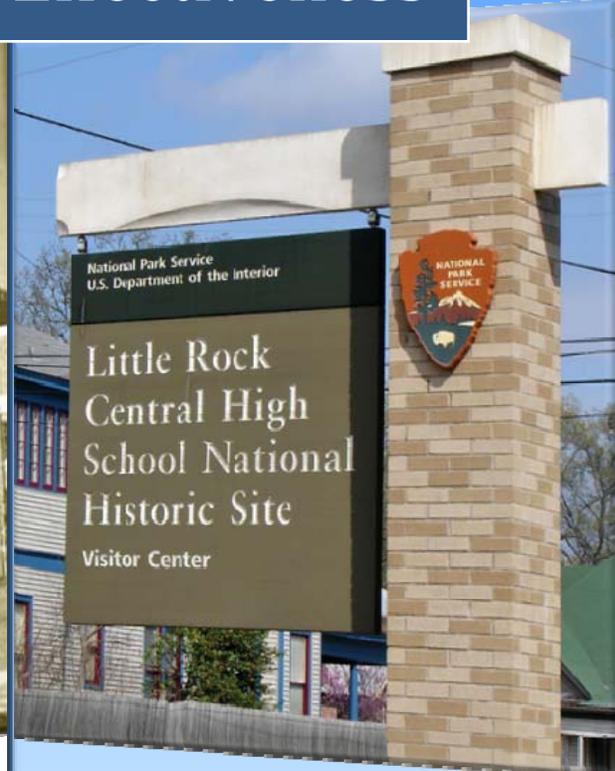


# An Evaluation of Exhibit Effectiveness



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# TRANSFORMING HISTORY, CREATING A LEGACY:

An Evaluation of Exhibit Effectiveness at  
Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site  
Little Rock, Arkansas

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During 2009-2010, a team of researchers observed, talked in person and spoke on the phone with 127 visitors to Central High School National Historic Site (CHSC) in Little Rock, Arkansas, to assess the effectiveness of onsite exhibits with respect to meaning making, accessibility and civic engagement. The 45 visitors who were observed onsite in July 2009 spent an average of 53 minutes viewing the exhibits, with a median time spent of 36 minutes. Of the July 2009 respondents, 86% were first time visitors, almost 70% indicated that they reflected on a personal life experience while onsite, and 28% indicated that they hoped to change or increase their civic behavior as a result of their visit.

One respondent voiced an insight that summarizes, in one sense, the findings of the entire study:

That is why I love the ‘We the People’ exhibit—it shows how few people were able to vote in the beginning of our country... We tend to simplify things, and with an exhibit like this, it helps explain things... This is part of our history in Little Rock, but it doesn’t have to be our legacy. Our legacy is that we move forward, but we need to always remember that this is part of our history. (FG 10)

Central High School symbolizes the end of racially segregated schools in the United States. In 1957, a group of African-American teenagers, known as the “Little Rock Nine,” *transformed history* as they endured public harassment, suffered private hardships, and displayed tremendous courage in a fight to ensure equal educational opportunity for all. Respondents recognized, however, that the story told at CHSC is larger than the people and events of 1957. The story encompasses *all the people* of this nation, and the world, as we strive to abolish unequal social systems and the habits of thought and action that sabotage race relations. Respondents also recognized that the Little Rock crisis illustrates the power of a handful of individuals to make a difference, to *create a legacy* that is qualitatively and substantively different than what went before.

Results suggest that the exhibits functioned to “reveal, relate and provoke,” facilitating intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance of the people, events and ideas portrayed in CHSC exhibits. The exhibits provided opportunities to link discussions of race relations to specific historical events and social contexts, while prompting reflection on present-day needs and issues. Respondents formed a wide range of meanings while onsite; however, results suggest that respondents emphasized the meanings of *courage, empathy, equality* and *diversity*. Respondents acknowledged that we have come a long way in the U.S., but they also recognized that “equality for all” has not yet been achieved.

Respondents experienced a wide range of emotions while onsite. Some exhibits graphically conveyed the “dark times” that the civil rights movement went through in the U.S., using iconic photos and disturbing videos to showcase the hatred that was unleashed on the Little Rock Nine. Respondent comments suggest that their own feelings of outrage or empathy were cathartic, and possibly transformational, allowing them to “grow beyond themselves” through their exhibit experience. Thus, results indicate that CHSC exhibits arouse affect, provide a cognitive framework for learning, and facilitate meaning, relevance and opportunities for

personal transformation. These outcomes may have been generated not in spite of, but because the exhibits tackle controversial topics head on. By portraying ideas, images and events that provoked negative emotions, the exhibits facilitated visitor questioning and even soul-searching.

The study assessed the “enduring impact” of the CHSC exhibit experience by interviewing 15 respondents onsite in July 2009 and one year later by phone. The phone interviews revealed that three exhibit elements in particular continued to exert an influence one year later, including (1) photographs, particularly the image the white student screaming at the black student, (2) the panels on human rights, and (3) the oral history recordings of the Little Rock Nine. Respondents continued to express empathy toward the Little Rock Nine while characterizing their struggle as one of providing educational access for all. One respondent continued to remark one year later on the intensity of the hatred that was directed toward the Little Rock Nine. One year later, many participants echoed a concern that was frequently mentioned during the onsite interviews. That is, that although civil rights have come a long way, we still have far to go. In the follow-up interviews, all but one respondent indicated that they continue to find personal relevance in the exhibits. In the phone interviews, respondents suggested that CHSC promoted civic engagement by prompting awareness and reflection. During the follow-up interviews, none of the respondents pinpointed strategies to improve societal relations, although this question was not specifically asked during the interview.

Given 3,000 square feet of exhibit space within which to tell the civil rights story, foster understanding, and launch civic action, CHSC could easily become a model within the National Park Service for promoting effective civic engagement. Based on study results, a conceptual model entitled “A Five-tier Hierarchy of the Antecedents of Civic Engagement” was developed. The hierarchy is comprised of five levels: *awareness*, *reflection*, *behavioral intentions*, *ownership* and *empowerment*. Results suggest that CHSC exhibits can promote civic engagement outcomes “from scratch” at the awareness, reflection and behavioral intentions levels. Results also suggest that CHSC exhibits primarily enhance pre-existing levels of ownership and empowerment. We recommend using Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) citizenship typology, the NPS Scholar Forum report (NPS Conservation Study Institute with Diamant, Feller & Larsen, 2006) and our five-tier hierarchy as the basis for formulating a civic engagement strategy and evaluation plan at CHSC.

Assessing CHSC exhibit accessibility was accomplished almost exclusively through the focus group interview process despite the fact that *all interviews* included questions regarding exhibit accessibility. Members of the disability community in Little Rock were invited to attend focus group sessions, thus increasing the amount and quality of data collected. Respondents identified a number of issues that limited exhibit accessibility or hindered visitors’ ability to understand exhibit content. For example, respondents identified a lack of navigational aids regarding the exhibit flow, including where to begin, where to end, and how best to move through exhibit content for clarity of understanding and heightened impact. Respondents also noted the limited coverage of the Sennheiser guidePORT audio description system, the use of small font sizes, a lack of caption boards or text-based alternative formats for some content that used audio-only content delivery mechanisms, phone cords of insufficient length for taller visitors, a lack of screen-based navigational controls at listening stations, excessively loud and continuously playing video soundtracks that prevented visitors in adjacent exhibits from processing exhibit content, an overall lack of tactile experiences, and lighting that produced excessive shadows and glare increasing visitor difficulty in viewing exhibits. A series of accessibility-related recommendations is provided at the end of the report.



## Transforming History, Creating a Legacy

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The members of the evaluation team would like to thank the staff of Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site for their patience and support during and leading up to the on-site research period and subsequent data analysis and reporting phase of this evaluation project. This mixed-method evaluation proved to be a challenge during its various stages. We want to commend the Chief of Interpretation, Laura Miller, for her contribution in conceptualizing and making possible this unique approach to exhibit evaluation. Special recognition also goes to Superintendent Robin White and other members of the CHSC staff whose desire to provide compelling and powerful interpretation to visitors led them to seek a comprehensive summative evaluation of the historic site's exhibits. We would also like to thank Ron Lewis and Sky McClain, the Stephen F. Austin State University students who helped us conduct onsite exit interviews and convince visitors to allow their comments to be recorded for the conversation analysis portion of this study. In addition, Sandy Strickland, a Ph.D. student at West Virginia University conducted the follow-up phone interviews and assisted with our data analysis efforts. We look forward to adding her analysis of this data (from her Ph.D. dissertation) into the ever-expanding set of study results. Particular appreciation is expressed for our report co-author Tammy Roberson. Her focus group transcripts provided invaluable information, giving us the tremendous amount of the "rich data" that characterizes this study. Thank you for helping *all of us* better understand and appreciate the "Little Rock Nine."

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1957, Little Rock Central High School became the symbol of the deathblow dealt to racially segregated public schools in the United States. Little Rock Central High School became the symbol of freedom, educational opportunity and hope. It was the site of the first real test of the United States Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) that ruled “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” As the events unfolded, international attention was focused on the school—showcasing attitudes, events and behavior that became a source of shame and embarrassment. The site also represents ongoing disputes about how to distribute power at the state versus federal level, as Orval Faubus, the Governor of Arkansas, clashed with President Dwight D. Eisenhower and federal troops over school integration. The story of the “Little Rock Nine,” the nine African-American students who chose to attend the formerly all white Little Rock Central High School reveals the power individuals have to make a difference. Their struggles, and the persecution they endured, reveal the hardships many people



Exhibit 9. Taking Equality in Education to the Courts

faced as the U.S. confronted the realities of racism.

Each visitor to Central High School National Historic Site (CHSC) finds his or her own meanings in the site. To be effective in their interpretive efforts, National Park Service (NPS) professionals must have an accurate knowledge of their audience—including the range of meanings that visitors attach to park resources. Recently, studies have begun to explore what visitors find meaningful in park resources (Barrie, 2001; Goldman, Chen & Larsen, 2001; Knapp, 2000). At CHSC, there is limited information regarding which aspects of park resources visitors find most meaningful. Specifically, park officials have no information to assess what visitors find meaningful in the visitor center exhibits that were installed in 2007 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Little Rock school integration crisis.

Park managers wanted to know in what ways, to what extent and under what circumstances visitors experienced various interpretive outcomes as a result of their exposure to park exhibits. Therefore, CHSC commissioned a summative evaluation of exhibit effectiveness, seeking to understand the meanings visitor ascribed to park resources as well as the intellectual and emotional connections to meanings that visitors derived onsite. Additionally, researchers assessed outcomes associated with civic engagement—exploring the extent to which onsite experiences promoted various civic engagement behaviors. Finally, the study also examined the accessibility of site exhibits to persons with differing abilities. Electronic, audiovisual and graphic media represent important channels through which the NPS conveys meanings and information. Media and technology play a vital role in helping the NPS fulfill its mission to preserve and protect resources while providing enjoyable experiences for park visitors. Direct feedback from visitors regarding their onsite interpretive experiences, including discussions regarding any barriers or constraints they experienced in using interpretive media products, is

essential to evaluate exhibit effectiveness (Knudson, Cable & Beck, 2003).

### Linkage to NPS Needs

NPS social scientists have identified a need for more social science research to better understand park visitors (National Park Service, 2004). Furthermore, Harpers Ferry Center and NPS interpretive personnel have identified several areas of research importance. A critical need for interpretive research includes: “How can we better understand the meanings and values of National Parks held by the public?” (National Park Service, 2004b). An understanding of the meanings visitors seek to connect with onsite, the meanings that visitors actually attain through their onsite experience, and the effect of onsite experiences on subsequent satisfaction and citizenship behaviors will assist park managers in assessing exhibit effectiveness.

The NPS has outlined five pillars to guide their Interpretive Renaissance (National Park Service, 2006). Two pillars are especially relevant to a summative evaluation at CHSC. Pillar #1 conveys the centrality of the interpretive mission: “Engage people to make enduring connections to America’s special places” (National Park Service, 2006). Ensuring that all visitors are exposed to the interpretive opportunities they need to form intellectual and emotional connections with the meanings and significance of site resources is more important than ever (Larsen, 2003). In addition, current and potential park audiences are becoming increasingly diverse. Park managers seek to assess exhibit accessibility, and exhibit contributions to enhancing civic memory and engagement (Wagner & Davachi, 2001).

Pillar #5 urges the NPS to “Create a culture of evaluation.” In 2006, the NPS presented an Interpretation and Education Program Logic Model (Figure 1). The model identifies the

inputs, activities, and outputs that comprise the education and interpretation program of the NPS, as well as the desired outcomes and impacts of NPS interpretive efforts. Four interpretive outcomes that are applicable to general park audiences were identified in the logic model:

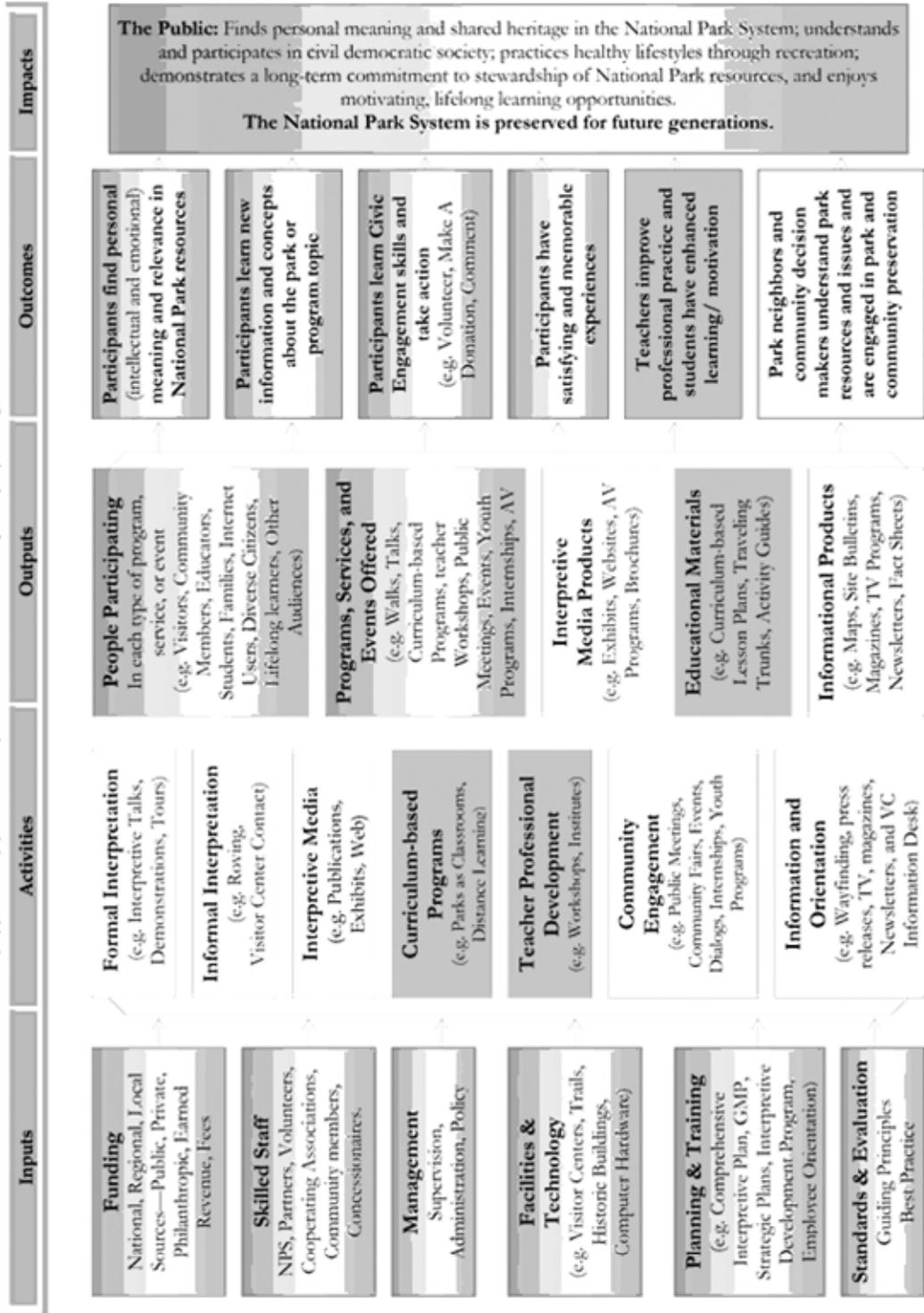
- Participants make personal connections to intellectual and emotional resource meanings.
- Participants learn new information or concepts about the park or program topic.
- Participants learn civic engagement skills and take action.
- Participants have satisfying and memorable experiences.

The NPS Interpretation and Education Program Logic Model provides a basis for evaluation efforts within the NPS. If evaluations focus on meaning-making—including cognitive and affective processes—and the formation of interpretive connections, they will be aligned with emerging emphases as outlined in the logic model. In summary, this evaluation was guided by principles outlined in the NPS Interpretive Development Program, outcomes identified in the Interpretation & Education Program Logic Model, and sought to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways, to what extent, and under what circumstances do visitors to CHSC in Little Rock, Arkansas, form intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance of site resources while onsite? Do visitors form connections to resource meanings that persist over time? And, do visitors engage exhibit content in ways that promote civic engagement?
2. Are the interpretive opportunities provided by CHSC exhibits appropriate, accessible and effective for persons with differing abilities?

**Figure 1.** NPS Interpretation & Education Program Logic Model, DRAFT v. 2b (10/5/05).

*Premise: If the NPS offers high quality interpretive, curriculum-based, and informational programs to a diverse public, the public will have better quality of life and will be better equipped to help preserve and protect the National Park System for future generations.*



## LITERATURE REVIEW

Interpretive researchers and evaluators have long recognized the difficulty associated with measuring the outcomes that audience members derive from exposure to interpretation and education programs (Barrie, 2001; Dustin & McAvoy, 1985; Falk & Dierking, 2000; Knudson et al., 2003; Risk, 1992). Even at the basic level of message processing, Beckmann (1999) indicated that evaluation only occasionally examines visitor understanding of key messages, and rarely explores the depth and intensity of visitor onsite experience. Generally speaking, the outcomes of interest include visitor thoughts, feelings and behavior (Goldman, Chen & Larsen, 2001; Ham, 1986; Larsen, 2003). Although these outcomes are difficult to measure, the proposed evaluation effort will build upon previous work and contribute significantly to an expanded understanding of the effectiveness of interpretive media products in informal settings.

Typical interpretive outcomes hoped for by interpreters include impacts to visitor knowledge, attitudes or behaviors. Evaluating these outcomes in free-choice settings has been undertaken in a number of ways, from assessing visitor's recall of facts, to time spent within an exhibit room, to time spent engaged in exhibit activities. However, in recent years, the method of assessing only cognitive outcomes based on traditional formal learning settings (schools) has been noted as being unrealistic and even inappropriate for museums and other informal learning settings (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Knapp, 2007; McManus, 1993). Recent studies have noted that learning in free-choice settings, such as the CHSC visitor center, can be better understood using constructivist principles (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Falk & Adelman, 2003; Hein, 1998). In this perspective, learners actively construct their own meanings based on interactions with the setting, interactions with the groups they visit with, as well as their prior knowledge, experience

and motivations (Falk & Dierking, 1992; 2000). Thus, learning is personal, and relies on the integration of new information into the visitor's own experiences. Rather than assessing simple knowledge gained using a pre-post test instrument, a more encompassing assessment would include looking at intellectual, affective and even social outcomes. In addition, cognitive and affective outcomes of free-choice settings have been found to be linked (Anderson & Shimizu, 2006; Webb, 2000), and thus can be difficult to isolate. In order to capture the multifaceted and socially contextualized experience of visitors (Falk & Dierking, 2000), this study adopted a constructivist stance in order to assess both cognitive and affective meanings that visitors form at CHSC.

Various cognitive impacts of interpretive centers have been noted in a number of studies. Many studies have noted a short term increase in knowledge or understanding (Anderson, Lucas, Ginns, & Dierking, 2000; Knapp, 2000), and others have noted that existing knowledge can be reinforced or enriched (Allen, 2002; Leinhardt & Gregg, 2002). In addition to these cognitive impacts, evidence has also been found for affective impacts in free-choice settings (Goldman et al., 2001; Knapp, 2007; Leinhardt & Gregg, 2002; Spock, 2000; Suchy, 2006). Evidence has also been found that visitors do connect with meanings found in resources (Goldman, et al., 2001). A number of more recent studies have noted that the social context of the visit also affects the outcomes, and as such, should be incorporated into assessments (Anderson, Storksdieck & Spock, 2007; Falk & Dierking, 2000; Rennie & Johnston, 2004). This social context was assessed at CHSC by the conversation analysis portion of the study.

One limitation of most of the research assessing interpretive outcomes, learning or otherwise, is the time frame—most studies have been limited to short-term outcomes. Very few studies have attempted to measure impacts over the long-term, due to the inherent difficulties of

measuring such complex variables over time. In order to assess longer term impacts, some have suggested using a more appropriate and holistic question such as “what can participants remember from the program or experience?” (Knapp, 2006). By initially focusing broadly on visitor memories, the most salient aspects of the visitor’s experience will be revealed. Probes can then be used to have visitors expand on their responses and allow the researcher to then probe for the “why” and “how” of memory formation, the relation to visitor meanings, and to assess both cognitive and affective outcomes.

### Civic Engagement

At historic sites that commemorate civil rights era events, an understanding of race relations may be prerequisite to an examination of the *antecedents, processes* and *types* of civic engagement. At these sites, interpreting historic events is complicated by, and made more unsettling, because of linkages to the issues of slavery and race. Horton (2000) suggests that interpretive sites must provide a context within which *hard thinking* can occur: “It provides our identity, it structures our relationships, and it defines the terms of our debates. We must learn from [history], even if doing so is, at times, annoying and uncomfortable” (p. 8). Wrestling with historical realities may be a necessary, but not sufficient factor promoting citizenship behavior. Henning, Nielson, Henning and Schulz (2008) maintain that positive civic engagement outcomes emerge through discussion-based approaches. Although their recommendations target classroom teachers, informal education sites could also adopt their strategies. Henning and colleagues advise creating opportunities for dialogue by allowing group members to respond to a problem, respond to an observation, respond to a narrative, or reflect upon learning activities. Finally, thoughtful critique and discussion may set the stage for the type of *reflexive learning* that is more

likely to emerge through community service or volunteering activities. Mündel and Schugerensky (2008) conclude that public-service organizations increase their effectiveness if their volunteers engage in significant learning and seize opportunities to reflect individually and corporately on their learning.

Shackel (2003) suggests that if one seeks to understand African-American experience in post-Civil War America, one must carefully integrate narratives that present “official” public history with those that were suppressed. Civil Rights sites provide access to African American voices, gradually reshaping the content and structure of our collective memory. The goal of interpreting civil rights history, however, transcends merely coming to grips with past injustice and/or identifying lingering social impacts. Rather, Chickering (2008) suggests that a human development agenda underlies all efforts to equip individuals to understand historic events and respond to present-day societal needs:

The developmental progression of all of these theories is that individuals look for ways to transcend boundaries and resist oversimplification. They recognize that answers and solutions vary with the context in which they are raised and with the frame of reference of the people involved. My own candidates for indicators of higher-order functioning are knowledge pertinent to key social issues; intellectual competence; interpersonal competence; emotional intelligence; integrity; and a level of motivation that invests time, energy, and emotion in concerns larger than our own immediate self-interest. (p. 91)

Westheimer and Kahne (2004) identify three types of citizens that span a range of citizen characteristics and potential development outcomes. *Personally responsible citizens* engage in identifiable citizenship behaviors (e.g., work, pay taxes, abide by law and statutes, recycle, donate blood, provide items for a food shelf, volunteer in times of crisis)—they are motivated by a character ethic and a baseline sense of responsibility. *Participatory citizens* may engage in behaviors similar to those of personally responsible citizens; however, they are more likely to serve as an organizational leader, understand government agency functioning, and work within

the system to accomplish group tasks. *Justice-oriented citizens* examine cause-effect relationships and seek to address root causes. They recognize patterns of injustice and focus their efforts on eliminating structures that reproduce injustice. Finally, they understand social movements and how to produce systemic change. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) outline their citizenship typology *as prelude* to asking fundamental questions about civic engagement development efforts:

Programs that successfully educate for democracy can promote very different outcomes. Some programs may foster the ability or the commitment to participate, while others may prompt critical analysis that focuses on macro structural issues, the role of interest groups, power dynamics, and/or social justice...Indeed, answering the question ‘Which program better develops citizens?’ necessarily engages the political views that surround varied conceptions of citizenship, because the question leaves open the definition of a good citizen. (p. 262)

### Accessibility

In 2000, the US Census counted 49.7 million people ages 5 and above that were self-identified as disabled (2002). This is a ratio of nearly 1 in 5 U.S. residents, or 19 percent of the population. Types of disabilities also are as varied as the level of independence in a person with a disability. The United Nations’ publication, *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, (2006) recognizes that the concept of disability is ever evolving based on the interactions between persons with disabilities and their environment, especially as it relates to equal participation in society.

Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990. This law defines disability as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual” (The U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.). Before the historic

passage of the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 concerned accessibility issues, mainly with those entities that receive Federal financial assistance or are Federal agencies (1973). This Act—and especially Section 504—has guided the National Park Service (NPS) as it pertains to access to programs, activities, and facilities (Richards, 1999). Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act requires that all Federal agencies incorporate accessibility when designing web-based media, audio tours, audiovisual programs, and other media incorporating electronic elements (1973). The NPS Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines list specific standards regarding electronic and information technology:

- A text equivalent for every non-text element shall be provided in web design.
- All training and information video and multi-media productions which support the agency's mission, regardless of format, that contain speech or other audio information necessary for the comprehension of the content, shall be open or closed captioned.
- When a timed response is required in a self contained closed product, the user shall be alerted and given sufficient time to indicate more time if required. (National Park Service, 2007)

Accessibility means more than just accommodating people in terms of mobility; it also relates to accessibility to information and to guided exhibit tours (Grinder & McCoy, 1985). Ham (1992) challenges interpreters to replace the old idea that somehow accommodation must happen for the “average human being,” since average varies considerably from one individual to the next. Programs and facilities must be designed to be approached, entered and used by persons with disabilities. Great examples of accessible design typically follow the Principles of Universal Design to guide a wide range of disciplines including environments, products, and communications (National Park Service, 2007). These principles include equitable use, flexibility in use, simple and intuitive use, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and size and space for approach and use.

## METHODS

A total of 127 visitors (i.e., individual participants who may or may not have been part of a group) were included in this study. In general, the study included only adult participants/ However, the conversation analysis (CA) portion of the study included visitors 13 years old and older. The inclusion of teenagers allowed researchers to record possible parent/teenager conversations and interactions. Study participants were divided into groups as follows:

- **Unobtrusive Observation Group**  
(45 subjects, including CA and exit interview participants. Note: Only one person in a CA pair was unobtrusively observed.)
- **Focus Groups**  
(65 participants)
- **Conversation Analysis (CA) Group**  
(A subset of those unobtrusively observed totaling 17 conversation pairs)
- **Exit Interview Group**  
(Everyone who was observed, including CA participants, were asked to complete a brief exit interview onsite; 36 respondents)
- **Longitudinal Telephone Interview Group**  
(15 respondents, interviewed one year later by phone. Note: Phone respondents were both observed and interviewed while they were onsite in July 2009.)

A qualitative research approach was used in all phases of this study. Because the study attempted to examine visitor behavior within the context of their museum visit and determine what meanings visitors ascribe to park resources, unobtrusive observation, focus groups, conversation analysis, onsite exit interviews, and semi-structured telephone interviews were the primary data collection methods.

During the four day study period, July 8-11, 2009, 76 individuals were approached to participate in the research. Overall, 76% of those approached agreed to participate in the study.

Of 48 people approached for CA, 14 declined. One male pair participated in the CA, four female pairs, and 12 of the 17 CA pairs were mixed gender pairs. While more females declined to participate in the CA study than males, researchers did observe more female only pairs visiting the site than male only pairs. Of 28 visitors observed outside of the CA pairs, only four declined the exit interview when approached at the end of their visit. All stated that they declined because they were part of a large group that was leaving shortly after they exited the museum. While more females were individually observed than males, the rate of exit interview decline was evenly divided among males and females. Only three persons who participated in the observation and subsequent exit interview declined to participate in the longitudinal telephone portion of the study. Table 1 reveals the gender distribution of the study group participants.

#### Unobtrusive Observation Sampling Plan and Procedures

A total of 45 people were observed during the four day data collection period in July 2009. A random selection of participants was not required for this qualitative study.

**Table 1.** Study Group Gender, July 8-11, 2009.

<b>Unobtrusive Observation</b> N = 32				<b>Conversation Analysis (CA)</b> N = 48 Total Approached = 76			
<b>Yes Male</b>	<b>Yes Female</b>	<b>No Male</b>	<b>No Female</b>	<b>Yes Male</b>	<b>Yes Female</b>	<b>No Male</b>	<b>No Female</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>



Collecting Data via Unobtrusive Observation

In an effort to obtain unfiltered visitor actions and reactions, visitors were not told they were being observed. However, signs noting that research was being conducted were placed within view of the entrance to the exhibit hall.

#### Unobtrusive Observation Data Collection Procedures

The site has designated 15 separate exhibit areas within the museum. During the unobtrusive observation part of the study, the observer recorded visitor movement through the museum onto a floor plan of the museum. Visitors were not told in advance that they were being observed. Time spent at each exhibit and total time spent in the museum was also recorded for each participant observed. Observers also looked for and recorded specific activities performed at each exhibit, such as reading, pointing, or interacting with exhibit elements. (See Appendix A, *CHSC Visitor Observation Form*, for a copy of the recording form.)

**Note:** While protocol was established regarding visitors who might approach a researcher about being observed, no visitors approached researchers related to the observation during the study period. In addition, during the exit interviews, no visitors asked about being observed.

### Unobtrusive Observation Data Analysis

One important aspect of exhibit evaluation is to study how visitors interact with exhibits within the setting itself without knowing they are under scrutiny. This method of evaluation allows evaluators and planners to see how “real” people relate to the exhibits—how they attend to and interact with the exhibit elements. The purpose is to provide information on which exhibits are most attended to, which ones are ignored, as well as the overall visitor flow through the exhibition space. Therefore, one portion of the CHSC evaluation took the form of unobtrusive observations of visitors in the exhibit area.

With regards to the unobtrusive visitor observations, commonly called *tracking and timing* (Serrell, 1998), the information collected included total time spent in the exhibition space, total number of stops, and total time at each stop. A stop was defined as a visitor stopping with both feet planted on the floor, and head oriented toward a specific exhibit element for at least 2-3 seconds. These figures, when used in a formula with the square footage of the exhibition space and the number of separate elements within the space, allow for two standard indices to be calculated: 1) sweep rate index, and 2) percentage of diligent visitors (Serrell, 1998). The sweep rate index is calculated by dividing the total time spent in the exhibition space by the number of elements, and provides a quick look at how much time visitors spent at each exhibit element. This study calculated the sweep rate index as well as recording the actual time spent at each

exhibit. The percentage of diligent visitors was obtained by calculating the percentage of visitors who stopped at more than half the elements, providing information related to how thorough an exhibition was used. Visitor flow patterns were also tracked and noted, providing a useful indication of how visitors move throughout the space.

In addition, tracking visitor movements allowed researchers to collect information related to *attracting power* and *holding power* (Peart, 1984; Bitgood, 1994). If a visitor stops at an exhibit element, even momentarily, it is said to have attraction power. The time spent apparently “reading” (looking at the exhibit) was noted. If a visitor spent at least 20 seconds reading an exhibit element, evaluators followed the common practice of assuming that the subject read most of the content, and that the element has a certain amount of holding power. Of course, this depends on a number of factors, including the amount of text, the complexity of the exhibit content, and/or the quality of the exhibit layout. Also, this reading is inferred, since there is no way to assess through observation procedures whether the visitor actually read any part of the exhibit. However, as noted above, a modified conversational analysis of visitors was used with a subset of visitors who were unobtrusively observed (17 groups total) to facilitate a more in-depth analysis of their museum exhibit experience.

### Focus Group Sampling Plan and Procedures

Focus Group participants were recruited through a variety of sources such as email lists, CHSC staff recommendations, word of mouth, and verbal invitations to visitors to the historic site. The 65 focus group participants consisted of students, community leaders, educators and the

general public. Included in this group were 12 disability advocates or persons with a disability. Table 2 shows the diversity in the focus group demographic.

### Focus Group Data Collection Procedures

The focus group interviews took place from mid-January through the first week in March 2009. Eleven focus groups were convened during the focus group portion of the study period. Participants agreed in advance to spend two hours of total time at the visitor center. Participants visited the exhibit space for forty-five minutes at the start of each focus group session. After viewing the exhibits an informal group discussion was held to gather and record visitor feelings, concerns, and reactions to the exhibit. Input was gathered from sixty-five participants. Focus group participants were asked the same questions as exit interview participants. Focus Group participants were asked verbally for their permission to record the focus group session using a digital recording device. They were informed that their responses will be kept confidential; that is, their name and identifying information will not be associated with the data when it is presented to the park or to external audiences. The focus group question protocol was as follows.

**Table 2.** Focus Group Participants

Participant Composition	Hispanic	African-American	Caucasian	Other	<b>Total</b>
Male	0	12	17	1	<b>30</b>
Female	1	14	19	1	<b>35</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>65</b>

## Focus Group Questions

1. Is this your first visit to the Visitors Center?  
Probe: How many times have you visited the site?  
Probe: What drew you to the site?
3. What was your favorite part of the exhibit?  
Probe: Why was that part your favorite?

### **Affect and Emotional Connections**

1. Were there any parts of the exhibit that triggered an emotional response or feelings about the events or people of the time period?  
Probe: Were the feelings positive or negative?  
Probe: Can you describe the strongest feeling(s) you had while going through the exhibit or about a specific part of the exhibit?  
Probe: What exhibit element triggered this feeling? (Text, a visual or video, audio, interactive?)
2. Which stories or images presented in the exhibits were most compelling or moved you most?  
Probe: What made those stories or images so powerful?
3. Was anything in the exhibit personally relevant to you?  
Probe: While you viewed the exhibits, did any personal experiences come to mind?

### **Cognition and Intellectual Connections**

1. While exploring the exhibits, did you learn something new, understand something better, or think about something differently?  
Probe: What did you learn, etc...., which elements caused this response?
2. Did the exhibits cause you to change your point of view in any way?  
Probe: Did they challenge any existing points of view?  
Probe: Did they confirm/reinforce any existing points of view?
3. Were there any particular exhibit elements that you wanted more time with or that you revisited?  
Probe: What parts of the exhibit made you feel this way?

### **Civic Engagement**

1. What values do Central High School and the Little Rock Nine represent?

Probe: Are the values you mentioned realized in today's society?

Probe: Why do you feel this way?

2. Did any exhibit elements remind you of current events?

Probe: What exhibit elements seemed to relate most to current events?

Probe: Were there any parallels to today's society?

3. Will you behave differently as a citizen as a result of seeing these exhibits?

Probe: Do you think anything you experienced in the exhibit would influence your future decision making?

Probe: Do you intend to behave differently with regards to your civic and community responsibilities?

Probe: Can you explain why these exhibits did or did not influence your thoughts about civic behavior?

## **Accessibility**

Lead in with a mini-scenario, something like “A museum contains images, text, objects, audio and video recordings—it’s jammed full of things to look at, listen to, read and think about. Sometimes, however, visitors struggle with various aspects of a museum. Maybe they can’t get up the inclines, or in and out of the tight spaces. Maybe they can’t see the small print or hear the recording. Maybe the exhibits are full of complicated terms or aren’t well organized. Maybe the choice of colors makes reading or appreciating the exhibit elements difficult...”

1. Did you encounter any barriers or problems to your enjoyment of the exhibit?

Probe: What exhibit elements triggered these issues?

Probe: What changes could be made to make your visit more enjoyable?

2. Did you use any of the touch screen/computer elements in the exhibit?

Probe: Which ones were the easiest to use and why?

Probe: Were any of them difficult to use and how could they be improved?

3. Were you able to see and/or read the text in the exhibit panels and the audiovisual components?

Probe: Were there any issues with the size of the text, colors, or contrasting backgrounds?

4. Were you able to clearly hear everything?

Probe: Were there any problems with volume controls or background noises of exhibits or visitors?

5. How accessible were the exhibits to you physically?

Probe: Were there any concerns about being able to smoothly move through the exhibit due to design, traffic flow, or visitors?

6. Do you have any suggestions for making the exhibit more accessible to all audiences?

Probe: Were any parts of the exhibits unclear or confusing?

Probe: Do you have any ideas for improving these sections?

### **Concluding Question**

1. If a child in your family were to ask you why this place is important, what would you tell the child?

## Focus Group Data Analysis

All audio recordings—focus groups, conversation analysis pairs and exit interviews,—were transcribed, coded and analyzed to provide appropriate feedback to park interpreters and staff. Hand-coding techniques and the use of NVivo 8.0 (a qualitative data analysis software program) were used to analyze all recordings. First, recordings were transcribed. Then one of the Principle Investigators (PI) coded the data. A very broad coding key was set up *a priori*, but the actual sub-categories (i.e., visitor meanings, cognitive and affective processes, civic memories or engagement, and exhibit accessibility) were allowed to emerge from the data (Allen, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994). After coding a small selection of the exit interviews, an initial coding sourcebook was developed, with categories that emerged, their hierarchy and definitions. Then, still during the initial phase of data analysis, two of the PIs independently coded eight exit interviews. Results were compared, coding inconsistencies were discussed, and code definitions were revised as needed. This revised coding sourcebook was then used to code all focus groups, exit interviews, and conversation analysis pairs.

Evaluators coded visitor comments related to their thoughts and feelings about the exhibit elements—we looked for instances of visitors connecting to the exhibits, either intellectually or

emotionally (Larsen, 2003), as well as the role of social interaction in facilitating these connections. Differences were also assessed between different types of exhibits (static, audio, video, hands-on, etc.), to see if any particular exhibit type is providing more (or less) opportunities for connections to the meanings in the resources, and if any difference exist between the types of connections (emotional versus intellectual).

### Conversation Analysis (CA) Sampling Plan and Procedures

A subset of the observation group of 45 was asked, as they began their visit, to participate in the conversation analysis (CA) portion of the study. Although conversation analysis is not a common part of most visitor center evaluations, some researchers have conducted studies that include a CA component (e.g., Allen 2002; Crowley & Callanan, 1998; Diamond, 1980; Hensel, 1987; Silverman, 1990; Tunnicliffe, 1998).

Conversation analysis is a data collection technique borrowed from the field of sociology. It is the most common form of ethno-methodological research (Woodruff & Aoki, 2004). A critical goal of CA is to examine social interactions to reveal patterns of behavior that exist between two or more people. Many visitors come to interpretive sites in social groups made up of family and friends; thus, CA can help understand how these groups interact as a social unit with the exhibits or within the exhibit space (Leinhardt & Knutson, 2004). Based in the larger research tradition of naturalistic inquiry, it was hoped that the CA would provide qualitative data regarding what visitors were doing and saying while interacting with the exhibits and each other, capturing meanings that emerge during their visit, shedding light on cognitive and affective processes at work during their exhibit experience, highlighting individualized and/or socio-

culturally-based instances of civic memory, revealing actual or intended acts of civic engagement, and documenting difficulties and/or constraints that visitors encounter related to exhibit accessibility.

Seventeen two-person visitor groups (pairs) agreed to participate in the CA. Pairs included two adults or one adult and one child over the age of 13. Based on Allen (2002), a preference for two individuals visiting the museum together but not part of a larger group was made in the selection of CA participants. This prevented unrecorded cross talk between participants and group members not participating in the study and not wearing recording equipment. Researchers completed a contact log to record basic information about respondents and non respondents. The contact log includes the date, time, gender, group composition (i.e., adult versus children), and response status (i.e., respondent versus non-respondent or declined) for each individual or group that is invited to participate in the study (see Appendix B, Visitor Contact Log).

### Conversation Analysis (CA) Data Collection Procedures

To facilitate data collection efforts, a research station was set up in the entry foyer of the CHSC Visitor Center during data collection time periods. The station consisted of a table staffed by one of the researchers and was relatively unobtrusive so as not to call undue attention to research activities. The researcher staffing the station approached candidates for CA as they entered the facility. The researcher explained that the park was seeking information about visitors' onsite experiences and asked if they were willing to participate in a conversation analysis study. Participants were asked verbally for their permission to record their conversations

using digital recording equipment. Participants who agreed were outfitted with a clip-on wireless microphone and a transmitter (or alternatively, they were asked to carry a voice-activated digital recording device) for the duration of their museum visit. The transmitter was stored in a pocket or clipped to a belt. All conversation analysis participants were asked to complete an Informed Consent for Participation in Research Form (Appendix C) prior to the beginning of the recording.

Researchers explained to participants that the device would record everything they said to each other or to other persons in the museum during their visit. The CA participants were not told that their movements were being recorded as well. As the CA visitors explored the museum, their movements, stop durations, and specific behaviors were also recorded on the CHSC Visitor Observation Form (see Appendix A). As noted earlier, visitors participating in the CA portion of the study were asked the exit interview questions. They were also asked about their willingness to participate in the follow-up telephone interview.



Research Station, Visitor Center Lobby

## Conversation Analysis Data Analysis

During the collection, and eventual transcription of the conversation analysis data, a number of technical difficulties impacted the ability to initially collect the data, and later analyze it. During data collection, electrical interference from the site's audio description equipment negatively impacted the ability to collect some of the data. Therefore, recording procedures were modified, and paired participants ended up having to share a single microphone instead of having separate microphones. In the end, this influenced the quality of the recordings. Of the 17 conversation pairs that participated, five recordings did not yield useable data.

Interestingly, of the remaining pairs, six pairs talked very little. They spent a majority of their visit time separated from each other; therefore, little usable data was recorded from these six CA pairs. In addition, some pairs spent time talking about things "off the topic" (such as discussing basketball scores). However, the recordings of six CA participant pairs did yield data that was audible and useful. These were the recordings that were focused on for the analysis. The audible comments were coded using the techniques described above.

## Exit Interviews Sampling Plan/Procedures

All visitors that were observed were asked to participate in a brief exit interview following their visit. CA participants were told about the exit interview at the time they agreed to participate in the CA. Exit interview response rate by visitors in the unobtrusive observation portion of the study was recorded in a second visitor contact log. The same information cited above was recorded for exit interview contacts (see Appendix B, Visitor Contact Log). Both

contact logs also contained information related to the willingness of the visitor to participate in a follow-up telephone interview.

### Exit Interviews Data Collection Procedures

At the conclusion of their museum visit, researchers approached each individual who was unobtrusively observed, or who participated in the study via observation combined with conversation analysis, and asked them to participate in a brief exit interview about their museum experience. At the end of the interview researchers asked whether the respondent was willing to participate in a follow-up telephone interview at a later time. If they agreed to the telephone interview, they were asked to complete a Visitor Contact Information Form (Appendix D). Participants were asked verbally for their permission to record their interview comments using a digital recording device. All conversation analysis and exit interview participants were informed that their responses would be kept confidential; that is, their name and identifying information will not be associated with the data when it is presented to the park or to external audiences. A sample exit interview protocol is provided on the facing page with additional protocols attached in Appendix E. Probing questions were asked if the respondent provided only a cursory response to the first question in a series.

### Exit Interviews Data Analysis

Loomis (2002) suggests that visitor satisfaction with an exhibit is best measured using multiple methods or sources. Qualitative data allows for an in-depth understanding of the effect

of various interpretive experiences on an individual by individual basis. Interviews can provide rich detail, supporting findings derived from observation and conversation analysis (Falk & Dierking, 2000). Exit interviews were coded and analyzed using the techniques previously described.

Central High School NHS  
Exit Interview Questions –Version A

Note: The same question is asked six (6) different ways in an effort to comply with federal regulations. Each question can be asked to no more than nine (9) respondents.

ID #: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

- I. Introduction
- II. Participation Yes/No? (Contact Log)
- III. Consent Form
- IV. Interview Questions (See below)
- V. 6-month Follow up?
- VI. Thank you gift.

- 1a. What drew you to this site today?
- 2a. Is this your first visit to the Visitor Center? (If not, approximately how many times have you visited?)
- 3a. Did the exhibits trigger any emotions in you? (Positive or negative? What element...?)
- 4a. While exploring the exhibits, did you learn something new, understand something better, or think about something differently?
- 5a. What do you think is the main idea of the exhibits?
- 6a. Do you have any life experiences that you saw reflected in the exhibits?
- 7a. What do these exhibits tell us about race relations then and now?
- 8a. Will you behave differently as a citizen as a result of seeing these exhibits?
- 9a. **Mini scenario:** “A museum contains images, text, objects, audio and video recordings—it’s jammed full of things to look at, listen to, read and think about. Sometimes, however, visitors can’t see small print or hear recordings. Maybe the exhibits are full of complicated terms or aren’t well organized. Maybe the choice of colors makes reading difficult. Perhaps visitors cannot get up an incline or in or out of tight spaces...”  
  
Did you encounter any barriers to your enjoyment of the exhibits?
- 10a. Is there anything else you want to share?

*Note: For a complete list of exit interview questions see Appendix E.*

## Longitudinal Telephone Interview Sampling Plan and Procedures

At the close of each interview, participants were asked if they would be willing to participate in a future follow-up telephone interview related to their museum visit. Fifteen telephone interviews were conducted. The follow-up interview enabled evaluators to include specific questions in the phone interview related to things respondents saw during their museum visit, checking to see if behaviors observed onsite led to various enduring outcomes.

However, given the small sample size, and the nature of the qualitative data collected, broad-based generalizations are not appropriate. These data collection procedures, however, promote an in-depth understanding of a contextual phenomenon rather than conclusions drawn through statistical analysis—in fact, the strength of qualitative methods provides a deeper, holistic understanding of the data. Visitors who agreed to the telephone interview were asked to record their name, address, email, telephone number, and best day/time to contact them in the future on the Visitor Contact Information Form (see Appendix D).

## Longitudinal Telephone Interview Data Collection Procedures

Approximately one year after their initial site visit, prospective phone interviewees were contacted by phone or email. They were reminded of their CHSC visit and that they had previously indicated a willingness to participate in a telephone interview and asked to offer a best time and date to set up the telephone call. When participant were reached for the first time by telephone, the researcher inquired whether the participant had time *at that moment* to answer questions about their CHSC visit or whether they would prefer to schedule a follow-up telephone

meeting time. An attempt was made to contact all respondents from the exit interviews who consented to being contacted. A minimum of 3 phone calls were made to each potential respondent over the course of 6 weeks in an effort to reach them. Voice or email messages were left for all respondents. A total of 49 were contacted, but 6 were unable to be reached due to disconnected or incorrect phone/email contact information. Voicemail messages were left for a total of 43 respondents, with 26 responding. Of those 26, two declined further participation, seven were not available during subsequent contacts, and 17 participated in the telephone interview.

The telephone interview was semi-structured and followed an interview guide format. This allowed for flexibility within the structured questions. The telephone interviews took approximately 15-30 minutes to complete. All telephone interviews were recorded with the respondent's permission, and the interviews were transcribed for data analysis. During the phone interview, participants were asked a series of questions related to their CHSC museum visit experience.

## Longitudinal Telephone Interview Questions

1. Do you remember visiting Central High School National Historic Site?

2. What do you remember about your visit or about the visitor center?

Probe: Over the past months, have you thought about or reflected on, your visit to Central HS NHS since your visit last summer? What topics or ideas have you reflected on?

3. What do you think the main idea of the exhibits was? Did anything stand out to you?

4. When exploring the exhibits, did you learn anything you didn't know before or did it reinforce something you already knew? Did you understand anything better or think about something differently?

Probe: Can you give me an example? What did you learn? What was reinforced?

Probe: Did any exhibit element stand out to you?

5. Did the exhibits trigger any emotions or feelings in you? Did you feel anything emotionally when you went through the exhibits?

Probe: Were the emotions positive or negative?

Probe: What kind of emotions did you experience?

Probe: Which exhibit(s) made you feel that way?

6. Was there anything in the exhibits that was personally relevant to you?

Probe: Have you had any life experiences that you saw reflected in the exhibits?

7. What do the exhibits tell us about civil rights then & now?

8. Since your visit, have you participated in any activities or projects for the betterment or improvement of your community/state/nation? Has your participation been at the same level or at an increased level? Are any of your activities new (i.e., activities that you did not participate in before)? Did your visit motivate you to participate in these activities?

Probe: Have you done anything that promotes any democratic values?

Probe: Have you done anything that might fall under the category of “civic responsibilities” (i.e., donate money to charity, serve on a jury, or volunteer at some place you haven’t before)?

Probe: Why did you do these activities? If a friend asked you why you did those things, what would you tell them?

9. While you were onsite in July 2009, did you buy anything at the Visitor Center, or take any materials home with you? If so, did you later interact with or reflect on those items?

10. Have you visited CHSC since your visit in July 2009?

Probe: If yes, how many times?

Probe: Why did you return?

Probe: What was the purpose of the visit? (If it was to bring friends or family members with you, did your previous visit motivate you to bring them?)

Probe: With whom did you visit?

11. If you were to drive by the school and site today, what thoughts (or feelings) would be going through your mind?

**Sociodemographic Questions:**

12. What is your age?

13. What is your highest level of education?

14. What is your employment status & field?

**Final Question:**

15. Is there anything else you would like to share about your visit to Central High School National Historical Site?

## Longitudinal Telephone Interview Data Analysis

Data from the telephone interviews were analyzed using hand-coding techniques as well as NVivo 8.0, in a similar fashion to that outlined above. The telephone interview data allowed for an examination of the durability of visitor connections to park meanings and significance (Knapp, 2006), including both intellectual and emotional connections, as well as providing a detailed look at cognitive and affective processes, civic memory, and civic engagement.

## RESULTS “ROADMAP”

### I. **Participant Summary**

### II. **Exhibits & Observations**

#### A. **How the Exhibits Functioned: Reveal, Relate, Provoke.**

*Theme 1: The capacity of CHSC exhibits to reveal, relate and provoke may be a function of relevant content, compelling images and the use of multi-sensory formats.*

#### B. **Timing & Tracking**

#### C. **Accessibility**

### III. **Meaning Making**

#### A. **Courage**

*Theme 2: The Little Rock Nine were emblematic of the courageous struggle among people of color for educational access and opportunity.*

#### B. **Empathy**

*Theme 3: CHSC fosters empathy by putting visitors face-to-face with real people who struggled, without malice, to overcome adversity.*

#### C. **Equality**

*Theme 4: CHSC promotes reflection on the evolving saga of equal rights granted and denied while highlighting the social and psychological toll caused by unequal treatment.*

#### D. **Diversity**

*Theme 5: CHSC represents the ongoing struggle to transform a history of prejudice and discrimination into a legacy of cultural diversity.*

### IV. **Relevance (or Meaning-Making<sup>2</sup>)**

*Theme 6: As visitors found personal relevance in exhibit content, they began to ask fundamental questions, articulate astute observations and pinpoint possible strategies to improve societal relations—possibly suggesting a heightened level of meaning making.*

### V. **Civic Engagement**

*Theme 7: CHSC promotes civic engagement by providing opportunities for awareness and reflection, serving as a catalyst in the formation of behavioral intentions, and enhancing ownership and empowerment.*

#### A. **Awareness**

#### B. **Reflection**

#### C. **Behavioral Intentions**

#### D. **Ownership**

#### E. **Empowerment**

### VI. **Enduring Impacts**

## RESULTS

The science of interpretation is not a precise one. Often visitors cannot articulate the emotions they experience or express a clear understanding of the meanings and significance of an event, place or historic resource. During the exit interview portion of the evaluation, respondents were asked general questions about their CHSC visit. They also were asked questions related to intellectual or emotional connections they may have formed related to civil rights struggles, the school integration crisis, the Little Rock Nine or other topics covered in the exhibits. The study assessed whether respondents were able to find personal relevance as a result of their museum experience, since researchers wanted to explore whether an enhanced level of relevance might lead to changes in attitudes, beliefs or civic behavior.

Study findings suggest most respondents visited the site, at least in part, because of a love of history. Many respondents were teachers or students; these visitors were likely to have an interest in education as an underlying reason for visiting CHSC. Almost 86% of respondents from the exit interview group were first-time visitors to CHSC. Exit interviewees overwhelmingly confirmed that they had an *emotional experience* as a result of viewing the exhibits. When they were asked if they had learned something new or formed an intellectual connection as a result of the exhibit experience, 75% responded that they had learned something new or understood the issues addressed in the exhibits better.

One approach that interpretation employs to facilitate visitor connections to resource meanings is to attempt to enhance the personal relevance of stories, objects, people and places. In interpretation, it is axiomatic that personal relevance facilitates personal connections to meanings. Freeman Tilden (1957) emphasizes the importance of personal relevance since visitor

response is proportional to the extent to which it touches their personal experience. In this study, almost 70% of respondents confirmed that they reflected on personal life experiences as a result of viewing the exhibits at CHSC.

Finally, researchers sought to determine whether visitors felt challenged to engage in citizenship behavior as a result of their museum experience. Twenty-eight percent of respondents indicated that they hoped to change or increase their civic behavior as a result of their CHSC experience. Approximately one-third indicated that they were already involved in their communities and that their onsite experience had *reinforced* their commitment to community involvement.

### Exhibits and Observations

Researchers observed 45 adult visitors to the CHSC exhibit area during the 5-day study period in July 2009. These visitors spent an average of 53 minutes in the exhibit area, while 36 minutes represented the median time spent. One observed visitor remained for only seven minutes. The longest time an observed visitor spent in the exhibit was 88 minutes. Please note that time estimates do not include time spent in the bookstore or the visitor center lobby. Table 3 summarizes the mean, median and maximum time visitors spent at each exhibit area, while also indicating the percentage of the total number of visitors who stopped at each exhibit. See Appendix F for a floor plan of the exhibits. This study made use of an existing numbering system provided by CHSC. To facilitate a detailed analysis of exhibit usage, researchers added an alphabetical numbering that is tied to specific exhibit panels within an exhibit.

**Table 3.** Time Spent at Each Exhibit (in seconds)

Exhibit #	Mean Time	Median Time	Max Time	Visitors Stops (% of total)
Exhibit 5	70	32	381	76
Exhibit 6	136	80	553	76
Exhibit 7	83	33	474	78
Exhibit 8	49	12	440	47
Exhibit 9	189	117	1313	84
Exhibit 10	156	71	2571	76
Exhibit 11	96	0	885	44
Exhibit 12	402	370	1189	87
Exhibit 13	560	35	3316	56
Exhibit 14	30	0	161	40
Exhibit 15	16	0	101	31
Exhibit 16	47	30	388	64
Exhibit 17	136	72	851	76
Exhibit 18	81	43	384	64
Exhibit 19	30	0	438	36
Exhibit 20	124	75	704	78



Interactive Exhibit Elements

The 16 exhibit areas were divided and identified into 52 separate components. Twelve of the 52 exhibits incorporated interactive elements, including: touch screen computers with videos to watch, touch screens with information to read, touch screens with quizzes to test one's knowledge, an electronic quiz board, a flip-up quiz board, phone stations for listening only, and phone stations that were linked to touch screens with short videos and oral history recordings. The exhibit area also had a few stools and one cushioned bench for visitors to sit on as they listened, watched and interacted with content displayed on screen.

Exhibits that were “separated” from the other exhibits by distance, flow patterns or visual barriers tended to be missed or ignored [see Appendix F to review the exhibit floor plan]. For example, exhibits 6D, 6E, and 7A were some of the least visited panels. Exhibit 18E featured President Johnson and the signing of the Civil Rights Act. Visitors may have noticed this exhibit

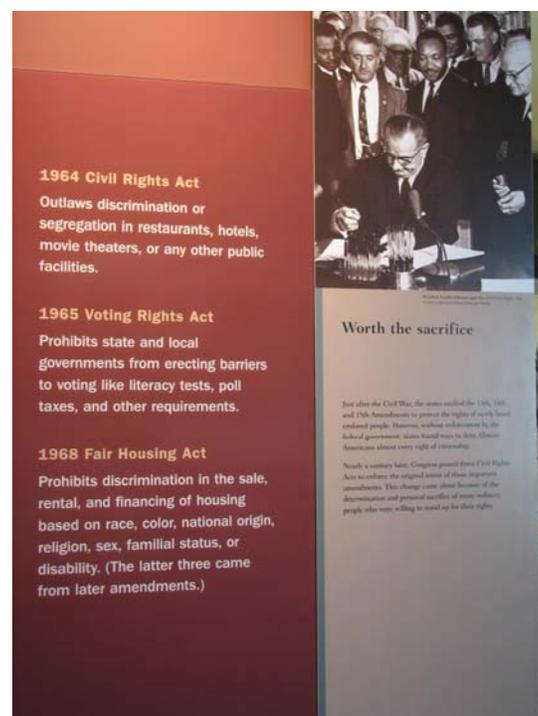


Exhibit 18E. The Civil Rights Act of 1964

“in passing,” but few visitors stopped at this panel. Exhibit 20F, a modernist painting of the Little Rock Nine, also received infrequent stops. The low visitation rate for this painting may have been caused by its physical separation from other exhibit areas, or because it was positioned at the “last stop,” when *museum fatigue* may have already set in, for visitors who moved from left to right (i.e., the majority of visitors).

### *How the Exhibits Functioned*

*Theme 1: The capacity of CHSC exhibits to reveal, relate and provoke may be a function of relevant content, compelling images and the use of multi-sensory formats.*

*Reveal.* Respondents provided detailed insights into what the CHSC exhibits revealed to them. With reference to content from the “We the People...” exhibit, one respondent saw “the mindset of the country” revealed:

I think it really showed...the mindset of the country. Like he was saying, ‘three-fifths of a person.’ It always comes back to economics, capitalism. That’s the foundation of what this country was built on...I think psychologically, if you treat people a certain way, ‘three-fifths’ was a way to psychologically think ‘I’m not really doing this to a person, I’m doing this to a piece of property.’ (FG 11)

Another respondent reflected emotionally upon the accomplishments of Ernest Green, finding meaning in his “simple walk”:

When I saw the video of Ernest Green walking across the stage, and one of his biggest thoughts was that he was trying not to fall. It was an accomplishment. He did what he set out to do, despite [everything that happened] from the first time they got there, and they got turned away, to graduating...It was a simple walk that represented so much. That was very, very powerful... (FG 6)

CHSC exhibits revealed to respondents the “larger context” within which the Little Rock crisis unfolded and within which we all live our day to day lives: “I think it’s important because it makes people aware. Their world isn’t just what they see—it’s so much bigger than that. I think you get a sense of that here—how this impacted the world and the civil rights movement...It’s important for that reason” (FG 4). Finally, in some instances, respondents wanted the exhibits to go further, *to reveal more*:

One of the things that is really powerful to see is that these kids, who were denied for...alleged inferiority, all but one of them has a college degree. One of them became an Assistant Secretary of Labor. One became a Ph.D. [They are] very distinguished and that needs to be in the exhibit. (FG 2)

*Relate.* Respondents related to CHSC exhibits on a number of levels. The exhibits fostered relevance by bringing past events “closer” *and* by prompting reflection on present-day issues. One respondent related exhibit content to past experiences of racism and present-day instances of overcoming racial barriers:

What it pointed out to me was, you know, the abject hatred. I remember it, but it brought it back a lot closer all of a sudden. [I was] thinking about the contrast with today, especially Tuesday when we are going to inaugurate a black President. But still, we’ve got a long way to go in this country when it comes to racism. (FG 2)

Another respondent engaged exhibit content in a “dialogue” that illustrated its relevance to her own life and that of her group members:

...Then it says, ‘to form a more perfect union, establish justice...’—not for us! They weren’t trying to establish anything for us. ‘Ensure domestic tranquility’—no, they were creating domestic violence for us. So when you go back and you break this down, you [find]...this did not include Arthur, or Deprecia or Vicky. It didn’t include [us]. We didn’t even have a delegate signing on our behalf—the chain gang, that’s what we had. That’s what was created. We have to understand this type of stuff. (FG 3)

Not every respondent incorporated so many dramatic flourishes; but *many* respondents

recognized that what was true then, is still true now: “There was a part that said ‘Wake Up, America, Your School is Going Under’...and that’s still true today. Education—I don’t feel like our education is up to par as it should be. We are still struggling, still...” (FG 1). Finally, exhibit relevance was enhanced when respondents took advantage of the opportunities the exhibits provided to link historic content to the present. One respondent demonstrates the myriad modern-day linkages that can be made if one reflects on the process of *change*:

I think what stood out for me—I don’t know that it’s new learning, but it’s a reminder of how long change takes...[it is] really such a long, painful process to bring about change. I was thinking about the President and Obama going in, and there is so much excitement by so many people. A lot of people probably have a vision of overnight change, but it’s probably going to be a long process too...[I also thought about] the individual sacrifices that were made to make these things happen, and you wonder, “Are we prepared to do those kinds of things to make change happen?” I don’t know. It seems like you don’t see as much sacrifice in our current culture. There’s a lot more selfishness, not the global vision, more of a—well, kind of like what some of these people had—it wasn’t *their* problem. I believe Emmett Till’s mother was like ‘it isn’t my problem,’ but then it became her problem when her son was killed. Those things struck me. (FG 4)

*Provoke.* Several respondents noted that being “at the place,” viewing Central High School through the huge picture window, hearing participant voices, seeing event photographs, and watching historic film footage *made history come alive* while providing an immersive context for one’s experience. As one respondent noted, “I’ve certainly heard the story, but it’s a lot different hearing it in [the] people’s voices that were actually there. Made it more real” (EI 23). The multi-sensory exhibits seemed to provoke stronger emotional responses than could be achieved by words alone. For example, one respondent implies that hearing emotion may elicit emotion: “You can hear all of their emotion as well. Reading the words is one thing, but to hear their emotion mixed in with it you can really see how they truly felt...It is very powerful” (EI 4).



Exhibit 17D. Highlighting the Emmett Till Story

Certain iconic images of the crisis, such as the picture of Hazel Massery spitting insults at Elizabeth Eckford or photos of the African American news reporter being attacked by a mob, provoked emotions such as surprise, empathy, or anger. One respondent confessed:

My favorite part? Well, the whole thing is very powerful. But looking out the window to Park Street, where it has the picture of the military and how the troops were lined up—up and down Park Street—you can look at that picture, and then look out at the street, and visualize where all that was. That was my favorite part. (FG 5)

Given the exhibit’s potential to provoke strong reactions, one respondent suggested that the *whole exhibit* represents a hedge against apathy and societal tail-spins:

[I want] to make sure that they maintain this place for posterity because I think if it isn’t [maintained], it would encourage a kind of apathy that could contribute to our reverting back to some very negative societal habits. I think the presence of this place reminds us that we must remain on the cutting edge of realizing human understanding, compassion and sensitivity for each other regardless of our ethnicity, our culture, our up rearing. After all, it’s not an American thing in the final analysis. It’s a global thing. And this exhibit speaks to that very issue. (EI 8)

### ***Conversation Analysis Excerpt: A Thought a Minute, Ending in Provocation***

**Respondent 62:** Oh, so Daisy Bates [was] President of the Arkansas NAACP. They published the Arkansas State Press.

**Respondent 62:** Cross burning incidents in their yard, see that?

**Respondent 62:** [Laughs] Here's an understatement, "I saw the paratroopers and they were pretty serious looking guys."

**Respondent 63:** [Laughs] Yeah...

**Respondent 62:** Its one thing to face the mob at the start of a school year, and another thing to endure the troublemakers all year long. Makes me think of Jackie Robinson...

As powerful as the historic images and multi-sensory formats can be, results suggest that at CHSC words can sometimes stand on their own. That is, a thin sliver of meaningful content, presented without embellishment, can provoke strong responses. One respondent laughed with her friends as she entered the visitor center, perhaps seeking to diffuse potential edginess? "We were laughing, or making a bit of a joke I guess, as we were walking into the building and talking about the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment printed there on the bricks. We just said, 'We aren't there yet, are we?' Because there is a lot of struggling to do..." (FG 5). In fact, observations suggest that visitors *do* display emotions as they engage exhibit content. While the main emotion recorded by researchers was laughter, there was also one individual who visibly cried during the exhibit experience. Perhaps laughter is one indicator (among many) that points to exhibit effectiveness at eliciting provocation?

Finally, one respondent advocated changing the exhibit to include emerging insights from the Human Genome Project. His rationale for the suggestion? It might facilitate a cultural *healing process*:

I didn't get around to [everything] because I was kind of enthralled with each thing that I was looking at...But does everyone know what the Genome Project is? I was wondering because this is like a moral responsibility not just to expose a problem, but to expose the solution to the problem. [That is], that we all came from the African. There is only one race, the human race. We just have different cultural backgrounds...I'm thinking of the moral responsibility of including some [aspect] of the Genome Project as a healing process. (FG 11)

## Accessibility

Congress passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990. The ADA law (*Pub. L. 101-336*) defines disability as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual” (1990). This federal mandate set clear, enforceable standards, giving the Judicial System the power to enforce those standards in an effort to end discrimination against persons with disabilities.

An additional component of this study was to evaluate the accessibility of the CHSC exhibits to all possible visitors. While no visibly disabled visitors toured the exhibits during the July 2009 study period, the focus group component of the study did include disabled visitors and disability right advocates.

Disabled participants or disability rights advocates generally expressed appreciation at the variety of audiovisual tools incorporated into the exhibits. One individual wrote, “I liked how the exhibit used vision, hearing, and touch. The pictures allowed me to see their struggles, to see their hurt or pain. By allowing me to hear people explain their struggles I felt like I was talking to them face to face” (FG 1).

Upon entering the physical space of the exhibit, several participants commented about not knowing the flow of the exhibit. “My instinct is to go to the right and I did all that and a little

ways in I realized that I was going against the sequence but you could look at it as going back in time too.” (FG 1)

When you walk down to the left and go to the South resisting [section], you are not sure where to go after that. You turn and there is that blank wall and the picture window, which has a nice view and I wouldn’t want to clutter anything up there, but you don’t know where to go. I kept going around to the right and kept coming back to 58 and 59 and then it took me a couple of minutes to realize that I had gone the wrong way to keep the sequence. That is something that is totally missing in the entire museum. When you walk in you don’t know where to go to start with and then you follow the sequence, you lose the sequence. (FG 2)

When asked about physically moving from one place to another within the exhibit, the consensus seemed to be that there was adequate space for wheelchair accessibility and for those with mobility impairments. However, someone did comment that if there were several people in a wheelchair at the center at the same time, there was only one listening station that was specifically wheelchair accessible. “I didn’t notice any other accessibility issues...Just from observing what I observed, I didn’t see any barriers” (FG 8). Another disabled participant commented: “As far as space, I think there is enough space for a



Exhibit 5. Entrance to the CHSC Exhibit Area

person with no sight to be able to move through there.” (FG 9)

Many of the comments were about how exhibit audio made it difficult to become visually or mentally engaged. The video on the “Media’s Impact” narrated by Mike Wallace and the entry video on the three towers were exhibit elements that garnered many positive comments from all participant groups. These exhibits also received many comments for being the most distracting while participants tried to read or concentrate on other exhibits.

It is noisy, almost distractingly noisy. You have the front three screens going on and you have the one audio going on here and if you are sitting with that thing up to your ear, you have to do like this (puts finger/hand over opposite ear) to hear anything. It’s like there is this constant bombardment of noise and you don’t have time to reflect or enjoy the other audio. (FG 7)

When you come out of one section with quite a bit of audio and then you move and it is totally quiet, if there was someone who could not see what was going on, they could not tell what was going on, did they drop out of the exhibit completely? (FG 7)

One participant with a hearing impairment required an interpreter and talked about not being able to experience these telephone listening stations. He related this inaccessibility to the exhibit story of inequality. It was noticed by the researcher and other visitors that the interpreter could not hold the telephone to listen in one hand and sign at the same time.

On the display that has the pictures of the Little Rock Nine, on the phones where you push the buttons to hear them tell their stories –there was no closed captioning for anything like that. I felt like I wanted to be involved and have the same experience but there was no closed captioning. (FG 5)

A disability rights advocate appreciated that the listening stations near the window (Exhibit 13) were captioned and had a listening track that was audio described. She expressed that this exhibit could be enjoyed by both a person who was deaf and a person who was blind.



Exhibit 13. Listening Stations

However, the experts wondered about how someone who was visually impaired would enjoy the other exhibits. “I did like how for the visually impaired it described the emotions like before someone would talk, i.e. Minnijean was using her arms dramatically and then it would go into what they were saying” (FG 4).

A disabled male and his partner expressed that they enjoyed the listening stations facing the picture window (Exhibit 13). However, only one of the phones at each station is audio described (each station has two handsets—one has an audio description track that plays through it, the other does not.) The couple sat together which meant that one of them did not have the audio described version. They suggested adding Braille to the videos, acknowledging that it takes more time to navigate through video with Braille compared to audio description.

The screen is just flat. If it had some indentions in it, it would be better for a person with no sight. Since the screens are already the way they are, Braille would probably be the best. You could just go straight down the row or whatever. It wouldn't take a whole lot of time. You wouldn't have to put like September, you could just put like S1 for September 1<sup>st</sup> and S2 for September 2<sup>nd</sup>. It wouldn't take much space. (FG 9)

Several people commented about the difficulty in reading or following the text in the exhibits due to the lighting overall and the font size on the exhibit panels. The lighting seemed to create glares on pictures and text depending on the height of a person. Some people leaned forward to put a shadow over the glare and others leaned back.

I noticed for me when I walk up to the panels the light reflected back on me. Maybe because I'm taller, but I found myself having to move back and forth. (FG 2)

There were also criticisms about the size of the text, especially in the interactive exhibits:

Also with the oral histories, the very last one, when you walk in with the TV monitor, it has captioning there but it was very tiny, as far as the text size, it was very hard to read. Some people may not be able to see that. I didn't know if that was an older TV or newer TV or what. I wasn't quite sure what the deal with that was. (FG 5)

The only thing I could think of was the kiosk. Some of them the print is very small and I have good eyesight. Again people that are reading those are the ones that are more determined to catch everything of the exhibit. That would be something that I would think would be a problem for some people. (FG 4)

The consensus among disabled participants or disability rights advocates was that the majority of the exhibits were fairly accessible to all visitors. The majority of focus group participants and all exit interview participants answered that they did not encounter any barriers or problems to their enjoyment of the exhibits. However, they were asked to think about family members and friends when they considered accessibility. Currently, people who are visually impaired would need to be accompanied by a companion or a park ranger in order to more fully enjoy the exhibits. Except for the initial entrance video on the three towers, and two oral history stations, the audiovisual elements are captioned so visitors who are deaf are able to read the captioning unless they have difficulty reading, seeing, or are not fluent in English. Comments that support the conclusion that persons with disabilities are able to form emotional and intellectual connections to the story of Little Rock Central High School include the following:

It was awesome. I could look at a photograph for a couple of minutes, it's like the photograph itself is speaking to me so I'm going 'Ahh, and I got it. I don't need the [captioning] to get it.' (FG 5)

I guess it goes back to [his] point about the ADA and all the struggles we both do every day to make things accessible for people with disabilities. That makes you more appreciative of what you are doing and it's not in vain. We are really making some steps to make things better. (FG 8)

### Exit Interviews & Focus Groups

Not surprisingly, the results from the focus groups yielded richer details than the results from the exit interviews. The focus groups were designed to provide opportunities for lengthy discussion of the study questions, lasting for 90-120 minutes. The exit interviews were designed to quickly capture answers from visitors in 10-15 minutes. Thus, while similar results were found when analyzing both data sources, a key difference between the two types of data was that the focus group respondents provided greater depth in their answers.

### Meaning Making

When respondents articulated the *meanings* and *significance* of the events, ideas and experiences that they encountered at CHSC, concepts such as courage, empathy, equality and diversity leapt to the forefront. They willingly embraced the totality of the exhibit content—unpleasant as it sometimes was—from the crafting of the constitution to slavery and race relations in pre- and post-Civil War America, from court cases and school integration battles to the Little Rock crisis and the dogged determination of the Little Rock Nine, from accounts detailing the influence of the media to present-day struggles for civil rights—and the expanded

sphere of those to whom civil rights may be extended. Of course, no respondent interacted with each and every layer of exhibit content, but every respondent conveyed one or more meanings they encountered, interacted with, and in some way claimed for their own. Respondents discussed these topics in ways that zeroed in on subtle nuances of meaning, while resisting the temptation to exchange potency for mere abstractions. They pulled from a rich reservoir of personal experiences, applying “what they knew” to exhibit content in ways that promoted empathy. They lined up staunchly in support of equality and educational opportunity—frequently linking these goals to what every parent wants for their child. Finally, they identified a few simple, but potentially effective strategies to deal with the tension that emerges when vision and current reality don’t match.

### *Courage*

*Theme 2: The Little Rock Nine were emblematic of the courageous struggle among people of color for educational access and opportunity.*

When asked what they thought was the main idea of the exhibit, some respondents emphasized “courage” or “determination” as overarching concepts. Others summed up the exhibits with a concise statement highlighting the Nine’s faith, fortitude and ultimate success:

- “Courage and determination.” (FG 10)
- “Courage, determination.” (FG 7)
- “Determination.” (FG 4)
- “They had courage well beyond their years.” (EI 21)
- “People had such courage to stand up to what they believe in.” (EI 17)
- “Determination—all they wanted was a good education. It took a lot of guts to be brave to go through that every day.” (FG 9)
- “They never lost faith in what they wanted to do.” (FG 6)
- “That they succeeded.” (EI 4)

### *Conversational Analysis Excerpt: Media Moguls & Courage*

**Respondent 33:** Here's a little display on the media. I'm going to take a look at this. One of the Nine is talking about the effect of the media and the fact that [because] it was live and in color on televisions all across the country—[that] made a big difference.

**Respondent 34:** This is interesting. Yeah. It shows you how white and black newspapers covered it.

**Respondent 33:** Yeah, this is a reprint from the editorial. I think that's the reason that they won the two Pulitzer Prizes, the editorial support for this. That took a lot of courage on their part...

**Respondent 34:** It's interesting to me that they're saying that most of the people in Little Rock favored this gradual integration plan, which is not something that comes as apparent when you look at these films. I get the impression that everybody in town was a racist and didn't want these kids in the school.

**Respondent 33:** It could profit from some scholarly research, because if I understand correctly Arkansas Gazette was run out of business by advertisers who responded negatively to their support for integration. So I'm not sure that you could defend this support of a majority of the people. Maybe it is a majority of the people, but the business community that had the power of the...

**Respondent 34:** That would be an important part of the story if they add here "This newspaper was run out of business by the other businesses"... It would be useful to have a segregationist's newspaper story and point out this story did not win a Pulitzer Prize.

**Respondent 33:** Yeah, here's the other side. If I understand [it], there certainly were two sides, and I think it was [via] television. You see the media's impact in that there was a story from *The New York Times*, which is banner headline three deep, but it was television that took it into everybody's home.

When respondents elaborated upon these ideas, they expressed universal acclaim for what the Nine did, what they achieved, and the value of their achievement today. Reflecting upon the courage of the Nine, one respondent confessed:

As an adult, I don't know if we would have the guts to do that. Kids, especially at that time, you think of 'Leave It to Beaver' and that whole innocent age, and it turns into a big ole hornet's nest and you have no idea that something like that could strike out of all of this. They were determined. (FG 9)

Many acts of courage primarily benefit oneself or one's immediate associates. However, one respondent suggested that the courage of the Nine rose to a higher level. It ultimately benefitted us each and every one:

I think this whole thing is about courage—to have the courage to try and right a wrong, whether you succeed or not. It's great if you succeed, but at least [you're] able to sleep at night...[Because]the first day was bad; and if they had gone home and said it's so much easier [to quit], they thought about returning to Dunbar, just going back. They didn't and that is quite important. For all of us. (FG 5)

Respondents recognized that the courage of the Nine was courage in pursuit of a cherished prize—*education*. One respondent reflected upon what the Nine were willing to endure in their quest for learning:

Maybe something else that I've learned from the film is that the Nine were champions of education. Those little steps they took were big enough to send out a message that there is a problem and we need help. So they stuck together. The Nine stood up to the oppression, the beatings, the dehumanization. It was a great piece of advocacy which sent out messages to other people and opened other people's eyes. (FG 3)

The courage of the Nine opened educational doors for people of color during the school integration era—and to this day, those doors have not swung shut. One respondent rued the contrast between the Nine's dogged pursuit of education and present-day attitudes:

With the struggles that those Nine had to go through, why aren't our children today really adamant or trying to get the proper education like they should be? A lot of people suffered to get a first class education and that is something that could be wasted. (EI 81, 82)

Finally, respondents recognized that the success of the Nine sent shock waves throughout the country, throughout the world. One respondent indicated that the actions *and* reactions of the



Exhibit 16. Looking at Civil Rights beyond Central High School

Nine were instrumental in effecting change, not only at Central High School but beyond Central.

Further, their success highlights “how far we still need to go”:

They succeeded...Had they not succeeded it could have changed the outcome for the whole country. [Equally important is] how they reacted, because other stuff was going on in other places. So if something that big would have crumbled, what could have happened? The fact that they succeeded has pushed us farther into realizing how far we still need to go. (EI 4)

### *Empathy*

*Theme 3: CHSC fosters empathy by putting visitors face-to-face with real people who struggled, without malice, to overcome adversity.*

Among the themes that emerged from an analysis of respondent meaning making, researchers found that comments related to empathy were never expressed in “sound bite” fashion. Rather, respondents elaborated on specific aspects of a situation, projected themselves into the scene, and allowed themselves to feel emotions ranging from compassion and respect to

fear and anger. Respondents empathized with the Little Rock Nine, the teachers, the white classmates, and even the society within which this struggle was embedded. The intensity of this experience often led respondents to ask questions about the fair treatment of others, whether or not to assign blame, and whether adopting a set of guiding principle(s) could avert the worst of the abuses.

Respondents expressed empathy through their efforts to visualize the events associated with the Little Rock crisis:

I never experienced direct racism like they did—no obvious racism—but I tried to visualize myself in their shoes. It’s an emotional response, [first] fear, then determination...commitment, determination, ambition, to better myself despite what you think. (FG 6)

The process of empathizing was also a process of puzzling over *the why*. One respondent who stood riveted to the images of the African American news reporter being hounded by the mob, later reflected:

There was a picture of a gentleman, a black man, being kicked in the face by the mob. I’m looking at him and I noticed that he...had a business suit on. The mob was just kicking this man in the face. And I’m thinking to myself, why would you want to harm somebody? (EI 19)

Respondents extended empathy to those who might have, in other circles, been the objects of scorn. Following their line of reasoning, one senses that their empathy was well-placed:

Several [points resonated] with me...the news reel stuff...when Mike Wallace was talking. [I saw] pictures of him and heard his voice back then, when he was young, and he is still going. I guess he is close to 90 now. To see him, and to have him talk about what was happening then, and to have him talk about what was his view now. I got an emotional response. These people lived history and they were just kids, normal human beings thrown into a thing. It was also in a couple of recordings, the point was made, a white boy was talking [with his buddy] about [how] he wished that he had done something, but he was just as confused. He was a teenager and what could be expected from a bunch of teenagers? He didn’t know what was happening and looking back, he was like ‘Darn! It would have been nice to have a

### *Conversation Analysis Excerpt: A Moment Captured in Time*

**Respondent 34:** I feel a little sorry for these...the white kids who are looking so hateful in the background, because they had to live their lives here too and with this film all the time in their memory...

**Respondent 33:** I think we'll see that some of the people pictured here with so much hate in their eyes apologized, and made up to those people to the extent that they could, later on.

little bit of perspective and I could have stood up for things that I eventually came to believe in.' It was just a bunch of human beings thrown in and trying to figure things out. (FG 9)

Similarly, respondents were willing to extend empathy to the white teachers at Central High, acknowledging the powerful influence of the early socialization process on their adult actions:

See, you can't even blame the white teachers. They grew up being told that the black man is like this and the white person is like this. So it is inborn, built into their mind, and then they actually pick up these things as they grow up. It's really difficult to get rid of it. (FG 3)

In an interesting reversal, some respondents bristled that at the time of the crisis, many Americans failed to show empathy to the people of Little Rock. One respondent found this tendency to judge inexcusable:

When they talked about the guy who goes to sell television time in markets outside of Little Rock and he can't sell any. I guess he didn't realize the negative impact that all of this had on the perception of Little Rock. In looking back, in hindsight with 20/20 vision, a lot of that negative view was pretty myopic because a lot of people had a lot of issues in their own backyard that they hadn't cleaned up. Chicago had no business to say anything bad about anybody in the 50s...It took a lot, like Mr. Clinton, to put us in a better light and the way that over the years the City and the State have done [a lot] to celebrate what the nine kids did and the folks that supported them. It puts us in a somewhat better light, but it took a long time to come. (FG 7)

The flip side of empathy may be gratitude and respect. In empathizing with the Little Rock Nine, one respondent expressed gratitude while also taking the “gratitude pulse” of our nation today:

It made me appreciate the time frame of when I was born and raised up...I'm thinking, 'Could I have put myself in their shoes back then?' Would I have enough patience to not hit somebody back?...I think our generation is kind of spoiled to a certain extent, because the foundation was laid. And [I'm] not saying we don't have anything to fight for, because we have a long ways to go. We just haven't realized it yet. We do have so many different opportunities that they didn't have back then.  
(FG 1.)

Another respondent saw in all the civil rights activists, including those nine young would-be students, role models worthy of respect: “We have these role models, including the Little Rock Nine, who stood up and worked towards some sort of peace and assimilation...I think that's to be respected” (EI 24). When we empathize with others, when gratitude and respect are our leading emotions, Central High School may serve as a trumpet call to learn from our mistakes and to treat everyone as we would like to be treated. One respondent summed up the message of the exhibits thus: “Learn from our mistakes. It's here so that of course we remember, ‘Please learn from our mistakes. Don't do this again. Treat everyone as human beings’” (FG 5).

### *Equality*

*Theme 4: CHSC promotes reflection on the evolving saga of equal rights granted and denied while highlighting the social and psychological toll caused by unequal treatment.*

When asked what they thought was the main idea of the exhibit, some respondents emphasized “equal rights” or “equality” as overarching concepts. Others summed up the exhibits with a concise statement highlighting the importance of freedom and fair treatment:

- “Equal rights” (FG 8).
- “Everybody should be equal...equality basically” (EI 14).
- “All people should be treated equally” (EI 25).
- “Freedom for everybody” (EI 20).

- “It gives you a feeling of equality and importance for everyone” (FG 11).
- “Well, I guess it says that they wanted to be treated equal, which is the way it should be” (EI 25).

In some ways, respondents viewed maintaining an atmosphere of social equality as a uniquely personal endeavor. For one respondent, an ongoing “internal dialogue” served as a constant reminder that “we’re all the same”: “I guess [I ] just constantly try to remember that they are my equal. I’m not better than anybody. Not according to where I live, or what I wear, or the house I live in. I’m the same” (EI 26). One respondent shared her approach to teaching equality at home, indicating that her perspectives were forged through personal experience with segregation:

I’m just imagining 50 years ago. I have a seven year old and I am trying to remember 50 years ago that as a child you had to know to go to this neighborhood or this way. My seven year old doesn’t have a clue. Race doesn’t enter into it. We’ve come a long way. There is a person who asked us a question, ‘Do you talk about race in your home?’ She is Caucasian. She doesn’t tell her children about race. She doesn’t talk about it because we are all equal. When you start talking about racial issues with children, and you start to divide that line...She doesn’t do that because she wants her children to know that all people are equal, and that is what we want too. All people are equal. It doesn’t matter if you are Latino, white, black or whatever—you are all equal. You start on equal footing. As [my child] gets older things will begin to change as she enters the real world. There will be things that other people tell her that we haven’t told her, and that is where we explain it to her. (FG 9)

Respondents seemed to consider *acceptance* as a prerequisite to equality. One respondent suggested that “closeness” is the key since acceptance may increase as distances shrink:

...with President Obama being elected, that is just huge. So I think that we have got to be close for people to be accepting of all people. You know, so hopefully people [will] have learned from some experiences. I’m sure that I really do think we are closer to the goal of everybody thinking that everybody is the same. (EI 11)

Closer physical proximity may promote social equality. But some respondents pinpointed underlying attitudes that can impede equity. With regards to the routine activity of high school

guidance counseling, one respondent implied a distinction between “equality of opportunity” and “equality of expectation”:

Exactly! Still today it’s a matter of expectation. If you are expected to go to college, then you take college prep classes and they are going to be offered. But at the same time, if you are not expected to do that, and graduating [from] high school is the best you can do... (FG 1)

The acid-test for equality in any society may be whether any person, or any social group, gets treated like a “second class citizen.” Perhaps a single known instance of conferring second-class citizen status negates all claims of equality? If not, there is a tipping point somewhere along the line. One respondent called attention to this issue by highlighting an instance of unequal wage structure within corporate America:

What he said [is] a parallel... They are working for WalMart and they aren’t on farm land. Those people came over here to basically get the same opportunities that we did, and WalMart turned around and is not paying them the same wage and [is] basically treating them like second class citizens. That’s one right there to me... (FG 1)

On balance, however, respondents felt that the trend was toward greater social equality. One respondent suggested overlooking lingering instances of unequal treatment and moving on:

I think that all of those opportunities are there and yes, there is always somebody that is still like that. You know, ‘you’re not as good as I am.’ But there are so many other people that don’t feel that way. We’re all different and at some point we need to accept that and move on. But I don’t know if that’s ever going to happen. (EI 23)

### *Diversity*

*Theme 5: CHSC represents the ongoing struggle to transform a history of prejudice and discrimination into a legacy of cultural diversity.*

### ***Conversation Analysis Excerpt: “We the People”—Doing the Math!***

**Person 1:** Look at this, “We the People did not include everyone.” Well this touches your point about things are improving. It’s come along way from these days. And we’ve come along way in the last, since 1957.

**Person 2:** The Three-Fifths Compromise. I didn’t realize until fairly recently that not only were the African Americans not able to vote or anything, but this Three-Fifths [Compromise] meant that that white people in Virginia, for example, when they voted, their votes counted for more than a white person living in the north because of all the black people that increased the population. And so the population in Virginia, I’m not going to be able to do the arithmetic, but if it had a hundred thousand whites and fifty thousand blacks, the population of the state would be counted as one hundred and thirty thousand in terms of the electoral vote. But only the white males were able to actually vote. So their votes were more powerful than the vote of the white person where there were fewer black people in the state. I thought that was interesting.

Coming to grips with a history replete with racism, segregation, and oppression while taking positive steps to promote cultural diversity today, may require looking both backward and forward at the same time. It may be necessary to formulate a dead-on accurate assessment of current social realities while holding unswervingly to a shared vision of *de facto* equality. As huge as these tasks seem, if, as one respondent suggested, in the past all eyes turned toward Central High School, and Central “still stands as a symbol of integration and change and progress,” then perhaps CSHC could function as ground zero for ongoing discussions about *operationalizing* diversity:

I would say that although there were other instances of integration of schools, this is important because it made international headlines and it made a lot of change. It brought a lot of attention to the idea of integration. Because of that, and even today, it still stands as a symbol of integration and change and progress. And for that reason, since it got so much attention as it helped push forward this change... it is really important as a history lesson. (FG 7)

To understand the challenge of fully realizing diversity, it may be helpful to examine respondent

perspectives regarding what the Central High School “history lesson” teaches us. It has been mentioned previously, but the tension between “having come so far” while “still having so far to go” is one that respondents felt keenly. One respondent blurted out during an interview: “That’s the first thing I wrote down. I’m thankful for how far we’ve come, but I think we have a long ways to go concerning all minorities” (FG 5). Speaking frankly, another respondent confessed, “There’s still a lot of prejudice...a lot of intolerance. It’s still here, just in a different way” (EI 23). Despite the influence of this dialectic, another respondent chose to emphasize the positive outcomes that emerged from the civil rights movement, attributing these outcomes to collective effort:

I was looking at...a group of young people in there. Do they really understand what took place for them to be [able to be] in this particular place to look at these exhibits? Back then, a place like this we could not enter at all. The sacrifice that people made—a lot of people—if you look at the whole picture, it wasn’t only black, Hispanics, Japanese, Indians, it was people from every walk of life and every race that was represented in this country [who] took part in order to bring this about. No one group can take credit for it. Even when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. did his march, there were whites, blacks, Japanese, whatever race was represented in this country was there participating for the right, for everyone. This is not just about one race but about everyone. (EI 14)

Similarly, one respondent emphasized the importance of revealing the “hidden story” that the civil rights era tells:

I think there is another hidden story here as I say we have ample instances of African Americans overcoming fear because they were the subjective targets. But they could not do that by themselves. There was another force out there that simply did not tolerate that. I think it is a place that we don’t incorporate into the story. There were white people who were equally as adamant about the circumstances but since they were not the target group, their efforts don’t rise to the level [of recognition] that I think they should. (FG 11)

### Conversation Analysis Excerpt: Desegregation & the Military (Then & Now)

**Respondent 34:** I think they could do a little more with this [topic of] World War II and racism, because the little that I know about it is that the black servicemen were by and large kept out of combat. In the navy, I think they were restricted to working in the mess and cleaning up. And there weren't very many, I don't think there were very many combat units in the army. And Truman did not desegregate the military in 1948. He signed an executive order that said it's the policy of the United States to segregate the military and then set up a committee to try to help make [desegregation] happen. And it took about five years or six years to desegregate the military.

**Respondent 33:** Yeah that's an important point.

**Respondent 34:** I mean Truman knew that he couldn't, he's President of the United States, but he still couldn't sign an executive order and say the military is desegregated today. It wouldn't happen. And who knows what would have happened to the military?

**Respondent 33:** He could have signed it, but it wouldn't happen. If he signed it, it wouldn't have been effective...

**Respondent 34:** And there may have been some very serious consequences that were too serious for the President of the United States to face in a time of Cold War. [Imagine if] the military had become ineffective—filled with violence and who knows what...

**Respondent 33:** Somewhat similar to the concern today about gays in the military...

A Little Rock resident, who had observed dramatic changes in her community over time, noted the renewed spirit of diversity and camaraderie at Central High and was prepared to bang the

Little Rock drums:

I think that it put a negative image on Central with the crisis. It made it look like a hostile environment for other races, [for] African Americans. Now it definitely represents the opposite of that. In 50 years it has shed that image, and it is seen as a symbol of diversity and a symbol of change and going there every day and seeing it being a successful school with a huge mix of races is like a living and breathing proof that diversity works. (FG 7)

However, respondent comments suggest that things changed gradually at Central High and appearances may not have always matched reality:

My mother graduated from Central in '68 and even though it was so much better than it was in '57, she still talked about going back to her parents and having them say, 'Yes, you can do it' because a lot of support wasn't there from the hierarchy of the school as far as school counselors. She would always say that a lot of the services you have available in high school, we didn't have available. I remember a class reunion in the 80s where everyone found out that the counselor had told them they weren't college material. That struggle was still going on. (FG 3)

Perhaps the pace of change at Central unfolded about as quickly as one might have hoped? After all, as one respondent aptly noted, it takes a long time to overcome centuries of hostility and inequality: "We've come a long way and there is still some work that has to be done. You can't take 400 years of oppression and in just a matter of 50 [years] think everything is going to change overnight. It's not" (EI 19). If changing social attitudes and greater awareness are the engines of societal change, then the social analysis provided by one respondent should prove heartening:

I went through it and...discrimination is discrimination, any way you cut it. Because someone looks like an Arab, or someone has different colored skin, or someone is smarter than the rest of the class, it's all hurtful. It's just as relevant to a kid being bullied in a classroom [as it is] to the man who couldn't vote. Levels of effect are certainly different, and how long it goes on, but it's the same thing. (FG 1)

While it's easy to rally around a bright vision for a better tomorrow, when respondents talked about cultural diversity, the darker forces of prejudice, discrimination and oppression usually featured prominently—even if only in the abstract. Two respondents, however, may have put their fingers at the heart of the matter. They discussed a deep-seated—and perhaps largely unrecognized and only partially addressed—*fear of loss*:

When she is talking about fear, people see things differently and have different perspectives. Where she is saying [is] that there is a fear of loss, a fear of [losing one's] identity or whatever, I'm looking at it like we can all bring something to the table versus being afraid that we can't integrate because I'm going to lose myself, my identity, my purity. (FG 11)

While forging a collective identity that exceeds the sum of its parts may represent the ideal; change that ushers in the reality of "richness in diversity" may be many years in the coming. One respondent suggested a viable approach to use in the interim that takes into account the reality of one's own experiences:

As open-minded and accepting as we would like to be, people have likes and dislikes and it's okay to have likes and dislikes on an individual basis, but it's when you translate those to a people as a whole... You know, 'the Hispanic population is lazy, shiftless and no good and they are all illegals.' Well, the hardest working people I have seen are from the Hispanic culture, so that stereotype doesn't fit. [When] you start to apply those things that you see in one or two individuals to a group of people based on the same characteristic of skin color, language or whatever, it's not the polite thing to do. I think that this helps reinforce that you have to evaluate people on an individual basis and not on a preconceived notion of how they should be or who they are. (FG 7)

If respondent comments can indeed shed light on root causes, then efforts to promote diversity may be hindered by an underlying fear of loss and an over-reliance on preconceived notions. Respondent comments suggest that *over time*, as social group interactions have increased, there may have been a corresponding shrinkage in the number, extent and intensity of our cultural fears. If so, then the next step to achieving diversity may be to teach people of all ages to evaluate others, as Martin Luther King Jr. dreamed would one day be the norm throughout the land, based on "the content of their character."

## Relevance (or *Meaning Making*<sup>2</sup>)

*Theme 6: As visitors found personal relevance in exhibit content, they began to ask fundamental questions, articulate astute observations and pinpoint possible strategies to improve societal relations—possibly suggesting a heightened level of meaning making.*

As CHSC exhibit content intersected with the *past and present-day experiences* of respondents, the events depicted throughout resonated more deeply, and the ideas interspersed throughout were reflected upon with more alacrity. As respondents found relevance in CHSC exhibits, their responses ranged from casual references to shared human experiences to clear indications that the respondent had personally encountered the kind of prejudice and discrimination that was unleashed on the Nine. One respondent likened the messiness of integrating Central High School to what mothers experience when they give birth. The link between messiness, ugliness and giving birth seemed to provide ample fuel for her reflections:

I'm projecting this, I have no idea, but I'm wondering if, after they went through that...if the students did stand taller and said 'Look what we did. It was a mess, it was ugly, like giving birth, but we did it.' I've often thought that they should have stood proud and been happy about what they did, just that they did it, even though it was ugly. But I don't know...I guess we call it a success because they did get through it, it did happen. Do they feel good? Maybe they don't because it was ugly, the more I think about it... (FG 5)

Another respondent found relevance in the exhibits because he too grew up within a segregated society. His childhood experiences equipped him to see segregation in modern day America:

I don't think I could point to anything in particular just that we dealt with that growing up and it brought some of it back to me. The foundation has been laid, but there are many places where we have such a far ways to go...even the segregation they got in 21<sup>st</sup> century America. (FG 1)



Exhibit 10. The South Resists Integration

When the respondent said “the segregation *they* got in 21<sup>st</sup> century America” instead of “the segregation *we* got in 21<sup>st</sup> century America,” one wonders if the use of the impersonal, third-person pronoun reflects a need to put emotional distance between himself and the continuing influence of segregationist thinking and behavior? Results suggest that recent memories also enhanced respondent’s ability to find relevance. One respondent reflected mournfully on the aftermath of hurricane Katrina:

With hurricane Katrina, that showed me that we got a long way to go. To me personally, that showed me that we have a long way to go. Not to hop off the subject, but if that had happened in a different city... (FG 1)

Similarly, as respondents related exhibit content to current world events or geopolitical contexts, their ability to find relevance in the Little Rock crisis seems to have increased:

I think it is surprising that then we were more of a dominant nation than we are now. Does that seem real? If you think about it, China right now is trying to graduate 100% of their kindergarten class... We were so much of a dominant nation then, even with the struggles, because people had ‘the want to.’ I don’t think people

realize how far we are behind. That's the scary part because our kids will be taking care of us some day. (FG 1)

There is an educational thread woven throughout CHSC exhibits since the Little Rock crisis was, on one level, a school integration crisis. The previous respondent, however, extrapolated from the U.S. educational context of the 1950s to the realities of modern day global competition and the role that educational excellence plays in maintaining a competitive advantage. Thus, the indicator of a visitor having found personal relevance in the exhibit content might be evidence of respondents reflecting on exhibit content, making connections with their past and present experiences, and identifying manifestations of the same (or similar) problems at work in the world today. For some, this was a very poignant line of inquiry that prompted them to *ask fundamental questions, articulate astute observations, and pinpoint possible strategies to improve social relations.*

*Asking Fundamental Questions.* The exhibits inspired visitors to ask themselves hard questions about their values and courage, including their ability to stand up for what is right and to endure suffering. A number of visitors wondered how they would have reacted or what role they might have played if they had been a part of the events during this time period. One respondent had the opportunity to engage in a question-and-answer session with someone who was at Central High School during the time of the crisis. His interaction with this woman left him more puzzled than ever. His comments suggest that continuing harsh attitudes could erode whatever “equal ground” exists. Perhaps for this reason he still seeks to understand the source of these harsh attitudes:

*Conversation Analysis Excerpt: Asking Fundamental Questions (& Wishing for Video)*

**Respondent 33:** The photograph with the headline raises the question about hostility and prejudice that's still a part of our lives today. Then they go on to say 'What would I have done if I were an African American student? A white student? A white parent? [It] causes anyone who would take the time to stop here, to look at it and to examine their own conscience and address the question that "[Is] it still with us today?" and that's an added value of this exhibit. It doesn't just show a black girl with newspaper journalists gathered round, but it asks you to think about what it was like then and what it's like today when we have a black president. We've come a long way...And maybe the schools are open now, but equal rights, civil rights haven't been extended to everybody. This one causes you to think that through...

**Respondent 34:** Hey, this is really nice. These recordings...

...

**Respondent 34:** This is really nice. It discusses these films. I just saw this announcement and the National Guard coming out... Oh my, and he's following her? Oh my, he's following that one girl.

**Respondent 33:** Hmm. Look at the...

**Respondent 34:** You know, these are just wonderful films. I wonder if it's a long time to hold the phone up to your ear? And you see there are a lot of them. Oh my. I wonder if they present all the material on this film as a movie-sort-of-a-thing that people can sit down and watch?

**Respondent 33:** ...when I go to places, historic places, I always go to the video. I never pass up the video. Maybe they have one here but we [didn't see it]? That would be good.

**Respondent 34:** Yeah, but this is just so compelling because it's hard to...even when reading some of this text here, it's hard to figure out exactly what this is all about. National Guardsmen keep coming to school and... And this is just so moving. You'd have to sit here for...I don't know how long this would run. Forty-five minutes? An hour? Holding a phone up to your ear...I don't think I would do it.

**Respondent 33:** A video might be better. I'd spend an hour on a video.

Those attitudes that were represented at that event are still very prevalent in our society...I went to grad school with a woman who was there and when we brought it up, she said that 'You don't know what it was like.' [She] told all us young people, not that I'm young now, as we asked 'What were ya'll thinking? Was that

as wrong and evil [as it seemed]?’ She tried to explain that we didn’t understand where [she] was coming from. And I still don’t understand where she was coming from. And this was not that long ago. It is a struggle and there is no way that we are on totally equal ground. There are some people with some very harsh attitudes in our society and culture. (FG 7)

*Articulating Astute Observations.* A couple of respondents could be cast as “astute observers” of contemporary American society. They assessed the impact our thoughts and behavior may be having on our individual and collective psyche. One respondent expressed the belief that a lack of historical perspective may instill a lack of self-respect in members of the younger generation:

I have my whole reading collection [organized] by ‘Here’s the women’s history collection, here’s the African American collection’ and, you know, the thing that gets me is that these are the books that I wished I had growing up. These are the books I wished I had at school. [I wish] that they were required or mandatory. I’m reading this part about the voting and how it should be for everyone regardless of race...it had the thing about race, but didn’t say anything about sex or gender because women didn’t get to vote until the 1900s. Black men got the right to vote before women got the right to vote. Those are two perspectives that I did not have between my ears growing up because I did not know we had to do all this fighting for that. The same thing that was [true] then is still [true] now. Our perspective is distorted because we don’t have the history from then until now. What happened way back then is what we had to go through to get to where we are now. So what [has] happened is we have a generation of people walking around with no respect for elders, nothing. No respect for themselves. (FG 11)

Another respondent used his experiences growing up in the Delta as a lens to examine what oppression is and how it operates in society. He suggested that the oppressor and the victim are both oppressed, but in different ways:

Growing up in the Delta, I had relationships with white people that were genuine. Yes, he had an idea and he lived in a society—we *all* lived in this society that did not recognize equality. But, when you put two human beings across from each other and let them engage, all of that sort of goes out the window—all the law and whatever—and it becomes a one-on-one proposition between those two people. I’m saying that that element could have been [in effect at Central High School]. That is the true force of the oppressed—*both* of those people were oppressed. One is

oppressed by his condition and the other is oppressed by his belief that is [consistent with] the majority of opinions in which he lives. (FG 11)

A third respondent reflected on the tendency of some African Americans to “throw up the race card.” He suggested that the election of President Obama indicates that opportunity exists for those who are determined to seize it:

Being a black person, even in our society, our culture, there are some black people who love to throw up the race card. I still think it's being taught. But with experience, it doesn't matter what race you are...you can achieve anything. Through Barack Obama's election we know it can happen. Now there is opportunity. Now we can say that. A strong amount of determination [and] commitment [is what is needed]. (FG 6)

*Pinpointing Possible Strategies.* One respondent related her childhood experiences to present-day tensions in the Middle East and tribal or sectarian violence in Europe, concluding that *recognizing, while rendering impotent*, the differences that exist between people may be the solution to violent or divisive tendencies:

You are different than I am and that's what I've been taught...I get a little pained when I think about the white doll, black doll thing. The fact that at some point in time children of color realized that they were not going to be treated equally and life was not going to be fair for them...I remember when I grew up and going to the dime store and there as a colored drinking fountain and a white drinking fountain and the same in the theatre. They went upstairs, the white kids sat downstairs and that was the way it was and you didn't think anything of it. But when you are six or seven years old, and your values are programmed at that age, and unless you have an emotional experience or you learn differently, that was just the ways things were supposed to be. You didn't think about it, even as unfair as it was. If you think about the tensions in the Middle East, they've been fighting for 300 years, 400 years. The Bosnians and the Serbs were the same way in many cases. It brings to light [that] as unjust and inequitable or unfair as it was, that sort of thing still lives today. You have to be able to look at someone and think that just because his hair is frizzy and mine's grey, it doesn't mean anything. (FG 7)

Finally, one respondent's comments suggest that the efforts her mother made to teach her about civil rights did not return null and void. As an adult she advocated the importance of incorporating civil rights into the school curriculum:

The only person you think about when you hear ‘civil rights’ is Martin Luther King—like [he] was the only one there. You don’t hear about Paul Robeson or Marcus Garvey. You really don’t hear about all these people. I’ve learned about civil rights through my mom and her taking me to exhibits and showing me documentaries and talking about the family struggles and what they all had to go through, [and through] reading newspaper clippings...She would bring it home to me, even civil rights in other countries, and educate me in that way. I think if we bring civil rights into the schools more, and teach about [civil rights] and human rights, the youth will embrace it and not have a catty-wampus [skewed] attitude about it. I think civil rights needs to be stressed more at schools. (FG 3)

## Civic Engagement

*Theme 7: CHSC promotes civic engagement by providing opportunities for awareness and reflection, serving as a catalyst in the formation of behavioral intentions, and enhancing ownership and empowerment.*

To analyze respondent comments related to civic engagement, we developed a five-tier hierarchy of civic engagement that included the following levels: *Awareness, Reflection, Behavioral Intention, Ownership and Empowerment*. All things being equal, each level is believed to promote civic engagement behaviors to a greater extent than the preceding level(s). However, the greatest likelihood of observing citizenship behavior may occur when several levels are combined, exerting a cumulative influence on the respondent’s subsequent behavior. To create the hierarchy, we analyzed respondent comments to CHSC exhibit content, placing these comments alongside the personal experiences and perspectives that exposure to CHSC exhibits elicited. We integrated response codes into a conceptual framework based upon (1) emerging emphases in our CHSC exhibit evaluation data, and (2) two factors previously summarized by Hungerford (1996) that influence “environmental citizenship behavior” among

### ***Conversation Analysis Excerpt: Family Members React with Surprise***

**Respondent 35:** Oh my goodness. I didn't know they'd been around that long. Ku Klux Klan, 1577. That's ridiculous.

**Respondent 36:** Mom! Mom! Look at this. The doll test. It shows a study that black children have a lower self esteem than white children and they chose the white doll as the pretty or nice one and the black doll as the bad one.

**Respondent 35:** Mmm.

**Respondent 36:** That's weird.

participants in environmental education programs (i.e., ownership and empowerment). We reasoned that factors influencing the effectiveness of programming to promote environmental citizenship may overlap, to some extent, with exhibits produced (in part) to promote civic engagement.

#### *Awareness*

As respondents reflected upon the people, events and ideas portrayed at CHSC, an awareness may have emerged regarding, for example, *why* the example of various 20th century civil rights activists remains significant today, *what* the nationally-televised events associated with the Little Rock crisis mean to today's iPod society, and *how* a range of personally-held values inspired varying interpretations of freedom, justice and equality then and now. This "enhanced awareness" was tied to *real people and real places*, and it seemed to push respondents to think about *who they needed to be*, and *what they needed to do*, in light of all they had seen and heard.

One respondent proposed telling kids today that the exhibits were ultimately about *you*:

It's just remembering that history is people, real people, it's lives. I was reliving the exhibit in my mind and the play we just went and saw, and that helped. I think what I would tell a kid is it isn't just history, it's stories, it's existence, it's you in a 100 years. (FG 1)

Another respondent viewed the school integration crisis as a catalyst for public awareness and action: "I think that the incident of Central High, as I recall it, was a real catalyst to making the public more aware that they needed to do something about the segregation issues" (EI 006).

Another respondent's emerging awareness encompassed the centrality of the Little Rock crisis and a conviction to call attention to this pivotal moment in history:

I think I would tell them that it's a pivotal part of American history. It's a huge mainstream integration attempt, successful for the most part. What it did do is to get people thinking that this was one of the final blows to segregationism. I think this is something to spread to people. This was the beginning of the end of the old ways. (FG 1)

For many, the exhibits reinforced their awareness that in the ongoing struggle for equality, a monumental step was taken, but "the war was never won":

The 'Separate but Equal' thing... There are still things that [happen today] with the lack of resources and how the state distributes money and funding. There's a battle that we still have to fight today. The war was never won. They just made a monumental step in history, but it didn't stop in the [past] because there is still an issue that we have right now. It's the fact that if you go and look at it demographically, African Americans are still at the bottom of the education pool and that's what these people fought for. (FG 3)

An expanded awareness frequently resulted in identifying *personal* or *societal needs*, and sometimes in formulating a *to-do list*:

- **The need to educate oneself regarding history**

I would like to read about it in more detail... there is some good history, and some good stuff to carry with you that you can really pay attention to, that I've never heard. (FG 3)

- **The need to be more aware**

I've been thinking about apathy and how that deteriorates a lot of things—just

being lazy about it. I know I need to be more aware. (FG 1)

I think I need to be more mindful about what's going on in politics and if schools close what's happening to those students? Where are they going? We should be more aware of things that are happening politically in our country. (EI 18)

- **The need to behave as one should**

I think the biggest thing that I could say, if I had to put it into words or quantify it, would be that the golden rule is to treat people as you'd want to be treated. These people came to school for an education as every other kid had the opportunity to undergo. So, I think that's the biggest message for me is treat people the way you want to be treated. (EI 24)

I think it just brings into perspective why it's important to pass along those values and morals of how to treat other people. (EI 24)

It's just part of human nature. You see it all over the world. If people are not active in the political process then they are pushed to the side. So, individually people have to be active in the political process... People have to get more active and take a more active role. If you don't use your rights to vote, you can lose your rights. That's just the way it goes. (EI 71, 72)

I'm engaged in my college community, but not the community around it. The exhibits show me how you can make a difference and maybe change history and get more involved. (EI 78, 79)

Well, I would hope that I was already acting as I should. I'll try not to backslide. (EI 6)

- **The need to speak out**

There is something on my plate that is worth fighting for and it still continues to this day. Some people brush it aside, but it's important to me. I don't know, seeing these exhibits reinforces that maybe I'll take a more active voice in it. Try to be more civically-minded. (FG 1)

[My daughter] said that there were millions of words, so that the purpose behind it was that we need to speak on things. (FG 3)

- **The need to believe and not give up**

We are a little part of everything from the PTA to the Community League and helping someone get elected to office. It always makes us [consider]... why you do certain things or why you want your kids to do certain things or our grandchildren to do different things. If you lay down, people walk all over you. So, you have to consistently stand up for things that you believe. (EI 71, 72)

I think it would maybe influence me to not give up at something I really wanted to achieve. (FG 6)

There was this quote that I had to take a picture of by Margaret Mead, ‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.’ I think that quote is the reason I joined Americorp, because one person can make a difference and that one person can make an impact...Martin Luther King was just one person, but you see how he rallied a group of people to help another group of people that helped another group of people that helped another group of people to change the world. I think that quote was powerful. (FG 1)

- **The need to judge wisely and make right decisions**

That kind of brings to light parents and schools and trying to make the right decisions. You think about the Little Rock Nine’s parents and trying to make the decision of whether you want to put your kids through that. (FG 4)

I think everybody should come and see it. If it doesn’t do anything for you, then nothing will. I think for myself, you shouldn’t hate people just because of their color. You should get to know them before you hate them. If you’re going to [hate them], have a reason. Don’t just hate them [for no reason]. (EI 20)

### *Reflection*

While viewing the exhibits, respondents were exposed to a veritable civil rights “hall of fame.” Often their visit prompted reflection on their past civic engagement experiences and/or instances where civic engagement is needed today. In our proposed hierarchy of civic engagement, *reflection* signifies a heightened response beyond simply *being aware*. In some cases, reflection prompted respondents to remember civil rights issues they had previously championed in their communities, to seek to incorporate more opportunities for reflection into student learning, to consider positive and negative social dynamics and the implications of these factors, and to assess lessons learned from the exhibits about how to facilitate change.

One respondent reflected at some length upon his earlier efforts to open up jury service for citizens who required language interpretation. He remembered his civic engagement

experiences while viewing the CHSC exhibits. He later reflected upon the ongoing needs for public education and equal access under the law:

I remember before I had a court order for jury duty. So, when that happened I called down to the person at the courthouse and they said that they would have to talk to the judge because there was going to be a whole group down there as a pool. I went down to see the judge. They had the pool in one place and I was by myself with the judge. They said they couldn't get an interpreter so I couldn't be part of the jury. Of course, I appealed that. I went ahead and fought against the court system and sued and won. I was allowed to go ahead and serve my jury duty. I think some people today are able to go in and serve just like any other person. They don't have to go down and meet individually with the judge and go through all of that. That really opened the door. (FG 5)

Another respondent recognized the value of reflection as a tool to promote student learning. She not only engaged in her own reflection related to CHSC exhibit content, but also wanted to facilitate an opportunity for young learners to engage in guided reflection themselves:

I am going to bring my students and I'm gonna have them bring a journal and reflect on what are some things that we can do to make a difference in our community, our world. For my students, we studied the holocaust before civil rights. In the whole scheme of the world, when I teach it my kids are like 'How in the world...? Why would the Germans do that to that group of people?' But it was happening here in our own country. And I think that having the kids reflect on that, and reflect on what is going on today and how they can make a difference is important. I think I am going to have them do that—bring their journals and reflect. See what they can do... (FG 4)

As respondents reflected on positive and negative social interactions, and the implications thereof, occasionally a conclusion would be drawn about specific things that need to change. To the extent that these reflections emerged from within a context of personal (or communal) service and outreach, the recommendations may have exerted greater sway:

The culture of the community is such that if I knew that Arthur was needing money and about to get evicted, we would go and find some means to do [something], and do so much that he was taken care of. [Maybe] he knew someone who knew someone that we didn't know. Because of him knowing them, and [their] coming to us, his word is bond. We [would] ask no questions, we [would] just do. If you need your child watched, we [would] ask no questions, we [would] just do. We are gonna take that child, and we are all gonna go, and we are all going to make it happen. I

think if we can get to that as a people, and stop being like crabs in a barrel pulling each other down, we will be better people. We will be able to lift everybody up. (FG 3)

One respondent considered which methods are most effective at facilitating social change—examining exhibit content for clues: “I think it makes you think about how to do it correctly. What was effective? What methods worked and what did not?...Can I champion—and how to champion it correctly?” (FG 4). Respondents pursuing this line of inquiry, however, may not have gleaned enough insight from the exhibits to feel confident about increasing their level of civic engagement in the future:

I’m not leaving with [civic engagement know-how]—except for the far right panel, near the desk. There is the one [place] I would say that ‘This is to get people to change or to get active to change society.’ The rest of the exhibit I took as historical reference. I’m still learning about something that took place in the past until that very last touch screen. ‘Oh, so this is the interactive for the future. You can go out and change the world.’ It wasn’t a strong feeling. (FG 7)

To some extent, however, as respondents reached the reflection level of civic engagement, they may not be looking to exhibits to provide all the answers. Rather, as this dialogue reveals, if a respondent recognizes a “civic engagement imperative,” he may put more responsibility upon himself to gain the knowledge and skills required to make decisions and act appropriately:

Man 1: I think we need to be less wishy-washy. Get on one side or the other. Make a decision on whatever issue it is. If you believe something—believe it and act on it. I’m right there in the middle of some issues and it makes me think about what do I believe and go from there.

Man 2: I think the reason why some people are in-between on certain subjects is that they don’t have enough knowledge or understanding. So I don’t see anything wrong with being in the middle on certain subjects because I don’t want to jump on one side and then be like, ‘Oh man...’

Man 1: That’s what I’m saying. If you are in the middle of something, maybe you should do more research, educate yourself, and [then] make a decision. (FG 1)

### *Behavioral Intentions*

As respondent comments reached the behavioral intention level of the civic engagement hierarchy, there was evidence that respondents planned to channel their awareness and reflections into concrete action. Based on their experiences at CHSC, barring unforeseen circumstances, and by their own admission, these respondents seemed primed to take action. One respondent's comments suggested that his onsite experience instilled a sense of urgency to "no longer sit back and be quiet about something I disagree with":

I think I come away from it with a sense of urgency that if I am in a situation and I don't like what's being done, or don't agree with it, I won't sit back and not cause a problem, like some of the students who did not want to mistreat [the Nine, but] just sat there and this is the result of it. My sense of urgency is to no longer sit back and be quiet about something I disagree with. I need to be out and be activated and motivated to express my opinion. (FG 8)

Another respondent indicated that the exhibit had a two-fold effect on his intended behavior. He was more determined to help break down racial barriers and he planned to invite others to visit CHSC:

I think, in my opinion, it will make me more determined to help others break down racial barriers and make them understand. Since this is my first time coming, I will tell others to come, and see what happens. Maybe [visiting CHSC] will give them a sense of not wanting to discriminate, or to behave differently against someone who has a different skin color, [or] to learn that we are all equal, we are all Americans. (FG 8)

As a behavioral intention, "inviting others to come" was mentioned by more than one respondent as a primary action step. One respondent planned to recruit teachers to bring their students to CHSC, knowing that the ripple-effects of such a strategy could be enormous:

I guess to me it was being able to hear the Little Rock Nine speak. I can go back—I work at an elementary school—and I can tell the teachers, 'You really need to get



Exhibit 19. Individuals Make a Difference

over there and let the kids hear it.’ And, not just saying it with the lesson, but actually letting them listen to what happened. Let them touch the things that are touchable and sit and really understand what went on. I think that would really help the kids to focus. (EI 71, 72)

Another respondent who works with young kids pledged to tell the story and keep hope alive: “A lot of these kids don’t know the history, so every opportunity I get I’m going to try to tell them, and keep hope alive—especially for the young kids” (EI 2).

Some respondents articulated behavioral intentions that could channel efforts in vastly different directions, that is, community board rooms, family living rooms and “the highways and byways.” Reflecting the common theme of the importance of education, one respondent confessed, “Well, I think education is so important. I like seeing how hard people fought to be able to go to school. Kind of makes you want to keep fighting to make the schools as good as they can be today” (EI 23). Another respondent indicated that CHSC exhibits reinforced an entrenched idea and an ingrained practice: “Coming here reinforced the idea that I instill in my

children, that no matter what happens and no matter what folks may say, as long as you get your education can't nobody touch you" (EI 019). In some cases, behavioral intentions were uttered because the cumulative effect of the exhibits was pure inspiration. One wonders whether such utterances could lead a respondent in unforeseen directions, traceable at some future point to a simple vow to be more compassionate? "[The exhibits] gave me inspiration. You can put that down! To be more caring, pray for them, [be] loving toward them. They are just like we are" (EI 27).

Finally, although not every respondent expressed an immediate intention to act, one respondent conveyed keen insight regarding the forces that, if they all aligned, would tend to elicit action:

As an old guy, it didn't teach me anything—it reminded me, and it was an affirmation of the possibilities should I participate [in] it. In that sense, I'm not going to go out and get on the picket line tomorrow, but it's a reminder that the people who are on the picket line have helped. If there is an occasion, I should probably do that—if the opportunity and the cause and my energies and [my] sensibilities all line up. (FG 9)

### *Ownership*

The gentleman quoted above provides a powerful conceptualization of the factors that foster "ownership." He indicates that before he would take action, *opportunity*, *cause*, *energies* and *sensibilities* would all have to line up. Ownership, then, could be conceived of as a measure of personal commitment to an issue or a task. Further, commitment levels could vary due to a variety of intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural factors. By including a section on ownership in our reporting of research results, we do not mean to imply that first time visitors to CHSC who spend an hour or more in the exhibit area could be expected to attain the ownership level of civic engagement as a result of their site visit. Rather, visitors walk in the door with varying levels of

ownership to such varied topics as education, civil rights, volunteering, child rearing, lobbying, and military service. We suggest that visitor experiences with CHSC exhibits will have positive, negative or neutral effects on baseline levels of ownership—and that respondent comments reflect these effects. Respondents drew from a rich reservoir of ideas, experiences, beliefs and actions that supported *ownership* as a critical component of their civic engagement:

- **Ownership: “Blood is thicker than water”**

One of my sisters married a guy who is half Indian and half Pakistani and their children have grown up [in the U.S.] He himself came over when he was 19 or 20 years old and worked to become truly American. You can’t even tell that he grew up anywhere else. They look Muslim. They look Middle-Eastern. So they have had trouble [when they] go to fly, especially him and the kids too. I’m sure they will struggle with this their whole life because they look even more Middle Eastern because of the mixed marriage. It’s interesting to see that in my own growing up years, one of the earliest fights I ever got into was defending one of my nieces in elementary school. (FG 1)

- **Ownership: Steering a sibling’s path while stimulating his mind**

I’m kind of involved with the community because my brother is going to 8<sup>th</sup> grade now. We kind of try to keep them involved in things just to keep them from doing bad things on the side. We do a lot of stuff in our communities just trying to get the kids to do some activities and stimulate their minds—like coming here! It’s summer break. Kids don’t really want to learn anything but when you can come to places like this, it’s interesting to them. So, it’s like ‘Okay, well, maybe learning in summer break isn’t so bad, you know.’ (EI 9)

- **Ownership through connecting with kindred spirits**

What I liked about one [exhibit], we sat down and we were listening on the phone. I’m also a member of AAUW (American Association of University Women) and the reflection of the one white woman discussing the involvement of the AAUW chapter back then—[they] pushed that you can’t keep these schools closed. [That] probably renewed my [thinking that] ‘Okay, you have to get back and get the programs scheduled for this fall.’ I’m pretty engaged. (EI 78, 79)

- **Ownership through vocational callings and choices**

For me it just reinforced that I want to go into the public school system—and not

choose the nice schools in the [nice] neighborhoods, but choose the difficult schools because you can make a difference there. (FG 1)

- **Ownership as evidenced by giving to the nth degree**

I don't have a nice paying job. I am a volunteer, that's all I do... These kids I'm working with, I've been with one of them since third grade... Well, I'm actually the president elect of the Texas State Association of School Boards. So I do lots of volunteer work. I enjoy doing it. It can be frustrating, but I enjoy doing it (EI 23)

- **Ownership through child rearing choices and perceptions of duty**

I bought some stuff here and I'm going to give this book to my son to read. I have some [for me], I would like to do a little bit more research on it myself and compare and contrast with students at my school. (EI 14)

When we start having kids, teach them that. A lot of people weren't taught that you're supposed to go vote. I guess everybody just comes from a different background, but when I have my kids I'm going to teach them about these people fighting for you to be able to vote. [I'm going to teach them that] way before it's time for them to vote—because that will stick with you. I was like her. When I turned 18, I was in line for 3-4 hours and the president that I voted for didn't win, but still I was happy. I was excited. I was 18 and in high school over at Central. I came back with my little "I voted" sticker on. I think it starts at home first, one step at a time, one person at a time. (FG 1)

It was my duty as a mom to bring them here. My son could easily be playing football in the pool with the other nine kids, but he needs to see this. Especially since we are here—this is history! We need to see it and especially to experience it firsthand. Kids are so sheltered a lot of times today. You have no idea... (EI 16)

- **Ownership: You can't change the world without it!**

I think that's why we are all here today... We want to make that change. We want to make a difference. We want to change the world. (FG 1)

### *Empowerment*

Civic engagement, like all civic virtues, is too valuable a commodity in society for its occurrence to be left merely to chance. Thus, parents, teachers, schools, extended families, government entities, non-profit organizations, and even commercial enterprises join forces to

promote various civic virtues. Before presenting research results related to the top-tier in our proposed hierarchy of civic engagement, it may be helpful to consider Hungerford's (1996) observations about the importance of *empowerment*:

Empowerment variables are crucial in the training of responsible citizens in the environmental dimension. These variables give human beings a sense that they can make changes and help resolve important environmental issues. 'Empowerment' seems to be the cornerstone of training in environmental education. Unfortunately, it is a step often neglected in education... Perceived skill in using environmental action strategies is one of the best predictors of behavior. (p. 31)

The proving ground for citizenship behavior appears to be nested within a parental training context where incremental skill development and the provision of a safety net are provided. One respondent recently urged her daughter to take steps to change school lunchroom policy.

Although the daughter didn't take up the challenge, the mother bided her time in a sense, knowing that she had planted the seed of empowerment:

I was thinking about my girls at their school. They go to Chenal Elementary and they are so mad and have been all year because the principal is making them sit boy-girl, boy-girl in the cafeteria. Now the fifth graders have assigned seats and that's just appalling. They were telling me this like they wanted to do something about it. I said, 'Why don't you talk to the principal or write her a letter?' They won't do it. They're just not ready to take that step but I'm planting that seed. I'm not willing to fight their fight for them. I'm not willing to do that. I would if there was something serious... But, you know, [they say] 'The boys spit in our food. It's just ridiculous.' (FG 4)

Similarly, while at CHSC, another mother thumbed through the visitor comment log. However, rather than commenting herself, she urged her daughter to express her opinions publicly: "I read a couple. Then I told my daughter, 'you need to comment.' I let her comment without reading over her shoulder" (EI 004). One respondent went to surprising lengths to empower her son. Knowing that empowerment without empathy, enlightenment and determination could prove ineffectual, she devised a strategy to combine all these elements into a single powerful lesson:

I think there is a way to present the 50s and 60s and all that and make it relevant to our youth today. That was analog time, and we can't do what we did in analog time because this is digital time. I try and do [things] with my son and take him to economically challenged areas. I tell him to walk the next block [while] I'm driving there because I want him to know this is what people go through. So I take him and put him in those environments and see whether or not he can function. I take him and show him people of different ages where they are at. I let them be face-to-face, breath-to-breath. [I ask him], 'Do you want to be there?' [Then I tell him], 'This is what you need to do. This is what I did when I was your age. I don't want you to do as I did, but I want you to make up your own plan about where you should be. Like my cousin Floyd—he said when he was 13 [that] when he gets to be 27 he will have a masters and be working on his Ph.D. He's 23 and [he's] getting ready to work on his Ph.D. You cannot tell me that you don't know what it is that you want to do.' I think we have to pick a youth, a black youth and show them how to be and how to do. (FG 3)

Respondents made it clear, however, that they were influenced by a wider circle of teachers and mentors during their formative years. One respondent credits the collective influence of several adult mentors with his future civic engagement in the area of little league baseball:

I remember having been prepared by Sunday school teachers, public school teachers and my parents for the day when I would have the responsibility as a parent and as a professional who do their part to make our community and our society a little bit better. I think it began when I was sort of the first one to integrate little league baseball in San Angelo. (EI 008)

Another respondent found a way to incorporate empowerment lessons into her private life and into her public service as a teacher:

I'm a Christian and [we] were expected to love all people whether they love you back or not. As a teacher, I tell my kids that I hope they learn something in the classroom, [that is], not to judge someone just because they are not like you and to step up if they see someone being bullied. (EI 017)

Results suggest that the involvement of adult mentors was an empowering influence in respondents' citizenship behavior. Sometimes, however, young respondents were thrust into situations that seemed to require a "ready-or-not response." Even as the respondent and her student colleagues "empowered themselves," parents and community members played a

supporting role. In the end, the respondent reflects back on a crisis averted while looking forward to future opportunities for outreach:

The state was going to come in and take over our schools. They elected me president and we had a huge meeting and brought everyone in here. We said, ‘We can’t let this happen. If they do this, they are taking us away from [ourselves]. So we got together. The community came together. When we all took the test, [from the] class of seniors, 77 of us made proficient or above average on the standardized test. This was [something] that did not [just] happen. The school did not do [that] for us. A momma and her sister Gail got together, and the people in the community got together...And the fact of the matter is [that], each of us in here, we can get a bus, and go home to these areas, and get these people and bring them here. (FG 3)

Older respondents were also engaged in citizenship behaviors that required a tremendous amount of skill and empowerment. One respondent indicated that CHSC exhibits inspired “renewed enthusiasm” to go back home and fight both unresolved issues in his community *and* the apathy that works against solving entrenched problems:

I don’t know that I will behave any differently because my wife and I, along with some people in my area, have been involved in the community over the years. As a matter of fact, we have had some, well, not opportunities, but occasions to be threatened, to be intimidated. As late as the late 90s we were successful in removing, for example, the rebel flag from Robert E. Lee High School in Midland, Texas. All the rebel symbols that were attached to band uniforms, trash cans, that sort of thing. So I, along with my wife and others of my age in their 30s and 40s, have been involved in community since day one. I think if anything [CHSC exhibits] validate what we’ve done as community persons. Therefore, I will go back with the same message but with a renewed enthusiasm as I talk not only to young people, but to adults who [make excuses] whether it is based on age [or other things], to sort of remind them that apathy is not the order of the day. So that’s what I’ll take back...(EI 008)

The previous respondent indicated that his civic engagement efforts had been met with threats and intimidation. Another respondent expressed concern that her civic engagement efforts might have a negative impact on her daughter’s ability to attend her public school of choice:

I don’t know if you guys saw the article in the *Arkansas Times* about race in Little Rock. Let’s see if I can get the gist of it. It was about how ridiculous it is that we have to pick a race when we are filling something out. It was talking about [the case of being] bi-racial. My kids are bi-racial, too, by the way. I was interested in that

article...I had made some comments about the school and how it was crazy that [when] my kids were first enrolling at Baker, and that wasn't our home school, so it was important for them to be black. Now I want to get my daughter in middle school at Pulaski Heights [and] she needs to be non-black...I got an email from Max Brantley asking if they could use my comments in an editorial. I thought, 'I don't know. I don't want to jeopardize her chances of getting into Pulaski Heights.' [Then] I thought, 'That is just ridiculous' and I emailed back saying that. I thought about it all night long, and [I concluded] that is just ridiculous that I can't even stand up... (FG 4)

Overall, respondent comments highlight the power of CHSC exhibits to foster meaning making, enhance opportunities to find relevance, and draw forth inspiration and a strengthened rationale for engaging in citizenship behavior. Even so, a few respondents were *so empowered*—no doubt due to a coalescence of personal life experiences and onsite experiences—that their comments were almost transformational in nature. One respondent made a powerful distinction between “history” and “legacy”:

That is why I love the ‘We the People’ exhibit—it shows how few people were able to vote in the beginning of our country. Only white, male property owners [were able to vote]. And, yeah, I’m one of those people who vote in everything, [including] school board elections and such—that was the way I was raised...I was one of those people who have always loved history. I remember reading about the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and I said ‘Oh, there is an error—that’s 1864’ and my mother said ‘No, it’s 1964.’ I said that the civil war was in 1864 and she said, yes, but it took another 100 years and it’s still not perfect. I think that is the thing. We tend to simplify things, and with an exhibit like this, it helps explain things... This is part of our history in Little Rock, but it doesn’t have to be our legacy. Our legacy is that we move forward, but we need to always remember that this is part of our history. (FG 10)

### Enduring Impacts

Follow-up telephone interviews were conducted one year after participants visited CHSC to assess their recollections, intellectual and emotional connections to resource meanings, and



Exhibit 6B. “We the People...”

civic engagement behavior. Every participant who was contacted one year later remembered their visit to the site, and some did so with incredible detail, describing nuances of specific photographs or individual artifacts within a display. When asked what they thought were the main ideas of the exhibit, respondents focused on the topic of *educating the public*, either through the illustration of history or through encouraging civility and equality.

While some participants had difficulty articulating their feelings, all respondents reported having an emotional reaction to the exhibits, some positive, some negative. Emotions included empathy, pride, anger, sadness, and admiration. When asked if the exhibits were personally relevant, all but one participant indicated having made a personal connection to the site. One respondent even described how after visiting Central High School, she spoke to her mother about the site. Her mother proceeded to open up about the family history of a grandparent being a member of the Klu Klux Klan. She credited her site visit with opening the doors of communication with her mother, allowing them to freely discuss a previously shunned part of the family history. Another respondent expressed her disappointment that while the displays set the

civil rights movement in a broader context, and she could relate to women's rights, she found the gay, lesbian, bisexual & transgender community still excluded from the civil rights discussion. Being a lesbian, this omission prevented her from being able to identify with the displays on a more personal level. When asked about civil rights *then versus now*, nearly all participants stated that while civil rights is better than in the days of Central High School, there is still a long way to go for the country to really treat all people as equals.

Participants also talked about being involved in their communities and helping or teaching others as a key component of "being civically engaged." For most participants, their visit did not motivate them to become civically engaged; however, it did encourage them to continue in their endeavors in their community. Only one individual spoke of participating on a state level; all others spoke of local neighborhood or community level involvement. When addressing democratic values and participatory democracy, participants had difficulty identifying actions that embodied democracy. Only five respondents voiced, without any prompting, that they had voted, even though this may be the flagship behavior related to exercising one's responsibilities as a citizen. Similarly, only one participant indicated having taken the direct action of speaking with his senator. However, when asked *why* they participated in community activities, such as volunteering, most respondents gave reasons that were associated with one's democratic duties in society.

Nearly all respondents stated that they purchased something at the bookstore or took promotional materials home with them and interacted with these materials at a later time. In addition, nearly all participants who were teachers used these materials in their classroom. Many teachers also focused on the site as a place to discuss *educational rights* as component of civil or human rights. All respondents had at least some college, many with graduate degrees, and if they

were not retired, most worked in the education field full-time. Only three participants returned during the one-year period following our initial contact in July 2009. However, comments focused on thanking the NPS for preserving the site as a part of history and urged the NPS to continue to do so. Finally, respondents were unanimous in that, if they had opportunity to do so, they would visit the site again.

## DISCUSSION

This study examined the effectiveness of exhibits at CHSC with respect to meaning making, accessibility and civic engagement. Specifically, the study sought to address the following questions:

1. In what ways, to what extent, and under what circumstances do visitors to CHSC in Little Rock, Arkansas, form intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings and significance of site resources while onsite? Do visitors form connections to resource meanings that persist over time? And, do visitors engage exhibit content in ways that promote civic engagement?
2. Are the interpretive opportunities provided by CHSC exhibits appropriate, accessible and effective for persons with differing abilities?

### Meanings & Relevance

Results suggest that visitors readily form intellectual connections to the meanings and significance of the people, events and ideas portrayed in the CHSC exhibits. The exhibits helped respondents develop a better understanding of the scope and complexity of the Little Rock crisis. For example, they came to understand that the Little Rock Nine story had many “players” and the story itself was embedded within a larger context. Respondents indicated that the exhibits helped them recognize the role of the Governor, the National Guard, the President, and the media in the unfolding of events.

Respondents frequently engaged exhibit content when they traced the “lineage” of the Little Rock crisis to the compromises and coalitions crafted by the founding fathers. They recognized that as these statesmen attempted to articulate American ideals, establish

Constitutional rights, and negotiate trade-offs between slave and non-slave states, they sowed the seeds of political conflict and social discord. Some respondents reflected with amazement that Constitutional provisions allowed only a small percentage of the population (i.e., white, male land-owners) to vote. Horton (2000) emphasizes that “If we are to have meaningful conversations about race in contemporary society, we must do so within the context of history” (p. 38). CHSC exhibits provided opportunities to tie discussions of race relations to historical events and social contexts. Respondents acknowledged that we have come a long way in terms of human rights and race relations—mentioning, for example, improvements related to desegregation and women gaining the right to vote. However, they consistently reiterated that “equality for all” has not yet been achieved.

Respondents frequently reported connecting with *an idea*, conveyed onsite through the use of a Margaret Mead quote, that a small group of people, struggling peacefully together, can change the world. Respondents acknowledged that the Little Rock Nine were just teenagers. They were probably naïve about the consequences of breaking through racial barriers. But because they were willing to endure great suffering, they are viewed as emblematic of those who fight for justice. Furthermore, the Little Rock Nine were seen as role models in the fight for educational access and opportunity. Respondents frequently touched upon the legal mandate—that utterly failed in a segregated south—to provide “separate but equal” educational facilities and programs. As they reflected upon what the Nine endured to secure a quality education, they expressed sadness that today education is often taken for granted. They grieved to think that the youth of today may be throwing away what a generation of civil rights activists worked so hard to give them.

The exhibits at CHSC affected visitors *emotionally*. Respondents indicated that many different emotions were felt while viewing the exhibits, including a range of positive and negative emotions. Emotional connections to meanings and significance of site resources seemed to emerge in two different ways: 1) exhibit content triggered a direct emotional response, or 2) the people, events or ideas portrayed in the exhibits provoked an indirect association with symbolic content, especially values and ideals. Respondents experienced a wide range of emotions while onsite. The most frequently mentioned *positive* emotions were amazement/awe, admiration/respect and inspiration. One main idea that emerged was that the Little Rock Nine were seen as symbols of courage and determination that inspired visitors to keep struggling to achieve equality.

In contrast, the most frequently mentioned *negative* emotions were anger, shame, feeling disturbed, or empathizing with the experience of prejudice, discrimination or hatred. A few local residents felt a certain amount of shame when they considered how the incident portrayed Arkansas to the outside world. Some exhibits graphically conveyed the “dark times” that the civil rights movement went through in the U.S., using disturbing videos and iconic photos to reveal the hatred that was unleashed on the Little Rock Nine, on African Americans in general, and on civil rights activists in particular during this time. Tilden (1957) long ago suggested that “The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction but provocation” (p. 9). Thus, exhibits may accomplish interpretive objectives in proportion to their ability to evoke positive *and* negative emotions. Respondent comments point to many sources of provocation within the exhibits. It may be that the *empathy* respondents expressed towards the Little Rock Nine and their parents represents an *aggregate* emotional response, a summing up of all the emotional content to which they had been exposed. Similarly, expressions of empathy may signify that the content was

internalized to a sufficiently deep level. Silverman (1999) suggests that visitor interaction with exhibit content can foster relationship building, personal reflection and identity expression. However, results from this study suggest that when empathy is created or enhanced, outcomes may go beyond identity expression to encompass *identity formation*. Respondent comments suggest that their feelings of empathy were cathartic and possibly transformational, allowing visitors to “grow beyond themselves” through their exhibit experience.

Larsen (2002) suggests that interpretation does not provide answers, rather it poses questions. Thus, it is significant to note that a frequent response to the exhibits was one of *questioning*. Visitors were confronted with ideas and images that were not pleasant. They saw recurring instances of harsh, even inhuman treatment. They observed patterns of injustice that seemed to resurface in each era. As this experience permeated their thoughts, they were provoked to ask questions about their beliefs, their fellow citizens’ beliefs, the actions they and others have taken in the past, as well as actions they might take in the future. Sometimes they asked questions seeking an elusive explanation as to *why*—why do people treat others unkindly? Why does it take so long for society recognize and redress wrongdoing? Why it is so easy to be complacent in the face of injustice? Other times they simply wondered: what would I have done?

A majority of the respondents connected *personally* in some way to exhibit content as evidenced by the sharing of a personal reflection, memory, story or experience. Many respondents discussed their experiences growing up, their school years, family interactions or experiences related to racial discrimination. Visitors understood that the civil rights struggle that took place at Central High School was connected to the larger civil right movement in the United States, as well as to other human rights movements around the world. Respondents frequently discussed local, state, national, and global problems, including education, immigration, religious

rights, sectarian conflicts and the global economy, within the context of CHSC exhibits. Data were collected in the months following the election of the first African American president in the U.S., and this event was frequently referenced by participants as well.

Study results support the conclusion that CHSC exhibits function to reveal, relate and provoke, providing a context within which visitors can and do form connections to the meanings of the Little Rock crisis, its historical antecedents, and various post Civil Rights era repercussions. Visitor meaning making encompasses such topics as courage, empathy, equality and diversity. Visitors engage exhibit content cognitively and affectively, forming both intellectual and emotional connections to meanings. Further, as visitors find personal relevance in the exhibit content, it appears that meaning making shifts to a higher level generating profound questions, astute observations and, in some cases, potential solutions to societal problems. Cameron and Gatewood (2000) maintain that an effective exhibit area “arouses affect while providing a cognitive framework for continued learning” (p. 127). The results of this study indicate that CHSC exhibits arouse affect, provide a cognitive framework for learning, and facilitate meaning, relevance and opportunities for personal transformation.

### Civic Engagement

In January 2006, the National Park Service and its partners hosted a forum on civic engagement in the national parks. Scholars came together to explore the necessity of, and potential mechanisms for, expanding the role of the national park system in educating citizens for effective citizenship behavior and strengthening participatory democracies, presumably in the

U.S. and abroad. Forum participants sounded a civic engagement clarion call. A few report excerpts will suffice to illustrate the *challenge* and the *vision* that emerged:

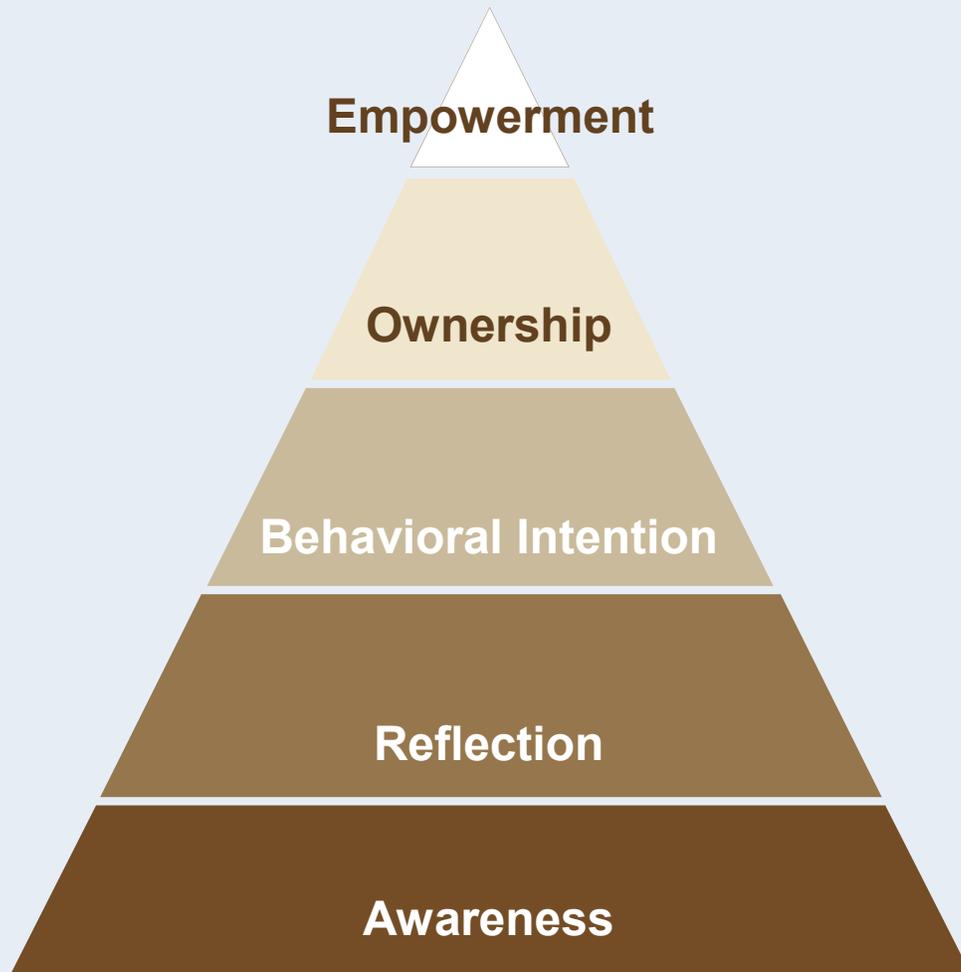
- “...we’re considering the role of the National Park Service as civic educator. We are looking specifically at how its unique programs can highlight the fundamental importance of and encourage active citizen participation in America’s civic life” (Dan Ritchie, p. 7).
- “Understanding the relevance of past experiences to present conditions, allows us to confront today’s issues with a deeper awareness of the alternatives before us. Standing in front of Little Rock’s Central High School...strengthens our understanding of the use of the past and of the many voices of which it is made” (John Hope Franklin, p. 7).
- “Ninety-one percent of 12th graders in the United States on a test could not offer two reasons why democratic societies benefit from citizen participation in politics” (Alexander Keyssar, p. 10).
- “Changing memories, changing cultural memories of the nation—because that’s really what I’m talking about—isn’t easy” (John Latschar, p. 13).
- “As stewards of your parks, you are also stewards of those values and the struggle to make those values real. Those values die if they are not constantly reenacted and re-embraced” (William Cronon, p. 15).
- “...perhaps our visitors will be a little better prepared to know what to do and how to do it as they go about our common responsibility of building and refining this nation” (John Latschar, p. 18).
- “There’s also the other side of access—[what] are the symbols, the artifacts, the stories—are they accessible to the people who come?” (Myron F. Floyd, p. 18).
- “So here’s someone responding as a citizen, as a teacher, as a parent to an experience that was made more powerful because it acknowledged the controversy, because it engaged with issues that had been subordinated for a long time...” (Charlene Mires, p. 29).

(NPS Conservation Study Institute, with Diamant, Feller & Larsen, 2006).

During a national forum examining the role of national parks in promoting civic engagement, CHSC is mentioned by name, along with a handful of other park hotspots, as “ground zero” in the agency’s efforts to foster civic engagement. Given the prominence of

Central High School in 1950s-era school integration efforts, the courageous struggle of the Little Rock Nine, and a 3,000 square foot exhibit area within which to “tell the story,” foster an understanding, and launch civic action, CHSC could easily become a model civic engagement site within the National Park Service. A careful analysis of study results led to the development of a “Five-tier Hierarchy of the Antecedents of Civic Engagement” (Figure 2). Incorporating two variables emphasized in Hungerford (1996), the hierarchy is comprised of five levels: *awareness*, *reflection*, *behavioral intentions*, *ownership* and *empowerment*. Results suggest that, at least in some cases, CHSC exhibits promote outcomes “from scratch” at the awareness, reflection and behavioral intentions levels. Results also suggest that CHSC exhibits primarily enhance pre-existing levels of ownership and empowerment, rather than facilitating these outcomes “from scratch.”

The importance of each level in the civic engagement hierarchy can be inferred from the comments provided by NPS forum scholars. “Relating past experiences to present conditions” (Franklin) prompts awareness and perhaps greater reflection on alternative courses of action. “Changing memories” (Latschar) represents an entry level in the civic engagement hierarchy (awareness/reflection); however, unless our collective consciousness shifts away from cultural myths toward more historically-based interpretations, motivations to act may be missing or actions may be misguided. Consistent with the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1988), after the “pivot point” when a behavioral intention is formed, the next two levels of the hierarchy represent intervening variables that could increase or decrease the likelihood of a behavioral intention resulting in actual behavior. That is, *ownership*, defined as in-depth knowledge and commitment, and *empowerment*, defined as having the required skills and the confidence to take action, could work for or against the emergence of citizenship behavior depending on whether



**Figure 2.** A Five-tier Hierarchy of the Antecedents of Civic Engagement at CHCS

these factors are present and to what extent they are operative (Hungerford, 1996). If Keyssar's study findings still hold, most high school seniors would not have even rudimentary knowledge supporting the attainment of ownership. Further, Cronon's comments suggest that there is a need to constantly re-embrace values—to continually be about the process of making higher-order values *real* in our lives. Thus, ownership may not be a level easily attained *or maintained*. John Latschar, Superintendent at Gettysburg National Military Park, expressed a hope that park visitors would leave the site “knowing what to do and how to do it.”

Although respondents discussed gaining empowerment skills from parents, grade school and Sunday school teachers—no respondents mentioned gaining skills and the confidence to take action from CHSC exhibits. As highlighted in the results, one respondent noted that *except for a single interactive screen* at the tail-end of the exhibit experience (Exhibit 19B), all the preceding exhibits served as “historical prelude” to actions a visitor might take upon leaving the site. This respondent seemed to grasp the importance of helping visitors *find their place in the story*. Schilling (2007) suggests that “...the challenge is to provide guests an *experience* of how the parts fit together, including their place in the story” (pp. 66-67). For sites that promote civic engagement and facilitate awareness and reflection upon critical social values, the visitors’ “place in the story” will include behavioral dimensions. Further, the Scholars Forum report suggests that parks must equip visitors to assume an active and effective role in society.

It is worth noting that questions raised by Westheimer and Kahne (2004) regarding whether to (a) emphasize the cultivation of knowledge, skills and abilities, (b) foster a commitment to participate, (c) equip visitors to engage in critical analysis, or (d) promote some combination of these civic engagement outcomes is an issue that has yet to be resolved within the NPS. Thus it is unclear whether “successful” civic engagement development efforts at CHSC

would emphasize the formation of personally responsible citizens, participatory citizens, or justice-oriented citizens.

In sum, a close look at the study results suggests that most respondent comments related to civic engagement focused on *becoming more aware* and/or *being inspired* to engage in a frequently undefined set of citizenship behaviors. Respondents who had a history of volunteerism and civic engagement expressed an intention to continue their service activities. These respondents indicated that the exhibits *affirmed* their community activism, providing as it were fuel for the fire.

### Enduring Impact

A comparison of results from the focus group interviews, exit interviews and conversation analyses identified both similarities and differences with the results obtained one year later via follow-up phone interviews. Based on initial findings, researchers identified seven themes. Some of these themes were emphasized by the 15 respondents who also participated in the follow-up interviews, while others were not. This discussion will examine the extent to which the seven themes remained salient among those interviewed by phone one year later.

*Theme 1: The capacity of CHSC exhibits to reveal, relate and provoke may be a function of relevant content, compelling images and the use of multi-sensory formats.*

The follow-up interviews revealed that three specific exhibit elements including (1) photographs, particularly the image the white student screaming at the black student, (2) the panels on human rights, and (3) the oral history recordings of the Little Rock Nine (especially when combined with the activity of looking out the window at the actual school) were the most

frequently remembered of any exhibit elements. A female respondent stated, “I remember...looking at all the pictures and interactive displays that you had and that you could see the school right across the street from the visitors’ center.” Another female respondent recalled, “I remember, you know, those pictures of the white students, you know, just screaming out things...”

*Theme 2: The Little Rock Nine were emblematic of the courageous struggle among people of color for educational access and opportunity.*

In the follow-up interviews, respondents did not focus on the idea that the struggle was solely among people of color, but rather that the struggle was for educational access for all. In this way, the Little Rock Nine and their supporters stood for what was right in difficult times. “It’s an educational place, to show everyone the struggle, [to show] that even in a struggle there is triumph if you stand your ground and stand for what you know is right” (Female respondent).

*Theme 3: CHSC fosters empathy by putting visitors face-to-face with real people who struggled, without malice, to overcome adversity.*

In the follow-up interviews, respondents focused on the violence and hatred directed toward the students, and many continued to express empathy and sadness toward the Little Rock Nine. There was no real discussion of the Little Rock Nine’s intentions beyond the fact that they wanted to go to school. The idea of violence and hatred was prevalent in participant responses; for example, one older male participant spoke of the intensity of the hatred that was shown. A female school teacher also wondered about the animosity and hatred shown to the students.

*Theme 4: CHSC promotes reflection on the evolving saga of equal rights granted and denied while highlighting the social and psychological toll caused by unequal treatment.*

A male social worker, who worked in the school system, reflected on his site visit one year later stating:

Civil rights then, it was out there. Everyone knew it was there and... you knew your place. There was a select few who stood out and said 'I have a right to do this,' and they stood out. But today, civil rights is apparent. I'm not just saying for African Americans, but now [people who] have handicaps, now we have civil rights and everyone has the rights. I guess that's what it is.

Another respondent mentioned, "Even though we have, even though women have the right to vote, and we can own property, and we can hold office...there is a serious class system in this country."

*Theme 5: CHSC represents the ongoing struggle to transform a history of prejudice and discrimination into a legacy of cultural diversity.*

One year later, many participants echoed a concern that was frequently mentioned during the onsite interviews. That is, that although civil rights have come a long way, we still have far to go. For example, one year later a female school teacher expressed her frustration that the exhibits did not address the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community's ongoing struggle for equality. She stated, "I'm lesbian and I'm totally looking forward to the day when we can have a historical park there where it says 'Remember when GLBTs used to not have full equality?'"

*Theme 6: As visitors found personal relevance in exhibit content, they began to ask fundamental questions, articulate astute observations and pinpoint possible strategies to improve societal relations.*

In contrast with respondents' comments onsite, those interviewed one year later emphasized the first two actions listed in Theme 6, but did not mention the third. All but one participant in the follow-up interviews indicated continuing to find personal relevance in the exhibit content. Several asked fundamental questions and/or articulated observations. For example, one female school teacher was still so appalled by the situation that she had difficulty expressing her meaning:

Just the sheer...I don't really know what words can describe the sheer...I know I cannot fathom what it was like for those white kids, for lack of a better term, to have been so mean and to rally and to...what? To protest. I don't even know what to call what they did. I am trying to put that together...what they did. Is it bred? Is it genes that gave them the motivation and power to make them think they were from a better, more superior race?

However, during the follow-up interviews, none of the respondents pinpointed strategies to improve societal relations (although this question was not specifically asked during the interview).

*Theme 7: CHSC promotes civic engagement by providing a touch stone for awareness and reflection, a springboard for behavioral intentions, and a launch pad for ownership and empowerment.*

In the follow-up interviews, respondents reiterated that CHSC promoted civic engagement by prompting awareness and reflection. However, comments did not focus on the levels of behavioral intentions, ownership or empowerment. The idea that seemed to emerge in

the phone interviews was that through awareness and reflection, CHSC promoted civic engagement by providing *much needed encouragement* to participants to continue in their endeavors in their local community. A male educator responded that he participated in community activities at “the same level that I have participated in [them] all of my adult life, but I wouldn't say it has motivated me to go out and seek something more to do. It certainly informed my participation in the things that I do.”

### Accessibility

Assessing CHSC exhibit accessibility was accomplished almost exclusively through the focus group interview process. Although *all interviews* included questions regarding exhibit accessibility, and participant observations indicated that those with mobility impairments relied heavily upon the few handrails found within the exhibit space, only focus group respondents provided in-depth comments related to exhibit accessibility issues and concerns. A recent National Park Service (2009) media publication quotes Kovach-Hindsley to emphasize that “good exhibits feature redundant, multisensory experiences” (p. 6). Consistent with the principles of universal design, the NPS seeks to make these multisensory experiences accessible to all (National Park Service, 2007). However, respondents raised several issues that hinder exhibit accessibility at CHSC.

The first issue that respondents raised had nothing to do with making content accessible to those with visual, auditory, mobility or cognitive impairments; rather, it affected the accessibility of exhibit content for all. *Respondents identified a problem with exhibit flow.* Specifically, respondents indicated that they did not know which direction to proceed through the

exhibit space—left or right, clockwise or counter-clockwise. Some respondents felt that they may have missed part of the story since they moved through the exhibits in a *non-chronological* fashion. If one wishes to engage exhibit content chronologically, one must begin to the left. The middle section contains exhibits dedicated exclusively to the story of the Little Rock crisis. Whereas, the panels on the right side of the exhibit are discuss events after 1957. This layout confused some respondents who noted that within the exhibit area there were *no cues* to assist them in their onsite navigation and decision making. Research suggests that visitors want to know *where they are* when visiting an exhibit area (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Moscardo, 1999). Perhaps an exhibit map, flowchart, orientation panel or directional signage would increase exhibit accessibility by providing visitors with a mental picture of the area? Falk & Dierking (2000) emphasize the importance of *locus of control* as a factor that promotes learning in museums, embedding this concept in their theory of museum-based learning. When basic orientation is provided, when visitors have a heightened sense of control, research suggests they will engage exhibit content more effectively.

Respondent comments also indicated that visitors with visual impairments might not be able to enjoy all parts of the exhibit. Currently at CHSC, the Sennheiser guidePORT system provides audio description for only three of the fifteen exhibit areas. Visually impaired respondents found this system easy to use, but they were very disappointed in its limited scope of application.

Overall, respondent comments suggest that Exhibit 13 was both popular and provocative. Exhibit effectiveness may have been strengthened by the fact that it provided visitors the opportunity to sit down, relax, and look out the picture windows, surveying Central High School while listening to oral history recordings and viewing video clips. Exhibit 13 reinforced and

expanded upon content included elsewhere in the exhibit. Thus, its value as a learning tool may have been enhanced through the provision of “redundant, multisensory experiences” (National Park Service, 2009). Perhaps because Exhibit 13 was so popular, respondents identified several accessibility issues associated with this exhibit. First, although there were audio described listening stations available at Exhibit 13, not all of the station handsets were equipped with this function. In contrast, at Kings Mountain National Military Park several tree models meet the needs of visually impaired visitors by providing tactile experiences combined with audio programming (National Park Service, 2009):

Inside the touchable tree model at Kings Mountain, an audio program plays in three distinct parts: an interpretive message, an overview of the exhibit theme, and verbatim audio description of the exhibit’s wall text. Visitors hear all three parts of the audio—there are no selection buttons that differentiate sighted visitors from those who are blind or have low vision. The park made this choice because they didn’t want to differentiate visitors based on any type of disability—they wanted every visitor to have access to the same audio experience. (p. 10)

Second, those with visual impairments could not navigate through the screen-based selection features on the listening stations by themselves. Participants suggested that audiovisual stations incorporate textural features onscreen or that Braille navigation symbols be added. Kovach-Hindsley advocates the use of simple touch-screen navigation with limited choices (such as four large touch targets in the corners) and consistent navigation (National Park Service, 2009).

Third, respondents identified another problem associated with the listening stations—that is, *the font size is too small!* Those with visual impairments, or anyone who just happened to forget their reading glasses on the day of their visit, might not be able to make full use of onscreen content.

Fourth, a person with a hearing impairment cannot access the “Voices of the Crisis” section of Exhibit 13 because it is limited to audio-only content delivery mechanisms. National Park Service (2007) accessibility guidelines mandate that all audio content be available in alternative formats, either through the provision of captions or via some form of printed material (p. 40).

Hand-held phone units elicited both positive and negative comments from respondents. Taller respondents requested longer phone cords so that they could stand and listen. Some respondents requested headphones that covered *both ears* to assist with noise reduction. Deaf interpreters found that they could not use the phones to listen and sign at the same time. Some respondents indicated that they liked the “period-feel” of the phone units since they harkened back to the day of rotary dials. Similarly, respondents appreciated the volume controls as overall noise levels within the exhibit area were a source of some complaints.

Respondents also noted that the main video screens played continuously. These video soundtracks proved distracting to readers, especially when reading content that required focused attention, such as was the case with the *Brown v Board of Education* court case panels.

Respondents noted that the exhibits provided few tactile experiences. Anita Smith, an exhibit designer for Harpers Ferry Center, advocates using universal design principles to provide experiences that encompass tactile, visual, and auditory modes of sensory input (National Park Service, 2009). While it sounds simple to implement, this approach poses a design challenge for historical sites if the primary exhibit themes do not correspond to touchable items. However, at CHSC, there are several display items “under glass” that could be made available in replica form to enhance visitors’ tactile experience. Also, a model of Central High School or a 3-D map of the area could provide tactile options. Representing civil rights, legal battles, the constitution, and

concepts like equality using tactile elements, however, may require further research and development efforts.

Finally, respondent comments pinpointed accessibility issues related to exhibit lighting. Respondents spanning a range of age, size and visual need categories complained that *shadows and glare* interfered with their ability to read or view exhibit elements. Depending on their height, respondents sometimes had to shade an exhibit, or stand to one side to eliminate shading in order to view exhibit elements clearly. Accessibility guidelines indicate that exhibit lighting should provide sufficient, even light to ensure that exhibit text be easily read while avoiding harsh reflections, glare, and shadows (National Park Service, 2007).

### Limitations

Conversation analysis proved to be a labor intensive, and technologically difficult, means of data collection. It required a large research team to implement, was fraught with equipment and technical problems, and limited data collection to only visitor pairs. At CHSC, the system that provides audio description of exhibit content interfered that with our radio-transmissions of visitor conversations, leading to poor data quality. Other researchers have noted similar issues with collecting data for conversation analysis (e.g., Allen, 2002). The cost-benefit ratio suggests that, unless the main focus of the research is on social learning, this method of data collection may not be worth it. In comparison, focus groups, exit interviews, and follow-up phone calls, all appear to generate useful data for answering research questions.

Many of our respondents worked within the education sector. We talked to teachers, retired teachers, principals, home schoolers, etc. It so happened that our July 2009 onsite data

collection efforts coincided with a Teachers Association meeting that took place in Little Rock, Arkansas. Thus, our sample may have been influenced by the large number of curious and dedicated educators in town for that event.

## Conclusions & Recommendations

This study explored exhibit effectiveness at CHSC using a variety of data collection methods (observation, focus groups, conversation analysis, and interviews). The assessment identified cognitive, affective and behavioral outcomes including intellectual and emotional connections to meanings, perceived relevance, civic engagement behaviors and their antecedents. Thus, a variety of short and long-term outcomes were examined. Finally, exhibit accessibility, including barriers to exhibit accessibility, was a focus of inquiry.

CHSC is to be commended for their unswerving commitment to honesty—and their willingness to address controversy head on. These qualities are everywhere reflected in the exhibit content. It is possible that the favorable comments provided by visitors, the depth and breadth of interpretive outcomes reported by respondents, and the extent to which respondents found personal relevance within the exhibit content may be attributed to the courage, authenticity and relevance of the exhibit content. CHSC cohesively tells the story of the Little Rock Nine and the school integration crisis. The exhibits weave together an examination of the inequalities inherent in our Constitution, the utter failure of “separate but equal” educational mandates in a segregated south, and the ongoing struggle for civil rights by various disenfranchised segments of our population. Further, the exhibits create a unity and flow among chronologically distant

events in our nation’s history. Embedding the Little Rock crisis within this larger social context helped respondents see that the Little Rock story included them!

It is worth noting that CHSC exhibits did not shy away from provoking negative emotions—using iconic images and multisensory elements to reveal tragic aspects of the school integration crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas. Further, respondents reported connecting to such negative meanings as hatred, discrimination, shame and injustice. Results suggest that it is okay to provoke negative emotions; indeed, eliciting negative reactions may be essential if one is to prompt honest reflection on the unsavory and unseemly aspects of our nation’s history. As Edward Linenthal argues, “...controversy doesn’t necessarily mean something is wrong. It means that people are passionately engaged” (NPS Conservation Study Institute with Diamant, Feller & Larsen, 2006, p. 21).



Exhibit 12. Multisensory Exhibit Elements

Within the NPS, formative evaluations of exhibits happen infrequently. Thus, it is highly recommended for exhibit designers, fabricators, interpretive staff, and exhibit writers to consult with disability advocates and experts when designing interpretative media. Paskowsky, an exhibit designer at Harpers Ferry Center, stressed that “the guiding principle is thought, not afterthought” (National Park Service, 2009, p. 12). Similarly, Harpers Ferry Center found that retrofitting an exhibit for accessibility after planning is costly, adding as much as 15-20 percent to the cost of a project. As CHSC works through the accessibility issues outlined in this report, we recommend that they engage in a consultative process with the disability community.

Problems with orientation and traffic flow can be rectified by a variety of means, such as the addition of banners, introductory labels, arrows, maps and floor plans, baffles, lighting, or directional signage (Serrell, 1996).

Since the guidePORT system is in place, it is recommended that a complete audio tour be designed that is audio described for those that are visually impaired. Perhaps some of the carpet tiles could be replaced with visual markers such as numbers for tour stops. This would also have the benefit of helping other visitors who are in need of a route through the exhibits. They too could follow the markers.

Caption boards are recommended by Harpers Ferry Center (National Park Service, 2007, p. 12). The use of caption boards would likely resolve barriers for hearing impaired visitors, providing access to the “Voices of the Crisis” component of Exhibit 13. Alternatively, providing written text via printed materials may be another option to consider due to limited space for caption board installation.

To improve visual accessibility, respondents suggested providing basic onscreen controls for the listening stations (Exhibit 13), such as the “*main*” and “*next*” buttons, in a large size format. They also suggested using a larger font size especially for the open captioned text.

An adjustment in lighting, via the use of filters or focus lighting, would provide benefits for all visitors, not just those with visual impairments, by eliminating shadows and glare.

Finally, we recommend using a critical review of Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) citizenship typology and their associated research results, the Scholar Forum report, and our five-tier hierarchy of the antecedents of civic engagement at CHSC as the basis for formulating a civic engagement strategy at CHSC. If the site is to serve as a civic engagement role model, it may be necessary to explore avenues for increasing visitor ownership and empowerment related to their citizenship behavior. It is recommended that evaluation procedures be implemented that will assess effectiveness at achieving civic engagement goals.

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APPENDIX A

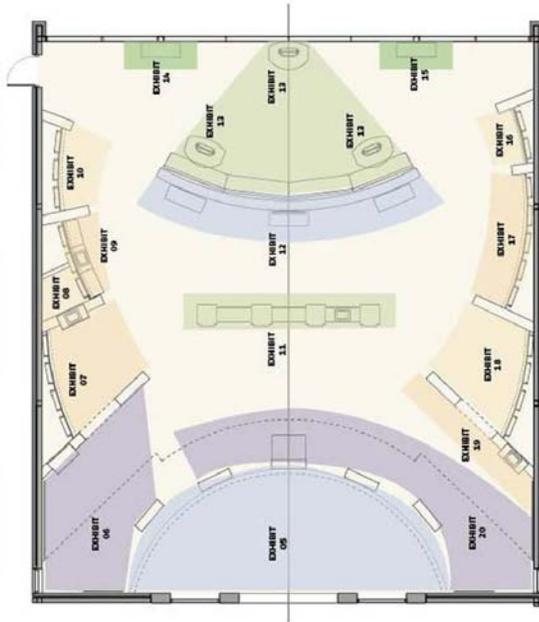
Visitor Observation Form

Central High School National Historic Site: Observation Form

Visitor Number \_\_\_\_\_

Time In: \_\_\_\_\_

Time Out: \_\_\_\_\_



<p><b>X9</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backtrack exhibit <input type="checkbox"/> Call someone over <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up phone <input type="checkbox"/> Point to something <input type="checkbox"/> Ponder/close eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Read text silently <input type="checkbox"/> Shake head <input type="checkbox"/> Show visible emotion <input type="checkbox"/> Touch screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use interactive <input type="checkbox"/> Watch video Other: _____ X9 Time: _____	<p><b>X10</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backtrack exhibit <input type="checkbox"/> Call someone over <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up phone <input type="checkbox"/> Point to something <input type="checkbox"/> Ponder/close eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Read text silently <input type="checkbox"/> Shake head <input type="checkbox"/> Show visible emotion <input type="checkbox"/> Touch screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use interactive <input type="checkbox"/> Watch video Other: _____ X10 Time: _____	<p><b>X11</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backtrack exhibit <input type="checkbox"/> Call someone over <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up phone <input type="checkbox"/> Point to something <input type="checkbox"/> Ponder/close eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Read text silently <input type="checkbox"/> Shake head <input type="checkbox"/> Show visible emotion <input type="checkbox"/> Touch screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use interactive <input type="checkbox"/> Watch video Other: _____ X11 Time: _____	<p><b>X12</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backtrack exhibit <input type="checkbox"/> Call someone over <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up phone <input type="checkbox"/> Point to something <input type="checkbox"/> Ponder/close eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Read text silently <input type="checkbox"/> Shake head <input type="checkbox"/> Show visible emotion <input type="checkbox"/> Touch screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use interactive <input type="checkbox"/> Watch video Other: _____ X12 Time: _____
<p><b>X13</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backtrack exhibit <input type="checkbox"/> Call someone over <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up phone <input type="checkbox"/> Point to something <input type="checkbox"/> Ponder/close eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Read text silently <input type="checkbox"/> Shake head <input type="checkbox"/> Show visible emotion <input type="checkbox"/> Touch screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use interactive <input type="checkbox"/> Watch video Other: _____ X13 Time: _____	<p><b>X14</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backtrack exhibit <input type="checkbox"/> Call someone over <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up phone <input type="checkbox"/> Point to something <input type="checkbox"/> Ponder/close eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Read text silently <input type="checkbox"/> Shake head <input type="checkbox"/> Show visible emotion <input type="checkbox"/> Touch screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use interactive <input type="checkbox"/> Watch video Other: _____ X14 Time: _____	<p><b>X15</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backtrack exhibit <input type="checkbox"/> Call someone over <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up phone <input type="checkbox"/> Point to something <input type="checkbox"/> Ponder/close eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Read text silently <input type="checkbox"/> Shake head <input type="checkbox"/> Show visible emotion <input type="checkbox"/> Touch screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use interactive <input type="checkbox"/> Watch video Other: _____ X15 Time: _____	<p><b>X16</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backtrack exhibit <input type="checkbox"/> Call someone over <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up phone <input type="checkbox"/> Point to something <input type="checkbox"/> Ponder/close eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Read text silently <input type="checkbox"/> Shake head <input type="checkbox"/> Show visible emotion <input type="checkbox"/> Touch screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use interactive <input type="checkbox"/> Watch video Other: _____ X16 Time: _____
<p><b>X17</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backtrack exhibit <input type="checkbox"/> Call someone over <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up phone <input type="checkbox"/> Point to something <input type="checkbox"/> Ponder/close eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Read text silently <input type="checkbox"/> Shake head <input type="checkbox"/> Show visible emotion <input type="checkbox"/> Touch screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use interactive <input type="checkbox"/> Watch video Other: _____ X17 Time: _____	<p><b>X18</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backtrack exhibit <input type="checkbox"/> Call someone over <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up phone <input type="checkbox"/> Point to something <input type="checkbox"/> Ponder/close eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Read text silently <input type="checkbox"/> Shake head <input type="checkbox"/> Show visible emotion <input type="checkbox"/> Touch screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use interactive <input type="checkbox"/> Watch video Other: _____ X18 Time: _____	<p><b>X19</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backtrack exhibit <input type="checkbox"/> Call someone over <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up phone <input type="checkbox"/> Point to something <input type="checkbox"/> Ponder/close eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Read text silently <input type="checkbox"/> Shake head <input type="checkbox"/> Show visible emotion <input type="checkbox"/> Touch screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use interactive <input type="checkbox"/> Watch video Other: _____ X19 Time: _____	<p><b>X20</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backtrack exhibit <input type="checkbox"/> Call someone over <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up phone <input type="checkbox"/> Point to something <input type="checkbox"/> Ponder/close eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Read text silently <input type="checkbox"/> Shake head <input type="checkbox"/> Show visible emotion <input type="checkbox"/> Touch screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use interactive <input type="checkbox"/> Watch video Other: _____ X20 Time: _____

<p><b>X5</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backtrack exhibit <input type="checkbox"/> Call someone over <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up phone <input type="checkbox"/> Point to something <input type="checkbox"/> Ponder/close eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Read text silently <input type="checkbox"/> Shake head <input type="checkbox"/> Show visible emotion <input type="checkbox"/> Touch screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use interactive <input type="checkbox"/> Watch video Other: _____ X5 Time: _____	<p><b>X6</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backtrack exhibit <input type="checkbox"/> Call someone over <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up phone <input type="checkbox"/> Point to something <input type="checkbox"/> Ponder/close eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Read text silently <input type="checkbox"/> Shake head <input type="checkbox"/> Show visible emotion <input type="checkbox"/> Touch screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use interactive <input type="checkbox"/> Watch video Other: _____ X6 Time: _____	<p><b>X7</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backtrack exhibit <input type="checkbox"/> Call someone over <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up phone <input type="checkbox"/> Point to something <input type="checkbox"/> Ponder/close eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Read text silently <input type="checkbox"/> Shake head <input type="checkbox"/> Show visible emotion <input type="checkbox"/> Touch screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use interactive <input type="checkbox"/> Watch video Other: _____ X7 Time: _____	<p><b>X8</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> Backtrack exhibit <input type="checkbox"/> Call someone over <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in conversation <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up phone <input type="checkbox"/> Point to something <input type="checkbox"/> Ponder/close eyes <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud <input type="checkbox"/> Read text silently <input type="checkbox"/> Shake head <input type="checkbox"/> Show visible emotion <input type="checkbox"/> Touch screen <input type="checkbox"/> Use interactive <input type="checkbox"/> Watch video Other: _____ X8 Time: _____
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## APPENDIX B

### Visitor Contact Log

**Central High School National Historic Site Visitor Contact Log  
 (Conversation Analysis and Observation Group)  
 (Visitors who agree to CA must also agree to exit interview)**

Date	Time	Group Composition		Gender Adult/Child		Yes Response	No Response	Telephone Interview	Telephone Interview	Comments
		Adult	Child	Male	Female	M/F	M/F	Yes M/F	No M/F	
<i>Example</i> 2/27/09	9:40 AM	2	0	1/0	1/0	1/1	--	0/1	1/0	<i>Male out of town frequently no follow-up call.</i>
2/27/09	11:00 AM	2	0	0/0	2/0	0/0	0/2			<i>Not staying very long.</i>

## APPENDIX C

### Informed Consent for Participation in Research



## United States Department of the Interior



IN REPLY REFER TO:

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Central High School National Historic Site  
2120 Daisy Gatson Bates Dr.  
Little Rock, AR 72202

*Experience Your America*

### **Informed Consent for Participation in Research**

“An Evaluation of Exhibit Effectiveness at  
Central High School National Historic Site in Little Rock, Arkansas”

You are being asked to be a subject in a research study for the National Park Service. This study is examining the significance and meanings of Central High School National Historic Site among visitors. Your participation is appreciated, and if you are interested in participating, please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Central High School National Historic Site. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. You have a right to ask questions of the research project, obtain a copy of the results, and have your privacy respected throughout the process.

The purpose of this study is to understand the meanings and significance that visitors ascribe to Central High School National Historic Site. The results of the study will assist the national historic site staff in developing more effective public programs and media products targeted for visitors. Your responses will also help the historic site managers learn what constraints and barriers may exist in reaching visitors.

The data will be collected through either short exit interviews, or by audio taping of visitors (conversation analysis) while they view the exhibit—you have been asked to participate in one of these options.

If you have been asked to participate in the exit interview, please read this section:

The exit interview will last approximately 5-10 minutes, and involve a series of questions relating to your perceptions of Central High School National Historic Site. Each interview will be audio taped strictly for scholarly analysis.

If you have been asked to participate in the Conversation Analysis, please read this section:  
Many visitors come to interpretive sites in social groups made up of family and friends; thus, Conversation Analysis can help understand how these groups interact as a social unit with the exhibits or within the exhibit space. A critical goal of CA is to examine the social interactions that exist between two or more people. Two members of your group will be given microphones, and your conversations will be recorded as you visit the exhibits. The data will later be transcribed, and analyzed.

All participants continue reading here:

Some participants will be contacted for short phone interviews in six months. Please check the box below if you would be willing to be contacted later as well. At this time, only your first name is needed, and your name will not be attached to any data. These names will be converted to individual numbers in the transcripts to precede each comment. This process helps keep the transcripts organized. All personal information, research data, and related records will be coded and stored by only the researcher to prevent access by unauthorized personnel. Your identity will be protected. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and can be identified with you will remain confidential and only disclosed with your permission or as required by law.

Both the interview and conversation analysis protocol have been approved by the Stephen F. Austin State University's Institutional Review Board. Additional information about this interview and its approval is available at your request.

You have read and understand the above information. You have been given an opportunity to ask questions and any questions you have had were answered to my satisfaction. You agree to participate in this research. You have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name

Willing to be contacted again in six months? *(please check one box)*  
YES   NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Theresa Coble, SFASU, Primary Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### **Additional Information Provided upon Request**

An Evaluation of Exhibit Effectiveness at Central High School  
National Historic Site in Little Rock, Arkansas

#### **Person Collecting and Analyzing Information:**

Theresa Coble, Associate Professor  
Stephen F. Austin State University  
Box 6109, SFA Station  
Nacogdoches, TX 75962-6109  
(936) 468-1354

## APPENDIX D

### CHSC Visitor Contact Information

Thank you for agreeing to a follow-up telephone interview concerning your visit to Central High School National Historic Site. Please provide the following contact information. You will receive an email reminder of the upcoming interview if you provide your email address. All information will be kept confidential; your name and identifying information will not be associated with the data when it is presented to the park or to external audiences. Thank you for helping to evaluate the exhibits at Central High School National Historic Site.

Date:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip:

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone:

\_\_\_\_\_

Email:

\_\_\_\_\_

Code:

\_\_\_\_\_

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## APPENDIX E

### Exit Interview Questions

**Central High School NHS**  
**Exit Interview Questions –Version A**

Note: The same question is asked six (6) different ways in an effort to comply with federal regulations. Each question can be asked to no more than nine (9) respondents.

**ID #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I. Introduction**

**II. Participation Yes/No? (Contact Log)**

**III. Consent Form**

**IV. Interview Questions (See below)**

**V. 6-month Follow up?**

**VI. Thank you gift.**

- 1a. What drew you to this site today?
- 2a. Is this your first visit to the Visitor Center? (If not, approximately how many times have you visited?)
- 3a. Did the exhibits trigger any emotions in you? (Positive or negative? What element...?)
- 4a. While exploring the exhibits, did you learn something new, understand something better, or think about something differently?
- 5a. What do you think is the main idea of the exhibits?
- 6a. Do you have any life experiences that you saw reflected in the exhibits?
- 7a. What do these exhibits tell us about race relations then and now?
- 8a. Will you behave differently as a citizen as a result of seeing these exhibits?
- 9a. **Mini scenario:** “A museum contains images, text, objects, audio and video recordings—it’s jammed full of things to look at, listen to, read and think about. Sometimes, however, visitors can’t see small print or hear recordings. Maybe the exhibits are full of complicated terms or aren’t well organized. Maybe the choice of colors makes reading difficult. Perhaps visitors cannot get up an incline or in or out of tight spaces...”

Did you encounter any barriers to your enjoyment of the exhibits?

- 10a. Anything else you want to share?

**Central High School NHS**  
**Exit Interview Questions –Version B**

Note: The same question is asked six (6) different ways in an effort to comply with federal regulations. Each question can be asked to no more than nine (9) respondents.

**ID #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

- I. Introduction**
- II. Participation Yes/No? (Contact Log)**
- III. Consent Form**
- IV. Interview Questions (See below)**
- V. 6-month Follow up?**
- VI. Thank you gift.**

- 1b. What was the main reason you came here today?
- 2b. Including this visit, approximately how many times have you visited this site?
- 3b. Did any of the exhibits trigger an emotional response or feelings about the events or people of the time period?
- 4b. Did you learn anything new from the exhibits?
- 5b. What struck you as the most important idea in the exhibits?
- 6b. Was anything in the exhibits personally relevant to you?
- 7b. What do these exhibits tell us about civil rights then and now?
- 8b. Do you intend to behave differently with regards to your civic and community responsibilities?
- 9b. **Mini scenario:** “A museum contains images, text, objects, audio and video recordings—it’s jammed full of things to look at, listen to, read and think about. Sometimes, however, visitors can’t see small print or hear recordings. Maybe the exhibits are full of complicated terms or aren’t well organized. Maybe the choice of colors makes reading difficult. Perhaps visitors cannot get up an incline or in or out of tight spaces...”  
  
Were any of the exhibit elements, spaces or content inaccessible to you?
- 10b. Anything else you want to tell the park?

**Central High School NHS  
Exit Interview Questions –Version C**

Note: The same question is asked six (6) different ways in an effort to comply with federal regulations. Each question can be asked to no more than nine (9) respondents.

**ID #:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

- I. Introduction**
- II. Participation Yes/No? (Contact Log)**
- III. Consent Form**
- IV. Interview Questions (See below)**
- V. 6-month Follow up?**
- VI. Thank you gift.**

- 1c. Why did you decide to visit Central High School?
- 2c. Have you been to the Central High School Visitor Center previously? (If yes, approximately how many times have you visited?)
- 3c. Did you feel anything while you experienced the exhibits?
- 4c. Did you understand anything better as a result of your exhibit experience?
- 5c. Was there one “big idea” that stood out to you as you viewed the exhibits?
- 6c. While you viewed the exhibits, did any personal experiences come to mind?
- 7c. What do these exhibits tell us about human rights then and now?
- 8c. Did the exhibits influence your thoughts about your duty as a citizen? If so, how?
- 9c. **Mini scenario:** “A museum contains images, text, objects, audio and video recordings—it’s jammed full of things to look at, listen to, read and think about. Sometimes, however, visitors can’t see small print or hear recordings. Maybe the exhibits are full of complicated terms or aren’t well organized. Maybe the choice of colors makes reading difficult. Perhaps visitors cannot get up an incline or in or out of tight spaces...”  
  
Were there any factors that limited your museum experience?
- 10c. Do you have any final comments?

**Central High School NHS  
Exit Interview Questions –Version D**

Note: The same question is asked six (6) different ways in an effort to comply with federal regulations. Each question can be asked to no more than nine (9) respondents.

**ID #:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

- I. Introduction**
- II. Participation Yes/No? (Contact Log)**
- III. Consent Form**
- IV. Interview Questions (See below)**
- V. 6-month Follow up?**
- VI. Thank you gift.**

- 1d. What motivated you to visit this site?
- 2d. How many visits have you made to Central High School?
- 3d. Did you have an emotional reaction to any of the exhibit elements?
- 4d. Did you think about anything differently as a result of your exhibit experience?
- 5d. What was the most significant message that the exhibits conveyed?
- 6d. Do you have any life experiences that you saw reflected in the exhibits?
- 7d. What do these exhibits tell us about the African American experience then and now?
- 8d. Did these exhibits motivate you to become more involved in community activities? In what ways?
- 9d. **Mini scenario:** “A museum contains images, text, objects, audio and video recordings—it’s jammed full of things to look at, listen to, read and think about. Sometimes, however, visitors can’t see small print or hear recordings. Maybe the exhibits are full of complicated terms or aren’t well organized. Maybe the choice of colors makes reading difficult. Perhaps visitors cannot get up an incline or in or out of tight spaces...”  
  
Did you experience anything that limited your enjoyments of the exhibits?
- 10d. Do you have any final thoughts?

**Central High School NHS  
Exit Interview Questions –Version E**

Note: The same question is asked six (6) different ways in an effort to comply with federal regulations. Each question can be asked to no more than nine (9) respondents.

**ID #:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

- I. Introduction**
- II. Participation Yes/No? (Contact Log)**
- III. Consent Form**
- IV. Interview Questions (See below)**
- V. 6-month Follow up?**
- VI. Thank you gift.**

- 1e. What brought you to this site today?
- 2e. Have you visited this site before? (If yes, approximately how many times have you visited including this visit?)
- 3e. What feelings did you experience as you interacted with the exhibits?
- 4e. Has your perspective on any issue or event changed after viewing the exhibits?
- 5e. What is the main point that you will walk away with from these exhibits?
- 6e. Were the exhibits relevant to your day to day life?
- 7e. What do these exhibits tell us about Constitutional rights then and now?
- 8e. Did these exhibits motivate you to become more engaged in your community in the future? If so, how?
- 9e. **Mini scenario:** “A museum contains images, text, objects, audio and video recordings—it’s jammed full of things to look at, listen to, read and think about. Sometimes, however, visitors can’t see small print or hear recordings. Maybe the exhibits are full of complicated terms or aren’t well organized. Maybe the choice of colors makes reading difficult. Perhaps visitors cannot get up an incline or in or out of tight spaces...”  
  
Did you have trouble using or viewing any of the exhibits?
- 10e. Do you have anything else to say about your exhibit experience?

**Central High School NHS**  
**Exit Interview Questions –Version F**

Note: The same question is asked six (6) different ways in an effort to comply with federal regulations. Each question can be asked to no more than nine (9) respondents.

**ID #:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

- I. Introduction**
- II. Participation Yes/No? (Contact Log)**
- III. Consent Form**
- IV. Interview Questions (See below)**
- V. 6-month Follow up?**
- VI. Thank you gift.**

- 1f. What drew you to this site today?
- 2f. Is this your first visit to the Visitor Center? (If not, approximately how many times have you visited?)
- 3f. Did the exhibits trigger any emotions in you? (+ or – ?; What element...?)
- 4f. While exploring the exhibits, did you learn something new, understand something better, or think about something differently?
- 5f. What do you think is the main idea of the exhibits?
- 6f. Do you have any life experiences that you saw reflected in the exhibits?
- 7f. What do these exhibits tell us about race relations then and now?
- 8f. Will you behave differently as a citizen as a result of seeing these exhibits?
- 9f. **Mini scenario:** “A museum contains images, text, objects, audio and video recordings—it’s jammed full of things to look at, listen to, read and think about. Sometimes, however, visitors can’t see small print or hear recordings. Maybe the exhibits are full of complicated terms or aren’t well organized. Maybe the choice of colors makes reading difficult. Perhaps visitors cannot get up an incline or in or out of tight spaces...”  
  
Did you encounter any barriers to your enjoyment of the exhibits?
- 10f. Anything else you want to share?

## APEENDIX F

### Exhibit Floor Plan

