied public voices, thereby building the personal within the public, which would be one of the most effective ways to engage a visitor in the exhibition. Gaynor Kavanagh (2002) emphasizes that the most effective way to accomplish the social responsibility of the museum can be performed through “the recognition of highly complex personal worlds” (p.110). She also recommends working with the memory of visitors to build the personal within the public.

Intellectualizing and problematising, however important, are simply not sufficient in themselves. They need to be accompanied by a kind of emotional literacy, an ability to work sensitively and astutely with the thoughts and feelings of others. Memory is the pivot of the personal. Self-definition, identity and a sense of well-being hinge directly on it. …When museums actively engage with the personal, what is discovered is that the work is neither straightforward nor anticipated—just like memory itself. Working with memories implicitly means working with emotions, with the past, present and the future. (p. 111)
To build the personal within the public, as Kavanagh (2002) emphasizes, we need to consider very different ways of thinking and feeling. One good example we can see is in the visitor labels. Salwa Mikdadi Nashashibi (2003) reports that a visitor-written label becomes an entry point to encourage other visitors who saw the visitor-written labels to write another object labels. Analyzing visitor-written labels, Nashashibi (2003) realizes that “visitor responses included questions about the art’s meaning and value and indicated interaction with the art on an intellectual, not simply emotional, or descriptive level” (p. 24). She describes those who are concerned with the quality of visitor-written labels concerns such as:

Opponents believe too much interpretation popularizes contemporary art, trivialized the art and the artists’ profession, and alienates others who are able to decode the art. They view interpretation as the province of professional artists and curators and believe multiple labels compromise authority. They also question the validity of visitors’ responses, which may include inaccurate historical information and may inadvertently confuse or misinform. (pp. 24-25)

However, unlike general concerns, Nashashibi (2003) concludes the following: “Receiving permission to express their perspective and identity within the larger group or community promotes visitor confidence and sanctions multiple interpretations and meaningful interaction with the art” (2003, p. 24). This kind of experiment is prompted in the trial that enables the visitors’ individual voices not to disappear inside the disembodied public voices.
Hidden Narratives

The third type of narrative that I identified was the hidden narrative. It was something that I could not clearly articulate but substantially existed there in my experiences as uncomfortable feelings, frustration, or blaming. Through reflection on my ways of thinking and my pattern of habits that made me uncomfortable, frustrated and blaming, I can articulate what I named as a hidden narrative, which refers to what is rarely noticeable both at the first place and at the on-going experiences in the museums, but is undercurrent in those experiences and articulated later through further reflection.

The first hidden narrative was initiated by the new discovery about me. I thought I considered an art museum as a pleasant place to visit while a natural history museum or a science center would be the least likely to be visited. But actually, I realized that I also had a kind of pressure as well as pleasure going to an art museum—a kind of tension. Even though it was not a specific narrative that the Carnegie Museum of Art had directly created for me, it was what I had maintained as being pertinent to an art museum-going experience. The art museum ascribed the most responsibility to interpret the works to each visitor’s competence, which created an invisible pressure about the art museum-going experience.

The authority that an art museum has seems to be exercised strongly on my experience as a female visitor. Minimally represented information performed a gendered space for me by letting me blame myself when I could not find information properly, just as females have a tendency to blame themselves when they get in trouble in the male-dominant society. This is what I noticed as the second hidden narrative.
The third hidden narrative of the museum was articulated when I performed a mother’s identity. At the Carnegie Museum of Art, my mother’s identity as a forced gendered role seemed to be underrepresented. Unlike Falk’s recent theory of the visitor’s identity categorization (2006; 2009), a female’s identity in a museum seems to be situated in the physical conditions as well as the social conditions of the museum experience rather than to be originally nested into one personality.

I realized that the modernistic assumption was inscribed as another hidden narrative in some places of the Carnegie Museum of Art, which is rendering Western cultures as a mainstream of cultures and a standard of world culture, thereby, marginalizing other cultures as Others. Even though museums are normally categorized as cultural institutions, we need to ask what culture museums display and how it should be displayed. Even though I addressed the problematic situation of the non-Western objects displayed at the art museums in this chapter, I do not want to argue how non-Western objects should be displayed or what better ways of doing so would be. Rather, I argue that all spaces in that museum should provide an invitation to each visitor in a way that appeals to their cultural background and multiple entry points rather than providing special invitations to selected visitors in those ways that convey what museum professionals consider important for the collections available to visitors.

Finally, what I discovered as the fifth hidden narrative was the hidden role of the Outdoor Sculpture Court, which created physically the middle zone between the museum and the real world and safe space conceptually where I could be relaxed emotionally and could initiate empowering myself. For me, the Outdoor Sculpture Court was an invitation
to the city garden and an encouragement to perform my personal agenda within the museum.

What I found out through investigation of the hidden narratives was the correlation with the at-a-glance narratives. In the stage of at-a-glance narratives, something positive in my experience still appeared as a positive outcome in the hidden narrative, while something negative still appeared as a negative outcome in the hidden narrative, even though all were unclear, unarticulated, ambiguous and vague at the first stage. This implies that even though visitors are keenly unaware of what they get through the first contacts with museums, no matter how positive or negative these are, these would have impacts on the interpretive experience of visitors because these are still undercurrent in the visitors’ experience.

**Research Question Two**

As discussed above, some narratives were positive to but some were challenging to me and my family. While positive narratives directly resulted in positive learning experiences, challenging narratives frustrated my viewing activities by discouraging me from continuing to look at and read them and reflect about them. In chapter 7, I tried to inquire into the second research question about the interpretive strategies I used to confirm or refuse the museums’ narratives. I found out that I have incorporated four strategies—passive resistance, active inquiry, subverting, and, finally, disguising—to negotiate the museum’s narratives when I encountered troubling situations.
When I encountered an overwhelming narrative, I chose to disguise my real feelings. If it seemed to be handled with my extra efforts, I invested my time and efforts to figure it out. But when my efforts proved to be useless, I chose an exit-oriented behavior of not actively participating in the designated route of a museum tour and just leaving. Finally, my strategy to seek proper information with my extra time investment was maximized, when I had an opportunity to subvert possible narratives into my own purposes in socially accepted manners.

These four strategies demonstrate specifically that a visitor is not a passive victim toward a troubling museum narrative but an active agent to control a troubled scenario in her or his own ways. Sometimes, it looked like a mere passive resistance that shows little positive influence on the museum’s narrative. However, sometimes, it yields a subversive power which might turn the original supposed purposes into my own.

Envisioning a visitor as an active agent to modify and edit a museum’s narratives invites the comprehensive definition of narratives of museums and visitors. In the general sense, there are three types of narratives: institutional narratives, curators’ narratives, and visitors’ narratives. It seems that the former two types of narratives might be overlapped by and even be grouped with the museums’ narratives, but visitors’ narratives are distinctly separate from these two types of narratives. However, such an approach might envision visitors’ narratives as fixed discourses without being able to negotiate with the other two, which may cause visitors to be viewed as “passive victims” (Noordegraaf, 2004, p. 15) of institutional narratives or curators’ narratives, especially when visitors cannot make their own multiple stories.
However, as shown in my stories, visitors’ narratives are not fixed entities. They shift continuously and adjust themselves into new museum environments by negotiating with both the institutional narratives and the curators’ narratives. This can occur because visitors become active agents “who by their physical presence, behavior, and viewing habits have an active role in shaping the museum space” (Noordegraaf, 2004, p. 15) when they produce their narratives.

In this context, Noordegraaf’s (2004) notion of scripts in the museum narratives, which locates museums’ narratives in the historical context in which the museums are situated, is very insightful. Noordegraaf’s (2004) idea of script broadens these narratives to move beyond being mere social and cultural systems to what she calls a “visual culture” (p. 15). She defines a museum’s presentation in relation to this visual culture as a script, which refers to the visual documentation of the museum in relation to its visual cultures. This is first comprised of all of the components that mediate between the museum and its visitors. These include “the location, architecture and layout of the building, the order and arrangement of the objects, the various display techniques and the different means of communicating with the visitor” (pp. 18-19). However, the most interesting aspect of Noordegraaf’s (2004) concept is that she made room for visitors in her notion of scripts. She says:

The notion of script is a useful tool to analyze the complex relations between the intentions of designers, the objects themselves and their potential or imagined users… In reality, people continually misread or scramble or resist the museum’s cues to some extent; or they actively invent, consciously or unconsciously, their own programs. (pp. 14-15)

Noordegraaf (2004) makes room for visitors as active agents who sometimes resist the museum’s narrative and sometimes invent their own narratives. She does not suggest,
however, that the museum’s narratives and the visitor’s narratives cannot be compatible or that there is always tension between them. Rather, each point of the tripod—the museum, objects, and visitors—is considered equally in her notion of a museum’s presentation as a script. This makes the interplay of the three visible when they are permeated and are negotiated. The four strategies that I articulated show specifically how a visitor actively functioned in this script of the museum.

**Research Question Three**

The third research question concerned my benefit and loss as a result of negotiation-making processes. What should I get and what should I miss from these negotiations? And, why should museum professionals care about it? Because my study was based on my self-knowledge, my stories showed how I was transformed from one into another—namely, from an uncritical visitor into a critical visitor. In Lindaur’s (2006) terms, a critical visitor is a person who can identify hidden messages and articulate marginalized voices. When I encountered my painful memories and decided to confront them, I could be transformed into a critical visitor. This was initiated by the activity to find out the hidden narratives.

As one of the ways to be critical in museum settings, visitors need to start to think about themselves first—who they are at the museum, what their concerns and interests are, and how their concerns or interests are related to the exhibition, display, or programs. I believe one begins to become a critical visitor by revealing him/herself, not by hiding
him/herself in the objective worlds, and by telling about him/herself, not by silencing him/her.

This was possible through the narrative-making process about my experiences. There are many suggested ways to become a critical visitor. One of these ways is to encourage a visitor to build a personal agenda in a public museum world. This way of encouraging helps a visitor notice what her or his interests, concerns, and working beliefs are. Delving into one’s folk psychology and negotiating with the narratives of museums help empower a visitor. This is achieved through narrative-making processes.

In this context, if a museum encourages a visitor to narrate what one experiences at the empowered safe space conceptually and physically, the empowered museum visitor would imprint the narrative-making experience on her or his memory at the moment of telling. The moment of narrative identity construction at an art museum does not tell about what one can get from the experience of telling on the spot, but it would tell something in the future in the same way that I found the hidden narratives of the museums.

**Conclusions**

Even though interpretation has been a main activity performed in the exhibition space, the exhibition space has not been actively investigated in terms of its implication on interpretation. Accordingly, there is little information on how a visitor interacts with works of art, what elements influence the interpretive processes of a visitor, what
messages the museum presents to a visitor, or how a visitor internalizes or rejects those messages.

In this context, this study investigated my experience as a visitor at the exhibition spaces of the museums in order to explore how the art museum’s narrative influenced my interpretive experiences and also how I responded to the specific contexts of museum narratives when I interpreted a work of art. Namely, I investigated how the museum’s narratives and my narratives can conflict, resist, and compromise each other.

As a result, I discovered that there are three types of narratives at the intersection of the two narratives—the at-a-glance narrative, the exhibitionary narrative, and the hidden narrative. Developed from the at-a-glance narratives through exhibitionary narratives up to the hidden narratives, these narratives evolved as a spiral, articulated clearly, and finally revealed themselves into what these meant to me. In particular, findings articulated through hidden narratives demonstrated how vague, incomplete, and inarticulate ideas, thoughts, and feelings residing at the stage of at-a-glance narratives can evolve and be articulated clearly through investigation into the intersection of the narratives of museums and my narratives. This was possible because I investigated my own folk psychology—my lived experience such as my behaviors, my working belief, my assumption, and my deep-rooted painful memories that were intersected with the museum’s narratives when I interpret the works of art.

As another finding through my autoethnographic investigation, I identified four strategies to respond to the narrative of museums, when I was in troubling situations: passive resistance, active inquiry, subverting, and disguising. This finding of the four strategies demonstrates that a visitor is not a passive victim toward troubling museum’s
narratives but an active agent to control a troubled scenario in their own ways. The presence of a visitor as an active agent makes it possible that a visitor can empower her/himself, when it is available.

One available way was through narrative-making, which enabled me to see the invisible. This first enabled me to be interested in my lived experience, which in turn made me look at my interests, my concerns, and my deep-rooted memories. The released power through my revelation, as a result, enabled me to transform an uncritical visitor into a critical visitor who could read a hidden message, hidden ideology, or the hidden curriculum of the museums in the name of hidden narratives.

In these ways, this investigation into negotiation between the two narratives shows how visitors are frustrated and encouraged in their interpretive processes, thereby implying ways to help visitors create their own interpretation positively, allowing them to empower themselves in empowered spaces.

**Significance of Study**

This study shows the following significance in the field of art education and museum education. Through disclosing me as a visitor when I was engaged in interpretive processes, this study can keep track of the learning cycle of a visitor—when her learning processes were encouraged or frustrated, what behaviors she took when her learning was encouraged or frustrated, and finally how she was transformed through these learning processes—thereby, opening up new possibilities for the psychological understanding of visitors’ behaviors and emotions during the interpretive process.
Keeping track of the whole interpretive process of a visitor is the first significance of this study.

Another significant outcome of this study is extending the definition of narratives from somewhat fixed into being permeable between the two. Through my stories and the interpretation of my stories, this study shows that visitor’s narratives are not fixed entities. Instead, these shift continuously and adjust themselves into new museum environments by negotiating with the museum’s narratives. In this context, the finding of the four strategies of negotiation can be considered as specific examples of how a visitor can actively resist, modify, and edit the museum’s narrative, thereby creating the new notion of the museum as a script, where a visitor can be an active agent to construct her or his narratives.

In the same vein, this study has examined the agency of a visitor in a museum space. Through being empowered through the narrative-making process, I found out how I could be an active agent of my meaning-making process: becoming an empowered visitor. This is third significance of this study.

Finally, this study provided critical examinations of the attitudes of researchers who were working in museum settings. I had usually taken myself out of the group I named as visitors and had positioned myself a little bit higher than that of visitors. I had assumed that I might know more than general visitors and I might not need to be empowered while other general visitors needed to be. In research settings, I had always been invisible as a researcher. As shown in the discovery process of hidden narratives, however, I could not notice the hidden narrative of the museum without revealing my deep-rooted beliefs and my painful memories as a visitor.
Through incorporating new research methodology of autoethnography in the field of museum education, it is possible to employ critical self-understanding as a researcher. This alternative research methodology showed how the reflexive self-awareness of the researcher could contribute to making a museum more inclusive, thereby empowering visitors, which is the fourth significance of this study.

Suggestions for Further Study

This study of visitors’ experiences can be further developed into the research of identity construction of specific visitors who have been underrepresented at the exhibition space of museums. For example, the investigation into mothers with children in the exhibition space would be the next step through which this research can be developed further: how mothers accompanying children identify themselves as individual visitors; and what they actually assume, feel, and think during their interpretive processes; how they interact with objects as well as children at the exhibition space; and what conditions help them be engaged in their viewing activities.

Furthermore, the investigation into culturally marginalized visitor groups can be developed in a similar way. One thing to be noted is that it would be better conducted as a form of comparative studies: One is working with metropolitan museums which display the cultural assets from the mainstream culture, while the other is working with community museums which aim to serve a specific cultural or ethnic group. The comparative study of culturally marginalized visitors’ experiences in two different sites is expected to show how they are negotiating themselves into two narratives of totally
different types of museums, thereby contributing to building a better understanding of them inclusively and culturally sensitively.
EPILOGUE

Entangled in the Skein of Thread

When I initially started to write of my experiences in the museums as a visitor, my thoughts were entangled. As already narrated in the methodology chapter, I was dazed in the skein of thread. All written experiences were so flat and seemed to be simply descriptive stories: it was everyday conversation among family members; it was to walk routinely in the exhibition space. I needed some analytical tools to break this type of insipidity embedded in my experiences and shed light on my experiences beyond the level of conventionality. The chance to look at my experiences more analytically came with the engendering annoyance of mine and appreciating it. Even though the encounter with annoyance in my experiences and how it awoke my unconsciousness were introduced in the methodology chapter with the concept of confrontation, as proposed by Bruner (1996), I came to see obviously what enabled me to confront my annoyance within the museums, just at the last stage of writing autoethnographic texts.

From this point on, I will tell you how I can identify this museum pedagogy that helped me confront my annoyance, at the last stage of writing my dissertation. What I noticed from my analytical interpretation of my experiences was that those confrontations happened at only some places physically and conceptually, where the feeling of annoyance can emerge and can be managed in a very reasonable way, and where the conversation between the Self and Other can be initiated. In the places, I can let my
unconscious feelings emerge from the conscious and I can shed light on what consists of my subconscious structure.

It happened physically in a detour in museums. The literal meaning of a detour is a deviated, not-the shortest route to arrive at the destination. In museums, I encountered a detour physically when I was lost due to the lack of signs telling the right route and when I walked along the construction zones. There I met my and my husband’s indirect and direct upspring separately. Because visitors were supposed to complain of a detour due to their extra efforts to find proper ways or extra inconvenience caused by the detour, I just assume, they might express their discomfort in a relatively easy way without suppressing or disguising it.

Conceptually, I can be rerouted in a detour from what museum professionals planned as a main purpose for a visitor, because a detour was planned as secondary and temporary. A detour is neither expected nor a main way. So, it might take a longer time than usual. From those notions related to a detour, a detour might imply a negative connotation. However, ironically, in a detour, I was able to reflect on what I was thinking and feeling.

In other words, a detour physically deviates from the main route and it conceptually shows less authority on a visitor because it is temporarily facilitated and not a pre-planned place. Finally it provides some reasonable reasons for a visitor to express himself/herself or complain about it in a reasonable, humble, less humiliating way. A detour is a place where a visitor initiates and recognizes the intersection between the museum’s narratives and the visitors’ narratives.
Naming It!: Museum Pedagogy as a Detour

My three types of narrative—at-a-glance narrative, exhibitionary narrative, and hidden narrative—are telling different types of stories, even though the three are developed from one into another and are inviting each other as a spiral shape. However, even if I combine all the three types of narratives altogether, it might not be a unifying story of my experiences. The reason is that there is an in-between space among the three types of narratives. Through working with this in-between space, the three narratives can be unified as a whole. However, an integrated narrative might be different from the one described as a skein of thread at the beginning. This does not mean that a unifying narrative is more ordered than the beginning. Rather, it means that each story in each narrative stretches out toward that in-between space, just as a rhizome stems from a plant body. Each story, which is stretched out toward the in-between space, is connected with other stories in the in-between space which is filled with my specific personal history, concerns, interests, and memories, just as rhizomes construct rhizomatous networking. In the in-between space, I, as a visitor, feel as if I were newly fleshed as a living creature with a specific history, memories, and concerns.

In other words, museum pedagogy as a detour is to make a visitor slow down in his/her pace of walking in museums, wandering there to figure out what’s going on, so that a visitor can think for him/herself. Museum pedagogy as a detour is to lighten visitors from the heavy weight of museum authority, so that a visitor may not be overwhelmed in a museum. This is possible because a detour itself entails less authority by museums. Museum pedagogy as a detour is to welcome a visitor emotionally so that a
museum visitor may be humble to share what they actually experience without disguising and pretending. Museum pedagogy as a detour is to make a visitor perform one’s subjectivity in the in-between space among visitors, objects, other people (such as museum staff and other visitors), and museum discourses.

In the same line of thinking, through museum pedagogy as a detour, a visitor can slow down his/her pace, speculating on what’s going on in his/her museum-going experiences. Furthermore, a visitor can be free from museum authority; a visitor can share what he/she actually experiences, no matter how humble, incomplete, and ambiguous it is; a visitor can perform one’s subjectivity in the in-between space.

From Museum’s Authority to Narrative Authority of a Visitor

As a result of performing museum pedagogy as a detour by myself, I can say I became a different visitor from the beginning, as once described in the notion of a critical visitor and an empowered visitor in chapter 7. For example, I started apportioning blame equally to the museum for not providing resources, when I got missing information; otherwise, I usually blame myself for not getting information properly. In the in-between space, rhizomes are growing from my body experience and are stretching toward another experience and start to be connected with them. However, rhizomes do not naturally burst into growth but grow through thought experiments: Wrestling with a variety of possibilities about one phenomenon, I tried not to oversimplify and not over-interpret what I experienced. These hundreds of thought experiments assigned me with a narrative authority on what I experienced beyond the level of one subjective experience, even
though I performed my own subjectivity. This does not mean I tried to make
generalization through my inquiry. Rather, it means that my voices empowered me by
assigning narrative authority on me otherwise executed by the museum.

In other words, by speculating in a detour, a visitor might become assigned with
narrative authority instead of the museum’s authority and instead of the art work’s
authority.

In any sense, my dissertation-writing process itself seems to be a kind of detour
toward my interest in the interpretive authority. Even though I was interested in
examining the interpretive authority in the interpretive processes in art museums, this
cannot be my primary research questions to be investigated in this study as discussed in
the prologue, due to its comprehensive and abstract notions of the interpretative authority.
While narrowing down my interest in the interpretive authority to the interpretive
experiences of a visitor, I just introduced it as a background to formulate my research
questions. However, now, writing the epilogue, I realize I have walked along the detour
toward examining the interpretive authority: I entered the museums naively and felt that I
was under the museum’s authority and under the authority of the art works. Recognizing
the authorities assigned to me and deconstructing them, however, finally conferred upon
me the narrative authority of my interpretive experiences.

Honestly, I am not yet sure who will be the primary readers of my dissertation and
who might receive the most benefit from museum pedagogy as a detour. Are they
museum professionals or museum visitors? However, one thing that I can say is that the
museum pedagogy as a detour will show the possibility of hope for both museum
professionals who try to understand a visitor’s experiences more deeply and museum
visitors who are interested in their rights and responsibility toward their empowerment.

**Educational Recommendations**

Based on my findings in this study and implications for the field of art
education/museum education, I submit the following educational recommendations as
applicable practical tips. While my findings and implications discussed so far are very
conceptual, these recommendations are very specific and practical. However, these could
provide an alternative picture of what museum pedagogy as a detour would be like.

First, advertising actively what a visitor can do in a museum is a good way to
invite a visitor into a museum because a visitor might feel a sense of welcoming from it. When I went to the CMOA again for a follow-up visit in summer 2008, I saw a docent
standing at the entrance of the gallery for the Carnegie International Exhibition. The
docent put on a badge saying “You can ask me anything about art.” The badge played a
symbolic role of breaking the public disembodiment or disinterest in the disguise of a
public manner; it not only informed me of my right as a visitor but also encouraged me to
exercise this right. The badge invited me to make my personal agenda within the public.
The endless encouragement might create more opportunities to interact with objects and
might encourage me to reveal my personal agenda, thereby, I believe, encouraging me to
get an embodied feeling rather than a disembodied feeling.

Second, to be sensitive to the needs of visitors, categorize visitors into small
segmented groups according to age, gender, level of education, race, or class, as well as
social groups, and be ready for what each segmented group needs to be served. For example, it might make a big difference if the museum staff are informed about what to say when a visitor inquires about the family program. Specifically, if a visitor group of mothers with children are fully categorized to be served, interactive exhibition frameworks or hands-on elements are especially useful at the exhibition space. Putting some activities for children to be engaged in into the exhibition space might not only help children learn but also help caregivers have their own free time, which can be positively invested in turn in their own learning activities.

Third, posting related information about works or the exhibit on the spot so that visitors do not need to wander to get proper information helps visitors be fully engaged on the spot at the exhibition. Placing media kiosks near exhibits or the entrance of exhibits would be a good alternative. If a visitor can have access to further information or make alternative choices into multiple interpretations through this media kiosk, this would play a role in encouraging visitors to get multiple interpretations or promoting the agency of a visitor.

Fourth, to build personal things in the world of the public, create interpretive labels (or wall texts) which focus on the engagement of objects rather than the delivery of information about objects. A visitor-written label would be a good example of interpretive label-making since it becomes an entry point to encourage other visitors who saw the visitor-written labels to write other object labels, and this includes not only simple emotional responses but also intellectual and interactional questions (Nashashibi, 2003).
Fifth, to give a sense of control over the space, create a physically comfortable space within the exhibitions or in museums, which can encourage a visitor to create a conceptually safe space in which the visitor can be relaxed emotionally. The Outdoor Sculpture Garden at the Carnegie Museums would be a good example. The presence of the Garden created a welcoming atmosphere at the beginning of the tour, which in turn re-invited me to use the space as a physically comfortable and conceptually safe space where I could be relaxed. Practically, placing portable chairs within the exhibition space would be another effective way to serve visitors who want to be relaxed.
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institutions for personal learning: Establishing a research agenda (pp. 67-78).


Appendix

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Dear museum professionals to be concerned with:

Hello! My name is Sunghee Choi.
I am doctoral candidate in the Art Education program at Penn State University in the United States. For my doctoral dissertation, I am planning a research project entitled “Questioning Interpretative Authority in Art Museums: Empowerment, Narratives, and the Construction of Identity for Visitors.” This research is designed to explore how visitors experience an empowerment at art museums. For this research, I am planning to dig my experiences—what I feel, observe and think—as a regular visitor at your museum, when I am engaged in interpreting objects displayed in your museum.

This research will be conducted through the research methodology of autoethnography. Usually, autoethnographic research is performed by researcher, herself. However, this research will involve the researcher’s family as well as the researcher as informants. As regular visitors, we—I and my family—will walk through exhibition halls, talk about displays, and experience activities offered in your museum. In addition, we will participate in any family programs that your museum might offer for their regular family visitors on the day we are there and will explore all museum facilities, such as the museum shop, resource centers and restaurants. After making family visit to your museum, I will also visit your museum individually. As a regular visitor, I will also walk through exhibition halls, talk about displays, and experience activities offered in that space. In addition, I will participate in any museum programs offered for regular adult visitors and will collect possible materials posted on websites, and displayed in the information center or a visitor resources center. For two cases, I will write field notes, record my monologue and family conversations, and will take pictures (and/or video-tape the visit), as regular visitors usually do, within the range which is allowed for regular visitors.

However, I will NOT contact museum professionals or other visitors for interviews for this research.

To initiate this research project, I need your verbal agreement that the use of audio-recorders is allowed in your museum. If you are an appropriate person to inquiry this issue, please respond to this email.

If you have any questions, please make sure to ask me, Sunghee Choi. If you would prefer to ask me questions privately, feel free to reach me at (814)-237-4644 or by e-mail at shc133@psu.edu. You can also call this number if you have concerns about this research or if you feel that you have been harmed by this study. If you have concerns or general questions about the research, contact Penn State University’s Office for Research Protection at (814)-865-1775. You may also call this number if you cannot reach the research team or wish to talk to someone else.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sunghee Choi,
# Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research

The Pennsylvania State University

| ORP USE ONLY: IRB# Doc.#1
| The Pennsylvania State University
| Office for Research Protections
| Approval Date: 06-15-2007 DWM
| Expiration Date: 06-13-2008 DWM
| Social Science Institutional Review Board

## Title of Project:
Questioning Interpretative Authority in Art Museums: Empowerment, Narratives, and the Construction of Identity for Visitors

## Principal Investigator:
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(814)-863-7307; mas53@psu.edu

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research is to investigate how visitors who have different vantage points cognitively, emotionally, and socio-culturally experience empowerment at art museums when they are engaged in interpreting a work of art.

2. **Procedures to be Followed:** The participants will be asked to walk through exhibition halls, talk about displays, and participate in activities that are offered in that space. In addition, the participants will be asked to participate in family programs that the museum might offer for their regular family visitors and will drop by all extra museum facilities, such as museum shops, resource centers, or restaurants. The participants will be asked to participate in family conversation and will be asked to take pictures about the exhibition, the museum, or people—whatever is meaningful to them—and will be asked to talk about the images they took after the visit. They will also be asked to talk about their experiences in museums and, in particular, the child among the family will be asked to express one’s experience visually. Finally, participants will be asked to make photo-narratives with the photos they took.

3. **Discomforts and Risks:** There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

4. **Benefits:** You might learn more about yourself and other family members by participating in this study. This research is expected to provide a better understanding to museum professionals and visitors about the experiences that visitors have when they interpret works of art at art museums. This information might assist in caring for visitors' empowerment experiences. This research may contribute to designing visitor-respectful museums.

5. **Duration:** The family visit to the museum will last six hours from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

6. **Statement of Confidentiality:** You and your child’s participation in this study is confidential. Only the person in charge will know your identity. The data and digital audio/
visual files will be stored and secured on the principal investigator’s laptop in a password-protected file. The recordings will be destroyed by July 2012. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. The following may review and copy records related to this research: The Office of Human Research Protections in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Penn State University’s Social Science Institutional Review Board, and Penn State University’s Office for Research Protection.

7. **Right to Ask Questions:** You can ask questions about this research. Contact Sunghee Choi at (814)-237-4644 with questions. You can also call this number if you have concerns about this research or if you feel that you have been harmed by this study. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or you have concerns or general questions about the research, contact Penn State University’s Office for Research Protection at (814)-865-1775. You may also call this number if you cannot reach the research team or wish to talk to someone else.

8. **Voluntary Participation:** You and your child’s decision to participate in this study are voluntary. You and your child can stop at any time. You and your child do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you and your child would receive otherwise.

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**Options for recording, being photographed, and being videotaped:**

______________________________ : I give my permission to be *audio/digitally taped*, to be *photographed*, and to be *videotaped*.

______________________________ : I do not give my permission to be *audio/digitally taped*, to be *photographed*, and to be *videotaped*.

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**Options for using photos**

______________________________ : I give my permission to use photos produced by me.

______________________________ : I do not give my permission to use photos produced by me.

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You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.
You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent for your records.

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<tr>
<th>Participant Signature</th>
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<th>Person Obtaining Consent</th>
<th>Date</th>
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**CONSENT TO MY CHILD’S PARTICIPATION**

**Options for recording, being photographed, and being videotaped (Parental consent)**

| : | 
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| I give permission for my child to be audio/digitally taped, to be photographed, and to be videotaped. | I do not give my permission for my child to be audio/digitally taped, to be photographed, and to be videotaped. |

**Options for using photos and drawings (Parental consent)**

| : | 
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| I give my permission for my child to use photos and drawings produced by my child. | I do not give my permission for my child to use photos and drawings produced by my child. |

I give permission for my child, ____________________________________________, to participate in this research project.

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<th>Parent Signature</th>
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VITA
Sunghee Choi

EDUCATION


M.S. in Art Education The Pennsylvania State University, 2005.

M.A. in Art History Ewha Womans University, Seoul, Korea, 2001.

B.A. in Korean Literature and Language (Certificate in Literacy Education) Ewha Womans University, Seoul, Korea, 1998

Visual Art (no degree conferred) Duksung Women’s University, Seoul, Korea, 1994

AWARD

2009 Penn State Alumni Association Dissertation Award, Pennsylvania State University

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Instructor, Pennsylvania State University (May 2008-present). Introduction to Visual Arts (Art 001)/ Introduction to Visual Studies (Art 10)

ESL Instructor, Mid-State Literacy Council, State College, PA (June 2008-present)


PUBLICATION


