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"Here Come the Crackers!": An Ethnohistorical Case Study of Local Heritage Discourses and Cultural Reproduction at a Florida Living History Museum

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“Here Come the Crackers!”: An Ethnohistorical Case Study of Local
Heritage Discourses and Cultural Reproduction at a Florida Living History Museum

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
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DEDICATION

To you, Dad, for always pushing me to think deeply. Our candid conversations about politics, culture, race and everything in between always inspire me to find new ways to prove you wrong. Thanks for being my guinea pig for anthropological theory! Also, yes. I finally finished my thesis. Thanks for asking.

Love,

Your Rotten Daughter

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ABSTRACT

This project explores the complex roles of power and heritage in the reproduction of cultural and ethnic identities in the context of a local living history museum called Cracker Country. Throughout this thesis, I demonstrate how discourses of Florida heritage are constructed, reproduced, or contested in various ways among all the museum's different communities of stakeholders. Using Michel-Rolph Trouillot's (1995) theory of historical silences and expanding on Laurajane Smith's (2006) notion of the Authorized Heritage Discourse, I explore the ways that heritage "works" at a local level, and the multitude of meanings it can hold within particular communities. I analyze the shared role played by both museum interpreters and local educators in the (re)production of particular heritage discourses, and how such discourses can both shape and be shaped by visitors' own cultural identities.

This project utilizes a case study methodological approach, involving ethnohistorical research and ethnographic methods. Through participant observation, interviews, and visitor surveys, I identify diverse and changing perceptions of heritage, the past, and what it means to be a "Florida Cracker."

CHAPTER ONE: ESTABLISHING THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

I. Introduction

Tucked away in one corner of the Florida State Fairgrounds, there exists a small, peaceful village where time never passes. The village and its inhabitants appear to be stuck perpetually between 1898 and 1920. In bold contrast to the celebrations of industrial achievement in the adjacent fairgrounds, the village eschews all signs of modernity. Everything is wooden and unpainted. No signs of cars or cellphones or electricity can be seen. The people dress in linen frocks or scruffy denim overalls and spend their days teaching curious visitors what life was like in “the good old days.”

This is Cracker Country, Tampa’s “only living history museum,” as their website boasts. It was founded in 1978 to “preserve the history of rural Florida”, or at least, one very specific version of it. The word “Cracker” is used to refer to a nebulous ethnic group of white, nineteenth-century pioneers and cattle herders who worked tirelessly to tame the Florida wilderness and build a life for themselves and their families. Over the years, the story of the Florida Cracker has been held up as a unifying symbol of Florida heritage, serving as a fable for “man’s” complex relationship with nature. It demonstrates the values of hard work, family, and a deep respect for the land, even as it celebrates individualism and the industrialization that helped to reshape Florida’s social and natural environments.

Despite the prevalence of similar narratives in various academic and popular histories throughout the country, the legend of the Florida Cracker remains a uniquely local heritage

discourse. In fact, outside of Tampa and rural communities around Central Florida, the word “cracker”¹ can have very different meanings. Most commonly throughout the South, “cracker” can be understood as a derogatory term toward White people² by people of color. In this context, the word has connotations of backwardness, ignorance, poverty, and racism. It is often synonymous with other White racial slurs, like redneck, hillbilly, or white trash. Given the dominance of such racialized and negative definitions of the word “cracker”, one wonders how a museum located in such a racially diverse city can boast the name “Cracker Country” while professing to represent rural Florida history as a whole. This question is especially important given the crucial role the museum plays in the social studies education of local school children through hundreds of fieldtrips each year.

Using Cracker Country as a case study, this project utilizes ethnohistorical research and ethnographic methods to unravel the relationship between power, silence, and local heritage

¹ Throughout this paper, I use the term “cracker”— in quotes and with a small “c”— to refer to the complex etymology and various meanings of the word. I use the terms Cracker or Florida Cracker to refer to the white pioneers and cattlemen who settled in Florida in the 19th century as well as their descendants and any other modern Floridians who identify as Crackers.

² When referring to racial identities and categories, I have chosen to use capital letters as per the Chicago Manual of Style’s recommendation, which states “*Black* is increasingly capitalized when referring to racial or ethnic identity. As a matter of editorial consistency, similar terms such as *White* may also be capitalized when used in this sense. Usage varies according to context, however, and individual preferences should be respected.” I have chosen to capitalize White as well as Black in order to emphasize the shared cultural experiences of White Americans relative to Black Americans, even as cultural practices vary among different White groups.

discourses, as well as their role in the construction and reproduction of cultural identity at a local level. This thesis combines heritage studies with Critical Race Theory, museum anthropology, and insights from the anthropology of education to explore the specific, local challenges involved in reproducing the past in the context of the ever-changing present.

This thesis addresses three main research questions:

1. How are key issues of heritage expressed in the production of the Cracker Country museum?
2. How are racial and ethnic identities and boundaries produced or reproduced in the context of the Florida Cracker?
3. What are the implications of packaging the "Florida Cracker" heritage for school children, and how might local educators and museum staff navigate the domains of power to respond to the challenges of reproducing the past in the present?

Project Background

My interest in Cracker Country as a research topic began serendipitously when I applied for a position as a historical interpreter for the 2018 Florida State Fair. At first, I remember being caught off guard by the name—perhaps even a bit offended—but then I reasoned that I was probably misinterpreting the word. Maybe the museum had something to do with crackers the food, or Cracker Barrel, or Cracker Jacks. It wasn't until I learned about the history of the Florida Crackers that I realized all those terms are more or less connected.

Growing up in New Orleans, I had only ever heard the word “cracker” in reference to people when it was being used as an insult toward people with my skin color. I became fascinated by the idea that what I perceived as a racial slur could mean something so different—something to be proud of even—by a whole group of White people here in Florida. After the fair,

I decided to continue on as a volunteer throughout Spring 2018. Once a week, I would dress up in hand-sewn representations of 19th century clothing (bonnet and all) and shadow the more seasoned interpreters as they led school tours. I learned a lot about rural farm life in the late 19th century and the skills and tools necessary to survive off the land. But I couldn't help noticing that the one thing that seemed to be missing from this idyllic representation of 19th century Florida history was, well, history. It seemed that, instead of teaching visitors about the social and political historical processes that shaped rural Florida, Cracker Country was instead teaching a way of life – or really, someone's perception of what life was like “back in the good old days.” By the end of that Spring semester, I was determined to discover just how this concept of the “Florida Cracker” fit in with Florida history and what it means to those tasked with its preservation and reproduction.

In Fall 2019, I took Dr. Antoinette Jackson's Issues in Heritage Tourism class. In this class, we learned all about various perspectives of cultural heritage and the powers and processes involved in reproducing the past for the present. I chose Cracker Country as the setting for my applied research project in an effort to break the ice within the museum on the complicated and racialized history of the word “cracker”. The museum directors were in support of this project, as the name had sparked some controversy over the years, ranging from negative comments on social media to parents and schools refusing to send children on field trips. This project would serve as a first step toward engaging broader audiences and creating more inclusive historical interpretations and representations.

Through Fall 2019, I conducted ethnographic research among the docents and staff of Cracker Country in the form of participant observation and interviews. The participant observation included shadowing five different docents during school tours in order to observe

how heritage and history are variously expressed and interpreted. I was tasked with leading my own tours, as well, which allowed me to witness first-hand the difficulties involved in interpreting history within the social and structural constraints of tourism. I also conducted 17 in-person interviews with Cracker Country docents in order to learn more about their perceptions of the word “cracker” and connections to Florida Cracker heritage.

Internship and Applied Research Goals

In Spring 2020, as part of an applied internship at Cracker Country, I conducted 100 visitor surveys during the Florida State Fair. The goal of these surveys was to explore local heritage discourses and various perceptions of Cracker heritage among different communities of visitors. I planned to continue working as a docent throughout the Spring to collect more data through participant observation and surveys with visiting teachers. COVID-19 derailed these plans as schools and the museum were shut down, but I was able to collect 22 teacher interviews through email and phone conversations throughout Spring and Summer of 2020.

Together my research includes three phases: participant observation and interviews among Cracker Country docents and staff, state fair visitor surveys, and interviews with visiting teachers. Using an ethnohistorical case study methodology, this research combines ethnographic methods with historical and archival research and content analysis of the museum’s training and interpretive materials. This mixed-methods approach makes it possible to examine the various ways cultural heritage is understood and expressed in a local setting and the role of heritage practitioners in both preserving “the past” and maintaining cultural relevance from one generation to the next. It reveals the important role that local history museums like Cracker Country play in reproducing cultural identities and ethnic boundaries through the messages that are passed on to local children about history and their own place within it.

Research Questions

To understand the specific challenges of heritage reproduction at Cracker Country and the processes by which the “Florida Cracker” is packaged and reproduced for local tourists and school children, this research addresses 3 overarching questions and sub-questions:

1. How are key issues of heritage expressed in the production of the Cracker Country museum?
 - a. How do local ideas about heritage relate to the authorized heritage discourse?
 - b. What is the role of power and silence in constructing the past at Cracker Country?
 - c. How is authenticity defined and expressed?
2. How are racial and ethnic identities and boundaries produced or reproduced in the context of the Florida Cracker narrative?
 - a. What is the history of the word cracker and how is it defined by different groups today?
 - b. What does the Cracker heritage reveal about whiteness and White cultural identities?
3. What are the implications of packaging the "Florida Cracker" heritage for school children, and how might local educators and museum staff navigate the domains of power to respond to the challenges of reproducing the past in the present?

Throughout the rest of Chapter 1, I discuss the etymology of the word “cracker” and how it has evolved within the context of Florida historical narratives. I will briefly describe the history and creation of the Cracker Country museum and the role that it plays in reproducing

cultural identities and heritage discourses locally. In Chapter 2, I will lay out the theoretical framework through which I examine heritage and heritage discourses throughout this project. Through the theoretical lens of Laurajane Smith's (2006) *Authorized Heritage Discourse* and Michel-Rolph Trouillot's (1995) *Silencing the Past*, I explore issues of power, silence, authenticity and cultural construction in the context of living history museums and the role that such heritage reproductions play in the formation and maintenance of cultural and racial identities. I also review the basic tenets of Critical Race Theory and whiteness studies and discuss the implications of these theories for local museums like Cracker Country through contemporary research by museum anthropologists and educators.

In Chapter 3, I review the research questions and describe the research design and methodology used to answer them. I explain the population sampling strategy and its limitations and lay out the specific methods used for data collection and analysis. This chapter also discusses the ethical considerations for human subject research and the steps taken to uphold the researcher's responsibility to "do no harm." In Chapter 4, I present the results of my research, beginning with a walking tour of the Cracker Country museum that includes information gathered from museum interpretations and participant observation. Next, I delve into the history of the Carlton family, the museum's founders, and explore the power structure of the museum. These sections provide examples of how power works to reproduce certain heritage discourses, while silencing others. The rest of Chapter 4 includes the results and analyses of interviews and surveys among docents, teachers, and state fair visitors.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I discuss the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the data presented in Chapter 4. This research presents several theoretical and practical applications and can serve as a model for critically examining local heritage discourses and historical silences in

future research settings. It also sheds light on the importance of taking into account local and regional differences in the formation of racial and cultural identities, and how these processes both shape and are shaped by local heritage discourses.

II. Research Setting and Background



Figure 1.1: Map of Florida State Fairgrounds, 2020

Museum Background

The Cracker Country museum is in many ways a cultural institution in Tampa, Florida. It was founded in 1978 by Mildred W. and Doyle E. Carlton Jr., the son of Florida Governor Doyle Carlton. As members of the newly established Florida State Fair Authority, the Carltons began

plans for the museum in 1977, the first year the State Fair was first held at its current location. They believed the fair needed “an exhibit to bring the rich history of early rural Florida to life” (Cracker Country 2021). So, the Carlton family donated the museum’s first exhibit—the childhood home of Governor Doyle Carlton, a two-story dogtrot cabin built in 1883 in Wauchula, Florida. Between 1978 and 1992, the Carlton family worked tirelessly to relocate and restore a total of 13 historical buildings from around the state including the Carlton House, the Smith House, 2 general stores, a church, a one-room school house and the Okahumpka Train Depot. The wooden structures, built between 1870 and 1912, have been restored and stripped of paint to reflect their appearance at the turn of the 20th century (see Figure 1.2).

The museum is situated in the southeast corner of the fairgrounds with four acres of manicured lawn and shady oak trees that are separated from the rest of the fair by high wooden fences and a scenic pond. The buildings are laid out in a circle around the museum grounds with a bandstand and wooden benches in the center, giving the impression of a small historic village with a central meeting ground. However, museum interpreters are quick to point out that Cracker Country is *not* a village because rural communities in 19th century Florida were much more spread out and isolated. Instead, these buildings are a collection of homes and businesses that have been donated to the museum by the descendants of early Florida pioneers who settled the untamed wilderness and struggled for generations to build a life for themselves and their families.



Figure 1.2: Cracker Country Brochure – Museum Map

These buildings and the lives of the people who lived in them are interpreted by costumed docents in an effort to bring a sense of authenticity to the whole experience. Docents lead visitors through interactive exhibits that focus on the everyday labor of rural homesteaders, including domestic chores like butter churning and laundry, as well as agricultural and technical skills, like cultivating soil, or making a rope from agave fibers.

The mission of the Cracker Country museum is to provide “educational opportunities for the public to learn about *old Florida*” (Cracker Country 2021; emphasis added). However, Cracker Country is only actually open to the public during the two weeks of the Florida State Fair and a handful of seasonal events such as Christmas in the Country and Homeschool Day. For the rest of the year, the museum hosts fieldtrips for more than 200 elementary schools throughout the Tampa Bay area. According to their website, “every year we see over 20,000 school children who learn about farm & household chores, community buildings, and the skills and trades of early settlers.” These field trips have taken place for the past 40 years, and as this paper will show, have had a lasting impact on local residents’ perceptions of Florida heritage and their own cultural identities. How do the museum’s representations of “old Florida” reflect the various histories and experiences of Tampa’s diverse population? And where does the word “cracker” fit into this historical narrative?

The Florida Cracker

The name Cracker Country is an homage to the 19th century pioneers and cattlemen who left their homes in Georgia, South Carolina, and the Appalachians to scratch out a life for themselves and their families in the wild inlands of Florida. These settlers, who were largely of English and Scotch-Irish descent would eventually come to be known as Florida Crackers. These pioneers were drawn to Florida in the years between the American Revolution and Civil War,

while Spain still lay claim to most of the state. Spain had begun offering land grants in 1790 to attract more settlers in hopes of ensuring their tenuous hold on the colony in the face of American, British, and Seminole conflict. When Spain finally sold Florida to America in 1821, many of the Spanish Land Grants were upheld on the condition that settlers must live on and cultivate the land. This was no easy feat, however, as much of the granted land was nearly uninhabitable, consisting of hostile swampland, bramble covered oak scrub, and palmetto brush. Settlers also had to watch out for wolves, gators, snakes, wild boars and panthers, which were far from endangered at the time. These early settlers lived in austerity, making do with what little provisions they brought with them and whatever the land itself could provide. They built simple, small cabins that became known architecturally as “Cracker Houses” (Ste. Claire 1998:29-36).

But while the land was far from hospitable, the Florida wilderness did have one major selling point—thousands of free-roaming Andalusian cattle. The Spanish had brought these cattle to Florida throughout the 18th century and had nearly succeeded in developing a thriving cattle trading economy with Cuba. But war and internal conflicts among Native Seminole groups, American settlers and the Spanish resulted in the constant changing hands of herds, and upon Spain’s departure, the release of thousands of cattle into the wild. At this time, Florida was a free-range state, meaning landowners could not legally enforce property boundaries, and cattle were free to roam where they pleased. Cattle were a hot commodity to rural settlers, not only for the meat and milk they provided, but for the price they fetched at market. Thus, in the years leading up to the Civil War, decades before Western expansion and the great cattle drives of the Wild West, Florida became the first hub for American cowboys.

However, these Florida cowboys could more accurately be called “cow hunters”. Unlike the wide-open plains of Texas, the Florida wilderness did not lend itself to rounding up large

herds of cattle on horseback. In the first half of the 19th century, when much of the land was untamed and uncultivated, cow hunters had to go out on foot, navigating swamps, sawgrass and palmetto scrub to locate their prey. The only surefire way to round up and herd the cattle in these conditions was to use a thick leather bullwhip. The loud cracking sound the whip made as they swung it over their heads would cause the cattle to herd together and run in the opposite direction. Using this trick, cow hunters could drive the cattle all the way across the state along what came to be called the Florida Cracker Trail. This trail stretched between the Gulf and Atlantic from Bradenton to Fort Pierce, where the cattle drivers would sell or trade their goods and livestock for much needed supplies to take back to their families.

When a Cracker Country docent tells this story to visitors, they emphasize the “crack of the whip” with a loud clap of their hands. They explain that the sound would echo for miles and miles. Townspeople, they say, would hear the whips getting louder, and someone somewhere would always shout, “Here come the Crackers!” The theory that the word Cracker – with a capital ‘C’ – comes from the cracking of the whip, is by far the most popular. Yet, there appears to be no primary historical documentation supporting this claim, aside from one passing comment by a 1930s Federal Writer, who even then is only perpetuating a well-established folklore (Bordelon 1991).

However, there is plenty of historical documentation of the word “cracker” in general. In fact, the earliest known use of the word was in William Shakespeare’s *King John* where he writes, "What cracker is this same that deafs our ears with this abundance of superfluous breath?" Here “cracker” refers to someone who is loud and boastful, and as such, the word is thought to have derived from the Middle English term “craic” which means “bragging talk” (Dolan 2006: 64). Throughout Elizabethan times, the word was often used to mean good humor

or a fun conversation (“cracking a joke”), and this use is still prevalent today in Ireland and Scotland. In America, the word took on a more negative connotation, and was often used by Anglo elites to refer to rural poor English and Scotch-Irish immigrants. (Ste. Claire 1998:29-36).

In his memoirs, Benjamin Franklin refers to poor immigrants who lived in the frontiers as “a race of runnagates [sic] and crackers, equally wild and savage as the Indians” (quoted in Ste. Claire 1998:36). Franklin’s quote demonstrates the racial undertones that mark the etymology of the word “cracker.” Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries “cracker” was largely associated with poor White frontiersmen who “were notorious braggarts, shiftless, sadistic in temperament, and brutish in behavior” and “supplemented their legitimate income by involving themselves in every type of illegal enterprise available along the frontier” (Lewis 1984:185). In other words, “cracker” was used by early, upper-class White Americans in the same way as hillbilly, redneck, or white trash (which each have nuanced meanings and histories themselves).

But in Florida, things were a little different. The word “cracker” was used the same way as everywhere else, referring to poor White people living on the frontiers of society, where the law of the land held far more weight than the laws of government. But somewhere along the line the crackers of Florida became the Florida Crackers. No one knows exactly when the Florida cattlemen and their descendants came to be known as Crackers – with a capital “C” – but it was certainly sometime before 1895, when famous painter Frederic Remington published a portrait of Bone Mizell, “A Cracker Cowboy” (Fig. 1.3).



Figure 1.3: Painting of Bone Mizell, “A Cracker Cowboy”, by Frederic Remington, 1861-1909

Source: Remington, Frederic, 1861-1909. A Cracker cowboy. 1895. State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <<https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/25891>>, accessed 20 July 2021.

By the 1930s, the term was so well established that various WPA Federal Writers were able to interview many “cracker families” (Bordelon 1991) throughout the state, and especially in South Central Florida where they were noted to be “squatting” in the swamps around Lake Okeechobee. It is clear from these writings that in the 1930s and 40s the Florida Cracker was already starting to gain a more positive reputation. While they are still referred to as “shiftless”, “superstitious”, and “boastful”, there is a note of nostalgic fondness for their “simple” wants and hard-working rural lifestyles. By the late 1930s, the notion of the Florida Cracker way of life had already been memorialized and celebrated in the writings of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings (1933, 1935, 1938, 1942), a journalist from New York who settled on an orange grove in Cross Creek, Florida and fell in love with the area’s natural beauty and the quirky characters who lived there. Her life in “the Creek” inspired her first novel, *The Yearling* – a story about a young Cracker boy, his pet fawn, and life’s hard lessons. She later published a memoir titled *Cross Creek* and a series of other novels and short stories surrounding that community. Rawling’s works

popularized what would come to be a recurring theme in interpretations of Florida history - the complex and increasingly estranged relationship between man and nature. For example, in *Cross Creek*, Rawlings boasts about her adoptive community's continued affinity with nature and the spiritual rewards it brings:

Because we have adapted ourselves, with affection, to a natural background that is congenial to us, we know that the struggle is better done in love than in hate. We feel a great pity for the industrial laborer who toils only for what it will bring him in pay, and will not do his work unless his pay pleases him. If we tillers of the soil sat down in a pet and refused to turn our furrows because our crops had failed us, the world would starve, for all its riches. We feel as great a pity for the industrial capitalist who reckons living in terms of profit and loss. Profit and loss are incidental to life, and surely there is enough for us all. We know that work must be an intimate thing, the thing one would choose to do if one had, as Tom said, "gold buried in Georgia." We know above all that work must be beloved (Rawlings 1942: 330).

The popularity of Rawlings' works transformed the Florida Cracker from "shiftless braggarts" to "noble savages" in the eyes of urban elites. This new narrative played on the growing sense of nostalgia overtaking the country as more and more land was being stripped for mining, factories, and urban development. In Florida, industrial progress also led to a growing agricultural economy, which entailed the buying up and draining of hundreds of thousands of acres of land, and the steady erasure of the Crackers' isolated and independent way of life. The more well-off Cracker families were swept into the flourishing cattle and orange grove sectors. All of a sudden, the Cracker wasn't just a poor White savage living out in the wild, they were the epitome of the hardworking, self-sufficient capitalist— the backbone of Florida's industrial

progress. In this new narrative, Florida's poor White pioneers are credited with taming the forces of nature through generations of hardship and sacrifice. And in the end, their hard work paid off. The Florida Crackers pulled themselves up by their bootstraps straight out of the scrub, and with the modest profits earned from herding cattle, they were able to buy land, build houses, and grow rich from cattle and orange groves.

By the 1950s, being a Cracker had become a point of pride for White, rural Floridians of all classes. It marked them as "true Florida natives" distinct from the bourgeois elites and wealthy tourists who were pouring into the coastal cities (Nelson 2008:243). Today it has become a badge of honor for those whose families have been here for so many generations. The term "Cracker" can now be found throughout the state, not only at Cracker Country. It marks geographical landmarks like the "Florida Cracker Trail"; businesses like Brooksville's "Florida Cracker Kitchen"; brand labels, like Cigar City Brewing's Florida Cracker beer; and even public schools, such as Cracker Trail Elementary in Highlands County. And it continues to be memorialized in popular histories like Dana Ste. Claire's (2006) *Cracker: The Cracker Culture in Florida History* and Glenn Simmons and Laura Ogden's (2010) *Gladesmen: Gator Hunters, Moonshiners, and Skiffers*, and even anthropological research attempting to define "Cracker Culture" as a distinct "subtype" of Southern culture (Hill and McCall 2009).

The prevalence of the Florida Cracker narrative marks a discourse of heritage that is particular to Florida, but that is hardly embraced by all Floridians. Cracker heritage is only one small "square in the patchwork quilt that makes up Florida's cultural history" (Baker 2018). The Federal Writers Project of the WPA proved that Florida in the past was just as diverse if not more so than it is today. Its writers, including Zora Neale Hurston, also "led expeditions and traveled throughout Florida to record blues, 'jook' songs, work songs, and traditional music from

African American, Cuban, Czech, Greek, Minorcan, Seminole, and Slavic communities” (Baker 2018). And yet, the popular narrative of Florida history has been built largely around the Florida Cracker. While historical information is certainly made available for the history of the Spanish, Seminoles, Cuban-Americans, Caribbean-Americans, African- Americans, and Greek-Americans, the Florida Cracker is the only group whose history is marketed as “Old Florida”.

And this narrative is further complicated by the racialized meanings of the word “cracker”, which resonate throughout history into the present even as some White Floridians wear it with pride. Outside of Florida, especially in the rest of the South, the term remains derogatory. It is most commonly used by people of color to call out a White person as ignorant or racist. One common origin story for this racial slur is that the term references plantation overseers “cracking” whips at enslaved laborers (Otto 1987:28) – a rather disturbing parallel to the Florida cowboy legend.

Yet, despite the long, complex history of the word “cracker,” Cracker Country sticks to the cowboy story. At the museum, “Florida Crackers” are interpreted as a distinct cultural group, with no reference to race. While the museum claims to focus on late 19th century Florida history, there is almost no mention of segregation, Cuban immigrants, Seminoles, or any Black or Brown Floridians. And, though museum directors have made considerable efforts to remedy this in recent years, there is still a noticeable lack of diversity on the staff. Cracker Country is in essence a museum about White Floridians by White Floridians for White Floridians, whose main audience actually consists of increasingly ethnically and racially diverse school children.

So, it is no surprise that the name Cracker Country might cause some furrowed brows among potential visitors. According to museum directors, they get several schools and parents each year who refuse to send children on fieldtrips. In recent years, the directors have also dealt

with a barrage of negative comments on social media. According to Cracker Country Director Cindy Horton, the situation became particularly fraught in 2013, during the trial of George Zimmerman, who Trayvon Martin allegedly called a “creepy ass cracker” before Zimmerman killed him. The trial gained national news coverage and, Horton says, led to an influx of calls from concerned Tampa residents and even more criticism online. However, the controversy never reached the point of media scrutiny or local protest. In fact, a search of all local newspapers between 2013 and today revealed only glowing advertisements for the museum, and the vast majority of reviews on Google, Yelp, Trip Adviser, and Facebook remain overwhelmingly positive. But while criticism of the name appears to be minimal, those who do take issue with the word “cracker” do not only find the name distasteful, but incredibly hurtful. For instance, one of the few negative reviews online states,

This is not a great educational place. There is a video circulating the internet with a tour guide that works there that has a whip flinging it at a Black child. Horrible place and that man should be fired. Whip cracking? A mess. Do NOT bring your children here (TrustReviewers.com 2018).

Having worked at Cracker Country for nearly a year in total, I can confidently say that no docents have ever aimed whips at any children. What this commenter likely witnessed was Ray—a 74-year-old farmer who got his first bullwhip at age 9—demonstrating (from a safe distance) how the cracking sound is actually a “miniature sonic boom” as the whip snaps the sound barrier. However, as someone whose immediate reaction to the name Cracker Country was not far off from this reviewer’s concerns, it is too easy to see how such a demonstration could be interpreted as inappropriate at best and blatantly racist at worst. For many visitors who

have never heard of Florida Crackers, historical whip use may have far more unpleasant connotations than it does for a Florida cowboy like Ray.

Ultimately, the meanings given to any heritage reproduction depend on the unique cultural experiences, expectations, and worldviews of both its consumers and producers. And those reproductions themselves are based on knowledge about the past that can only ever be incomplete, filtered as it is through the particular perspectives of its chroniclers. However, simply understanding heritage as a cultural construction made up of multifaceted meanings about the past, does not account for how certain historical narratives become institutionalized and preserved as “Heritage,” while others are continuously silenced or marginalized.

What are the mechanisms and criteria by which certain heritage discourses are authorized as more historically or culturally significant than others? And how are such processes adapted at the local scale? In the context of Cracker Country, there appear to be two competing but equally powerful discourses at play. The word cracker/Cracker exists simultaneously as a racial slur and a proud cultural heritage, so that the meanings of both uses are impossible to untangle. Thus, rather than attempt to define or make sense of “Cracker” heritage, this thesis seeks to uncover the processes of meaning-making that allow for the production and reproduction of such disparate heritage discourses at the local level.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

I. Introduction

It is often said that history is written by the victors, that what we know about the past has been constructed by those with the power and authority to record, interpret, and preserve history as they see fit. While the same can easily be said of heritage, you'll never hear that adage. The difference lies in the distinctive roles that heritage and history play in society. History uses written and material evidence to produce a structured, linear narrative about what happened in the past so that we might better understand how we got where we are today. Heritage, though it uses many of the same tools and methods of history, is more about the present than the past. It is an ongoing social construction that involves everyday "cultural practices of meaning and identity making" (Smith 2006:13). Like all social phenomena, heritage is fraught with conflicting meanings and emotions and subject to the tumultuous tides of political and cultural change.

In this chapter, I will explore various constructions of heritage and uncover the role of power in shaping how people understand and relate to the past as well as to each other. Through Laurajane Smith's (2006) theoretical framework of the "Authorized Heritage Discourse" and Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past* (1995), I reveal how heritage has been used to construct and maintain particular worldviews, while silencing others. I explore how heritage discourses are used to shape ideas about authenticity, tradition, and cultural and national identities. I will also discuss alternative heritage discourses, the role that heritage plays in the

everyday construction of ethnic and racial identities, and the importance of shedding light on heritage discourses and practices that have been marginalized.

Finally, I will examine recent changes in how heritage professionals think about representation and the silences surrounding race and racism in American museums. I review some innovative approaches to developing more community-engaged, culturally inclusive heritage reproductions that offer fascinating and hopeful examples of how heritage can be used to better represent the present as well as the past.

II. **The Discourses of Heritage**

“[Heritage] is our living connection to history in the present moment—a connection that can be expressed in a variety of ways, such as through rituals, traditions, stories, songs, memories, and myths” (Jackson 2012:23).

“All at once heritage is everywhere—in the news, in the movies, in the marketplace—in everything from galaxies to genes. It is the chief focus of patriotism and a prime lure of tourism. One can barely move without bumping into a heritage site. Every legacy is cherished. From ethnic roots to history theme parks, Hollywood to the Holocaust, the whole world is busy lauding—or lamenting—some past, be it fact or fiction” (Lowenthal 1996: ix).

“There is, really, no such thing as heritage” (Smith 2006: 11).

Heritage is...complicated. It can refer to material relics of the past or intangible cultural practices in the present. It can be deeply personal, spectacularly national, or seemingly universal. As Lowenthal (1996) has pointed out, the notion of heritage has become increasingly popular

over the last few decades. Globalization, industrialization, mass tourism, and rapid cultural and social change has led to fears that heritage is at risk, that past ways of life are being erased or “canceled.” Since at least the 1960s, internationally recognized “world heritage” sites have popped up around the globe, attracting tourism worth more than \$1 billion annually. So, what is it about heritage that has so many people and nations alike clinging to its vestiges? What exactly makes something “heritage” and who decides what does or does not qualify?

The Authorized Heritage Discourse

Laurajane Smith (2006) argues that heritage is not simply “a thing to have,” like an inheritance from the past, but rather “something that is done” in the present. As a social practice, heritage includes the professional management and conservation of historical sites, cultural heritage tourism, as well as myths, rituals, and any other cultural practice that helps people connect with the past. Such practices, “as well as the meaning of the material ‘things’ of heritage” (2006:13) have long been reflected in and constructed by an “Authorized Heritage Discourse” (AHD).

The AHD is a “self-referential discourse” that reflects the cultural meanings, values, and worldviews of one particular group—the wealthy, White Europeans and Americans responsible for its construction (Smith 2006:28). This discourse has had real social consequences. By virtue of its institutionalization, the AHD silences alternative or “subaltern” discourses and confines conflicting narratives to particular sites of contestation. No room is left for questioning this official heritage discourse or the various roles heritage actually plays in different communities.

Taking a critical realist approach, Smith uses Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze the AHD, exploring heritage discourse as a form of social action with real, material consequences. From a critical realist perspective, Smith explains that,

the way people talk about, discuss and understand things, such as ‘heritage’, have a material consequence that matters. In addition, not only is discourse ‘used’ to do things by actors, but discourses also do things to actors and are productive independently of actors (Smith 2006:14).

Smith traces the origins of the AHD to the European Enlightenment and emerging ideas about science, race, and nationalism. Faith in scientific objectivity and its ability to reveal inherent truths about reality led to the idea that it was possible to uncover “the past.” Understood as an immutable “thing,” the past could be evidenced by its tangible remains, which often took the shape of the grand and monumental—castles, temples, statues, portraits and other symbols of power and nationalism. Smith refers to the Western preference for grand material remains as a “monumentality.” This “mentality”—or way of thinking—is a central component of the AHD, which limits heritage to material symbols of wealth and triumph. Smith states that such material heritage serves as “a brutally physical statement . . . of the power, universality, objectivity and cultural attainment of the possessors of that heritage . . . and subjectivities that exist outside or in opposition to that are rendered invisible or marginal, or simply less ‘real’” (2006:53).

Another major component of the AHD is the notion of “patrimony,” stemming from the French word for heritage, *patrimoine*, defined as “property passed on to a person by his or her father or ancestors” (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/french-english/patrimoine>). The notion of heritage as a material *inheritance* has led to the sense that it is “the duty of the present . . . to receive and revere what has been passed on and in turn pass this inheritance, untouched, to future generations” (Smith 2006:19). In other words, heritage—at least within the AHD—is not simply about remembering or celebrating the past, but about maintaining existing cultural values into the future.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, this sense of duty to preserve the past materialized in the form of national museums, universities, and professionals granted authority to collect, categorize, and conserve symbols of national and ethnic identity, as well as construct identities for “others” (Smith 2006: 17-18). As Western European and American governments struggled to deal with the aftermath of civil war and revolution and maintain colonial rule, they drew on the notion of heritage to forge cohesive national identities around the sense of a “glorious” shared past. National policies like the Chancellery Recommendations of 1807 in Denmark and England’s Ancient Monument Protection Act of 1882 were instituted to regulate the conservation and management of material culture. Such preservation policies relied on the expertise of historians and scientists, and so the disciplines of anthropology, archaeology, and history were granted institutional authority.

Emerging from a combination of industrialization, urbanization, and mass migration, the Romanticist ideology of the late 19th century was much more backward-facing, focused on the beauty of natural landscapes and the “rural idyll” (Smith 2006: 20). Romanticism nevertheless retained the Enlightenment notion of the separation of nature and culture, allowing a distinction to develop between natural and cultural heritage in which landscapes that are visibly altered by human action are seen as cultural, while “wild” and “untamed” environments are considered natural. This distinction between “natural heritage” and culture was formalized in 1872 with the establishment of Yellowstone, the world’s first National Park, and reinforced by Britain’s National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty in 1895. The National Trust was primarily focused on preserving the manicured estates and grand country houses of England’s landed gentry (Smith 2006: 21). Over the next century, these “stately homes” of powerful men became a focal point of “national heritage” in countries around the world.

In response to the catastrophic destruction of material heritage which accompanied World War I, world leaders began to implement national and international strategies for the protection of heritage sites. In 1931, the International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments became the first to adopt the idea of a “common world heritage” and to stress the importance of education and public history programs to raise awareness of at-risk heritage sites. Its seven-point manifesto made recommendations that would become the foundational principles for heritage practices worldwide.

By the 1960s, a sharp increase in heritage tourism and rapid modernization sparked new international concern for the protection of heritage sites. The resulting demand for more stringent international conservation policies led to the creation of a highly bureaucratized global “heritage industry” (Smith 2006; Lowenthal 1998) which works to systematize and standardize heritage classification, preservation, and management. One of the founding international organizations of the global heritage industry was the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) which was responsible for the 1964 “canonical text of modern heritage” (Smith 2006:26) known as the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites. Also known as the Venice Charter, it “stresses the importance of cultural and historical significance” in determining conservation and management practices for heritage sites. This policy places even greater interpretive powers in the hands of academics and scientists in the determination of what qualifies as heritage.

By 1972, the AHD had become embedded in global heritage practice. The UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention) “established an international agenda for the protection and conservation of sites of *universal significance*, and importantly confirmed the presence of ‘heritage’ as an

international issue” (Smith 2006: 27; emphasis added). The AHD is reflected in UNESCO’s assumption that heritage is universal: the whole world must share the same cultural values and a desire to pass them on in similar ways. By promoting heritage as a shared resource that must be saved for the “common good” of “future generations,” the AHD prohibits communities in the present from challenging cultural stereotypes and telling their own stories in their own ways.

With the establishment of the World Heritage Convention, sites deemed by UNESCO to have “universal significance” have enjoyed enhanced protection and dedicated funding for preservation and management. However, the designation of World Heritage Sites also drove increasing levels of heritage tourism, leading to increased foot traffic, overuse of material culture, and exploitation of local residents. Thus, in the process of trying to save heritage, there has been a tendency to “love it to death” (Lowenthal 1996: 26). Critiques of mass tourism would crescendo throughout the 1970s and 80s as heritage practitioners, tourism researchers, and anthropologists alike began to question the implications of tourism for the preservation of historic sites and the cultural practices of local communities. Substantial concern has surrounded the notion of authenticity and the commoditization, or “McDisneyization” (Ritzer and Liska 1997), of traditional cultural heritage.

Smith notes that the discourses of authenticity that emerged from the 1970s tourism critiques “share all too much discursive space with the AHD” (Smith 2006:35). These writers used the term “authenticity” uncritically and often without definition. Of course, tourism has undoubtedly had lasting effects on cultural practices and socioeconomic structures all over the world. However, the AHD constructs heritage as a universally recognized, material resource that must be protected and passed on, unchanged, forever. As such, many critiques of tourism assume that cultural change is the same as cultural erasure, inviting cultural stereotypes and denying the

possibility of agency among local communities. What counts as “authentic” culture and what is “fake” or “performed” is inevitably determined by the authors’ own unquestioned perceptions of culture and reality. Thus authenticity, like the AHD, is a “self-referential discourse” (Smith 2006:28).

Of course, like all forms of social practice, heritage discourses change over time. Even a discursive practice as structurally and globally entrenched as the AHD can be shifted through cultural change and political agency. For example, in 2003, UNESCO established the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, formally sanctioning intangible culture as a component of World Heritage. The official classification of intangible cultural practices as “heritage” grants many ethnic groups a degree of political recognition and protection. However, power is never readily relinquished, and change comes in ebbs and flows. Bureaucracy makes it difficult to challenge the overarching discourse and limits efforts to promote the experiences and cultural values of subaltern groups. As such, the AHD still largely centers the tangible and the monumental, supported by appeals to “expert authority” and by the “ability to reduce the concept of heritage to ‘manageable’ and discrete locales” (Smith 2006:30). “In this gaze, the proper subject of which *is* the material, a material objective reality is constructed and subjectivities that exist outside or in opposition to that are rendered invisible or marginal, or simply less ‘real’” (Smith 2006: 53).

For example, indigenous groups who have long recognized natural landscapes as part of their cultural heritage struggle to get their lands listed as heritage sites because of Enlightenment notions about the separation of nature and culture, as well as racialized stereotypes that delimit what constitutes culture. Smith describes an Australian Aborigine group who tried to save a part of their natural heritage by emphasizing the area’s importance for traditional rock painting

practices. The broader issue of conflicting heritage ideologies and the politics of cultural recognition was overshadowed by a microscopic focus on the perceived lack of “authenticity” of tools used by modern rock painters.

The ability of the AHD to classify, delineate, and standardize often simplifies heritage debates to binary oppositions — real vs. fake, traditional vs. modern, nature vs. culture, tangible vs. intangible, etc. The AHD also constrains how people perceive and use heritage by lumping all heritage practice under the heading of “tourism”. In this view, heritage is a fixed and finite resource to be passed on to uncritical “visitors” by “experts.” Such experts tend to act swiftly to maintain their authority and silence dissenting voices in the event that any group seeks to actively renegotiate the meaning of heritage for themselves.



Figure 2.1: 5 Themes of the AHD

Smith refers to the AHD as a “self-referential discourse” (2006:28), because it represents solely the aesthetic predilections and life experiences of those responsible for its institutionalization—specifically, wealthy, White Europeans and American “experts.” This discourse has had real social consequences. It determines who should be the “spokespersons of

the past” and constructs “the past” as a singular, objective reality that can be identified and categorized on the basis of its perceived “universal significance.” This suggests that the past exists separately from the present, and therefore past events are irrelevant to contemporary problems. This creates the illusion that “the past is a foreign country” (Lowenthal 1985), that human beings who existed outside of living memory must have been fundamentally different, so their motives and actions cannot be judged through the lense of the present—a sort of temporal relativity summed up by the oft-repeated phrase “things were different back then.”

The conception of heritage as a fixed cultural inheritance is reified through the practices and structures of tourism. This industry has worked to commodify feelings of nostalgia for the “good old days,” by producing heritage sites that complement tourists’ preconceived notions about the past, celebrate particular cultural and national identities, and glorify certain historical actors. The growing popularity of such sites is a testament to the changes that modernity has wrought on society, and the idea that cultural heritage is at risk of being lost or forgotten. However, while tourists flock to heritage sites that have been deemed authentic and culturally significant by those with the power to make such classifications, untold numbers of sites, stories, and traditions are being actively silenced and thus are truly at risk of being lost to the ages.

Power and the Construction of Historical Silences

In *Silencing the Past*, Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995:15) explains that “the past does not exist independently from the present. . . . The past—or more accurately, pastness—is a position” that can only be identified in relation to the present. As such, history often says more about how we see ourselves today than “what really happened” in the past. The production of history involves the selective construction of “the past” from a handful of moments and the silencing of others. Trouillot outlines four key moments in the process of historical silencing, between “what

happened” and “that which is said to have happened” (1995:2). These moments do not occur on a single, linear path from past to present, because history is actively produced and reproduced over and over in complex, often conflicting ways for present audiences.



Figure 2.2: 4 Moments of Historical Silencing

The first silence occurs at the “making of sources,” the moment at which a historical event is recognized as meaningful and recorded by a contemporary chronicler. This usually leads to a disproportionate focus on the powerful elite and a dearth of information on the lives, experiences, and contributions of marginalized groups. As a result, the interpretations found in history books, media, and museums are almost always based on a monolithic view of history.

The second silence is shaped by “archival power,” the power to create historical archives and decide what gets preserved. Archives “convey authority and set the rules for credibility and interdependence; they help select the stories that matter” (Trouillot 1995:52). Archival power stems from institutions—museums, libraries, universities, government organizations—and operates through rules and procedures that dictate the types of sources that are assembled. Archival power is manifested in the AHD and all the institutions, policies, and professionals that make up the global heritage industry.

This brings us to the third silence, the creation of historical narratives and “unequal degrees of factualness” (Trouillot 1995: 54). Sources that are retrieved and mentioned more regularly become privileged as facts, while others must be carefully repositioned to fit within the existing corpus of knowledge. This makes it incredibly difficult to shed light on histories that fall

outside the entrenched narratives accepted by the cultural majority. Trouillot refers to such histories as “the unthinkable” or “that which one cannot conceive within the range of possible alternatives, that which perverts all answers because it defies the terms under which the questions were phrased” (Trouillot 1995:83). For example, according to Trouillot, the Haitian Revolution was “unthinkable even as it happened.” A worldview which divided people into “degrees of humanity,” with Black people at the lowest rung, made it impossible for Europeans to imagine a well-organized Haitian army determined to fight for freedom. Trouillot states that such “unthinkable” histories must be carefully “repositioned” to fit within popular narratives, in order for marginalized voices and perspectives to be accepted as historical fact.

Lydia Otero (2010) gives a stark example of such repositioning in her account of the creation of the historic district known as Barrio Libre. This “historic neighborhood” in Tucson, Arizona was invented by heritage professionals in the 1980s as part of a strategy to combat gentrification and preserve the cultural places of Mexican Americans known as Tucsonenses. In reality, the Tucsonenses had been pushed to the margins of the city during the 1960s as part of a series of “beautification” efforts to promote tourism among White Americans. Tucson officials at the time envisioned the city as a sort of heroic Wild West, the product of Manifest Destiny and man’s perseverance against nature and “the Indians” (Otero 2010:9). Otero refers to such imaginings as the “Anglo fantasy heritage.” The idea of a successful local economy in a predominantly Mexican community was “unthinkable” within this historical narrative. To promote their fantasy heritage, Tucson’s White leaders therefore had to do something about the Tucsonenses, who had developed a thriving downtown market of their own. To this end, the Tucsonenses were exiled to various barrios on the outskirts of the city. When preservationists and Tucsonenses later sought to preserve Tucson’s Mexican heritage, this story had to be

“repositioned” into the established historical narrative in a way that would resonate with city officials and tourists. Thus, the myth of “Barrio Libre” was born, creating a distinct, carefully delineated part of town where Mexicans were said to have been able to live freely away from the social (and legal) restrictions of Tucson’s Anglo-American residents. This narrative was hardly an accurate reflection of the complex social fabric of the Tucsonenses’ cultural spaces. But it helped to “reposition” their story into the established historical narrative in a way that would resonate with the perspectives of city officials and tourists.

The process of repositioning brings “new” facts into Trouillot’s fourth moment of historical silencing. This is the moment of “retrospective significance,” when the silences begin to speak for themselves, when non-conforming historians can shed light on alternative histories and question why they were silenced to begin with. Retrospective significance produces “silences of resistance, silences thrown against a superior silence” (Trouillot 1995:69). For Trouillot, that superior silence is the dominant Western discourse around the Haitian Revolution, which Haitians have subverted by silencing any narratives critical of King Henry I. For Otero, it is the discourse of the Anglo fantasy heritage, against which Tucsonenses have thrown their own subversive silences in the form of the Barrio Libre. In this paper, I explore the superior silences at work in the Cracker Country museum and identify the more subversive silences and alternative discourses that shed light on the retrospective significance of the Florida Cracker.

I argue that this constant interplay between the authorized discourses and silences of history and the often-divergent meanings, experiences, and social practices they engender, help to make heritage a living, breathing, ever-changing phenomenon. In the next section, I explore how the dynamic nature of heritage, as both authoritative discourse and everyday social practice, complicates prescribed notions of authenticity and expert authority about the past, while helping

to construct a sense of cultural belonging and continuity within particular communities through the maintenance—and invention—of cultural traditions.

Authenticity and Invented Traditions at Living History Museums

Authenticity

“Authenticity,” like heritage itself, has multiple meanings for different people and in different contexts. For MacCannell (1976), authenticity refers to a sort of spiritual fullness, that is so lacking in modern Western society, that tourists feel compelled to seek it elsewhere. For Handler and Saxton (1988:243), “an authentic experience . . . is one in which individuals feel themselves to be in touch both with a ‘real’ world and with their ‘real’ selves.” This definition touches on one of the key issues of authenticity in heritage practice—the perceived dichotomy between real and fake—which raises issues of power and expert authority in determining what is or is not authentic.

In his analysis of the reconstructed historical site of Lincoln’s New Salem, Edward Bruner (1994:399-400) identifies four distinct uses of authenticity: 1) authenticity as “historical verisimilitude,” whereby museum professionals attempt to “produce a historic site believable to the public, to achieve mimetic credibility”; 2) authenticity as genuine or a “perfect simulation” of the past (Handler and Saxton 1988: 252); 3) authenticity as an original (as opposed to a copy or replica), which by definition suggests reproductions can never be authentic; and 4) authenticity as “duly authorized,” which raises questions of power and the “authority to authenticate.”

Living history museums offer an excellent example through which to explore these facets of authenticity, given their popularity among tourists and heritage practitioners who “seek to regain an authentic world, and to realize themselves in the process, through simulation of

historical worlds” (Handler and Saxton 1988: 243). With their collections of old buildings set up to look like historic villages and costumed actors performing everyday activities of the time period represented, living history museums demonstrate how heritage is constructed and packaged into a “coherent narrative” about the past for the express purpose of preserving and passing on specific cultural values and meanings in the present (Hall 1999: 5).

However, as with any museum or heritage site, the images and stories on display will take on different meanings depending on the specific assumptions and expectations visitors bring with them (Karp and Lavine 1995). At living history museums, tourists do not simply gaze upon a pre-packaged representation of heritage created by experts; rather, they are invited to actively engage with and question the experience. The presence of costumed docents further complicates the ways that heritage is understood and performed, as each docent comes with their own cultural baggage and interacts with various publics in different ways (Bruner 1993). With so many different and intersecting stakeholders, what gets presented as heritage is often a watered down, sanitized version of history, that can most easily be packaged for tourist consumption (McKercher and du Cros 2002). Throughout this process, power and expert authority continue to shape such heritage productions, determining whose histories should be represented and how.

Despite the obvious commodification of heritage at these sites, “authenticity” remains a central concern of living history museums. Many visitors claim to experience a sense of authenticity when walking through the old buildings of living history museums, surrounded by actors in period clothing. Ultimately, this “authentic feeling” is produced not by any particular attention to detail, but through nostalgia and the act of remembering one’s own personal histories and family stories. Thus, a living history museum does not present a “perfect simulation” of the past (Handler and Saxton (1988: 252) but rather an “authentic reproduction” (Bruner 1993: 393)

of history that reflects visitors' and docents' ideas about the past. Such reproductions achieve "mimetic credibility" by enabling heritage to be experienced both as a tangible cultural resource and through the embodiment of intangible cultural practices.

Smith (2006: 67) explains that the embodiment of heritage is facilitated by the "performance of remembering." Memories and feelings of nostalgia are triggered when visitors see docents engaged in activities like spinning and weaving, butter churning, blacksmithing, and other old-timey practices intended to symbolize common ideas about "the good old days" and "simpler times." Such practices may evoke treasured memories of visitors' childhoods or reflect stories they have internalized from their elders or the media. Because they fit so well with visitors' cultural expectations of "the past," these reproductions are often perceived to be authentic, despite their failure to relay the whole story of a given place or time. As Bruner emphasizes, the real issue "is not if an object or site is authentic, but rather who has the authority to authenticate" (Bruner 1994:400). According to Bruner, the ultimate "authority to authenticate" at living history museums lies with tourists and docents rather than historical experts.

Bruner explains how at New Salem, tourists' preconceived notions about the relevance of the town to the life of Abraham Lincoln perpetuate a fantasy in which the town existed for the sole purpose of inspiring him to pursue a career in law. This narrative incorporates nationalist myths regarding the "self-made man" and "honest Abe" that are sanctioned by the Authorized Heritage Discourse. However, the narrative itself is not drawn from expert historical accounts about the town but seems to have stemmed from visitors' own ideas about the past:

Many visitors have a romantic view of the past, and they see New Salem as an isolated, self-contained, rural village . . . In this mindset the past was a time of honest values, of

quiet good humor, of generosity, and of inner strength, where a figure like Lincoln was not only heroic, but a prototype of society (Bruner 1993:21).

Costumed docents help to reinforce this narrative. “When the tourists enter a house, they see a woman sewing, quilting, spinning, or somehow occupied with her hands, which gives the impression of domesticity and self-sufficiency, not of commerce and trade” (Bruner 1993:22).

Historians and managers at New Salem have made some efforts to educate tourists regarding the historical nature of this “rural village,” which was actually a thriving center of commerce. However, such efforts are undermined by the museum’s own marketing strategies which aim to meet “touristic expectations” (Bruner 1993:22). For example, brochures claim to “take us back to a simpler time” and contain reference to Lincoln’s (unproven) affair with Ann Rutledge. These narratives are not found in any “authentic” (as in duly authorized) histories of New Salem but have gained authority over time due to the significance they hold for visitors. According to Bruner,

New Salem and similar sites enact an ideology, recreate an origin myth, keep history alive, attach tourists to a mythical collective consciousness, and commodify the past. The particular pasts that tourists create and imagine at historic sites may never have existed. But historic sites like New Salem do provide visitors with the raw material . . . to construct a sense of identity, meaning, attachment, and stability (1994:411).

In other words, authenticity refers to how closely a visitor’s experience matches their expectations, which are often derived from the White, middle-class values and aesthetics of the AHD.

Bruner, however, questions the power of overarching discourses to shape how people view the past, claiming that “society and its agents of power may aim for the monolithic view,

but it is something strived for rather than finalized or achieved. There are always dissident voices and challenging readings” (1993:14). Bruner suggests that the ultimate authority to authenticate particular heritage reproductions lies in the hands of tourists and local communities and their ability to construct new and equally authentic cultural meanings through their personal interactions with each other and with the past. Bruner’s notion of a culturally constructed authenticity allows for the fact that people and cultures are never static or monolithic. New cultural meanings and practices are always being constructed and reconstructed through human interaction, and the cultural traditions, myths, and values through which various groups define themselves and others are subject to continuous change.

Understanding the constructed nature of authenticity sheds light on the active role that heritage plays in the formation of cultural meanings and identities. As Laurajane Smith explains, heritage is not simply “a thing to have” but also “something that is done” (2006: 65). As a cultural practice, she says heritage includes:

...those activities that actively engage with thinking about and acting out not only ‘where we have come from’ in terms of the past, but also ‘where we are going’ in terms of the present and future. It is a social and cultural process that mediates a sense of cultural, social and political change (2006: 83).

This process is not limited to professional heritage management activities, but also includes everyday cultural practices and traditions. Smith came to this understanding of heritage through her work with the Waanyi Women’s History Project in Queensland, Australia, in which the Waanyi women worked to record their oral histories, harnessing Smith’s authority as an archaeologist to make sure their concerns regarding the custodianship of their cultural sites were taken seriously by local government agencies. Smith and these women were engaged in an act of

heritage management, but at the same time, the Waanyi women were actively practicing their heritage in the present by recalling memories and passing on stories and traditions. Smith states that it was the embodiment of this remembering that made this an act of heritage. As they embodied the cultural practices of learning history from their elders, and took the time to fish between recordings, the women “assert[ed] a sense of their identity as Waanyi women” (Smith 2006: 47). Heritage is not just about passing on a static set of meanings and values. As a cultural practice or “performance,” heritage is a vital tool for the construction of “identity, power, memory, and place” (Smith 2006: 48).

Public Heritage vs. Private Heritage

Another way to understand the difference between heritage as a dynamic cultural practice and heritage as a “thing” to preserve, is through Erve Chambers’ notion of heritage as both a “public” and “private” phenomenon. Chambers defines public heritage as “an expression of the past that attempts to preserve important though often fading cultural practices . . . The bases of this approach to heritage is both preservation and celebration of diversity.” Unlike Smith’s AHD, which is “more closely linked to ideologies associated with the rise of national identity” (Chambers 2006:2), Chambers views public heritage as having been “democratized” as evidenced by the growing number of marginalized communities involved in heritage reproductions. However, public heritage can also celebrate and preserve stereotypical notions of the exotic Other and “unspoiled” natural environments. The popularity of such heritage productions among tourists can serve to “separate the objects and performances of heritage from their actual heirs, serving to transfer them to the marketplace as commodities . . . to be appreciated and accumulated by strangers who . . . have no stake in the outcome and feel little or no responsibility for the kind of careful upkeep that heritage truly requires” (Chambers 2006:3).

The responsibility for upholding the “performances of heritage” is a key part of what Chambers refers to as “private heritage.” Private heritage involves “the ways in which the past is dynamically linked to the present, with heritage values identified and interpreted by community members rather than by outsiders.” Chambers points out that this more local, community-centered form of heritage does not necessitate efforts to reconstruct or memorialize “a past that has been lost,” because the past remains linked to present-day social and environmental conditions through the active processes of cultural reproduction.

While public heritage constructs the past as a separate entity and something to be learned from, private heritage is all about culture. Chambers sees private heritage as the “heritable obligations, responsibilities, and privileges that are experienced and repeated in the culture of everyday life” (Chambers 2006: 3). Importantly, even within seemingly cohesive communities, cultural practices, values, and meanings are not always inherited equally or consistently. Chambers’ notion of heritage practices as evidence of a “direct and inalienable inheritance” echoes a common theme of the AHD, assuming that the presence of cultural traditions indicates cultural, genetic, and even geographic continuity over time. But, as Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) have pointed out, this is often not the case at all.

The Invention of Tradition

Like heritage and authenticity, tradition is another contested concept with a range of forms and meanings. Traditions are generally considered to be cultural practices that have been passed on from generation to generation, creating a sense of belonging and cultural continuity within particular groups and places. However, as Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) explain, all cultural traditions are necessarily “invented traditions”, or,

a set of practices . . . which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a *suitable historic past*. (Hobsbawm 1983:1; emphasis added)

Their edited volume provides multiple examples of “age-old traditions” that are actually “spurious,” or more modern fabrications. These include nationalistic rituals, like pledging allegiance to the flag, as well as religious or cultural practices like holidays, and forms of ethnic dress, like Scottish Tartans. Again, the notion of cultural reproduction is linked to an Authorized Heritage Discourse that privileges certain “suitable” values, behaviors, and meanings. However, Hobsbawm’s theory of invented traditions emphasizes top-down socialization often in the form of nationalism, leaving out processes of cultural change at the local level. As Handler and Linnekin (1984:276) point out, “the invention of tradition is not restricted to such self-conscious projects. Rather, the ongoing reconstruction of tradition is a facet of all social life.”

For example, in his study of the North Carolina Scottish Highland Games festival, Deepak Chhabra (2003) explains how the apparent “staged authenticity” (MacCannell 1973) of the traditional Scottish games and dances evolved over time into more modern, but equally authentic traditions, even those designed with tourists in mind. The classic Scottish dance, for example, was originally a ballroom dance, but today’s festival includes a sword swinging addition. Likewise, the Parade of the Tartans was not “handed down from generations” but rather was introduced in 1964 to enable spectators to be more actively engaged (Chhabra 2003:708). Despite such changes, the Highland Games continue to hold profound cultural significance in North Carolina as Scottish immigrants and their descendants still “stage Highland games... to

display and promote their traditions and to deepen their commitment to their community” (Chhabra 2003:709).

Clearly, traditions are not proof of cultural, national, or hereditary continuity; rather, they are the object of constant invention and reinvention (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). However, Nelson Graburn notes that “even these new, historically created phenomena are often quickly assumed to be age-old or timeless, because people want them to be so and because the customs become invested with authority that is difficult to challenge” (Graburn 2000:8). The preservation of cultural traditions helps people to find security and comfort in the face of change (Graburn 2000). Risk plays a key role in heritage discourses as threatened sites, monuments, and ways of life give rise to new emphasis on preserving traditions as heritage. Renato Rosaldo has called this “imperialist nostalgia” (1989), a feeling of guilt “for having changed the world in a homogeneous direction, for having eliminated” (Graburn 2000:8). Because we can never actually go back to the way things were, we turn to traditions to feel secure in our identities. This makes tradition an effective weapon in identity politics. It can be used as cultural capital to symbolize one’s place in a society, or to build an “imagined community” among disparate groups. It can be used to legitimize the heritage of marginalized groups or to discredit it by virtue of their perceived lack of tradition. But, as Graburn (2000:10) explains,

...the reservoir of tradition is not static. It grows through activity and attention to maintenance; it fills up with the creation and practice of traditions. It does not know whether the traditions are old, modified or new, but that they are traditions, that they are strong and that they are the strength of the people.

The meanings of heritage (or authenticity or tradition) are constantly under construction. We create our identities by telling stories, which necessarily “impose beginnings, middles and ends on the random and contingent” (Graburn 2000:10) to create coherent wholes. But through this process, there are always those parts of the story that just don’t fit the narrative, and must be altered, silenced or contested. Indeed, “all heritage is uncomfortable to someone . . . because heritage has a particular power to legitimize – or not – someone’s sense of place and thus their social and cultural experiences and memories” (Smith 2006:81). All heritage is also inherently political, because certain groups “will have a greater ability to have their values and meanings taken up and legitimized than others, and power both molds and is molded by this process” (Smith 2006:81).

In order to shed light on and legitimize the diversity of heritage discourse and practice, and thus confront the silences of the AHD head-on, Smith states that “a critical and engaged understanding of the power and authority of competing heritage discourses. . . is necessary before negotiation can commence” (2006: 38). In the next section, I will explore the role of power in the creation of competing discourses of Southern heritage and how these discourses have been used to construct, maintain, reproduce, and also challenge the boundaries of racial and ethnic identity over time.

III. Identity, Race, and Competing Narratives of Southern Heritage

Identity and Identification

What does it mean to identify as an American? Can there be such a thing as “American culture” when its citizens remain divided by geo-political borders, ethnic boundaries, gender categories, class hierarchies, racial dichotomies, and the ever-present phantom of the Mason

Dixon line? The problem, as Lee Baker (2004:1) explains, is that despite so many diverse, intersecting, and shifting identities, Americans do perhaps have one common cultural trait —our capacity for ascribing, as well as subscribing to, strictly bounded categories of what are in reality amorphous, ephemeral “groups.”

According to Baker, “the way an individual chooses to identify him or herself [identity] and the way others identify that individual [identification]” are cultural practices that emerge in response to and are simultaneously structured by institutionalized systems of race, class, and gender (2004:1). These systems are social constructs, but they have real, tangible consequences, working together to ensure that different individuals and groups experience the same American cultural practices in drastically different ways. As such, Baker suggests that one way to effectively study American culture “is to identify those institutions, practices and activities that are shared by many people every day in the United States while investigating how individuals and groups experience them in different or similar ways” (2004:1).

The act of visiting a heritage site is one example of a common cultural practice that is experienced in different ways by different people. Such places are full of different, competing meanings, and not everyone remembers the same things in the same ways. For instance, the traditional interpretations heard at plantation museums in the South, which reproduce notions of the “rural idyll” and sanitize the history of slavery, may be perceived as romantic and comforting for some visitors. But for the descendants of the enslaved, such narratives will be uncomfortable and potentially traumatic.

Importantly, while different categories of people do experience real differences, the categories themselves are not static or innate (Baker 2004). By analyzing identity as a category of social practice, Baker is able to “write about identity without reifying it” and thus

“dynamically map the way people maintain, contest, and negotiate the boundaries and borders of race, class, gender, and sexuality” (2004:3). Baker describes three main ways that people practice identity: 1) personal identity or self-concept, 2) collective or group identity, and 3) the identification of others based on perceived traits. This last use of identity can be dangerous, because “too often people actually believe that one can correctly identify someone's individual identity as a result of their outward appearance” (Baker 2004:3).

Heritage is an important tool for the practice of identity in each of these forms. It can be used to help individuals and groups establish or maintain a sense of place, or belonging, but it can also be used to invalidate or discredit claims of cultural continuity or ownership by others. Laurajane Smith (2006) explains the role of heritage in identity formation through Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of the habitus and cultural capital. She argues that the “durable dispositions”—cultural values, expectations, and preferences—that structure (and are structured by) habitus are threatened by the rapid pace of modernization which “erodes customs and expectations” to the point that “individuals and communities are forced to re-articulate and recover a sense of the past and to affirm or renegotiate a sense of habitus” (Smith 2006: 49).

If habitus helps to explain how heritage is used to negotiate a sense of one's personal identity, Bourdieu's other concept—cultural capital—demonstrates how heritage can be used to identify others. Smith sees heritage “as part of the cultural capital that may be invested in to help identify a person's membership to a particular social group or class, but may also require a particular attainment of cultural literacy” (2006:49). In other words, people can be identified as “Other” if they do not practice or identify with your heritage in the same ways. However, as Brian Graham (2002:1004) notes, “heritage may also be actively used to reject or contest received notions of identity, and the dominance of the cultural capital thesis tends to obscure the

possibility of subversive uses of heritage.” Heritage, then, can be understood as a social practice of negotiating identity, and this negotiation can take place within, outside, or in opposition to the AHD. However, when marginalized communities use heritage to challenge or subvert the AHD, the process is often rhetorically reduced to “identity politics” (Smith 2006:52). This rhetoric helps confine heritage discourses within the AHD, because identity politics always limit heritage debates to “Who owns the past?” when the more important question is “Who controls it?”

In the context of American cultural heritage, the power to control historical narratives, and thus color how people perceive their own identities and learn to identify others, has mostly rested in the hands of White elites. The cultural practices of heritage and identity formation in America are in part shaped by the history and structures of racism and the social construction of race. This reality has real effects on the “self-concept” of people of color in America, especially young people, who too often do not see themselves reflected in heritage constructions – be they history textbooks, local museums, or public spaces.

Critical Race Theory and the Invention of Whiteness

Race is a social construct, but one that has real, material effects on the lives of racialized human beings. Racial categories are loosely informed by phenotypical traits like skin color and are reproduced through the formation of cultural identities. But they have been structured by the more salient social forces of wealth, power, and governance. While categories of race are numerous, shifting, and complex, racial divisions in the United States have always centered around a Black/White dichotomy, in which whiteness is equated with freedom, goodness, and light and blackness with subservience, savagery, and darkness (Kendi 2016).

Such ideas continue to inform the self-concept of racialized individuals as well as the material opportunities and resources of racialized groups. But, as Ibram Kendi explains,

...no racial group has ever had a monopoly on any type of human trait or gene—not now, not ever. Under our different-looking hair and skin, doctors cannot tell the difference between our bodies, our brains, or the blood that runs in our veins. All cultures, in all their behavioral differences, are on the same level. Black Americans’ history of oppression has made Black opportunities—not Black people—inferior (2016:11).

Racist ideas about Black people in America are not simply a product of some innate fear of difference. Rather, as Kendi demonstrates, “racial discrimination → racist ideas → ignorance/hate: this is the causal relationship driving America's history of race relations” (2016:9). The systematic structuring of racial disparities in America is responsible for the construction of racist ideologies as well as the maintenance of racial identities. The concept of systemic racism—the notion that American society is materially structured around racial divisions and the continued oppression of Black people—is one of the main tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT).

Developed by American legal scholars in the 1970s, CRT has been defined as a movement among “activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power” (Delgado and Stefancic 2001:1). As much of the country celebrated the apparent success of the Civil Rights Movement, a small group of lawyers examined the actual impacts of those legal decisions and policies as they relate to race and power. According to Derrick Ball, the decision in *Brown v. the Board of Education* was not the victory that it seemed. Bell argued that “civil rights advances for Blacks always coincided with changing economic conditions and the self-interest of elite Whites. Sympathy, mercy, and evolving standards of social decency and conscience amounted to little, if anything” (Delgado and Stefancic 2001:18).

In *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (2001:7-9)

lay out the five basic tenets of CRT, which I paraphrase below:

1. Racism is pervasive, part of the “ordinary” everyday experience of people of color.
2. Racism is “materially determined.” It serves the interests of White elites, giving them little economic incentive to address it.
3. Race is a social construct, not a biological fact.
4. Race intersects with class, gender, and sexuality to produce different identities and life experiences within racial groups.
5. Multivocality is a powerful means of shedding light on these issues.

Another important aspect of the field is its unique focus on the social construction of whiteness and the normalization of White supremacy as a foundation of Western society. In America, the arbitrary division of “Whites” and “Blacks” was consciously designed to maintain the wealth and power of colonial elites. Following Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676, colonial American elites quickly realized that the best way to avoid peasant revolts was to diminish poor Americans’ ability and inclination to take collective action against the rich. To foster division among workers, elites constructed a racial order in which Blacks were labeled as inferior to Whites.

This formal racial order developed through a series of legally sanctioned White privileges and increasingly oppressive restrictions for Black people. For example, only Whites were permitted to bear arms and act in self-defense; only Whites were granted freedom at the end of their indenture; White women had the right to substitute Black labor for their own; and only White servants were allowed to own livestock (Fluehr-Lobban 2019:156). Of course, this Black/White dichotomy was entirely arbitrary, as genetic diversity, population migrations, and

cultural change make it impossible to draw clear lines from any particular traits to an individual's group identity. With a citizenry comprised of European immigrants with diverse physical traits, languages, traditions, and social standings, combining all free Americans under the single racial category of "White" was (and remains) no easy task. As such, "blackness" had to be encoded into law, a process that differed from state to state, and included such unscientific measures as the one-drop rule or the paper bag test (Fluehr-Lobban 2018:159).

In her book, *The History of White People*, Nell Painter suggests that thousands of years of slavery throughout Europe created a sense of natural hierarchy between masters and servants, which was superimposed on white and black bodies. She concludes that "poverty in a dark skin endures as the opposite of whiteness, driven by an age-old social yearning to characterize the poor as permanently other and inherently inferior" (2011:396). Painter's analysis, like many works in Critical White Studies, connects racial discrimination to class hierarchies and the desire of poor Whites to increase their social capital by distancing themselves from poor Blacks.

Ultimately, however, the "invention of whiteness" served to cement the power of the Anglo elites. As Theodore Allen (2006[1975]:12) observes, it is not hard to understand why plantation owners fought so hard to protect the institution of slavery. Their goal was clear: "the securing of an increasing supply of plantation labor and the establishment of a stable system of social control for its maximum exploitation." But why were only African laborers subjected to perpetual slavery? Why not also procure the forced labor of Irish and Scottish convicts from England? "If this course was not followed," Allen explains, "it was not for reasons of social order in England, but of the establishment of a system of social control in the unique conditions

of the plantation colonies. . . The non-slavery of white labor was the indispensable condition for the slavery of black labor” (2006[1975]:12).³

This system of White privilege/Black oppression has endured throughout American history, normalizing racist ideas about Black people. Kendi (2016) identifies two racist ideologies that have worked together to solidify America’s race relations, describing their proponents as “segregationists” and “assimilationists.” Segregationists view races as real, biological distinctions and believe that Whites are naturally superior to Blacks. Assimilationists understand that ideas about race are socially constructed but consider Blacks to be *culturally*

³ It is important to note that the black/white binary that arose from America’s colonial administration is a uniquely “Anglo” construction of race. The process of racialization played out differently in different places. For example, in the Spanish colonies, there was no strict racial binary, nor any conception of “whiteness”. Instead, racial identity existed along a hierarchy from Spaniards, creoles, indigenous people, free Blacks and enslaved Africans, which was complicated by *mestizaje* (mixture). Spanish censuses also included several racial sub-categories, such as *mulatos*, *mestizos*, *zambos*, *libres*, and even *pardos* (light browns) and *morenos* (dark browns). This created a racial caste system (*Sistema de Castas*) in which Spanish men were at top, enslaved Africans were at the bottom, and everyone else made up a stratified middle caste divided loosely along a color line (Wade 2010: 26-30). This unique form of racialization is important to keep in mind in the context of Florida history, where alliances between Black maroon communities and Seminoles directly threatened the two-tier racial caste system in the rest of the South—a major cause of the Second and Third Seminole Wars (Dixon 2007:44-45).

inferior. Many 19th century opponents of slavery were assimilationists. They believed that slavery and oppression had fundamentally damaged the culture, psychology, and spirit of Black people, turning them into “brutes” (2016:164). As such, the only way to raise Blacks out of poverty and end racial hatred was to enable and encourage them to act more like Whites. Assimilationist logic remained prevalent during the Civil Rights Era, supporting arguments for desegregation, and continues to this day.

Today, however, the persistence of racist ideas is obfuscated by notions of culture, poverty, and crime. Many Americans do not understand how racial disparities in wealth, education, criminal justice, health, employment, etc., arise from racial discrimination and racist policies rather than from some flaw inherent to Black people as a monolithic group. Thus, despite widespread rejection of overt, segregationist racism, many Americans never acknowledge or address the systems of privilege that continue to reserve the majority of resources and opportunities for those identified as White. These enduring systems of White privilege were famously laid out by Peggy McIntosh, who compiled a list of 46 “unearned advantages” that most White Americans “[take] for granted as neutral, normal, and universally available to everybody” (McIntosh 1989:143-145). For example:

- “I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.”
- “I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.”
- “When I am told about our national heritage or about “civilization,” I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.”
- “I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.”

Is There Such a Thing as White Culture?

One of the keys to White privilege in America lies in the common belief that White people are “cultureless” (Perry 2001). White people cannot see the cultural assumptions through which they operate because these assumptions are the lens through which they view the world. In her research with high school students in California, Pamela Perry discovered that White teens tended to link identity to their sense of self and individuality, rather than ideas about cultural heritage or race. Culture was something reserved for “minorities” (2001:76). Because the country was built for them, and because White people still make up the majority of Americans, most Whites tend to see their culture as just “normal” or “American.” When pressed to identify with a particular cultural group, they often refer back to their immigrant ancestors—whether or not they feel any real connection to those roots.

Many studies of whiteness have come to a similar conclusion—that White culture is invisible to Whites because it makes up their “normal,” everyday experiences. And “because the dominant norms of whiteness are not visible to them, Whites are free to see themselves as ‘individuals,’ rather than as members of a culture. Individualism in turn becomes part of White resistance to perceiving whiteness and indeed to being placed in the category ‘White’ at all” (Martha Mahoney 1997:331). David Roediger (1991) has even gone so far as to argue that Whites *have* no culture beyond maintaining their control and privilege over others.

While racial privilege clearly remains invisible to most White Americans, viewing whiteness itself as invisible risks reifying notions of European-American “assimilation” and reducing all White experience to a perceived core value system based on middle-class, capitalist ideologies. Moreover, given changing demographics in the U.S. and the increase of non-Whites in positions of power, the notion that White people are still truly color-blind is “bizarre in the

extreme” (Frankenburg 2001:76). As such, there is a growing trend in studies of White racial identity to:

focus on whiteness as a situated identity, not as an identity of uniform privilege but as a complex social identity whose meaning is imparted by the particular context in which white actors are located. Poor, gay, or otherwise marginalized whites are likely to have a different experience of their privileged racial identity than are others able to see the direct payoff of white skin privilege (McDermott and Samson 2005:249).

I would also argue that regional context should be considered as part of any analysis of whiteness and racial identity. Unfortunately, scholars have thus far failed to identify “concrete ways in which the process of White racial identity formation varies or experiences of whiteness differ,” leaving us with “no standard way of classifying how whiteness, or any other dominant group identity, is experienced” (McDermott and Samson 2005:256). One of the main purposes of this thesis, therefore, is to shed light on a particular expression of White cultural identity in the context of the Florida Cracker. This study moves beyond “old-world” ethnic affiliations and discourses of assimilation and color-blindness (McDermott and Samson 2005) and takes into account the complex range of regional, political, class, gender, multi-racial, and multi-ethnic identities that have developed over the course of American history.

The following section demonstrates such complexities by exploring the peculiar relationship between White Southern identity and competing narratives of Southern heritage, slavery, and the Civil War.

Contested Narratives of Southern Heritage

On June 17, 2015, a 21-year-old White male armed with a .45-caliber pistol opened fire at a historic African American church in Charleston, South Carolina, killing nine people. The killer was an avowed White supremacist who had posted several images of himself visiting Civil War sites while holding that same pistol in one hand and a Confederate flag in the other. The shooting sparked divisive protests over the presence of Civil War monuments in public spaces throughout the country and led to the removal of many Confederate statues over the following years (Upton 2017). The most recent controversies surrounding these monuments are just another chapter in a long history of competing Civil War narratives and the changing constructions of Southern heritage discourse.

Monuments to The Lost Cause

In *Memory in Black and White*, Paul Shackel (2003) traces the origins of public Civil War monuments to “Decoration Day” (the original Memorial Day) in the South, which began as a way for Confederate women to commemorate their fallen soldiers by placing monuments in cemeteries. However, by 1890, more than half of all Confederate monuments were placed in public spaces rather than cemeteries. The tradition established to mourn the dead had been repurposed to memorialize the “heroic” deeds of noble soldiers. Southern White women played a powerful role in (re)producing memories of the antebellum South, as groups like the United Daughters of the Confederacy worked to promote a very particular narrative of Civil War history, known as the “Lost Cause.” Shackel (2003:176) explains that, “Southern whites gained tremendous political and social power after Reconstruction and developed a southern patriotic past that could overcome historical humiliation. They created a glorious past of honor and dedication to a cause that excluded African Americans from the story.”

Until the Civil Rights Movement, emancipation, slavery, and Black people in general were largely erased from any discussion of the Civil War. Yet, the highest frequency of public Confederate monument building occurred between 1890-1930, during the height of segregation and mass lynchings (Hale 2013: 14). During the 1920s, hundreds of statues went up in state parks, capital buildings and courthouses throughout the South and some Northern cities as well, “marking these public spaces as the property of the White people who celebrated this Confederate version of the past” (Hale 2013: 15). A further surge in monument building occurred in the 1950s and 60s along with Civil War Centennial ceremonies, and in response to Civil Rights advances.

Shackel explores how memories and perceptions of the Civil War differ among Black and White communities and how the “public memory” has been consciously shaped by powerful (White) actors. He details the histories of four Civil War monuments to demonstrate the “different and changing perceptions of race, the use of power, and the ability to use resources to control public memory” (2003:19). One example is the Heyward Shephard Memorial. Shephard was the first casualty of John Brown’s attempted slave revolt at Harper’s Ferry, and was described by a contemporary newspaper as “an unoffensive, trustworthy, free Negro man” (2003:96). Thereafter, words to this affect were used in all public discourse and historical accounts about the raid in an effort to reinforce the trope of the “Faithful Slave.” This is a part of the Lost Cause mythology which insists that Black people were happily enslaved and would never have risen up against their beneficent masters. The Heyward Shephard Monument was conceived by the UDC in 1894 to honor the “faithfulness of thousands of negros” (2003:98); however, it faced controversy from the very beginning— due to the false, implicit suggestion that Shephard had been enslaved—and wasn’t unveiled until 1931 in Harper’s Ferry National

Park. During the 1990s, faced with renewed public controversy, the NPS turned the monument to face a wall. Today, it faces the public with an interpretive plaque that addresses the entire historical context (against the wishes of both the UDC and NAACP).

A monument to Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, built in 1897, is one of only five Civil War monuments that represents African Americans. The 54th was the first all-Black regiment in the country, led by White commander Shaw. Critics say it honors Shaw at the expense of the soldiers. Shaw sits in the center of the monument atop a large horse, while the soldiers march on carrying their heavy loads. Many have pointed to the racist attitudes of the artist to support their interpretations. Others, including many Black people today, choose to see the sculpture differently. Colin Powell proclaimed in 1997, “Look at them. Look at them one more time. Soldiers looking to the front, marching solidly and straight ahead on a perpetual campaign for righteousness” (Shackel 2003:139).

Shackel’s case studies demonstrate the social processes of constructing, reproducing, and changing collective memories about the past. As discussed above, these memories and the meanings they hold for us both shape and are shaped by our personal and group identities, and this is what the practice of heritage is all about. The social process of heritage reproduction in the American South has long been a product of the imbalance of power between White and Black Americans, with White perspectives, memories, and meanings taking center stage; but not without challenge. In contemporary preservation, Civil War battlefields and monuments play a variety of roles that are continuously being negotiated. They are places where Blacks and Whites and northerners and southerners are struggling over meaning and sanctification as the collective memory of race is being challenged (Shackel 2003:175).

“Heritage Not Hate”

There is nothing inherently racial about embracing a Southern identity. For many people living in the South (myself included), “Southern” denotes a cultural identity that can be informed by many different factors, from the natural environment and warm weather to family lineage, pithy colloquialisms, fried food, and a slow pace of life. Nevertheless, a growing and increasingly vocal group of people equate Southern heritage with the rather short history of the Confederacy, while rejecting the much longer history of slavery and racism that caused the Civil War. This became evident in the popular hashtag slogan “Heritage Not Hate” that began trending in 2015 to protest the removal of Confederate monuments. Historian Elizabeth Hale (2013) points out that this obsession with the Confederacy and the Civil War is hardly new. In fact, “the Civil War draws more nonprofessionals into the project of making history than any other event in the U.S. past. And as the history of Lost Cause history makes clear, this popular history making has been underway since Reconstruction” (Hale 2013:14).

What’s different about “neo-Confederates,” according to Hale, is that they have learned to cloak their Lost Cause ideologies under the more “color-blind” language of heritage. Replacing the rhetoric of Confederate “history” with that of “heritage” shifts the discursive focus to the celebration and preservation of cultural identity, making it much more difficult to draw attention to inconvenient historical facts like slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, and the everyday memories and experiences of people of color in America. Equating Southern heritage with Confederate heritage means celebrating a particular notion of *White* culture and identity, one that is built on the assumption of innate superiority, or at the very least, an uncritical acceptance of whiteness (and all its privileges) as “normal.”

And yet, just as there are many ways of being Southern, there are certainly different ways of being “White.” Reducing either identity to the ideologies of the Lost Cause excludes White Americans whose experiences and cultural values do not fit with that narrative. It leaves out all the various expressions of racial and ethnic identity even among White Southerners, such as Cajuns, Appalachians and, as we shall see, Florida Crackers.

IV. Museums and Education – (Re)presenting Heritage for a Diverse Society

The entire United States...is debating its own pluralism – uncertain that the melting pot works or should work, in search of some territory of shared culture, uneasy about the place of the United States in the international arena. These debates – which are, after all, about how we will live in the future – echo in the precincts of the museum. If the museum community continues to explore this multicultural and intercultural terrain consciously and deliberately, in spite of the snares that may await, it can play a role in reflecting and mediating the claims of various groups, and perhaps help construct a new idea of ourselves as a nation (Karp and Lavine 1991:8).

Heritage is currently undergoing a “crisis of authority” (Hall 1999:7) in which traditional institutions have been forced to take a step back and recognize their positionality and privilege, while trying to make room for those whose perspectives have long been silenced. More and more heritage professionals are seeking to “decolonize knowledge” (Pratt 1992:2) and “decenter whiteness” (Duhé 2018) by engaging with marginalized perspectives. Hall says that this new movement of “re-writing the margins into the center . . . is not so much a matter of representing ‘us’ as of representing more adequately the degree to which ‘their’ history entails and has always implicated ‘us,’ across the centuries, and vice versa” (1999:10).

Of course, the AHD cannot be so easily dismantled due to the profound “operational inertia militating against key professionals re-examining their criteria of judgement and their gate-keeping practices from scratch and failing to shift the habits of a professional lifetime” (Hall 1999:8). Such inertia is reinforced by the “great unspoken value” (Hall 1999:7) of whiteness, which does not cede power without a fight. However, as nations, cultures, and populations grow, shift, and change, those committed to specific, static representations of social memory and meaning may one day find themselves without an audience (Hall 1999:13). To ensure continued relevance, museums today must determine the best ways to harness the power of heritage to engage diverse audiences with new ideas about the past and how it relates to their lives and identities in the present.

Some pioneering heritage professionals, historians, and educators have already made strides in this direction by attempting to recenter the narratives of American history around the experiences of African Americans and other marginalized groups. Such changes are also being pursued in plantation museums in the South, where the narratives of the Lost Cause have historically been naturalized and given life. Public perceptions of plantation life have been further shaped by popular depictions (e.g., *Gone With the Wind*), which “posit the centrality of a master-slave dynamic without critique . . . [and] foreground an elite, White male plantation owner and marginalized black servants as key caricatures” (Jackson 2012:26). Such static and simplistic representations construct fixed categories of racial identity and social place, in which those categorized as “black” are lower on the social hierarchy than “Whites,” and therefore lacking in agency. These representations have egregiously misrepresented the diverse experiences of enslaved Africans whose skills, knowledge, and labor were critical to plantation success.

In *Speaking for the Enslaved*, Antoinette Jackson (2012) uncovers the subjugated knowledge of highly skilled African laborers by interviewing descendants of the enslaved. Her research includes ethnohistorical case studies of four plantation museums and their surrounding communities in Florida and South Carolina, where “enslaved Africans were responsible for all aspects of commercial rice production— from field hands, to engineers, to sailors, to cooks, midwives, teachers, and artisans. Yet this is not the story that tourist brochures tell” (Jackson 2012:15). The prevalence of the uncritical master/slave narrative has had real, far-reaching consequences for how people perceive not only Southern plantations and the antebellum South, but also the relationship between racial identity, power, and agency through the present day.

One of the people Jackson interviewed made this point clear, when they asked her to “tell them we were never sharecroppers” (2012:16). The sharecropper narrative is a common trope among heritage sites throughout the South. Jackson explains that in many historical accounts, descendants of enslaved Africans were represented as having progressed along a hierarchy from former slaves to sharecroppers...The sharecropper category refers to a farmer who is given credit for seeds, tools, food, housing, and access to land, with part of the harvest going to repay the landowner. This description typically implies that the sharecropper is not a landowner (2012:99).

This narrative fails to acknowledge the land ownership and occupational status of many descendants, who represent a diverse group of “painters, cooks, artists, deacons, longshoremen, Park Rangers, fishermen, basketmakers, gardeners, and business owners” (Jackson 2012:16). Jackson’s study demonstrates how multivocality and storytelling can provide the foundations for a richer, more inclusive story about the past. Descendants’ diverse life experiences can help

heritage managers to rewrite plantation narratives and shed light on the limiting nature of heritage discourses that force people into fixed categories of identity and social place.

Efforts to include marginalized voices in heritage narratives have even started to extend into the public arena. Led by journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones, the ongoing 1619 Project “aims to reframe the country’s history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans at the very center of our national narrative” (Hannah-Jones 2019). It began with the publication of 10 works written by Black Americans in *The New York Times Magazine* on April 19th, 2019—the 400th anniversary of the beginning of slavery in America. The essays explore the legacy of slavery and persistence of systemic racism in American society. The authors ask readers to reimagine American history with slavery at its center, arguing that slavery and racial segregation played a critical role in shaping every aspect of American society, from democracy and capitalism to health care, the prison system, and even traffic congestion (Silverstein 2019). The 1619 Project was widely criticized as “revisionist history” and met with heated backlash from some academics, politicians, and even the White House. Recently, this criticism has even escalated to attempts by various states, including Florida, to ban the teaching of Critical Race Theory in public schools.

The intensity of the negative responses to this project reveals the degree to which the authorized version of our nation’s history has become embedded in our national and cultural identities, effectively silencing a diverse array of voices whose stories do not fit the narrative. The long, complex history of slavery and the Civil War followed by a century of segregation, Jim Crow, lynching, and the arduous struggle for equal rights, has been swept up into an official history that reads like an epic novel. The protagonist (America) confronts their inner demon (slavery), defeats the villains (the KKK), and comes out victorious (Civil Rights Act). Over the

course of the past decade, however, the illusion of a post-racial America has been largely shattered (Kendi 2018, 2020; Coates 2015). Technology and social media have brought greater visibility to racial violence—in the form of mass shootings, police brutality, and the reemergence of White supremacist groups.

As America begins a new chapter of reckoning with the realities of systemic racism, museums are slowly coming to acknowledge their responsibility to engage and educate the public “in service to society” (Jennings 2015:103). According to museum professional Gretchen Jennings, confronting racism in museums is not simply a laudable goal but a social imperative:

Museums . . . cannot stand to the side and let this sad national story repeat endlessly. We who are among the keepers of stories, both local and national, must participate. We must begin by looking at our own institutions, how they contribute to racism, and how they are suited to healing it (Jennings 2015:104).

This responsibility to the public is especially great for museums like Cracker Country, whose primary visitors are elementary school children. Like schools, local history museums can play a critical role in the socialization and identity formation of young people. As more heritage professionals begin the process of transforming museums into inclusive places of learning, guidance from trained teachers will be critical. Without a clear understanding of the developmental needs of children and the psychological processes of identity formation, simply adding more voices into historical narratives will have little lasting impact.

For instance, despite a common misconception that children are “color blind” to racial differences, several studies have shown that infants as young as three months old begin to develop a preference for faces similar to their own and become increasingly unable to differentiate between faces of people of other races. This phenomenon is quickly reversed if the

infant's social environment includes people with diverse physical characteristics (Kelly et al. 2005). Such studies do not show that race and racism are innate human traits, but rather demonstrate how arbitrary social divisions based on certain physical traits work to reproduce implicit biases from one generation to the next.

As children get older, these implicit biases develop into a form of social knowledge that informs how they identify both themselves and others. As Hindley and Edwards explain, “young children are remarkably good observers who pay close attention to human behavior . . . Children absorb both the overt and covert messages about who is and is not ‘normal,’ who is trustworthy and who is to be feared” (2017:14). Therefore, if the adults in their environment have regular, positive interactions with people of different racial backgrounds and are not afraid to talk openly about racial identity, their children will be less likely to develop harmful racial biases. Anna Hindley and Julie Edwards (2017) discuss the potential for museum programming to support positive, early childhood racial identity formation by helping families and communities talk about race. Museums are ideal spaces for such conversations, because they are believed to provide authoritative, tangible evidence of the existence and significance of cultural groups. Representation in museums matters because

Children learn who is important, who is “real” and who is ignored from what is made visible and what is erased. When they only see images and people like themselves, they are in danger of thinking only people like them matter. When they do not see themselves reflected in the world around them, they run the danger of thinking who they are does not matter (Hindley and Edwards 2017: 14).

Hindley and Edwards (2017) discuss their early childhood education initiative at the National Museum of African American History and Culture, whose mission has included a

commitment to social justice, activism, and providing a space for healing and reconciliation. They based the museum's education program on four years of workshops with K-12 teachers and research in child development and psychology. The result is an object-based, active learning program that "engages children in a constructivist process of interaction" (Hindley and Edwards 2017:16), enabling them to make connections between the museum's collections and their own lives. For example, one of the exhibits includes a child's chair from an early 20th century African American school house in South Carolina. Children see this chair on display and are then invited to touch real pieces of similar wood and metal. They read the children's book "Peter's Chair," in which Peter, a Black child, learns to share his favorite chair with his sister. "The children talk about the chairs in their own lives and then think about what it would be like to not be allowed to have books, go to school, or have their own chairs. Then they look again at the chair on display behind the glass. Children all agree it is an important chair!" (Hindley and Edwards 2017:16-17).

The authors recognize that starting conversations about race with children and families will not always be easy. However, they conclude that it is in the best interests of museums, as well as the nation,

that our particular task of . . . preservation, research and public education, includes our best thinking about how race has shaped our past and is transforming our future—and that we share our understandings with young children who are already creating the future in how they learn to think about race (Hindley and Edwards 2017:19).

Of course, any efforts to transform a museum's narratives and include marginalized perspectives requires consideration of the various stakeholders within the institution and its surrounding communities. Museum educators Lovisa Brown, Caren Gutierrez and Janine Okmin outlined

three main strategies for producing inclusive museum programming in a “culturally responsive and sensitive manner” (Brown et. al 2017:121). These include not being afraid to engage in complex histories, making sure educators and docents are properly prepared, and partnering with members of the communities who are to be represented. Heritage museums have an important role to play in forming and transforming how people think about the past and how it relates to their identities and everyday experiences. By rethinking how they represent the past, museums are perfectly situated to redefine what it means to be an American in the present and produce a more inclusive society for the future.

V. Summary

As Erve Chambers has argued, “heritage has become one of those ideas that easily commands our respect and attention, but that in the end does not seem to work in any general sense because its most profound meanings are almost invariably personal and thoroughly partisan” (2006:1). The literature surveyed in this chapter has certainly showed this to be the case. Heritage is complicated even further by its relationship to the equally dynamic and socially constructed notions of race, culture, identity, and power.

Whose cultures and histories are chosen to be preserved and reproduced and in what ways have long been influenced by the AHD. This discourse privileges Eurocentric, middle-class worldviews; champions grand, national narratives and monuments; and presents heritage as a shared, universal, material *inheritance*, while silencing all other perspectives. However, the authority to shape heritage discourses is not limited to heritage professionals and national governments. Cultural preservation occurs locally in diverse and dynamic communities, where traditions are constantly reinvented to better suit the needs of the present. Local communities can

use heritage discourses to expose historical silences or establish a sense of cultural continuity and belonging. And the authorized institutions of heritage can choose to help in this process as well.

The “overt political nature” (Smith 2006) of challenging the AHD in support of one or another group remains unpalatable to heritage professionals committed to the perceived impartiality of “the past.” Heritage consumers, however, are becoming increasingly aware of the impossibility of an impartial past. In an era of “fake news” and “cancel culture,” ideas about the past are becoming more and more entrenched in identity politics rather than historical documents. Stewards of heritage sites and practices must consider the risks of “sticking to the facts” of history when new facts and perspectives are constantly coming to light.

Heritage studies have shed light on diverse ideas about authenticity and the power of traditions and memory to internalize heritage representations as cultural identity. Heritage reproductions can bring people together through a sense of shared cultural values but they can also leave people feeling excluded, misrepresented, or ignored. Before heritage museums can hope to develop more inclusive historical narratives, it is necessary to understand the unique role that each institution plays in the reproduction of local cultural meanings, memories, and identities. This will also require a thorough understanding of intra-organizational power structures and the relationships between various stakeholders. Together, the literature discussed in this chapter provides a framework for considering heritage as a constructive cultural process, in which knowledge about the past is constantly reproduced and restructured to better fit the present. This process often works from the top-down, but it can also be organic, emerging from everyday practices of cultural reproduction. Such practices represent “the work that heritage does” within a community (Smith 2006), and this work is never finished. How we understand the past and our own place within it changes with each new generation.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

I. Research Questions and Objectives

The purpose of this research is to uncover the various ways that heritage and identity can be understood and expressed by different people even within a particular heritage site. The denotative extremes of the word “cracker” among different Florida residents perfectly demonstrates how diverse and particular the discourses of heritage can truly be. This research is designed to reveal the specific social interactions, practices, and power structures responsible for producing and reproducing the Florida Cracker heritage, and the implications this discourse has for local communities. The research design and sampling strategy for this project were developed to answer the three specific questions and sub-questions defined in Chapter 1 (see pg. 11).

II. Research Design and Methodology

Using the theories discussed in Chapter 2, this research design utilizes qualitative and quantitative data to analyze the concepts of heritage discourse, historical silencing, authenticity, and invented traditions as distinct units of analysis to shed light on local processes of cultural reproduction. This project uses a case study methodological approach, which uses multiple data collection techniques, including ethnohistorical research and ethnographic methods.

Ethnohistorical Case Study - A Methodological Approach

Case studies are commonly used as a research method in the social sciences because they lend themselves to both qualitative and quantitative mixed-method approaches, as well as “thick”

descriptions about a particular phenomenon. (Merriam 1998:30). Robert Yin (1994:23) defines the case study research method “as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.” For this project, the Cracker Country museum serves as a specific “case” to study the phenomena of heritage discourses and cultural (re)production at the local level. This is accomplished through multiple data collection techniques, incorporating the methodological tools of ethnohistory and ethnography. According to Antoinette Jackson,

The ethnohistorical methodology incorporates anthropology’s use of theory as a framework for organizing data and formulating analysis and the historic method for collecting, verifying, and organizing relevant material. The ethnographic methodology involves the direct collection of data from the field via observation or interactive participation with the subject(s) under analysis (2006:12).

For this research, relevant ethnohistorical material included museum interpretive and promotional content, primary historical documents, as well as popular histories and historical fiction surrounding rural Florida’s past. The ethnographic methods utilized in this research include participant observation, semi-structured interviews and visitor surveys.

Sampling and Recruitment

This research involved a sample size of about 140 participants, who were asked to take part in a variety of ways depending on their position relative to the museum. The research design is centered around 3 groups of museums stakeholders:

- Cracker Country docents
- Florida State Fair 2020 visitors
- School teachers who attended a Cracker Country fieldtrip in 2019

Docents:

Cracker Country employs about 120 part-time paid and volunteer docents year-round. However, many of these only work during the state fair, while throughout the school year, there are only about 20-30 alternating docents available on any given day. From among the most regular docents, 17 were chosen through purposive sampling to participate in one-hour-long, semi-structured interviews, and another 5 agreed to let me shadow them on school tours. The number of interviewees falls within the sample size of 15-20 recommended for data saturation for qualitative data by Crouch and McKenzie (2006).

Visitors:

During the 2020 Florida State Fair, I conducted visitor surveys with a total of 100 State Fair visitors outside the Cracker Country entrance. Surveys were conducted on alternating days of the week at different times in order to collect data from a cross-section of visitors. Participants were selected on a next-to-pass basis, meaning whoever was next to pass in front of the survey station at the end of each interview was asked to participate. I tried to alternate between people exiting the museum and those walking by in order identify different degrees of familiarity or affinity with the museum. For reasons that I will explain below, this strategy did not end up producing a representative sample of all State Fair visitors, as all but 5 of the 100 participants were visiting Cracker Country that day.

The Florida State Fair welcomed 455,851 visitors in 2020, according to industry data from Carnival Warehouse.com (2020). Unfortunately, there is no record of how many of these

chose to visit the Cracker Country museum, although it is certainly a much smaller number. Assuming the population size to be the total number of state fair visitors, the sample of 100 participants yields a 90% confidence interval with a margin of error of +/- 8.2. However, the survey responses cannot be assumed to have a one-to-one relationship with the opinions of fairgoers in general, as I discuss in the limitations section.

Still, the data collected from these surveys produced more than enough information about the perceptions, motivations, and experiences of Cracker Country visitors to reach data saturation as described by Crouch and McKenzie (2006). Whereas 15-20 respondents are considered adequate for data saturation among a single group (such as the docents), Crouch and McKenzie suggest collecting data from 15-20 of each subgroup within a more diverse population. These surveys include a cross-section of age groups, genders, ethnicities, and geographic backgrounds that should adequately reflect the range of Cracker Country visitors.

Teachers:

A total of 22 elementary school teachers (each representing 1 school) were chosen to participate in structured and semi-structured interviews about their experiences with Cracker Country field trips. Teachers were chosen from a list of 284 schools from Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, and Sarasota County who had brought classes to Cracker Country in 2019. Participants were chosen from a variety of schools and communities to assess patterns in field trip experiences and perceptions from a cross-section of school demographics.

III. **Fieldwork and Data Collection Methods**

Fieldwork was conducted at Cracker Country between Fall 2019 and Summer 2020 and carried out in three phases:

1. Semi-structured interviews with docents – Fall 2019
2. Florida State Fair visitor surveys – February 2020
3. Semi-structured interviews with teachers – Summer 2020

The data collection methods for each phase of research were designed to correspond with one of the three research questions stated above. Other research methods, including participant observation, archival research and museum content analysis were carried out throughout the entire project. The data collection process for each phase and methodology are described below.

Participant Observation

The ethnographic methods used in this case study include participant observation in order to observe and record insights about the everyday practices and relationships of the museum's different stakeholders. To accomplish this, I myself volunteered as a docent from September 2019 to March 2020. In addition to this, 5 docents (including 3 who also participated in semi-structured interviews) agreed to let me shadow them for a day as they led school tours. The participant observation process took place during school field trips every Tuesday-Friday, as well as during staff training sessions and meetings and, of course, Florida State Fair in February 2020. The data collected from this fieldwork was recorded daily in a secured journal with all identifying information obscured. These fieldnotes were used to identify patterns and differences in heritage discourses and practices and constructions of cultural identities among different subsets of docents.

Semi-structured Interviews

Docents:

Between September and December 2019, 17 docents volunteered to participate in one-hour-long, semi-structured interviews, which took place at Cracker Country. The interviews consisted of qualitative and quantitative questions regarding definitions of the word “cracker”, the degree to which docents identify with “Cracker” heritage, their thoughts on the museum’s interpretations of Florida and/or “Cracker” history, as well as their own personal backgrounds (See Appendix A).

Teachers:

A total of 22 teachers participated in structured and semi-structured interviews, which focused on teachers’ experiences at Cracker Country and the effectiveness of the museum’s educational content, including pre-fieldtrip lesson plans as well as the historical interpretations and activities offered at the museum. The interviews shed light on how teachers from various communities define the word “cracker”, and how they feel the museum represents or does not represent their own heritage and that of their students. Teachers were asked for suggestions about how Cracker Country could create more inclusive educational programming and better resonate with students from diverse backgrounds and age groups. Teachers were also asked to discuss how the museum’s narratives and exhibits fit into the Common Core curriculum and what strategies they might suggest for developing more inclusive narratives for students of all backgrounds and age groups (Appendix B).

Initially, I had planned to choose teachers to interview from separate teacher visitor surveys conducted during school field trips. Unfortunately, when all field trips were canceled in March 2020 due to Covid-19, this part of the process was no longer possible. Instead, teachers

were contacted via email from a list of schools who had attended Cracker Country field trips in 2019, and the questions from the original visitor survey were combined with the interview questions. These interviews were conducted between April and June 2020 through email, phone, and virtual meetings, with the latter two options providing an opportunity for less structured interviews and more follow up questions.

Visitor Surveys

A total of 100 visitors to the Florida State Fair were asked to fill out an anonymous, 5-minute questionnaire regarding their motivations for visiting or not visiting Cracker Country. This survey included basic demographic questions, multiple choice, freelists, and rating scales in order to assess how various visitors perceive heritage and authenticity, and what they believe Cracker Country has to offer the public. Due to concerns by the State Fair Authority regarding public perceptions, I was instructed specifically not to ask visitors how they define the word “Cracker”. Instead, visitors were asked to define heritage and authenticity, and rate on a scale of 1-10 how much they personally identify with the heritage represented at Cracker Country, and how authentic they find these representations. Visitors were also asked to identify their favorite and least favorite exhibits and anything they would do to improve the museum experience (Appendix C).

These surveys serve as an important piece of ethnographic data and shed light on interesting perspectives and insights among various communities of Cracker Country visitors across different age ranges, ethnic groups, religions, political affiliations, and geographical backgrounds. They are also a useful tool that Cracker Country can use to better engage with local communities, develop more inclusive programming, and find ways to maintain or increase relevance for new generations of visitors.

Archival Research and Content Analysis

The ethnohistorical component to this research design included historical and archival research as well as content analysis. Historical research centered around the foundations of the Cracker Country museum, the Carlton family, and the history of the 19th century pioneers who came to be known as Florida Crackers. This research included primary historical documents from the museum's archives, life histories conducted by WPA writers, and contemporary newspapers. Secondary historical accounts included academic research from the USF library archives as well as popular histories (see Ste. Claire 2008; Simmons and Ogden 1998) and historical fiction like the works of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Patrick Smith's *A Land Remembered*, the latter of which has been taught for years in 3rd-6th grade social studies classes as part of the Sunshine State Standards curriculum, and is also recommended in the new B.E.S.T. Standards (Florida State University 2019). These materials were analyzed in comparison to Cracker Country exhibits, interpretations, training resources, and marketing materials in order to identify the narrative themes and historical silences that make up the authorized heritage discourse of Cracker Country.

IV. Data Analysis

This research utilizes the “grounded theory” method of data analysis as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), in order to identify emergent and recurring themes that make up local heritage discourses and the various ways people consume or contest heritage reproductions. Grounded theory entails constant comparison and continual analysis throughout the data collection process. The raw data from fieldnotes, surveys, and transcribed interviews was coded into categories that could then be compared and contrasted to identify patterns across various groups. Audio recordings of interviews were transcribed within 48 hours, using both the Otter

transcription software and manual transcription. All data, including transcribed audio and written survey responses, were continually processed and organized through Microsoft Excel to ensure quality and integrity. The grounded theory method allows for overarching themes to arise naturally from the data, rather than trying to fit the data into a pre-defined theory. Although this research design centers around pre-defined units of analysis (AHD, silence, authenticity, traditions), it does not seek to prove a hypothesis, so much as develop a model for identifying local heritage discourses and their connection to power, cultural identity, and change.

V. Research Limitations

There were several limitations to this research methodology that should be mentioned. First and foremost were the concerns of the Florida State Fair Authority about public relations. While the museum directors and docents were very open to this project, a few members of the FSFA were uncomfortable with the idea of bringing more attention to the word “cracker” and its various meanings. As such, I was limited in the questions I was allowed to ask visitors, but I was at least able to ask docents and teachers what they think about the word.

Second, the state fair visitor surveys took place in front of the entrance to the Cracker Country museum, which is located near one of the entrance gates to the fairgrounds. Initially, this location was chosen to be able to alternate between visitors exiting the museum and fairgoers who passed it by without entering. The goal was to discover potential patterns in varying attitudes about the museum, especially between locals and out-of-state visitors. Unfortunately, this did not work out as planned. The fairgrounds have four different entrance gates, with the one near Cracker Country located in the Southeast corner. This entrance turned out to be one of the most overlooked by the tourists, as the majority of rides and attractions were located near other entrances. In practice, this meant that pretty much the only visitors coming

through the southeast gate were those who were specifically there to see Cracker Country. Additionally, due to the public relations concerns, I could not wander around the fairgrounds outside of the chosen survey station. Therefore, the 100 respondents may not be an adequate representation of the overall population of state fair visitors. And, because there is no separate count of Cracker Country visitors it is hard to judge the statistical significance of this sample size among museum visitors in particular. However, given the number of respondents associated with each category, including age, race, gender, backgrounds, etc., it seems that data saturation was reached among museum visitors, if not state fair visitors in general.

VI. Ethical Considerations

Do No Harm

As outlined by the American Anthropological Association's (2012) *Statement on Ethics*, it is the responsibility of all researchers of human subjects to "first, do no harm" to their participants. As such, I have worked closely with the museum and the Fair Authority to develop survey instruments that could provide the most data without causing harm to the museum or its staff. Participation in every stage and part of this research was completely voluntary and had no impact on docents' professional status or reputation.

No identifying personal information revealed by docents, teachers, or visitors has been shared with the directors or anyone else. All visitor surveys were completely anonymous. All fieldnotes, interviews, and survey data remain confidential and anonymous, and identities have been obscured throughout the analysis, except in a couple cases where a particular individual's unique and well-known role in the museum is being described. A voice recorder was used with

participant consent during interviews. Audio recordings will be maintained until after the final report is approved, at which time, participants have the right to choose what happens to the files.

Informed Consent

The University of South Florida's Institutional Review Board (IRB) requires informed consent for any research involving human subjects. All participants were given Consent Forms outlining the goals and scope of this project, as well as any risks that may be associated with their participation. This research project was classified as having minimal risk for participants, but because the data collection process and associated risks differed for each type of stakeholder, docents, visitors, and teachers were given different Consent Forms outlining their specific roles in the project. The IRB recognized docents' participation as having more potential risk due to the nature of participant observation and their status as museum employees. As such, the docents who participated in interviews and shadowing were given Signed Consent Forms (Appendix A), while State Fair visitors and teachers were asked to provide Verbal Consent (Appendix B and C).

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I. Introduction

This chapter begins with a walking tour through the museum, so the reader can experience what it might be like for students and teachers during a Cracker Country field trip and have a better understanding of the museum itself and the people who make it work. The information and interpretations presented in this section are derived from my field notes and are a compilation of data collected from the five school tours that I shadowed during participant observation. The quotes presented here are paraphrased and derived from multiple sources, and all historical information comes from Cracker Country brochures and interpretations by docents. The purpose of this section is not to present a thoroughly accurate description of Cracker Country or 19th century rural Florida, but simply to introduce the major themes and interpretations present in the museum. In the sections that follow the tour, I will begin to answer each of the three research questions in turn by analyzing the data collected from interviews, surveys, archival and historical research, and of course, participant observation. In the final section of this chapter, I will discuss the results of the data, and how they relate to the research questions presented.

II. Inside Cracker Country – A Tour

The tour begins at the southeast entrance to the fairgrounds in Tampa, Florida, where 10-14 docents stand waiting to welcome their respective groups. It is 10 a.m., and the docents have spent the past hour socializing, perfecting their costumes, and mentally preparing for their next

performance. As the buses pull up, the group smoothly transitions into their characters—phones tucked away in their aprons, water bottles covered in knitted sleeves, all personal effects hidden in hand-crafted wicker baskets or vintage leather mailbags. The students line up in front of a seemingly perfect simulation of a rural 19th century man or woman, adorned in well-worn, hand-stitched, linen blouses and skirts or denim overalls, topped with a straw hat or bonnet.

In each docent's hand is a small slate chalkboard in a wooden frame, a replica of those used in 19th century school houses. These “old-fashioned tablets” as many docents call them, contain the day's schedule. Each group (about 20 children on average and at least two adults) will follow their own schedule for either the A track or the B track, which differ in the particular buildings they will get to see. The fieldtrip will last for 2.5 hours, during which the students will experience seven historical buildings or activities designed to show them what life was like for rural Floridians in the late 19th century.

Our docent introduces herself with a welcoming smile and begins the tour with a quick knowledge check for the students.

“How many of you have been to Cracker Country before?” A few students raise their hands; they've come during the State Fair, they say. “And do you know why we call it Cracker Country?”

“Because we get to eat crackers?” the students say, because they've heard from their teacher or siblings or upperclassmen that this is the case, and really, it's what they're most looking forward to about this trip.

“That's a good guess!” our docent continues. “We certainly will get to eat some crackers today, but that's not why. Anyone else?” The children are stumped, as the docent expected. And so, she moves on to her regular spiel.

“You see, waaay back in the early 1800s (over a 150 years ago!) Florida was what we call an ‘open-range’ state. This means there were no fences anywhere. Now, a few hundred years before that, the Spanish had come here with lots and lots of cows. And because there were no fences, these cows just went wherever they pleased. Well, some enterprising young men realized they could make a fortune off of all these loose cows, so they moved their families to Florida, and became what we call ‘cow hunters’. They would hunt down cattle in the swamps and palmetto brush, round them all up into a giant herd, and then lead them all the way to town to sell them at the markets.

“Now, how do you think these Florida cowboys rounded up all those cows?”

“Oh! I know! With a lasso?” a few kids yell out.

“Nope! You see, Florida’s not like the Wild West, where you can herd cattle on horseback over miles of open plains and just lasso a few cows as needed. Florida has too many trees and swamps, and tall, tall, grasses to be able to chase down and rope a cow. So instead, the cow hunters would use a leather whip!

“Now, don’t worry! They would never, ever hit the cow with the whip. Because that could tear the hide and bruise the meat, and then nobody would want to buy their cows. Instead, they would swing their whip real fast through the air, and it would make a loud CRACK!” At this point, the docent claps their hands as hard as they can to demonstrate, and all the kids join in.

“This sound,” she continues, “scared the cows so bad, that they would all get together and start running in the opposite direction. And that’s how the cow hunters could herd the cattle all the way to town. Now just imagine. The crack of the whip was so loud, that it would echo for miles and miles. And back then, they didn’t have all this constant noise from cars and airplanes and everything else. So, when the cow hunters cracked their whips, the townspeople could hear

them from miles away, and they'd all shout, 'Here come the Crackers!' Well, after a while, the name stuck, and those cowboys and their families came to be known as Florida Crackers, and that's why we're called Cracker Country!"

Next, the docent explains that today we'll be seeing what life was like for those 19th century cowboys and their families. She leads the group into the fairgrounds and pauses at a wooden bridge that marks the entrance to the museum. "This bridge", she explains, "is a time machine, and once you cross it, you'll be all the way back in 1892." With that, we step off the concrete breezeway of the fairgrounds and cross the bridge into a peaceful village, frozen in time, with unpainted wooden buildings shaded by mossy oaks and centered around a green grass courtyard. Our docent checks her pocket watch (the only sanctioned, period-appropriate, time-keeping device) and leads us to the first station on her "tablet".

Station 1: The Smith House or The Carlton House – Churning Butter

Depending on whether the group is on track A or track B, they will get to visit either the Carlton House (Fig. 4.1) or the Smith House (Fig. 4.2). The Carlton House was the first building brought to Cracker Country in 1978, and it is the reason the museum exists. This two-story, three-bedroom, pinewood farmhouse was built in 1885 in Hardee County west of Wauchula on 120 acres of farmland. It was home to Albert and Martha Carlton and their 10 children. One of these children, Doyle Carlton, would become the 25th governor of Florida. He and his siblings grew up helping their father with the family orange grove and cattle ranching business. In the 1970s, Doyle's son, Doyle Carlton, Jr. donated his father's childhood home to the Florida State Fairgrounds to preserve his family's legacy and the history of rural Florida.



Figure 4.1: The Carlton House

Standing before the front porch, the students are impressed with the apparent size of the house, until the docent reminds them that the Carltons had 10 kids—nine boys and only one girl. Her name was Ella and she was the oldest. As the students come up the front porch steps, they notice a steep staircase to the left leading to one of the upstairs bedrooms—this is where the boys slept. Another staircase in the back of the house leads up to the adjacent bedroom, with a sign that reads “Ella’s room”. Many of the boys in the class shout “No fair!”, while the girls appear delighted that Ella got her own room and the boys didn’t.

But, our docent explains, Ella didn’t have it easy. In many ways, Ella was like a second mother for her younger brothers. She was responsible for helping her mother cook and clean and sew, tend the kitchen garden, and wash clothes. She would often wake up before the sun had even risen to help her mother prepare breakfast for the whole family. After this explanation, even the boys tend to agree that, yes, Ella deserved her own bedroom.

Upon entering the house, the students walk through the breezeway, which Floridians call a “dogtrot” because that’s traditionally where the family dog liked to hang out. There are doors to the left and right in this hallway, leading to the parlor and the parent’s bedroom, respectively.

Students can look into rooms, but cannot enter. The rooms are furnished with antiques and a few items that are original to the house. In Albert and Martha’s bedroom, students can see a wicker and cowhide chair, where Albert used to sit, and a couple antique shotguns hanging over the bed. Our docent explains that these guns were used for protection from wildlife, including bears, panthers, and wild hogs who would destroy their crops.

On the other side of the dogtrot is the back porch (which has been updated to include a wheelchair-accessible ramp), which leads to the dining room and kitchen. In the dining room, the students meet Miss Carolina, one of Cracker Country’s oldest, and longest-serving docents, who teaches them all about making butter, starting with a quick cow anatomy lesson.

“Can anyone tell me the name of the part of the cow the milk comes out of?” she asks, making rhythmic squeezing motions with her hands to mime the milking process.

“Udders!” the kids all shout.

“Nope!” replies Miss Carolina, and then after a few more wrong guesses, “The part of the cow the milk comes out of is called *the teats!*” The kids all laugh at the word and Miss Carolina just gives them a patient smile.

Next, the kids all line up to try their hand at using a relatively new-fangled, mechanical butter churn. It’s a glass jar with wooden paddles connected to a crank. The kids all turn the crank three times to churn the butter in the jar before heading into the kitchen to finally get what they’ve all been waiting for, a butter-covered saltine cracker.



Figure 4.2: The Smith House

Meanwhile, over on the B track, another group stands before a much smaller house. The Smith House is a one-bedroom farmhouse from Pasco County, built in 1894 as a wedding present for Daniel and Elizabeth Smith. They had four sons who slept on the floor in front of the fireplace, while their parents slept in the bedroom on a cot that still remains in the house. The house was donated to Cracker Country in 1979, where it sits directly across from the Carlton House. This allows docents to draw the students' attention to the difference in size between these two homes. Students immediately assume that the "big house" belonged to "rich people" and that the Smiths must have been very poor.

However, the docent explains that what the Smith's lacked in monetary wealth, they more than made up for in both land and community. The Smith House was built in only 3 days by all of their family and friends, who came together to chop wood, source materials, and construct a family home for the newlywed couple. Because all the materials came from the Smith's own land, the total cost of the house was only \$15, the price of the metal tools.

The students are guided through this small home, where they can see the original cot in the bedroom and the fireplace where the brothers slept. They are encouraged to imagine how they would feel having to sleep on the floor and spend all their time outside, since the house was used mainly for shelter. Upon exiting the back door, the students are directed to sit on benches around the outdoor kitchen area, where another docent awaits to teach them all about making butter. She discusses the entire process from milking the cow, to straining the milk, to churning the cream for hours to make sure there's enough butter for the entire family. The students take turns churning butter themselves in a small ceramic butter churn, and then they, too, finally get to eat their long-awaited buttered crackers.

Station 2: Laundry

After the crackers are gone, the students walk the short distance to the next exhibit, which is set up to look like the Smith's outdoor laundry room. The students sit on benches around the wash station, which consists of a cast iron cauldron with a wooden paddle, a large block of lye soap, a bucket filled with soapy water and an aluminum washboard, another bucket with an antique agitator (which looks more like a metal plunger), and a wooden ironing board with a real iron. After explaining what each artifact does, the docent has the students form an assembly line and take turns trying out each tool.

If there is time at the end, the docent discusses the differences between modern and 19th century clothing, allowing students to ask questions about their outfit. Almost inevitably, or with the gentle guidance of the docent, the conversation will turn to gendered differences in clothing—"Why do all the girls wear dresses?" "Do all boys wear overalls?" "Why do you have to wear long sleeves?"—which in turn leads to gendered differences in household chores. The docent points out that all that hard work they just did was usually a girls' job. While boys

helped their mom out with the laundry when they were younger, they were needed in the fields to help their dad as they got older. During one of the tours that I shadowed, a rather observant second grader pointed out, “But [the Smiths] didn’t have any daughters!”, to which the docent responded, “I know, right?! Poor Mrs. Smith had to clean up after those stinky boys all by herself!”

Station 3: The One-Room School house



Figure 4.3: Front of one-room school house.

With this image of the rural 19th century gender dichotomy fresh in mind, the students are now led to the one-room school house (Fig. 4.3). This school was built in 1912 and served the historic community of Castalia in DeSoto County. It was moved to Cracker Country in 1980 along with many of the original desks. Once in front the school house, the docent tells the group to form two lines—boys on the right and girls on the left. The boys are told to wait as the “ladies” enter first through their own door. Once inside, girls sit on the left side of the classroom and boys on right side. The docent explains that boys and girls always sat separately in school

because they were there to learn different things. Girls were taught the math and language skills necessary for cooking, sewing, and buying goods at market. Boys were taught to measure in acres for farming, how to calculate cattle prices, and geometry for building things. When asked, the students usually agree that this system was pretty unfair. But generally, they are much more interested in the artifacts and ambience inside the historic school house (Fig. 4.4).



Figure 4.4: Inside the school house.

The students sit at genuine 19th century wooden desks and each has their own slate tablet and chalk to write with. At the front of the classroom is a large chalkboard with the Pledge of the Allegiance on one side and some simple addition problems on the other. Depending on time constraints and the attention levels of the group that day, the docent will either walk the kids through a quick history or math lesson.

For the former, the docent will read out the Pledge of Allegiance from the chalkboard and ask to class to write down any words that appear to be missing. Written on the chalkboard is the original Pledge of Allegiance written by Francis Bellamy in 1892. It reads: “I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice

for all.” Almost every student immediately notices that the word “God” is missing, and most eventually realized that the “United States of America” is as well. Rarely, however, is there enough time in this seven-minute station for docents to explain the significance of these missing words. Although, one docent I followed did manage to explain that “under God” was added in 1954 under President Eisenhower. They went on to suggest that Eisenhower approved the addition to emphasize America’s status as a “Christian nation” to set us apart from the communists. The teachers and chaperones seemed to find this intriguing. The kids were drawing pictures on their chalkboards.

More generally, docents focus on the culture of the school house. In the 1800s, teachers in rural communities were almost always young, unmarried women, so that they could devote all their time to their students rather than raising their own family. These teachers could be as young as 13 years old, because kids only went to school from 1st to 8th grade. At this point many of the present-day kids wonder how exactly you can have eight different grades in the same room. Well, it involved a lot of teamwork and respect. The teacher depended on the older kids to help out the younger ones and expected everyone to stay on task. If they didn’t, there would be consequences. The docent points to the corner, where sits a white, cone-shaped hat, with the word DUNCE spelled out in bold black ink. If students misbehaved, the docent explains, the teacher would make them sit in front the class wearing the Dunce Cap. The word “dunce”, according to the docent, “doesn’t mean you’re stupid; it just means you did a really stupid thing.”

Teachers had a lot more freedom when it came to disciplining children back then, and bad behavior was simply not tolerated. Here, the docent begins to reminisce about the forms of corporal punishment allowed in classrooms when they were a kid (which for some reason always seems to put a whimsical look on teachers’ faces). However, one thing that *was* tolerated was

absence. Because many students were often needed at home to help their parents in the house or fields, it was common for kids not to show up at school, especially during harvest season.

After their seven-minute lesson in the school house, the children spend another seven minutes having “recess”. They get to play with a variety of 19th century hand-made toys, such as the cup and ball, jump rope, and wooden ring toss. The docent explains that most toys had to be made by hand, so kids had to make do with whatever resources they had available. They couldn’t just go to Walmart any time they wanted a new toy.

Station 4: The General Store



Figure 4.5: The Rainey family General Store

After recess, the children get a chance to buy their own 19th century toys at the old Rainey family General Store (Fig. 4.5), which has been remade into a museum gift shop. However, because of time constraints and the limited number staff in the gift shop, only those

who brought money are allowed inside. The rest remain on the front porch while the docent explains the history of the building and what shopping was like for rural folks in the 1800s.

The Rainey Store was built in the 1880s in Ona, one of the oldest towns in Hardee County. It was run by the Rainey family, who lived above the shop, through the 1960s. A combined general store and post office, the Rainey Store prospered greatly from Ona's 1911 railroad boom, but began to decline in the 1930s when Highway 17 was built through Wauchula, making the rural railroad town of Ona obsolete. By the 1980s, the store had been abandoned and began to fall into ruins. But in 1988, the descendants of the shop owners, Reid and Gussie Rainey, decided to preserve their family's legacy by donating the building to Cracker Country.

While the railroads certainly helped stores like the Raineys', not all rural communities had ready access to railways, and even the most isolated homesteaders still needed to visit the market from time to time. The docent explains that "going to market" was always a special occasion, where multiple families would come together, dress up in their best clothes, and prepare the horses and wagons for the long journey to the nearest town. Once there, shopping for food and supplies was much different for these 19th century families than what we're used to today. For one, it involved lots of socializing and waiting, rather than speeding through aisles and avoiding other shoppers. Also, prices and wages were not always fixed as they are today, allowing for bargaining and bartering goods. If there is time after all the money has been spent in the gift shop, or at the end of tour, the docent will usually take the kids to the Terry Store (Fig. 4.6) to get an idea of what a real general store would have looked like in the 1890s.



Figure 4.6: Inside the Terry Store

The J.R. Terry Store was built in 1891 by the grandfather of Florida’s Governor Lawton Chiles. It served as a general store in Fort White from 1920 to 1988. According to local legend, Jack Roundtree Terry bought the store in 1920 to convince Maude Sparkman to marry him, because she refused to marry a farmer. The two ran the store together until Jack passed away in 1956. But Fort White locals always referred to it as “Miss Maude’s Store”, and Maude continued to run it until her own death in 1988. It was donated to Cracker Country only 4 years later by their sons, Jimmy and Bill Terry.

Today, a framed picture of Miss Maude sits on her favorite rocking chair right inside the store, along with her favorite sweater and her glasses. The store is set up just the way she had it, including the antique metal cash register that she refused to switch out for a modern version, as well as a half-drunk bottle of her favorite whiskey hidden in the safe (the kids don’t get to see that). The only real differences are the items on the shelves, which the Terrys did change with

the times. At Cracker Country, however, the items include 19th century artifacts and replicas of canned goods, flour sacks, ceramic dishes, metal tools, medicine bottles, fabrics for making clothes, and lots more. These items are displayed on built-in shelves on the walls behind the counter.

The docent explains that shoppers never retrieved their own goods, but instead gave the shop owner a list of all the things they needed. While waiting, shoppers could mingle, catch up on town gossip, or sit and play checkers. A small table with a checker board and berry-dyed corn-cob slices sits by the wood-burning furnace for just this purpose. To explain how the bartering system worked, the docent points to a glass jar filled with old-fashioned candies. She asks the kids if they want a piece, then says, “What will you give me for it?” Some kids offer their recently bought toys, or whatever they have on hand. “No, no,” she says. “I don’t need none of that. Do you have any eggs? I really need some eggs to sell.” None of the kids have eggs, of course, which is for the best. Because the candy has been there longer than anyone remembers.

Station 5: Animals, Garden, and Candle Making

With the shopping out of the way, it is time to head back to the homestead for a couple more chores. The docent leads us behind the Carlton House, where the students take a peek at the live chickens and geese and the thriving kitchen garden filled with celery, carrots, potatoes, tomatoes, collards and other Florida staples, including an avocado (aka “alligator pear”) tree. They learn that young children (especially girls) were expected to help their mothers in the garden and with preparing food for meals. Looking again at the chickens, they also learn just where that food came from.

Next, the children head down to the candlemaker’s shed, where they learn how 19th century homesteaders survived without electricity. Inside the shed are three large vats filled with

hot beeswax. A docent sits at a stool behind each vat with four long wooden sticks. A skinny pre-dipped candle is attached to the end of each stick by a clothes pin (Figure 4.7). The children enter 12 at a time (four at each vat), and carefully dip their candles into the wax three times. They are amazed to see how much bigger their candle gets! Unfortunately, the docent explains, a candle this size would only burn for about an hour, so families would have to dip a lot of candles to have enough light to last a whole year. That meant they needed a lot of wax.

Beeswax was easy enough to find; all you had to do was locate a beehive. However, the farmers knew that destroying the beehive was a bad idea, because the bees were needed to help pollinate their crops. Instead, they would light a fire under the hive, and use a smoker to pump smoke in. This caused the bees to fall asleep, so that the farmer could easily extract a portion of the hive. This practice was sustainable because the bees would simply rebuild. Sustainability, the docent explains, was important to 19th century farmers. They always respected nature, because without natural resources they wouldn't have been able to survive.



Figure 4.7: Me making candles out of beeswax

Station 6: Rope Making

Another important natural resource in Florida was the agave plant. This native succulent contains strong fibers that were perfect for making ropes. Ropes were used for all sorts of purposes on farms, including clotheslines, fences, hunting traps, pullies, etc. One lesser-known use is the 19th century rope bed. Before box springs, rural homesteaders would use a crosshatched pattern of ropes pulled tightly across a wooden frame to support their mattresses, which were also made from renewable resources.

Before they head to the rope-making station, the children pass around a miniature replica of a rope bed, complete with a mattress sack filled with a strange material. The docent asks them to guess what the mattress is stuffed with, reminding them that it's got to be a natural resource native to Florida. Most kids say "cotton" or "wool" and sometimes "down feathers" if they were paying attention by the geese. The docent lets them guess for a bit, before calmly pointing up at the ancient moss-covered oak above their heads, and the kids all shout, "Ohhh! Moss!"

The docent explains that this moss is itchy and covered in bugs, so the pioneers would have to boil it first. Then, they'd stuff a cloth sack and lay it on top their rope bed. But it was important to make sure the ropes were taught before climbing in, otherwise you'd sink to the floor in the middle of the night! This is the origin, our docent proclaims, of the phrase: "Sleep tight and don't let the bed bugs bite!" ⁴

⁴ The museum historian has pointed out many times that this is NOT in fact the origin of this phrase, as bedbugs and the mites found in moss are two completely different pests. But docents continue to say it anyway, because it's an easy mnemonic that keeps the kids engaged and excited for the rope-making activity.

Having gained a more tactile understanding of how important ropes and other natural materials were to 19th century farmers, the students now get to try their hand at making a rope from scratch. With the help of two of Cracker Country’s most long-standing docents, Bill and Ray, as well as the teacher and whatever chaperones the two can rope into assisting them, the students will each get a turn with the antique metal rope machine. The machine is pre-loaded on one end with six strands of agave fibers, which are all tied onto a paddle at the other end, 20 feet away. Ray instructs the teacher or chaperone to hold onto the end paddle as tight as they can, while another stands in the middle with a wooden separator to keep the strands from catching on each other. Then, each child comes up to turn the crank on the rope machine 5 times. This causes the 6 strands of agave fibers to twist together until they get so tight, they begin to twist over themselves again from the opposite end, resulting in a sturdy, 10-foot rope for the class to share however their teacher sees fit. As the class waits for everyone to finish their turns, Bill regales the crowd with his comedic wit, offering suggestions for how they can use their class rope, such as tying up their teacher (“Yay!”), or the teacher tying up misbehaving kids (“Nooo!”). Once the rope is complete, the children are ready for their last stop—the Okahumpka Train Depot.

Station 7: Okahumpka Train Depot



Figure 4.8: Okahumpka Train Depot. Left: Depot exit and red caboose. Right: Waiting room entrance.

The entire Okahumpka Train Depot, which served that town from 1898, was moved to Cracker Country in four pieces on the backs of trucks in 1979 (See Appendix D). The students enter the station from the main passenger waiting room, which contains the ticket window, a potted plant, and a painted wooden bench. They continue through a door on the left into the conductor's office. Here they will learn all about different communication techniques train operators used before the telephone, including the wooden train order hoops, the telegraph, and morse code. The docent explains the importance of the railroads in connecting communities, allowing people to communicate and travel more easily.

Next, the class steps through another door to the left and enters into the main train station. Today, the inside of the station, where the trains would have passed through, has been converted into a large model railway, complete with tiny buildings, people, and scenes of everyday life in late 19th century Florida. There is even a miniature replica of Cracker Country. A docent-conductor stands above this small world behind a raised podium that serves as his control station. At his command, the lights come on, the trains begin their rounds, the Ferris wheel in the county fair begins to spin, and every few seconds you can hear a tiny man on horseback, surrounded by cattle, cracking his whip in the air.

The Big Finale: The Crack of the Whip

As the children exit their final station around half past noon, a thunderous noise echoes through the air, causing several people (adults included) to jump and scream.

"Oh, good!" says the docent, "Looks like Mr. Ray has started his whip demonstration. Let's go see!"

Excited and a little nervous, the class follows to the center of the yard, where all the other tour groups have gathered in a large semicircle. Before them, at a safe distance, stands Ray, the

epitome of the Florida Cracker, with his worn straw hat, well-used overalls, and beloved leather whip.

“My daddy bought me my first whip when I was 9 years old,” he tells the crowd. “And I’ve been practicing ever since. You can never master the whip. As soon as you think you have, that’s when it’ll bite you!” He points to the vivid scars that crisscross his hands, arms, and even parts of his face. “The cracking sound is caused by this little piece of leather at the end of the whip, called the fall,” he explains, stepping back a bit further to get into position. “Now, when I swing this whip, this piece of fabric goes so fast that it breaks right through the sound barrier. So, the sound that you hear is actually a miniature sonic boom!”

With that, Ray lets his whip fly, swinging it around himself with all the speed, precision, and grace that could be expected of a man who’s been practicing for over 60 years. He continues as all the kids wave goodbye and head toward the exit. And as the students cross the time machine bridge once again, the crack of the whip echoes into the present.

The Cracker Country field trip described above is only a small snapshot of what the museum offers its visitors. While I included as many of the most relevant common themes as I could, the truth is, every day and every docent brings a slightly different story. There is no exact script for docents to follow at each exhibit. Instead, docents know the stories associated with each building by heart, as if it’s their own childhood memories they’re recalling. In fact, several docents do claim kinship with one or more of the families who donated their ancestral homes to Cracker Country. Thus, interpretations come nearly as much from historical documents and museum training materials as they do from family gossip, folk legends, and personal memories.

Throughout the rest of this chapter, I will analyze the discursive themes, stories and practices, as well as the people and personalities, that come together to construct this Cracker

Country narrative. The following sections will explore the data collected through ethnographic fieldwork, historical research, and content analysis to answer each of the three research questions in turn. The concluding section will discuss what this research reveals about power, silence, and the production and reproduction of cultural heritage and identity.

III. **Research Question 1: How are key issues of heritage expressed in the production of the Cracker Country museum?**

Discourses of Heritage

Docents' Heritage Discourses

"[Heritage is] what you have learned and gained from your forebearers, from your parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles and your family. It's what they pass down to you about life and what's good in life and what's right in life and what's wrong in life. Values are the only things that continue...It's like my parents always told me, you can't take it with you."

"Heritage is the story of where you come from, traditions you bring with you, your value system."

"It's the accumulation of everyone who went before you."

"[Heritage is your] bloodline. That's it. Some say the flag, the American flag, or the Confederate flag, is heritage. It is not. You're not born from a flag."

"Heritage is what you inherit. It's items, culture, your meaning of life. It's your deep background."

~From Interviews with Docents, September-November 2019

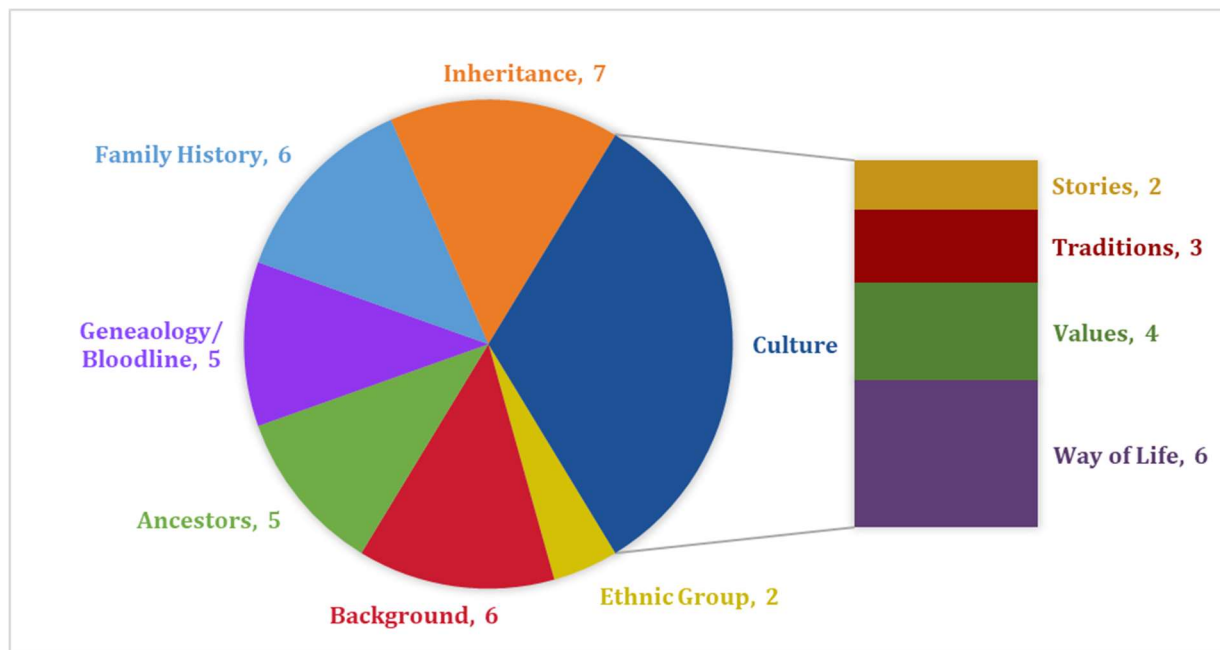


Figure 4.9: Docents' Heritage Discourse Themes

Docents defined heritage in many different ways that both reflect and challenge the Authorized Heritage Discourse. Heritage was generally understood as the sum of intangible cultural traits—stories, traditions, values, and ways of life—that one “inherits” from their “ancestors”. This notion of cultural heritage is highly personal, centering around docents’ own life experiences, family backgrounds, and lineage. This was made even more apparent by the fact that genealogy research is a popular past time among Cracker Country docents. In fact, four of

the 17 docents I interviewed said they had recently had their genetics traced through services like Ancestry.com or 23 and Me.

The concept of inheritance was particularly salient. Among those interviewed, eight docents (47%) defined heritage as a sort of inheritance, with a focus on both the “accumulation” (n=1) and the “continuation” (n=1) of knowledge, traditions, and values. They also used the words “inherit” (n=2), “passed down” (n=2), “handed down” (n=1), and “teachings” (n=1). These same docents referred to heritage as something that is passed down for “generations” (n=1) of our “forbearers” (n=1), which we learn from our “parents and grandparents” (n=2). However, despite this strong focus on family history and traditions, several docents also expressed an even more personal view of heritage, indicating that it is our own “life experience” (n=2), “choices” (n=1), and even moral convictions that define our heritage. As one docent explained:

Docent: Heritage is what has been brought to your life through your parents, your education, your own personal experiences that make up who you are as a person, how you evolve in your thinking, and how people change. You often hear that people can't change. But I don't believe that at all. People can change; it's a choice. And that's part of your heritage. You can come from a certain kind of family, but you can make a decision that you are going to change your life to something better, something that suits you more. And we don't all have to just follow the same footsteps.

Me: So, does that mean you can choose your heritage?

Docent: You can't choose the past because it is already there, but you can choose the present and the future.

This docent suggests that how we define heritage is never set in stone. How a person, family, or group comes to understand their own identity as it relates to the past will change with the experiences and choices of each new generation. In general, docents' own definitions of heritage were highly personal and intangible, with a focus on the families and places in which they were raised, and the experiences they had growing up. One docent defined it simply as "the way you were brought up, the style of life you become accustomed to." However, while docents did not personally define heritage as a universal resource or in terms of material inheritance, the discourses of World Heritage, monumentality, and the preservation of tangible culture were still expressed in how they viewed their role as heritage practitioners.

When I asked docents, "What does Cracker Country have to offer the public?", the consensus was that it helps children learn about history in a fun and memorable way. However, there was tendency to overgeneralize history as a single, linear process from "the past" to "the present", without reflecting on the diverse range of lived experiences in either era. For this question, docents used phrases like "our ancestors" (n=1), "where we come from" (n=2), "how things were" (n=3), "what we had" (n=2), "the past" (n=4), "the heritage" (n=1), and "Florida history" (n=4).

This discourse of heritage practice is centered around a common theme: that teaching children what life was like in the past will help them appreciate what they have in the present and make better choices about what should be preserved for the future. However, while this discourse is similar to the AHD's concept of universal heritage, the notion of heritage preservation expressed by the docents also had some key differences. For one thing, it was much more localized. "The past" that the docents were focused on was the history of rural Florida's 19th century cowboys and pioneers. And part of this history includes a rather unique conception of the

man vs. nature motif that is so prevalent in the AHD. Cracker Country's docents emphasize the importance of natural resources to the early pioneers, and teach children that respecting and protecting our environment is just as crucial to our survival today as it was to the early settlers.

As one docent explained,

It's important for kids to know where things come from. Kids have lost the connection with how we raise our food and stuff. They say, "We don't care about bees! They sting. Let's kill them all!" They don't understand the repercussions of choices. And I don't try and sell an agenda or anything, but, you know, before recycling we were careful with things. And I think we have such a disposable culture now. . . I always try and give them a message when we're with the bees. . . to get across to them how important bees are to our standard of living in the modern world, as well as in the world that this place represents. And to realize where people are coming from, that this is how things were in the old days. And if we're not careful, we could be back there again, if we don't take care of our planet.

Another common theme of docents' perceptions of heritage is the myth of the "good old days". This reflects the AHD theme of nostalgia and the notion that cultural knowledge and values are at risk of disappearing forever. Docents interpret life in rural Florida as "simpler times" (n=2), where people "worked hard" (n=1), "got along" (n=1), and were "good neighbors" (n=1). They seem to view their role as stewards of this way of life, tasked with passing on the values of community, hard work, and responsibility to future generations. One docent stressed that Cracker Country teaches visitors to "appreciate the present and also makes them aware of their responsibility for the future. You know, that the people before them worked hard to bring us to where we are today. And it's their job to take us even farther."

Another said that Cracker Country is important because it teaches children certain values and social graces that are lacking these days:

Docent: It's teaching manners and history and doing chores and what life was like back in that time; the simpler way, the common bond they had. You were able to be a good neighbor. If they ran out of something, you could barter with them. You could just donate whatever you had.

Me: Do you think that's something we're missing today? Being good neighbors?

Docent: I would say yes. I've had new neighbors move in that I've said maybe 50 words to them. You know, I've tried to be neighborly to them. They haven't reached back.

In addition to preserving particular cultural values and behaviors, Cracker Country has also played a vital role in saving and preserving various examples of rural Florida architecture. With 13 original, well-maintained historical buildings, the museum is certainly a success in terms of material preservation. Yet, the notion of tangible heritage in the form of artifacts, sites, or historical structures was mentioned only 3 times throughout the interviews. In general, docents appear to value intangible cultural heritage over the tangible, but a few also pointed to the importance of material culture to help audiences understand and connect with the past. As one docent explained:

The amount of buildings we have is insane! The fact that they're wooden and that we keep them protected and safe, I mean, that's a miracle from a historical preservation perspective, especially in the climate that we're in. In Florida, it's so hard to keep these things protected and readily available. I mean, you hear about the castles in England that are falling to bits because nobody can protect them. So, the fact that we're incorporated

with the state fair, that we have so many funds to protect these buildings and keep them as good as they are, people can see them and it's awesome when you hear parents that are like, 'I was here when I was in second grade, and it looks exactly the same!' And that's what I love hearing because it means we're doing a good job with the preservation. And that, I think, is worth its weight in gold. Because, like, everyone can tell you about Gasparilla with the pirates, but who's going to tell you about the cattle industry?

Docents are generally proud to be a part of an institution that plays such a vital role in teaching and preserving the specific history presented at Cracker Country. And though they do not necessarily view themselves as “expert authorities” on the matter, docents are dedicated to being as accurate as possible in their interpretations. When asked what they considered to be the most challenging aspect of being a historical interpreter, docents responded with the following:

- “Getting everything right”
- “Trying to keep a true narrative; not generalizing”
- “Being accurate, avoiding making general statements”
- “When adults tell kids the wrong facts”
- "Being sure not to tell untruths. There's enough misinformation in the world!"
- "Trying to present the past in a realistic manner, trying to not stereotype.”

However, docents recognize that engaging children with the “truth” of history is, in fact, a challenge, especially when trying to include historical facts that lie outside the museum’s particular narrative. Several docents (n=8) stated that they wish the museum could better represent the experiences of other groups living in rural Florida in the 1890s, including racial and ethnic groups, religious groups, and different types of labor. For example, one docent said,

Docent: I always thought we should include an exhibit on fishing in Florida, because fishing was a huge industry, and a lot of these Crackers were actually fishing. Plus, they discovered phosphate in the late 1800s and started mining it. That would have been right underneath some of those farms. The turpentine industry was huge, too. It would be nice if the museum could be expanded to include these other culture groups.

Me: But then, would it still be Cracker Country?

Docent: Probably not.

Another docent said that they always make an effort not to overgeneralize or stereotype, “to make children understand that there are variations from what these people in this county did to what may have happened over here. Just because we're going back in time doesn't mean everybody did the same thing, or lived the same way.”

For the majority of the docents (n=10), getting to share their love of history with kids is the main reason they choose to work at Cracker Country. But several (n=5) also said they enjoy being a docent because it means being part of a community of people who love learning. Many docents are not from Florida and are constantly learning new things about Florida history to present to the kids. Working at Cracker Country allows docents to be part of a club of history buffs who enjoy sharing stories, researching genealogy, and practicing crafts like canning, sewing, weaving, gardening, etc. For one docent, Cracker County is all about “the camaraderie.” They’re favorite part is “being in there in the trailer and everybody talking at once and talking over everybody and listening to all the stories and everybody just sharing. That is just so great. And then our ability to share those stories with young minds and show them a different time.”

Docents do not appear to see themselves as experts or authorities on the “facts” of Florida history, but as storytellers charged with passing on values and traditions of a particular way of life. However, one must always be careful when telling stories, because as one docent explained,

Allegories can be good, but to make the judgment on that is very difficult. By making up stories, you are taking a risk at [the visitor’s] expense. . . [History] is scary, because it’s interpreted. Because it’s somebody’s life, and if it's not passed down, it's gone. And even what remains is watered down and diluted. History changes and so it's interpreted. It's based on my lifestyle today, and I can't accept things the same way my dad did, for example, because I didn't share his experiences growing up.

Another docent echoed this sentiment, saying that the most challenging thing about being a historical interpreter is “staying up with history, because it's ever-changing. We are making history every day, and you don't want to insert today's history in the wrong place.”

Altogether, docent’s perceptions of heritage and their role as heritage practitioners were far more complicated and personal than the AHD. Although there is still a tendency to overgeneralize about “the past” and the benefits of teaching children “how things were” in “the good days”, most docents also recognize the limitations of the Cracker Country narrative as well as their own authority on the subject. As we will see later in the chapter, this is particularly apparent during the Florida State Fair, where docents and visitors are able to interact with and learn from each other in less structured ways.

State Fair Visitors

“[Heritage is] the traditions and ways of living that have been passed down from one generation to the next, where you come from and the life that your people live.”

~Anonymous Florida State Fair Visitor, 2020

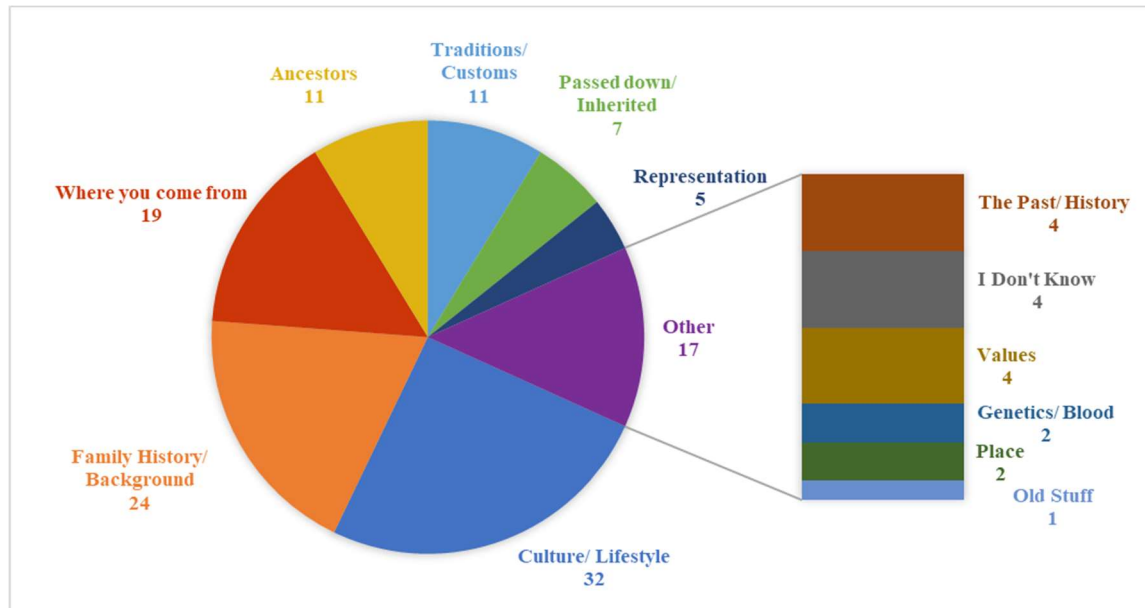


Figure 4.10: Visitors' Heritage Discourse Themes

Like the docents, state fair visitors overwhelmingly viewed heritage in a more personal, intangible sense. For many people, heritage had more than one definition, making it impossible to group each individual's answer into a single theme. Instead, visitors' definitions were divided into several overlapping themes. The three most common themes were Culture/Lifestyle, expressed by 32% of visitors, Family History/Background (24%), and "Where you come from" (19%). Interestingly, only one of the 100 visitors defined heritage as the preservation of material culture, or as he put it "old stuff". In compiling the themes for visitors' heritage definitions, I chose to keep Traditions/Customs and Values as two separate themes rather than placing them

under Culture as I did for the docents. This is because visitors were more likely to speak of culture in a broader sense, referring to the entirety of a person or group's "way of life" (n=7), "lifestyle" (n=2), or what they learned "growing up" (n=4). The word Culture was used 23 times; Traditions, 7; and Customs, 4. Surprisingly, given its importance to the docents, only 4 visitors mentioned Values when defining heritage.

Another surprising result was the frequency of the phrase "Where you come from." 19 visitors used almost the exact same wording, with only a few slight variations, including "where I came from", "where you're from", "where your family's from", and my personal favorite, "where you identify as coming from." Heritage is clearly understood as relating to one's own personal family history, culture and background. As with the docents, there is a focus on intergenerational inheritance, the "passing down" (n=4) of cultural traditions that we "inherit" (n=2) from our "ancestors" (n=8), "forebearers" (n=1), "elders" (n=1), or "grandparents" (n=2). This also results in a feeling of responsibility to one's ancestors, an obligation to "keep history alive" as one visitor put it. A few visitors also defined heritage as one's "nationality" (n=1) or "country" (n=2) of origin. Six respondents simply listed their own ethnic identity ("Specific Ethnicity" in Fig. 4.10) as their definition of heritage, including "Quaker", "Italian/French", "English/Irish", "African-American", "Hispanic", and even "Country Redneck". Somewhat surprisingly, no visitors claimed "American" as either their heritage or their ethnic identity, though one respondent did define it this way: "[Heritage is] where I came from, and what my family brought to the American culture."

These surveys show that for the majority of Cracker Country visitors, heritage is a combination of culture, history, and group identity. For them, history becomes heritage through historical facts, local stories, and the ancestral legacy of a particular family— or "clan" as one

visitor put—within a particular community. They perceived culture as an amalgamation of past and current social norms, values, and lifestyles. As one visitor explained, “heritage is the culture and history of your past. The people, places, and religion and politics all mold your past self”. Most respondents seemed to be aware that heritage is something that changes over time, and that shapes how people perceive themselves and interact with the world around them. One visitor, a communications major at USF, said it best: “Heritage is about how people think, live, communicate with each other, how they create culture, accept it without thinking about it. How its transformed from one generation to the next using communication.” Of course, one of the most important ways that culture and knowledge is passed down in through education. The following section reveals what teachers who attended Cracker Country field trips think about heritage and their role in reproducing cultural identity through teaching history to kids.

Teachers’ Heritage Discourses

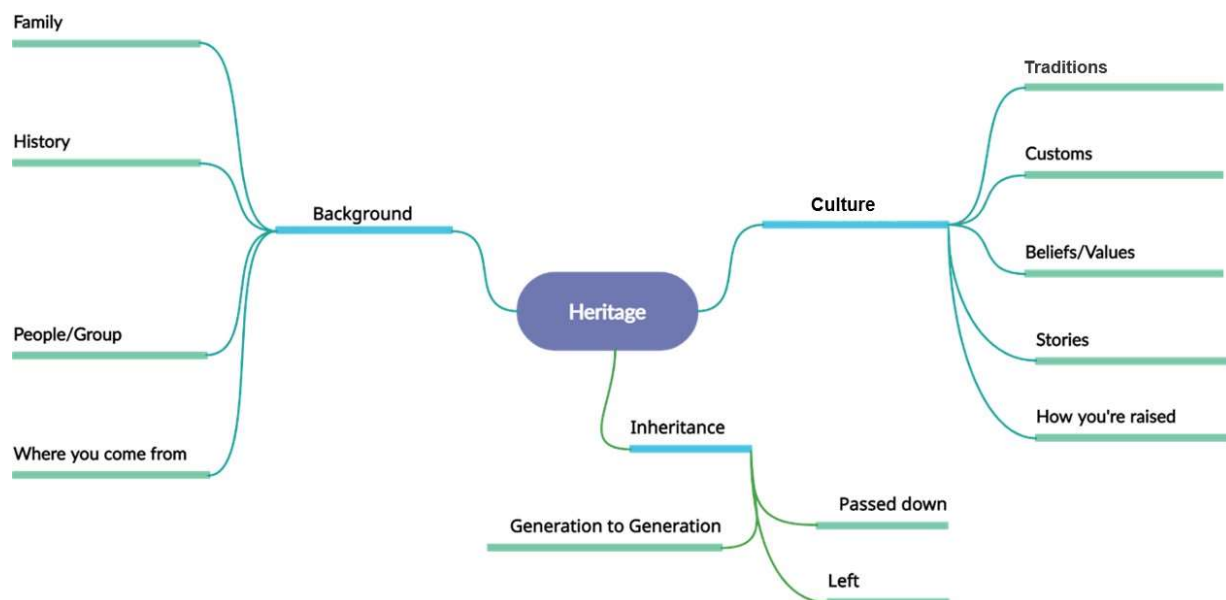


Figure 4.11: Teachers’ Heritage Discourse Themes Mind Map

The data above (Fig. 4.11) was collected from semi-structured interviews with 20 teachers who attended a Cracker Country field trip with their class in 2019. Teacher's definitions of heritage can be divided into three main categories: Culture, Background, and Inheritance (Table 4.1). But as with the docents and state fair visitors, many of the themes and common words overlap even within single definitions. Background, for instance can refer to one's personal history, the cultural practices and norms into which they are "born and raised" (n=2). Others defined heritage as the background of a particular "group", "place", "location", or "community". For example, one teacher defined heritage as "the lifestyle of a group of people from the same location." Out of 20 teachers interviewed, seven used the word "background" in their definitions, while others defined it as "where you come from" (n=3), your family's history (n=5), your "roots" (n=2), and where your "ancestors" (n=2) "originated" (n=1).

Table 4.1: Teachers' Heritage Themes and Word Frequencies

Culture		Background		Inheritance	
Culture	6	Background	7	Inherit	1
Traditions/ Customs	9	Where you're from	3	Passed down	4
Values	2	Roots	2	Generation to generation	4
How you're raised	2	Family	5	Left behind	2
Material Possessions	1	Ancestors	2		
People/group	3	History/Past	5		
Stories	1	Originate	1		

For these teachers, heritage appears to be (to borrow from one of the docents' definitions), an *accumulation* of a person or group's family histories, place of origin, as well as

one's own past experiences and ways of life they are raised in. This brings us to the other two major themes of teachers' heritage discourse: Culture and Inheritance.

Just like the state fair visitors and docents, teachers' perceptions of heritage have little to do with preserving material remains of the past, and everything to do with intangible cultural resources, like traditions, beliefs, values, and stories. Interestingly, as opposed to the state fair visitors, teachers were more likely to include the sorts of things that culture consists of rather than the word itself. Nearly half (n=9) of the teachers interviewed referred to traditions/customs, while only six used the word "culture" (and one "lifestyle"). Other aspects of culture included "values" (n=2), "material possessions" (n=1), and "stories" (n=1). The majority (n=14) of the teachers viewed cultural heritage as a strictly personal or family matter, while three indicated that heritage has to do with group identities and interactions with each other. Take these definitions for example:

- "Heritage is the customs, culture, and history of a people, group or community, including its traditions."
- "The lifestyle of a group of people from the same location."
- "My family history, where we come from and the traditions we follow."
- "To me, your heritage is where your family is from, and the cultural norms and traditions associated with it."
- "The roots from where you come. A cultural background that you can identify with."

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the notion of heritage as inheritance was particularly salient among seven of the teachers, but mostly in the intangible sense. This makes sense, considering

passing on cultural norms and knowledge is literally their life's work. Several teachers defined heritage as cultural "traditions," "lessons," and "stories" that are "passed down from generation to generation" (n=4), or "left behind" (n=2) by one's ancestors. Only one teacher actually used the word "inherit", and they were also the only one to mention material items: "[Heritage is] something that a person inherits from family - values, traditions, prize possessions." Two other teachers defined heritage not as the preservation of any particular cultural practice or material resource, but as a passing down of stories and knowledge. "Heritage means the history that has been passed from generation to generation to describe the past," said one teacher. Another said, "It's the story of a person or a place's past. It's what is left behind to tell the story to others."

Power and the Construction of Historical Silences

As Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) explained, the stories we are told about the past are shaped by moments of historical silencing at every stage of the history-making process and by the powerful actors who determine that process. History is silenced from the initial recording of an event, to the archiving of that historical record, to the construction of historical narratives, and later, in retrospect, to changing ideas about the significance of that history. In this section, I will demonstrate examples of historical silencing at Cracker Country and explore how the complex relationships of power among museum stakeholders also allow for moments of retrospective significance. These are moments when the official narratives come into conflict with contemporary knowledge and cultural values, allowing visitors and docents alike to view the past in novel ways, and perhaps open the door for change.

Hierarchy of Power

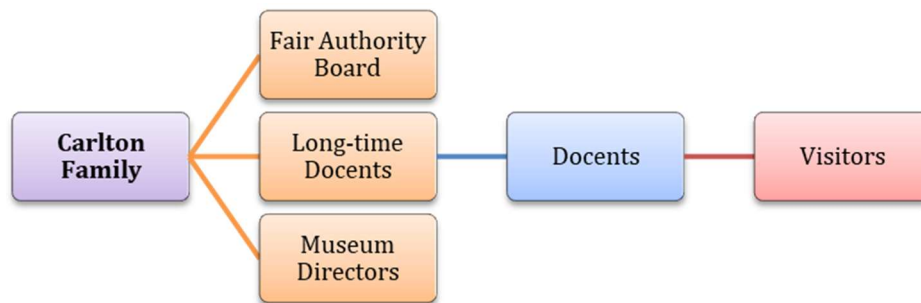


Figure 4.12: Cracker Country Organizational Hierarchy

Cracker Country's power structure is largely hierarchical, beginning with the Carlton family and their descendants. The museum's founders, Doyle Carlton, Jr. and his wife Mildred, have passed away, but their son Doyle, III, still maintains final say in the museum's operations. Like his father before him, Doyle, III is a member of the Florida State Fair Authority. Aside from the Carlton House, the family also helped obtain each of the museum's 13 historic buildings. Several of these structures belonged to friends and family of the Carltons, and many of the older docents have family ties to them as well. This appears to have created an interesting hierarchy of stakeholders, from the Carltons to the Fair administrators, to the oldest docents, then to the museum directors, newer docents, and finally the visitors.

The Carlton Family



Figure 4.13: Albert and Martha Carlton with 9 of their 10 children c. 1895. Doyle Carlton stands to Martha's right. This portrait hangs on a wall in the Carlton House for visitors to see.

Source: Albert and Martha Carlton with family - Wauchula, Florida. 1895 (circa). State Archives of Florida, Florida Memory. <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/118022>, accessed 21 June 2021.

“I’m the seventh generation in my family. My ancestors migrated down from the Carolinas, through Georgia and ended up in what is now called Hardee County . . . They were looking for the promised land. It wasn’t a biblical promised land, but they were looking for a place that they could move their family, establish a better lifestyle and to create opportunities for the family.”

~Doyle Carlton, III, quoted in TBBW Magazine (Brown 2020)

The Carlton family traces its roots to colonial North Carolina, and boasts a pedigree of soldiers from the Revolution to the Civil War. Alderman Carlton (b. 1803) was the first to settle in Florida after he was granted land in Alachua County under the provisions of the Armed Occupation Act of 1842. He soon moved his family to Hillsborough County, where in only a few years he became a planter, a trustee for the First Methodist Church of Tampa, and a successful cattle rancher with his own registered mark and brand (Livingston 1976:13).

During the Third Seminole War, the family moved to Fort Meade, where Alderman was made second lieutenant to Capt. Francis M. Durrance's militia company. He died in 1856 leading a garrison of six men to defend Willoughby Tillis' homestead from a group of Seminoles led by Ossen Tustenuggee. A partial inventory of the Carlton estate after his death included a 32-year-old enslaved woman named Charity and her 4-year-old son named Joe, as well as several houses, 161 acres of land in Fort Meade, 160 acres in Alafia, 140 head of cattle, and more (Stone 1998). The administrator of Alderman's estate published this notice following his death:

Will be sold to the highest bidder before courthouse in Tampa on 15th of November next:
one negro woman, age about 35 years, good house or field hand—also with her, a boy about 5 years old—very smart healthy child—will be sold together, as boy is her child.
Estate of Alderman Carlton for benefit of heirs.

When the Civil War came to Florida, Alderman's eldest son, Daniel Carlton (b.1823), joined the Rebel cause with his own sons. But the history of the Civil War in South Florida is complicated. As historian Spessard Stone (1996:55-60) notes, "the legend of a Solid South persists among many descendants of pioneer families of South Florida, who express amazement or denial when confronted with Union ancestry." This was certainly the case among Cracker Country docents, many of whom were surprised—one even said "disappointed"—to learn the

Carlton family would ultimately betray the Confederacy and join the Union. But the Carltons were not alone. They were among hundreds of men in the area south of Fort Meade who became “refugees” of the Confederacy, helping to secure cattle and supplies for Union forces and laying siege to Rebel homes in the process. Most of these men were ideologically aligned with the Southern cause, but grew tired of the Confederacy’s practices of forced conscription, seizing of resources, and poor treatment of soldiers. In 1863, when Rebel deserter Enoch Daniel proposed raising a volunteer force of 200-800 refugees to overtake the Confederate’s cattle supply area between Charlotte Harbor and Tampa Bay, Union General Daniel P. Woodbury was happy to have them. This was the beginning of the Second Florida Cavalry, also known as the Florida Rangers.

The Florida Rangers were a powerful source of intelligence for the Union, and became notorious for betraying their own countrymen. On one occasion in 1864, they even raided and burned down the home of Willoughby Tillis, who Alderman Carlton had died to protect 10 years before. In a letter to General Woodbury, Captain Crane gloated about the Confederate’s poor treatment of their own people, which drove so many of their best soldiers to the Union. One of these was the son of Daniel Carlton, who at the beginning of the war had “drove his sons in the Rebel Army, with shouts of exultation,” according to Crane. Crane informs Woodbury that,

The Rebs, we hear, carried [Daniel Carlton] off in Irons northward. One of his sons [Reuben Carlton] at home on furlough, seeing his father treated thus, came to us, and I have the pleasure today of seeing him bear arms directly under our glorious old 'Banner.'

The Florida Cavalry are respected even by their bitterest enemy” (Stone 1996). Daniel’s three oldest sons, Reuben, Wright, and Albert Carlton all joined the Union in the Second Florida Cavalry, and after the Civil War, Daniel became a registered Republican.

In the 1870s, the family settled in Manatee County, where they became successful cattle ranchers. In 1868, Albert Carlton (b. 1845) married Martha Winfield McEwen (b.1851), the daughter of a Methodist minister. He acquired 120 acres of land from his father about four miles east of Wauchula, where he built a homestead, raised cattle, and began his lucrative career in the citrus industry. Albert and Martha lived in a relatively modest, three-bedroom home with their 10 children from 1885 to 1905, when Albert bought a larger 10-bedroom estate in Wauchula. There, the Carltons continued to amass land, cattle, and orange groves, and became such an economic powerhouse in the region, that in 1917, Albert and his oldest son Charles were able to open the First National Bank of Wauchula with \$50,000 (Stone 1998). But it was the Carlton's eighth child who truly immortalized the family name.

Governor Doyle Carlton:

Doyle Carlton (b. 1885) graduated from the Liberal Arts College of Stetson University in 1909. He went on to receive a second B.A. from Chicago University in 1910 and his L.L.B. from Columbia University in New York in 1912. After school, Doyle did not return to the country to work on the farm like most of his family, but instead moved to Tampa to practice law and politics. Doyle Carlton was elected to the State Senate for Florida's 11th District in 1916, where he initiated a highway building program, campaigned for women's suffrage, and passed a bill granting free textbooks to Florida schools.

In 1928, Doyle, a Democrat, was elected the 25th governor of Florida, beating his Republican opponent 148,455 to 95,018. Unfortunately, Doyle's tenure as governor occurred during the Great Depression, which presented many challenges to his leadership. In an effort to keep the state afloat, Governor Carlton reduced state payrolls (including his own), regulated banks, and passed a 3-cent gasoline tax. His efforts kept public schools and the new highway

program from collapsing, but cost him politically. In 1931, Carlton was offered a \$100,000 bribe from gambling lobbyists to sign a bill to approve greyhound racing, which also would have helped the state by providing a new source of tax revenue. But Carlton wasn't having it.

According to his son, Doyle, Jr., the conversation went like this:

They said, 'Governor, you know how much your name is worth today?' He said, 'Not very much.' They said, 'It's worth a hundred thousand dollars if you'll sign the race track bill.' He said, 'Well, if my name's worth that much to you, it ought to be worth that much to me, so I just believe I'll keep it.' He vetoed the bill (News4Jax 2018).

In the end, despite being a one-term governor, Doyle Carlton has gone down in history as someone who leads with "integrity in the face of great pressure" (Hawes 1986). This is the family legacy that Doyle Carlton, Jr. sought to preserve when he created Cracker Country.

Doyle Carlton, Junior:

Though he was raised in Tampa, Doyle, Jr. spent much of his youth toiling on the farms at the Carlton Estate in Wauchula, where he learned "the value of hard work and country living, . . . developed a deep attachment to the land, and was awed by the generosity his many aunts, uncles and cousins showed their city relations" (Sweeney 1991). In an interview for the Tampa Tribune in 1991, Doyle, Jr. said "At the time, I remember thinking that if I ever could make a living in Wauchula, I would stay here."

And so, he did. In 1943, Doyle, Jr. married his high school sweetheart Mildred Woodberry, daughter of the president of the Hav-a-Tampa-Cigar Corporation. With \$20,000 from Doyle, Sr., the two of them purchased 18,000 acres in Hardee County and established their family home in Wauchula. There, Doyle, Jr. continued to expand the Carltons' cattle ranching

and citrus business. However, embracing his country roots did not stop Doyle, Jr. from following in his father's footsteps politically. He was elected to the State Senate for the 27th District three times in 1952, 1956, and again in 1964, during which time he made a name for himself by securing state and federal funding to eradicate the screwworm fly—a devastating pest for cattle farmers—and fought off efforts by segregationists to close public schools.

Like his father, Doyle, Jr. gained a reputation as someone who always did what he thought was right instead of what was politically expedient. He demonstrated this during the 1960 gubernatorial race, when he lost the Democratic primary to Farris Bryant by 96,705 points. The turning point in the race was when the two candidates were asked about integrating public schools. According to Carlton, "We were asked: 'If the public schools were integrated, would you withdraw your child?' His answer was 'Yes.' Mine was 'No, I'd be governor for all the people.' After I answered, some of my friends said, 'You just lost the election.'" Because of his refusal to back down on this issue, Doyle Carlton, Jr. was awarded the first LeRoy Collins Award for Political Courage in 1991 (Sweeney 1991).

Despite the effective end to his political career, Doyle and Mildred Carlton continued to play influential roles in Florida politics, business, education, environmental conservation, as well as the Baptist Church. Their dedication to service and education culminated with the creation of the Mildred W. and Doyle E. Carlton Jr. Cracker Country museum at the new Florida State Fairgrounds in 1979. Doyle Carlton, Jr. served as the chairman of the Florida State Fair Authority from 1979-1990, during which time he helped to make the fair the popular event it is today. From the very beginning of the fair, Carlton knew that there would have to be a rural history museum. "If it's going to be a state fair, it has to represent the state," Carlton said (Sweeney 1991). Beginning with his grandfather's Wauchula home, the Carltons oversaw and

helped to fund the transportation of all 13 historic buildings to Cracker Country. According to Carlton, it was Mildred who came up with the name of the museum in order to honor the legacy of the Florida cowboys they descend from. “My wife came up with the name Cracker Country,” he said, “because we're trying to tell a lifestyle of rural Florida around the turn of the century and how our people lived in those times. This was a part of their history” (Doyle Carlton, Jr., 1997. USF Oral History Interview with Pierce Wood, Jr.).

For the last 40 years, the museum has served the Carltons’ mission of “preserving Florida’s rural heritage” through interpretive programs, school field trips, and a dedication to historical research and accuracy. Doyle and Mildred Carlton continued to play an active role in the museum and their communities their entire lives. They passed away in 2003 within four months of each other.

Doyle Carlton, III:

Today, the Carlton family legacy lives on in Doyle Carlton, the Third. The great grandson of Albert Carlton inherited the Carlton family’s many successful business ventures, which include 60,000 acres of cattle-grazing property in Wauchula, the Horse Creek Ranch in DeSoto County, and his own company, Roman III Ranches, among others. Doyle, III also continues to play a supportive role in the Cracker Country museum. Like his father before him, Doyle, III can often be seen visiting his ancestors’ home on the fairgrounds. You can spot him by his trademark jeans, leather boots and cowboy hat. He is also an active board member of the Florida State Fair Authority (Brown 2020).

Florida State Fair Authority

The Florida State Fair Authority (FSFA) is “a twenty-two-member board comprised of respected community, business and agricultural leaders from across the State of Florida”

(<https://floridastatefair.com/board-members>). Board members are volunteers who provide guidance, planning, and community outreach to support State Fair administrators for all events held on the Florida State Fairgrounds. The Florida State Fair is itself “a quasi-governmental Authority,” which the FSFA is charged with managing under Florida Statute 616. According to Florida Statute 616.215, all members of the FSFA Board, including the chairman, are appointed by Florida’s Commissioner of Agriculture, who may also assist and advise the Board on finances, operations, and staffing. From 2011-2020, Doyle Carlton, III was the chairman of the FSFA. He stepped down in January 2021, and the current Agricultural Commissioner Nikki Fried has appointed Susanne Clemons to the position. Carlton remains an active board member of the FSFA. According to the Florida State Fair website, the mission of the Florida State Fair Authority is “to create positive entertainment experiences through: the annual Florida State Fair; a variety of year-round events; quality competitive programs; a commitment to agriculture, education and community service; and a focus on new opportunities.”

The Museum Staff

The FSFA is responsible for hiring the Cracker Country director. For the first several years the museum was in operation, the director was Ann Singletary, a close personal friend of Doyle, II and Mildred Carlton. According to several docents I spoke with, Ms. Singletary was (and remains) adamant that Cracker Country be as authentic—in the genuine, original sense—as possible. She was responsible for securing the majority of the historical buildings, and her keen attention to detail and dedication to research resulted in most of the costume styles, artifacts, decorations, and activities that visitors enjoy to this day. Although Singletary stepped down as director in the ‘90s, she still checks in on the museum from time to time, and her name still holds weight with long-time docents, museum staff, and the FSFA.

Today, the day-to-day operations of the museum are run by Director Cindy Horton, along with the programs coordinator. Prior to working at Cracker Country, Horton was the director for the museum at Stone Mountain Park in Georgia, where she gained a lot of experience dealing with public relations issues surrounding contested heritage, due to the giant Confederate monument carved into the side of the mountain. Under the museum's current leadership, Cracker Country docents have become younger and slightly more diverse, a direction Horton has said she hopes to continue. The museum staff are all interested in finding solutions to make Cracker Country more appealing to broader audiences, especially among Tampa's rapidly diversifying schools. As such, they have been incredibly supportive of this project from the beginning. However, at a few points, some compromises had to be made to ensure that the FSFA and Doyle Carlton, III would also approve.

Power Dynamics in the Museum

Toward the end of the Fall 2019 semester, I was presented with the entirely unexpected opportunity to share some of my research findings with three members of the Florida State Fair Authority. I had been at the museum on a Monday, when no school tours are scheduled, to reveal a poster I'd created from my interviews with docents that semester to the museum director, the programs coordinator, and the museum historian. As it turns out, there was a board meeting that Monday, which just happened to be wrapping up as I shared my poster. The museum staff appeared to enjoy my poster presentation, and decided to invite a few FSFA members over to see it as well. The FSFA expressed interest in the insights from docents, especially their feelings regarding their roles as historical interpreters and ideas for improvement. However, when I explained the full scope of my project, they each raised concerns about the prospect of discussing different meanings of "cracker" with the public. At the end of the impromptu meeting, I was left

with the cautious support of the FSFA, but had to go home and rewrite some of my interview questions. I initially planned to ask fair visitors the same question posed to docents: “What are the first 5 words that come to mind when you hear the word “cracker?” After this meeting, I changed the question to: “On a scale of 0-10, how much do you personally identify with the heritage represented at Cracker Country? Please explain your answer.”

While the FSFA yields much decision-making power, it is also clear that the Carlton family still plays an influential role within the fairgrounds, especially within the museum community. In every conversation I had with docents, museum staff, and even the FSFA members, there was always an overriding sense of pride, respect, and even love for the family who brought so much to Tampa and the surrounding region. This pride is expressed every day by docents during school tours as they tell the story of the Carlton House, and in some cases, even remind children to thank the family for giving them this experience. During the State Fair, the feeling permeates the museum grounds, as new docents excitedly share their “Carlton sightings” after spotting Doyle, III disappearing into one of the exhibits.

During one of my shifts in the Carlton House kitchen, I had just finished wrapping up a rather inspired retelling of how Ms. Ella and her mom had to wake up at the crack of dawn to cook breakfast for 9 growing boys and their dad, when an older gentleman in the crowd winked at me from under a cowboy hat. Once the crowd had dispersed, a docent came running into the kitchen exclaiming, “Do you know who that was!? That was Doyle Carlton!”

The history of the Carlton family is also presented to the public during the state fair in the Carlton-Woodberry Gallery exhibit. The Gallery contains pictures and personal artifacts from three generations of Carltons and Woodberrys and several interpretive signs. One of the signs tells the story of Doyle, Jr.’s refusal to bow to segregationists during his run for governor and his

subsequent reward for “political courage.” In my experience, most visitors don’t read all of these signs, but the ones who do always make a show of nodding and humming their approval of Carlton’s actions and often point out how “progressive” Doyle, Jr. was for his time. The docents are all particularly proud of this story. But I never heard anyone mention to the visitors that Alderman Carlton had been a slaveowner, as described above, and neither do any of the signs. Some docents *will* go as far as interpreting the history of the Civil War, surprising visitors with the knowledge that the Carltons fought for the Union, but there is rarely time for these discussions to go into much detail, and I never heard anyone point out that the Carltons initially joined the Confederacy with “shouts of exultation”.

The Construction of Historical Silences

The silencing of history at Cracker Country takes place at all levels, but in varying degrees. It began at the source, with the structures of power responsible for deciding to record the genealogies, land deeds, military accomplishments, and business ventures of prominent men like the Carltons. It continued with the creation of historical archives, including Doyle, Jr.’s decision to preserve his grandfather’s home as the epitome of “rural Florida history.” Silence is reproduced in historical narratives that glorify the accomplishments of wealthy, White Floridians, while leaving out the lives, accomplishments, and struggles of all other groups. History is silenced again in the retrospective significance of the “Florida Cracker,” wherein the complicated history and racially charged aspects of the word have been all but erased in local heritage discourse, thanks to concerted efforts by local historians to paint Florida Crackers as a culturally distinct group (Ste. Claire 2008; Simmons and Ogden 1998; Hill et. al. 2009). The very existence of a “Cracker culture” seems to have been retrospectively constructed to reclaim a positive sense of White, Southern identity, in a way that silences the history of race and racism.

All of these moments of historical silencing leave no room for interpretations of the racial oppression and violence that took place in Florida in the late 19th century, during the height of Jim Crow. Combined with the lack of diversity among the docents, this silence reinforces the notion of a homogenous, White, Florida history. This discourse is most obvious in the Church and Train Depot exhibits, where physical evidence of the existence of Black lives has been rendered silent and (almost) completely invisible.

The African American Church

The building labeled simply “Church” has had a rather more complex history, being used for a variety of purposes for the past 100 years. It was originally built circa 1914 to serve as a one-room school house for the African American community in the town of Gretna, Florida. Gretna, located three miles west of Quincy in Gadsden County, was a thriving turpentine town that popped up in the late 19th century with the railroads. It was established in 1905 by W. P. Humphry of the Humphry Company. In 1908, Humphry founded a different school house, the Gretna School, for White children only. It was later used as a community center and dance hall, and served the Red Cross during WWII. This school still stands in its original location today and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2008. The NRHP assessment includes local stories and fond memories of the Gretna School, emphasizing its historical significance due to the role it played in “the educational and social needs of the Gretna area from the earliest years of the community.” The NRHP assessment makes no mention of the presence of Black residents or the fact of segregation in the community, beyond a concession that: “The school fit the description as a ‘common’ school. Many rural communities initiated their own schools, paid for by local taxes, and were intended to serve ‘common’ white people from all social classes and religious backgrounds” (NRHP 2008).

But Gretna was settled by both Black and White residents, though the two communities were largely divided by the train tracks. And sometime around 1914, a school house was built for African American children as well. This school served the Black community of Gretna for over 30 years. In 1946 it also became the new home for the Holy Ghost Church, after the original church burned down. Around this time, the building was being used as a school, a church, a community center, and the meeting hall for the Grand United Pallbearers Home Society (GUPHS), which helped to raise money for funerals for families throughout the community. The building continued to be used to accommodate students and the GUPHS even after a new church, Springfield African Methodist Episcopal, was built in the 1960s. The old building was donated to Cracker Country by the Pallbearers Home Society in 1980, along with its original benches.

The Church at Cracker Country clearly contains a lot of important history for African American residents of Gretna, Florida. And yet, none of this history has ever been officially recorded. The information provided here was collected from hand-written letters between then Cracker Country Director Ann Singletary and elderly members of the Springfield AME Church and GUPHS who remember going to school in the old building (Appendix D). If it were not for Cracker Country, there would be no evidence, archival or material, of the existence of this school house/church, or even of the African American community in early Gretna. And yet, this history is not often made clear to visitors. The sign outside the building reads,

Church: c. 1900. Gretna, Florida. A church was often the first public building erected in a new community. Churches served as a place for worship, fellowship, weddings, funerals, and other community events. This building was originally a school house, becoming the Holy Ghost Church in 1946.

During school tours, just like during its past life, the Church doubles as a one-room school house for tour groups on the B track. Sitting in the building's original church pews—boys on the right and girls on the left—students get the same interpretation of the “common” rural school experience they get on the A track. Unlike the other school house, however, the Church has no pictures on the wall of the children (or churchgoers) who attended there. There is, however, a framed photograph that shows a group of Black school children playing outside a similar one-room school house in Brooksville in 1892 (Fig. 4.14). This photo could offer an opportunity to interpret the multiple uses of the Gretna Church and explain that Black communities in rural 19th century Florida also had one-room school houses. Unfortunately, with only seven minutes in the building, there is rarely enough time to adequately cover 19th century rural schools, let alone broach the topic of school segregation.

During the state fair, this photograph is actually removed from the Church. I discovered this one day while working in the Terry Store, when a docent beckoned for me to look at something inside the closet. The picture had been stored there for the duration of the fair, since it is not related to the Church itself. This decision was largely due to the museum's longstanding tradition of trying to keep interpretative materials as “authentic” as possible during the fair. However, it is also because, during the state fair, the building is actually interpreted as a church and not as a school. Ironically, this is also the only time when the Church might be recognized for its role in the history of Black Floridians.



Figure 4.14: Photograph found in Terry Store closet. Caption reads: “Students playing at Twin Lakes School, an African American school south of Brooksville, in 1892.”

Source: The photo’s caption reads: “From Images of America: Brooksville by Robert G. Martinez,” which was published in paperback in 2004.

Many fair visitors are drawn to the Church’s prominent wooden cross steeple and the constant outpouring of Christian music. This music comes in the form of the 19th century organ inside the church (which is not quite authentic, since it came from Indiana) and the resounding voices of Gospel choirs, as well as fiddles, harps, student orchestras, and even mountain dulcimers. State fair visitors who get to witness the African American Gospel Jubilee choir will at least leave Cracker Country with some idea of the existence of Black rural Floridians at the turn of the 20th century. But they are unlikely to ruminate on the realities of racial segregation and oppression that shaped the social lives of Whites and Blacks alike, and which ultimately determined whose histories are deemed authentic, and whose get put storage closets. This silence is made even more conspicuous when one considers the interpretations at the Depot exhibit.

The Hidden Waiting Room

Let us return to the last stop on our Cracker Country school tour: the Okahumpka Train Depot. The students enter the depot toward the right side of the building, where they find a sparsely decorated but cozy looking waiting room, containing a wooden bench with back and armrests and some travel advertisements on the walls. To their left is the ticket window, and next to the window is a door leading into the stationmaster's office. As the students enter and sit down at the front of the office, the docent whispers to their teacher to go read the sign on the wall adjacent the waiting room (Fig. 4.15) There, the teacher notices not one, but two ticket windows. Peeking through the second window, the teacher sees a completely different waiting room, located directly behind the one we entered through. This one is smaller and undecorated with only two flat wooden benches, with no back or armrests.



Figure 4.15: Depot waiting room windows inside stationmaster's office.

Between the two ticket windows, a sign explains that the Okahumpka Depot was designed with two waiting rooms to adhere to the Supreme Court's "separate but equal" decision in the case of Plessy v. Ferguson. It goes on to ask,

But were they equal? Although the Okahumpka Depot's waiting rooms were far more modest than those of larger train stations in urban areas, there are differences in the furnishings and the size of the non-white waiting room on the left compared to the waiting room on the right, which was reserved for the exclusive use of white passengers. This sign offers the teacher a glimpse of the social realities of 19th century rural Florida, and an opportunity to address them. But the teacher's students are all looking toward the front of the office, where the docent is regaling them with morse code and other communication trivia. The docent says nothing about the sign in the back. She leaves it up to the teacher to decide what to do with this information. The students move on to their next stop none the wiser.

Authenticity and Invented Traditions

"The moment tradition is born is a wonderful feeling. At the Florida State Fair, it's the little details—the sounds, the lights, the thrills, the feeling of that moment. The only thing more wonderful than when you find tradition is the moment you're able to pass it on."

(Florida State Fair 2020 TV Commercial)

When it comes to knowing the past, we will always be limited to the particular records and stories chosen to be passed down by those with the power to do so. But knowing our heritage is a bit more complicated. The cultural traditions, values, and lifestyles in which we're raised contain a lot of information about who we are, where we come from, and where we might be headed. But these aspects of heritage are themselves mutable. As the advertisers for the 2020

Florida State Fair made clear, traditions are not innate cultural traits; they are born and passed down by human behaviors and choices. There is a common-sense notion, especially within the Authorized Heritage Discourse, that invented traditions are somehow less authentic than those that supposedly go back generations. And yet, all traditions are invented at some point, and authenticity, too, is a concept that becomes blurry the more you look at it. In this section, I examine various perceptions of authenticity among Cracker Country visitors and how they are shaped by visitors' own cultural expectations as well as conscious choices made by the museum staff. Finally, I explore the many 'authentic' traditions that have been born within the museum community itself and how they get passed down to the next generations of docents.

"Oh! I thought you were fake!" – Visitor Perceptions of Authenticity

I am stationed once more in the Carlton House, where I sit primly on an old wicker chair in the corner of the dining room. I have been sitting for hours in this position, knees together under a linen skirt, tucked to the side with ankles crossed. My hands rest atop my wicker basket, where my phone, chapstick, car keys, and ibuprofen are all hidden beneath a handstitched cloth. I'm pretty sure my muscles have atrophied into a welcoming smile. From my place by the door, I can see the crowd heading down the dogtrot hallway toward the dining room. They can see me, too. A visitor enters the dining room, and immediately notices the magnificent feast spread out across the Carltons' table—pork and fried chicken, fried green tomatoes, corn and rice, sweet potatoes and green beans. And the centerpiece: a gorgeous seven-layer chocolate cake.

"Is that food *real*?" the visitor asks, trying to get a good sniff.

"Yep," I reply for the 2000th time that day. "It's real. I've been smelling it all day, and I'm starving!"

The visitor nearly jumps out of their skin.

“Oh, my God!” they exclaim, hand on their racing heart. “I thought you were fake!”

This exact scenario happened so many times during the State Fair, that I nearly began to question my own existence. But it wasn’t an unreasonable assumption for the fairgoers to make. Most of them had just come from the school house, where a pair of frankly creepy, 40-year-old animatronics of a teacher and student narrate the everyday struggles of 19th century rural education. These poor, obsolete robots are only dragged out for the state fair, thankfully, because I’m sure they would terrify today’s school children. But the robots are anathema to Cracker Country for reasons beyond their constant malfunctioning and terribly inhuman movements.

They are also the only sign of any sort of modern technology. In all the other buildings, there is either no electricity at all or all signs of it are carefully tucked away. Water fountains are disguised to look like barrels, which as far as visitors need to know, could have come straight from the (fake) well next to the Carlton House. Docents are careful to stay period-appropriate at all times. All personal items are to remain hidden in baskets and leather satchels. Phones are strictly forbidden except in the docents’ trailer. And then there are the costumes.

The costumes are a result of painstaking research by Cracker Country’s first museum director, Ann Singletary (a childhood friend of the Carltons), as well as the current museum historian. The fabrics are mostly donated and hand-stitched by some of the older and more talented docents. They include: woven floral designs in the form of dresses or matching skirts and blouses; aprons; men’s off-white, button-down linen shirts; blue jean pants or overalls; straw hats or bonnets; and a pair of leather boots, which docents are not provided. During the fair, everyone who participates, from vendors to musicians, is expected to dress the part. Docents spend most of their time stationed at various buildings, but get regular breaks and an hour lunch. Many spend this time wandering the fair, mingling with other docents and vendors, and just

being a part of the action. The end result from a visitor's perspective, is a step back in time to a quiet, 19th century village where everyone really seems to know each other, strangers are always welcomed with a smile, and the stress of modern life can just fade away.

Visitors seem to enjoy Cracker Country as equal parts entertainment and education. When I asked visitors about their motivations for visiting Cracker Country, 24 respondents (24%) said they were there to learn about Florida culture and history, while 24 others viewed it as just another curious fair attraction. Seven said they were there just to get away from the noise and crowds of the fair, and six said they come every year for the nostalgia, because Cracker Country reminds them of the "simple", "good old days" of their youth. Another six visitors were there with their children or younger siblings because they wanted to show them "where we came from" (n=2), "how things were back then" (n=2), and "how people used to live" (n=2). Despite being constantly surprised that some docents are not in fact mannequins, Cracker Country visitors don't seem to question the authenticity of their museum experience. During the surveys, visitors were asked to rate from 0-10 how much they agreed with the following statement: "Cracker Country offers an authentic representation of 19th century Florida." Visitors rated the museum's authenticity 9.12 out of 10 on average. But what constitutes an authentic historical reproduction in their eyes? To find out, I asked visitors to explain what authenticity means to them (Fig. 4.16).

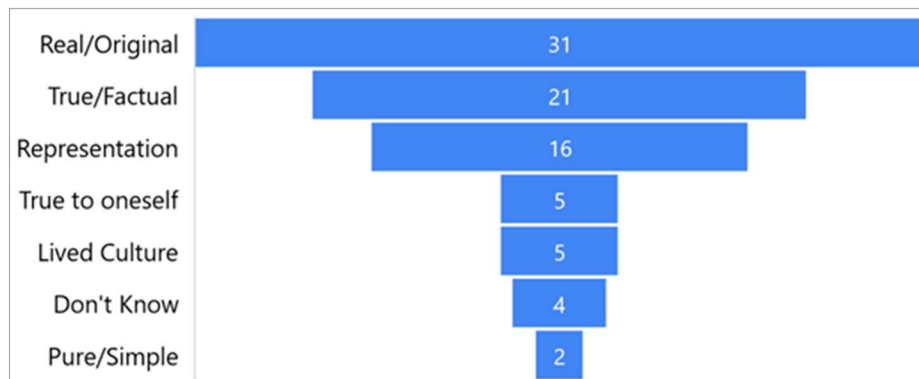


Figure 4.16: Visitors' Perceptions of Authenticity

The findings showed that authenticity can be seen as a three-dimensional construct. The first dimension is Reality and Originality, which denotes something (material or intangible) that is genuine or real, and which originated in the particular place or culture being represented. One respondent defined authenticity as something “original to the area” while another equated it with “products from the past.” One visitor defined it strictly as “actual, with no reproductions.”

However, interestingly, many other respondents were mindful that the original state of both material culture and cultural lifestyles cannot always be preserved. Thus, the second dimension of authenticity appears to be Representation. A surprising number of respondents defined authenticity as “accurate representation” (n=3), “accurate portrayal” (n=2), and “exact replica” (n=2). These respondents suggested that reproductions can be just as authentic as genuine artifacts as long as they represent the period in a way that is as “close” (n=3) or “similar” (n=1) to the original as possible. For example, one visitor defined authenticity as “a close representation of how things were back in the day.” Another interesting finding is that whether or not a reproduction is perceived as authentic representation seems to depend largely on the visitor’s overall experience and feelings of emersion. As one visitor explained, authenticity involves the “ability to replicate a genuine experience.”

Crosscutting these dual notions of authenticity as both Reality and Representation is the dimension of Truthfulness. Many visitors expressed a deep regard for the “facts” (n=4) of history that can be “verified” (n=1) with documented “proof” (n=3). Others put less stock in the official narratives of history, declaring that it should never be “sugar-coated” (n=2). One visitor suggested that the authenticity of any historical reproduction should be determined by “how real it is from what we’ve been told.” As this suggests, Truthfulness has dimensions of its own.

Beyond dry historical facts, the Truth also has a deeper, personal meaning. Five respondents defined authenticity as “being true to yourself” (n=2) “true to your roots,” “true in character, speech, and walk,” and “true to your moral code.” Authenticity, like heritage, proves to have lots of facets. Yet overall, visitors expressed a high degree of certainty that the heritage represented at Cracker Country is authentic. This makes sense when viewing authenticity from the dimension of Reality and Originality. Cracker Country has one of the most extensive and well-preserved collections of 19th century rural Florida buildings, after all. And there is certainly a high degree of accuracy involved in the research and design of the docents’ costumes. But other aspects of Representation and Truthfulness are a bit of a mixed bag.

For one thing, the docents themselves are not an accurate representation of all rural Floridians as they are overwhelming White and elderly. Their costumes, while well researched, are not exact replicas, as docents regularly (and subversively) make concessions to modern style in the form of zippers, nylon vs. straw hats, wristwatches instead of pocket watches, and of course, modern eye glasses, which is allowed. Additionally, as any docent worth their salt will tell you, Cracker Country is NOT a village. But most visitors perceive it that way because of how the buildings are all laid out in a circle around a central yard. The lifestyle being preserved is that of cattle ranchers and farmers. These families were separated by large swaths of mostly

inhospitable land and communities were maintained through periodic gatherings at common meeting grounds, like the church, post office, general store, and train station. But these places were usually not in easy walking distance unless you had a full day or more to travel. Perhaps the most “real” aspect of Cracker Country is the fact that most of its buildings were originally used by rural families in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Interpretations of these buildings do include historical facts about the people who used them, but they also include lots of guesswork, allegories, and some hefty generalizations.

Gendered Dimensions of “Authentic” Representation

Beyond the lack of racial and ethnic diversity represented at Cracker Country, the representations of rural Florida life are also chock-full of gendered stereotypes. Many of these do have historical evidence backing them, including the domestic roles of mothers and daughters and the seating arrangements of boys and girls in the school house. But gendered interpretations are ubiquitous to the point that docents can’t seem to help inserting them randomly in every story. For example, a docent I worked with in the candlemaker’s shed, explains the process of collecting beeswax with this story (paraphrased):

When it was time for the family to get together and make candles for the year, Dad would send his sons out into the woods to find a beehive. Once they found one, they’d go get Dad to help them light a fire under the tree, so they could smoke out the bees. Then, when all the bees were asleep, they could carve out a bit of the wax, and bring it home to Mom and their sisters, so they could start dipping candles.

Sure, there is a good bit of historical documentation claiming candle-making as a traditional women’s chore, but how often was this actually the case? What if “Dad” didn’t have any sons, or what if his only son was disabled? Would Dad have to chase down beehives on his own because

his daughters might get too dirty in the woods? What if he didn't have any daughters? Would "Mom" have to make all the candles by herself, or could any of the boys help out? What if Dad was away at war? Could Mom not be trusted to light a fire? What if either parent had passed away? What if they were childless, or unmarried? Popular historical accounts often make broad, sweeping generalizations, hiding every exception to the rule under the rug in the process. And yet, because these accounts are so popular, any interpretations that differ from the authorized narratives are instantly suspect. Take for example the case of Belle.

Belle is a 63-year-old self-proclaimed Cracker born and raised in Tampa. She grew up on a farm nearby the present-day fairgrounds when the area was nothing but cow pasture. She remembers helping her neighbors raise prize-winning cattle and being impressed by their skills with the whip. When Cracker Country first opened, she took her son to see the cattle demonstrations. They ended up becoming close friends with the whip maker at the time, who taught her son how to crack a whip. Throughout her life, Belle has been farmer, a tailor, and a manager for a horse tack and western wear store. Anyone who meets Belle knows right away she's a cowgirl. At Cracker Country, Belle doesn't dress in skirts and bonnets. She wears cowboy boots, a leather hat, jeans, and a tasseled leather vest. Museum staff do not altogether approve of this wardrobe choice. They have expressed their concerns about the historical inaccuracies of Belle's outfits on numerous occasions. But so far, they've had no luck changing her mind. As far as Belle's concerned, she's just dressing like the authentic Cracker she is.

This example demonstrates how seemingly common-sense ideas about authenticity can be challenged and changed over time. As long as visitors see exactly what they expect to see, they will perceive Cracker Country as an authentic representation of Florida history. Most visitors have been coming to the fair since they were children, and have seen the same docents

year after year. Thus, whatever the docents' costume choices, visitors expect to see them. Over the years, the docents themselves have become the heart of the museum experience. And in the process, they have developed their own localized systems of authentic cultural practices and beliefs. In this way, it could be said that the *docents* are the most "real" thing at Cracker Country.

"Cracker in Training" - Invented Traditions and Cultural Reproduction Among Docents

When you become a docent at Cracker Country, you immediately feel like you're a part of a family. Over the past 40 years, Cracker Country's docents have formed a strong community complete with shared cultural knowledge, values, and traditions. These cultural traits are passed down to new docents during training and docent meetings, as well as through stories, unofficial social gatherings, and sanctioned community activities like canning classes, watching historical documentaries, and volunteering for the museum.

Docent training takes the form of shadowing. In order to understand Cracker Country narratives and interpretive practices from a variety of angles, new docents follow five different experienced interpreters before they lead their own group. All docents receive continuous training in the form of regular morning meetings, historical presentations, and relevant films. During Fall 2019, docents gathered every Friday to watch the BBC docuseries "Edwardian Farms", which brings to life British farm life at the turn of the 20th century. For the most part, these meetings rarely feel like work. You can always count on more than one docent to bring a homecooked meal or some baked goods. People spend nearly as much time laughing and gossiping as discussing the topics of the day. One of the most common things for docents to gossip about is their school tour groups, or more specifically, the parents who chaperone them. It is a universal truth at Cracker Country that "the chaperones are worse than the kids" when it comes to not talking during tours. This shared belief is reiterated at every morning meeting,

where it is quickly absorbed by new docents as cultural knowledge. Another oft-repeated truism is that Cracker Country serves to give retirees their “grandkid fix”. This exact phrase was used by two of the elderly docents I interviewed, but it seems to be a common part of the Cracker Country lexicon, because I once heard a 20-something docent say it as well.

The camaraderie experienced at Cracker Country is largely based around a shared love for history and working with kids. But this connection is maintained outside of the museum through other shared hobbies and interests. For example, two of the docents I interviewed were in the same weaving club before one invited the other to come work for Cracker Country. A few other docents apparently met each other at that club as well. Other docents dabble in gardening, blacksmithing, sewing, model trains, and homemade telescopes. The latter has been incorporated into the Tall Tales event in October, as a grand finale where visitors can mingle with several local telescope enthusiasts and try to spot Saturn’s rings.

Docents have created other cultural traditions within the museum as well. Public events throughout the year are planned by the museum director and program coordinator, but they are brought to life by the docents who volunteer their time and creative energies. For instance, during the Tall Tales event in October, docents research and share their own favorite folk stories from Florida history, such as the legend of the Skunk Ape, the evil red caboose, and cow hunting giants. This event is preceded by a photo opportunity for visitors in front of a wall of paper mâché jack-o-lanterns (Fig. 4.17), each hand crafted by a docent.



Figure 4.17: Paper Mache Jack-O-Lanterns

Ultimately, however, it's the Florida State Fair that really brings everyone together. Docents and museum staff prepare all year long for these two weeks, sewing clothes, sourcing beeswax and agave fibers for ropes, tending to the vegetable garden, and honing their various crafts. The docents' job during the fair is not to lead groups, but simply to exist, as “authentically” as possible, as 19th century farmers. Women sit in rocking chairs on porches, knitting or weaving on their own personal looms as they share stories with visitors and gossip with other docents. The men can be seen operating the more industrial exhibits, like the blacksmith shop, the cane mill, and rope making. During the state fair, the docents are joined by various vendors, also dressed in 19th century garb, who travel to Cracker Country once a year to sell their wares: homemade broomsticks, leather belts, whips, beeswax candles, pottery, and more. These vendors also spend their days as authentically as possible, demonstrating their crafts

right there in front of the visitors. Though the vendors only come for the state fair, they are accepted into the docent community with ease, like well-loved kin visiting from afar.

The sense of community and kinship that arises among docents and vendors is evidenced by the practice of gift giving and reciprocity. Docents look forward to getting a free bowl of “swamp cabbage” straight from the vendors’ cauldron, and in return they are sure to tell every visitor they see how delicious it is. On cold days, the old women at their looms will happily weave a scarf for any docents or vendors who need one. When I was conducting my surveys, I would often direct visitors to the leather shop right behind me, simply because the person running it was so friendly. In return, unprompted, he made me a genuine leather belt!

Being a part of the docent family means sharing their passions as well as their pain. Because the large majority of docents are well passed retirement age, it is not uncommon to receive notice of someone’s passing. For many of the older docents, Cracker Country has played a major role in much of their lives. The family they’ve made at the museum are as close as their actual kin. Therefore, to honor their memory and their service, when long-time docents pass away, it has become tradition that their Cracker Country family will see them off in costume.

But to end this section on a happier note, there is one tradition that always puts a smile on everyone’s faces—the docents’ dance on the last day of the fair. This can only be considered a “dance” by the loosest of definitions, because like it or not, when the bluegrass band kicks up that final round of “Rocky Top”, you will find yourself being spun around by somebody, elbows linked, in some sort of deranged do-si-do. This is the moment everyone has been looking forward to the most, not just because the fair is finally over, but because every bluegrass band to hit that stage has played that song repeatedly for two weeks straight. We dance, because this is the last time we’ll have to hear about “good old Rocky Top, Tennessee” for at least another year!



Figure 4.18: Docents dancing to “Rocky Top” one last time.

When you become a docent at Cracker Country, even for the purposes of participant observation, you are welcomed into a family, a community really, of people with similar interests who love sharing their knowledge and culture with others. But how exactly do the cultural practices of docents relate to the Florida Cracker heritage the museum purports to represent? And how do the notions of heritage reproduced at the museum impact the cultural as well as racial identities of visitors from diverse backgrounds? The next section explores this question by delving into the various categories of identity museum docents, visitors, and teachers subscribe to, and how they relate to the “Florida Cracker.”

IV. **Research Question 2: How are racial and ethnic identities and boundaries produced or reproduced in the context of the Florida Cracker?**

Demographics

I have waited until this section to go into detail about the characteristics of the research participants, because I believe their answers to basic demographic questions highlight the key aspects of identity construction and maintenance. As Lee Baker (2004) explained, the formation of group identities is a process of negotiation between one's own *identity* vs. the *identification* of others. This distinction was made clear in respondents' complex answers to questions about their race and ethnicity. These answers, as well as information about age, place of birth, and religious affiliation, revealed a lot about both the cultural and personal aspects of identity formation.

Docent Demographics

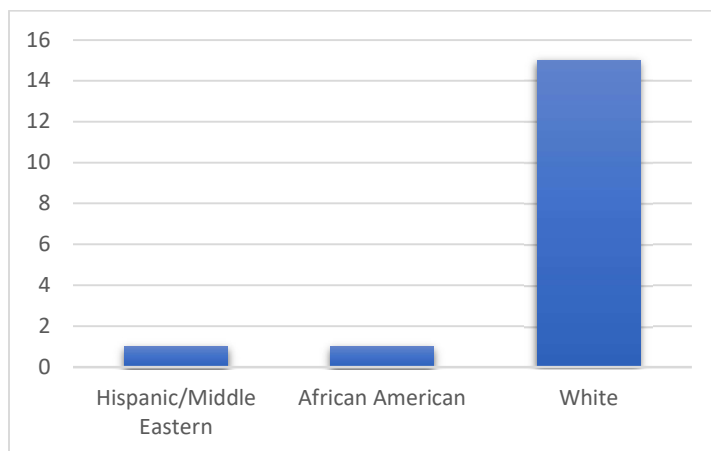


Figure 4.19: Docents' Racial Identifications

As mentioned previously, docents are overwhelmingly White and passed retirement age, more so than this sample reveals. The two docents who identified as other than White (Fig. 4.19), are among only a handful of non-White docents out of about 140 docents on staff. One, an Air Force veteran from Pennsylvania, initially listed both his race and ethnicity as "American."

When I asked him to clarify, he qualified that he sometimes identifies as African American but only “under pressure.” The other non-White docent, a 23-year-old from Perth Amboy, New Jersey identified her race as “Hispanic/Middle Eastern” and clarified her ethnicity as Puerto Rican/Lebanese. On the other hand, another young docent whose family are all from Cuba, identified as White.

Regardless of racial identification, those who did identify as White (or Caucasian), varied greatly in how they perceived their own ethnic identity (Fig. 4.20). This largely seemed to center around place of birth and genealogical background. The majority identified as Scotch-Irish and British, or “Celtic” as one put it. Three identified as “American” (one as “American/Indian” because his grandmother was Cherokee). Others claimed “Southern,” “Cracker,” and “Polish”. Docents come from all over the country and beyond, including Michigan, California, Nevada, New York, New Jersey, Tennessee, and England. Only six came from Florida.

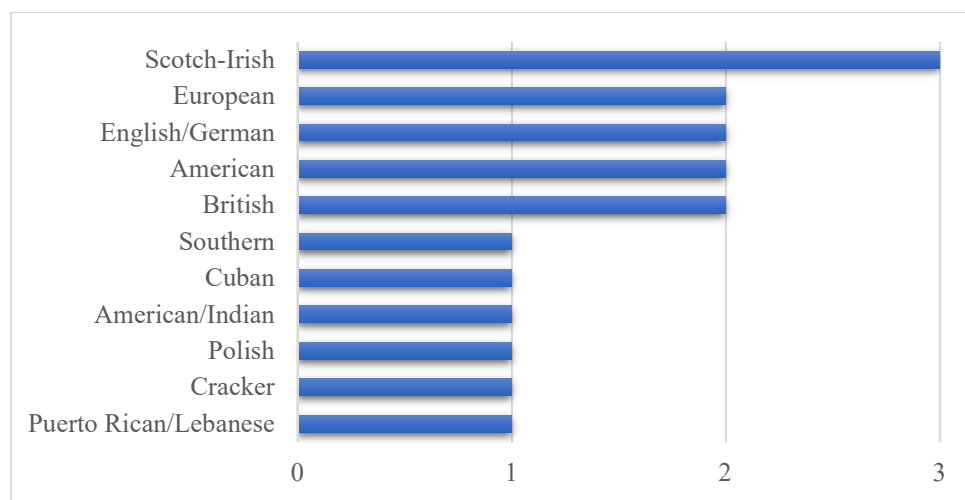


Figure 4.20: Docents’ Ethnic Identity

Nearly half the docents I interviewed are 60 or older (Fig. 4.21), but in reality, the three docents I spoke with who were in their 20s are among only a handful of permanent docents

under 40 years old. (This does not count History Connectors—high school students who help out during public events for school service hours).

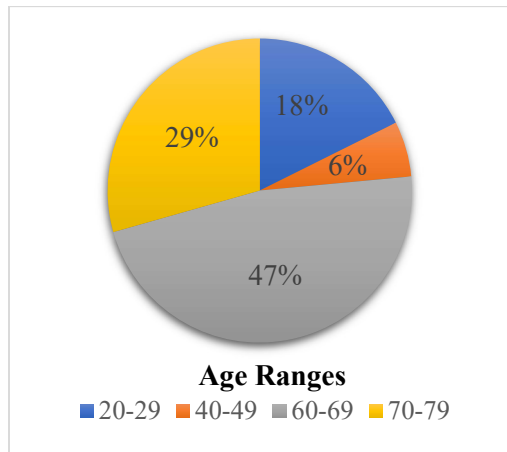


Figure 4.21: Docents' Age Distribution

Docents' religious affiliations (Fig. 4.22) were mostly various forms of protestant Christian (54%). Another 29% were Catholic, and 17% were not religious at all. Religious identity did not appear to reflect differences in age, ethnicity or even place of birth.

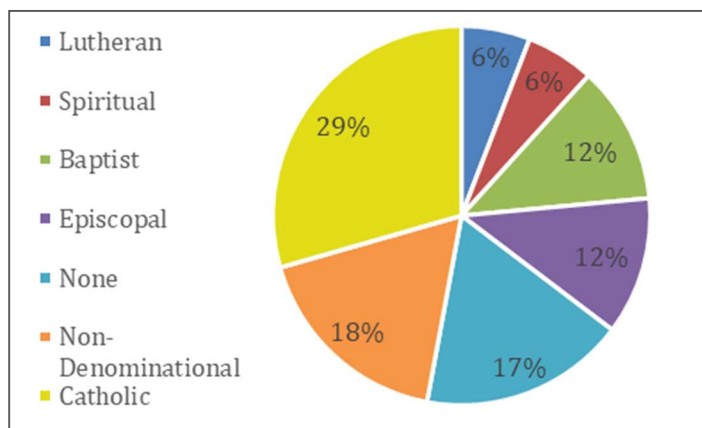


Figure 4.22: Docents' Religious Affiliation

Visitor Demographics

State fair visitors' ethnic and racial identities (Fig. 4.23) were just as complex as the docents'. The majority, 64%, of respondents were White, 17% were Hispanic, and 9% were African American. Most visitors who identified as White, did not clarify an ethnicity, while three others identified their race as White and their ethnicity as European, Texan, and "Everything", by which they meant every White, European country. Meanwhile, three visitors from Jamaica, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, respectively, identified their race as Black and their ethnicity as Caribbean. State fair visitors came from all over the world and every region of the U.S. (Fig. 4.24). There were three visitors from India, three from Canada, two from Ecuador, and one each from Saudi Arabia, Germany, Hungary, England, and Mexico. Only 30% of visitors were from Florida, and 17 of these were from Tampa.

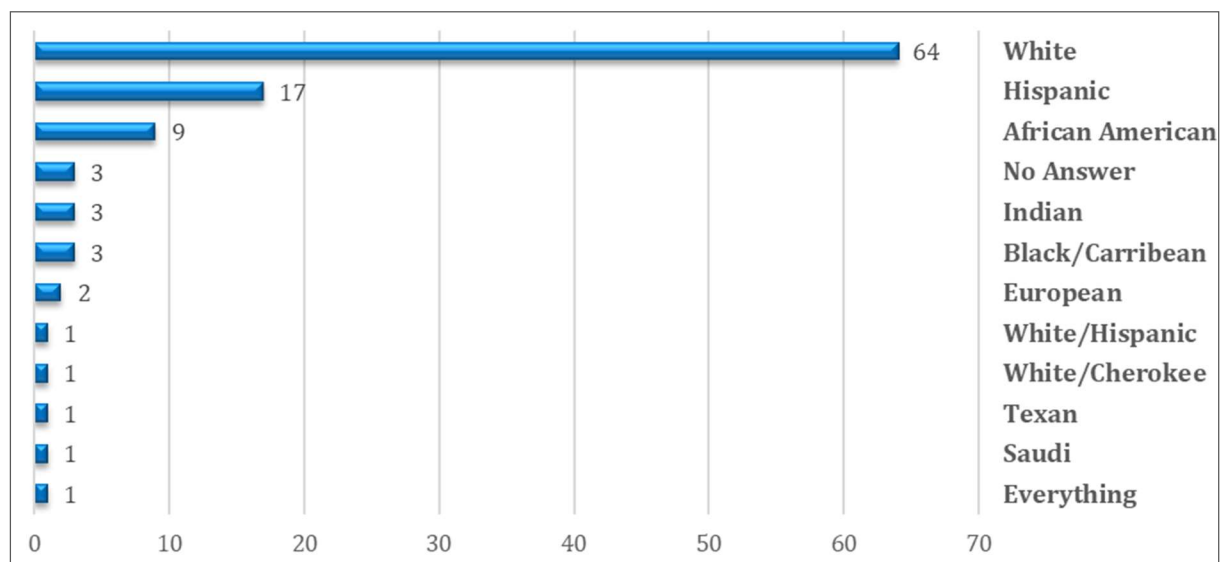


Figure 4.23: Visitors' Racial/Ethnic Identity

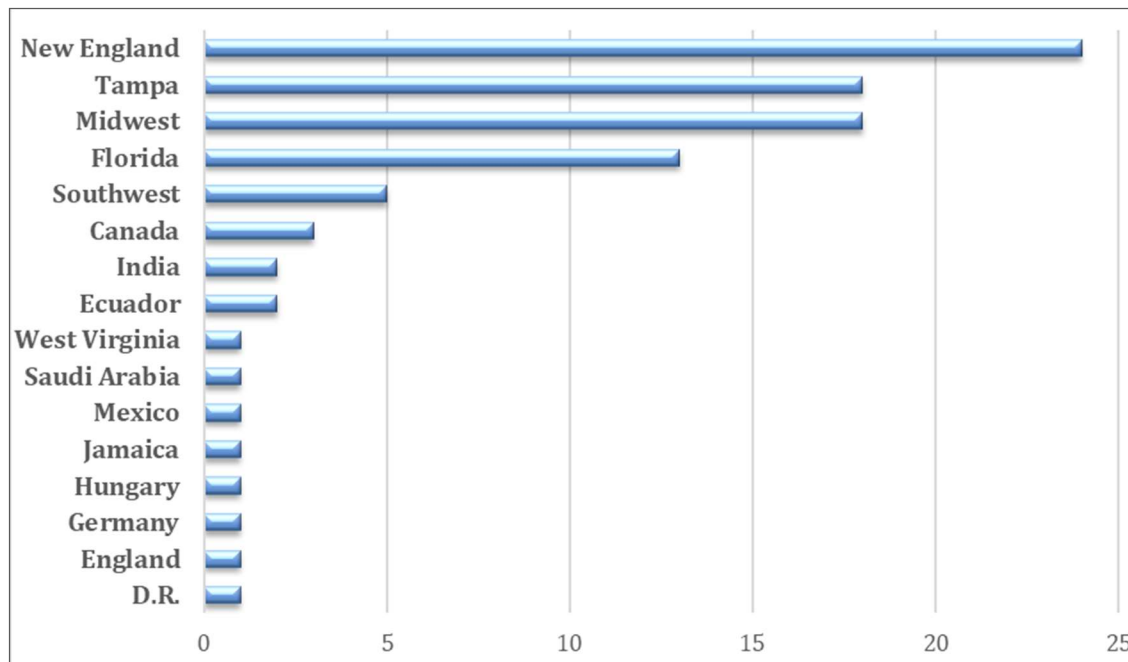


Figure 4.24: Visitors’ Places of Birth

40% of visitors identified as Christian—mostly Baptist and Non- Denominational— followed by 18% Catholic and 11% Atheist (Fig 4.25). Additionally, two of the three Indian visitors identified as Hindu and the other as Asatru; the visitor from Saudi Arabia was Muslim, and there was also a “Viking Pagan” from Hungary. 18% of respondents did not wish to answer.

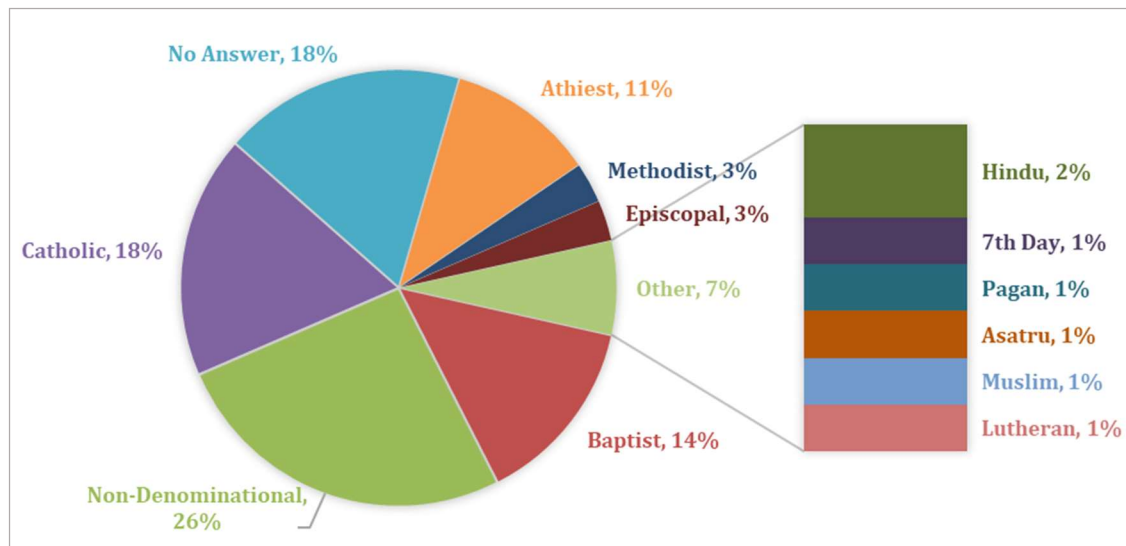


Figure 4.25: Visitors' Religious Affiliations

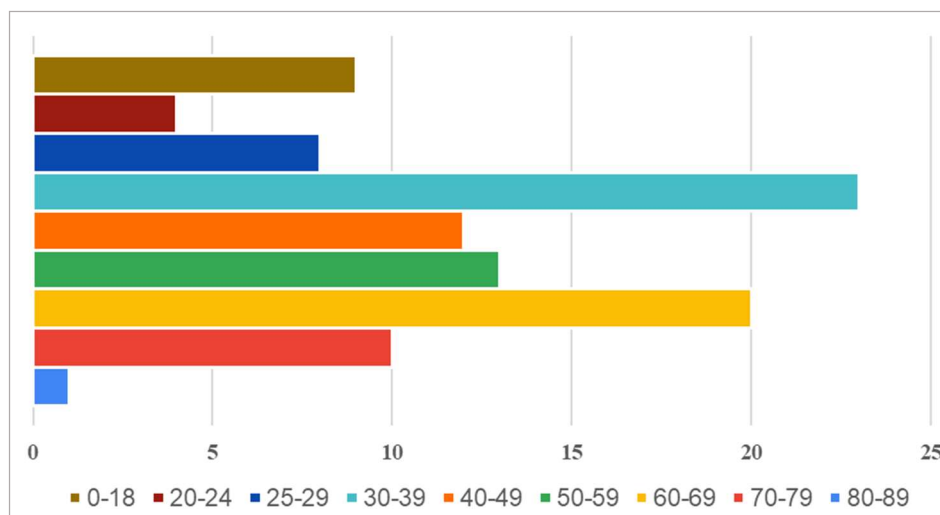


Figure 4.26: Visitors' Age Ranges

The data from the visitor surveys appears to show that Cracker Country is visited by all age groups during the Florida State Fair (Fig. 4.26). However, it should be noted that the proportion of younger visitors is largely skewed in this sample, because my first day conducting surveys happened to be during a field trip day for local high schools. Many of the students were

excited to participate in this survey, however, I had to leave out the responses of 5 participants who were under 18 years old. Seven of the 18-year-olds included in this research were school students surveyed during that first day. Throughout the rest of the survey period, I only spoke with two other 18-year-olds, who both said they did not plan on visiting the museum that day. Other than that, I saw very few young adult visitors and only a single college student out of 100 participants. The majority of the respondents were young parents in their 30s and 40s who were there with their children. 58 visitors surveyed were there with their children, or 64% of all respondents over 18. Surprisingly, senior visitors were only the second-largest age group. Motivations for visiting Cracker Country did not significantly differ by age. Young adults, parents, and older visitors alike said they were there “for something to do” at the fair, to show their younger family members “what life was like”, or because their families “made” them. Some older respondents, as well as one 18- year-old, said they were there for the “nostalgia.”

Teacher Demographics

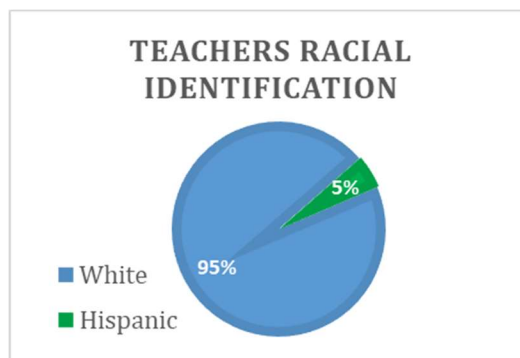


Figure 4.27: Teachers’ Racial Identification

The 20 teachers I interviewed were all women, and all but one identified as White or Caucasian. The one non-White respondent identified as Hispanic (Fig 4.27). The teachers’ responses to the question about race and ethnicity reveals the complexities of documenting such

a fluid concept as identity through survey instruments. For the docents and visitors, the demographic portion of the surveys included two separate lines for Race and Ethnicity, which resulted in the more detailed answers above. However, simply as a means to save space when formatting the document, I provided only one line on the teachers' survey for "Race/Ethnicity". As a result, all 20 teachers simply listed one word, either White, Caucasian, or Hispanic.

Teachers ranged in age from 33-66 with an average age of 49.7 (Fig. 4.28). Only six were born and raised in Florida, though they have all lived in the state for at least 10 years (29.4 years on average). The rest were born throughout the U.S. (Fig. 4.29), including the Midwest (n=4), Northwest (n=1), New England (n=4), and other Southeast states (n=3). Teachers were 40% Catholic, 35% protestant Christian, and 25% left the question blank (Fig. 4.30).

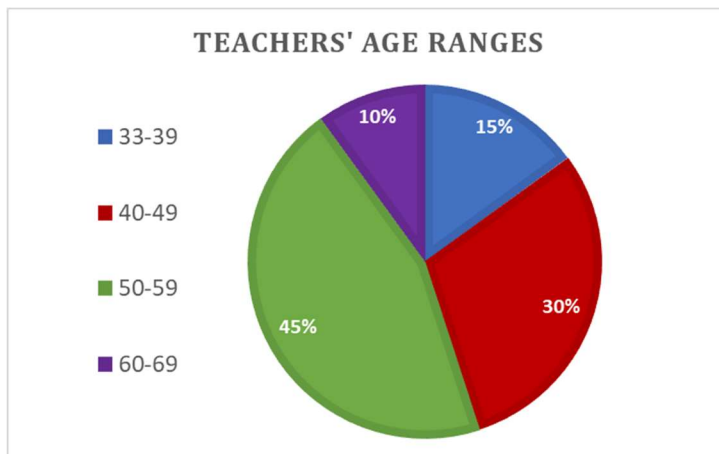


Figure 4.28: Teachers' Age Ranges

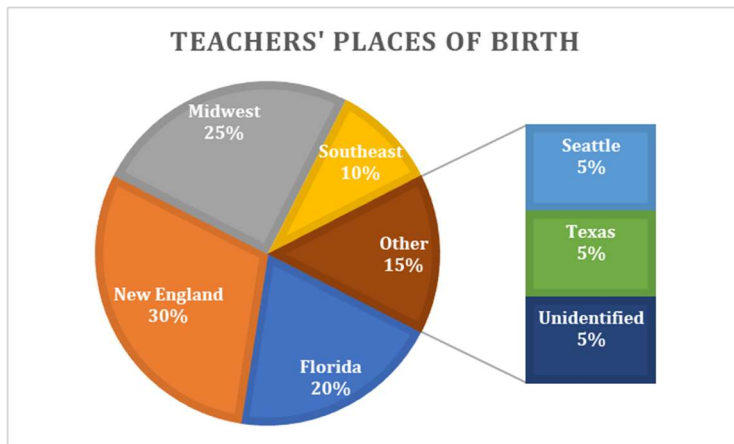


Figure 4.29: Teachers' Places of Birth

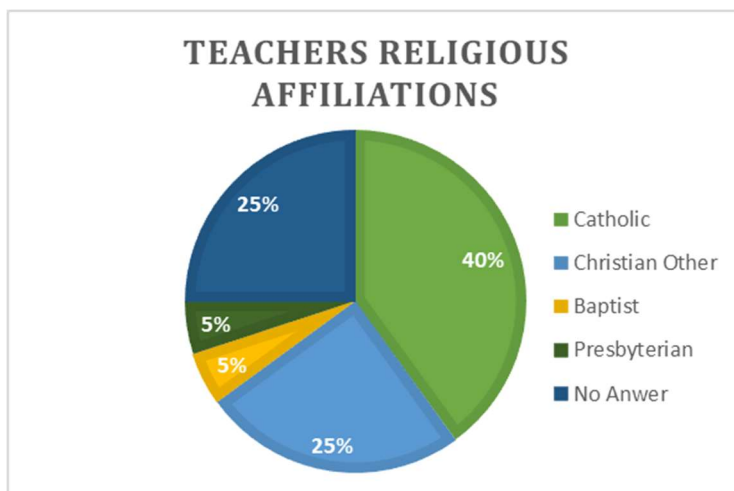


Figure 4.30: Teachers' Religious Affiliations

Now that we know a bit more about who Cracker Country's docents and visitors are, the question is how do these different stakeholders relate to the heritage experience offered at Cracker Country? What does the word "cracker" mean to docents, visitors, and teachers? What does it mean to *be* a Florida Cracker today, and who is or is not a "Cracker?"

“Cracker” Defined – Freelists

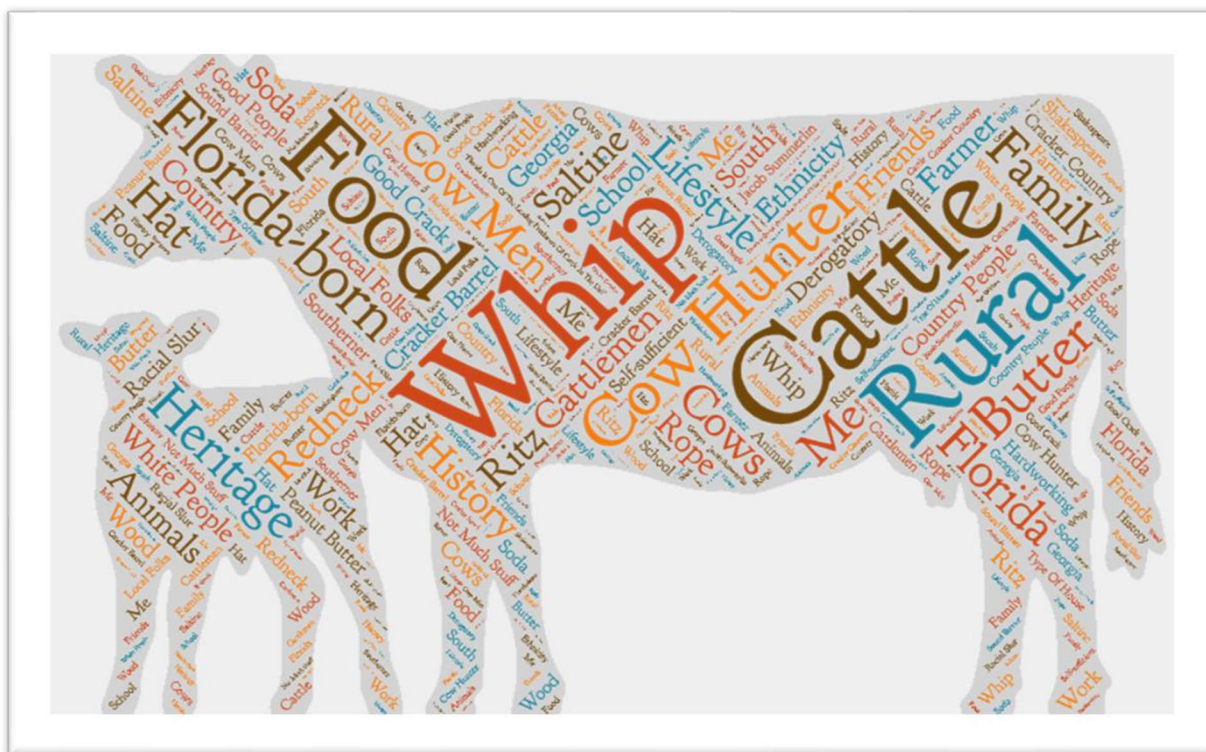


Figure 4.31: Cracker Word Cloud

What exactly does “cracker” mean to the various communities involved with Cracker Country? The image above was created for a poster presented to the museum (and members of the FSFA) in Fall 2019 as part of Dr. Antoinette Jackson’s Issues in Heritage and Tourism class. The word cloud was derived from interviews with 17 docents, but a word cloud built from teacher’s definitions of “cracker” would certainly produce a similar result, with a few caveats (see Table 4.2). I could not collect data on how state fair visitors defined “cracker” specifically, but the surveys still provide insight on how various visitors relate to and identify with the heritage Cracker Country represents. To understand how docents and teachers define “cracker”, I asked participants to list the first five words that come to mind when they hear the word.

Table 4.2: “Cracker” Free-List Word Frequencies

Docents		Teachers	
Whip	9	Whip	12
Food	6	Florida	7
Cattle	4	White	7
Cow Hunter	4	Native	6
Florida-born	4	Food	5
Rural	4	Cowboy	4
Heritage	3	Cattle	3
Butter	2	Rancher	3
Cow Men	2	Redneck	3
Family	2	Settler	3
Florida	2	Farm	2
History	2	Pioneer	2
Lifestyle	2	Rural	2
Redneck	2	Southern	2
White People	2	Slavery	1

Docents were asked to list the first words that come to mind when they hear the word “cracker.” The most commonly associated word was “whip” at 53%. 41% said “cattlemen”, 35% “Florida-born”, and another 35% said “country” or “rural”. Only two docents listed “White people” as a word that first comes to mind – these were the only two respondents who identified as non- White. When asked how “cracker” is defined *outside* Cracker Country, 100% of docents said it was “derogatory.” White docents equated the slur with “poor”, “uneducated,” “redneck”, or “white trash”, but only the two non-White docents associated it with “White people” in general. Interestingly, no one expressed concern about how this use of the word might impact visitors’ perceptions of the museum.

For teachers, however, it was the opposite. Although they also thought about words like “whip” (n=12), “cowboy” (n=4) and “Florida,” (n=7), teachers were more likely than docents to list the racial connotations of “cracker” as the first words that come to mind for them, including “White” (n=7) and “slavery” (n=1). When asked to consider other definitions, 6 teachers couldn’t think of any outside the narrative of the Florida cowboys, while 5 others actually listed characteristics of this theme as their “other” (i.e. secondary) definition, including “southern” (n=1), “country,” (n=2) and “Floridian” (n=2). This could be related to the fact that the majority of teachers were born and raised outside of Florida, so they never heard the Cracker Country narrative until they moved here. However, the majority of docents were also born out of state, so it seems more likely that docents have simply become so used to the museum’s interpretations that they hardly consider the alternatives anymore.

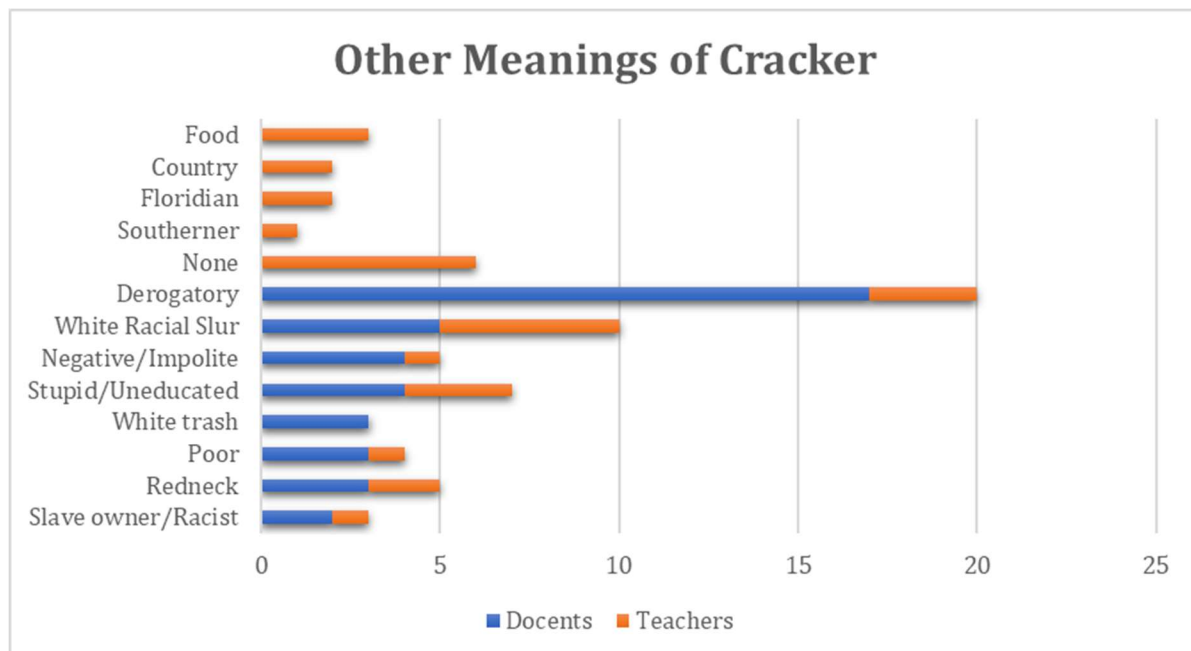


Figure 4.32: Docents’ and Teachers’ “Other” (Secondary) Meanings of “Cracker”

Degrees of Cracker Identity – Likert Scales

Docents' Degrees of Association with Florida Cracker Heritage

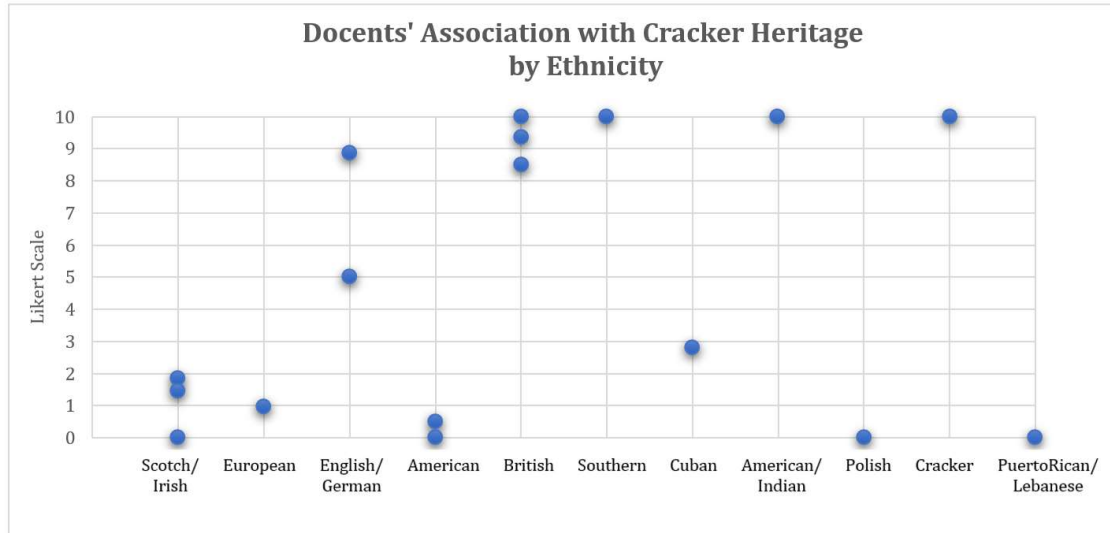


Figure 4.33: Docents' Degrees of Association with Florida Cracker Heritage by Ethnicity Identity

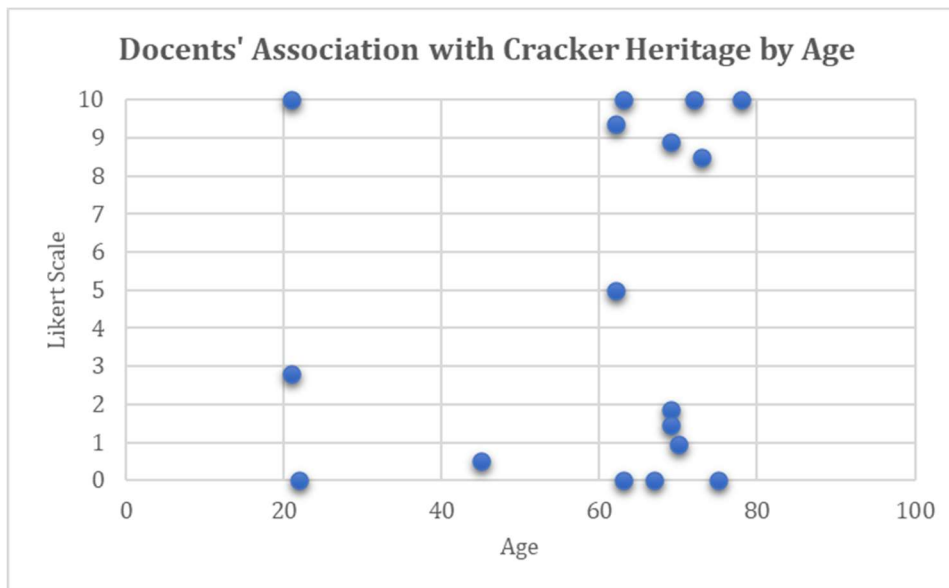


Figure 4.34: Docents' Degrees of Association with Cracker Heritage by Age

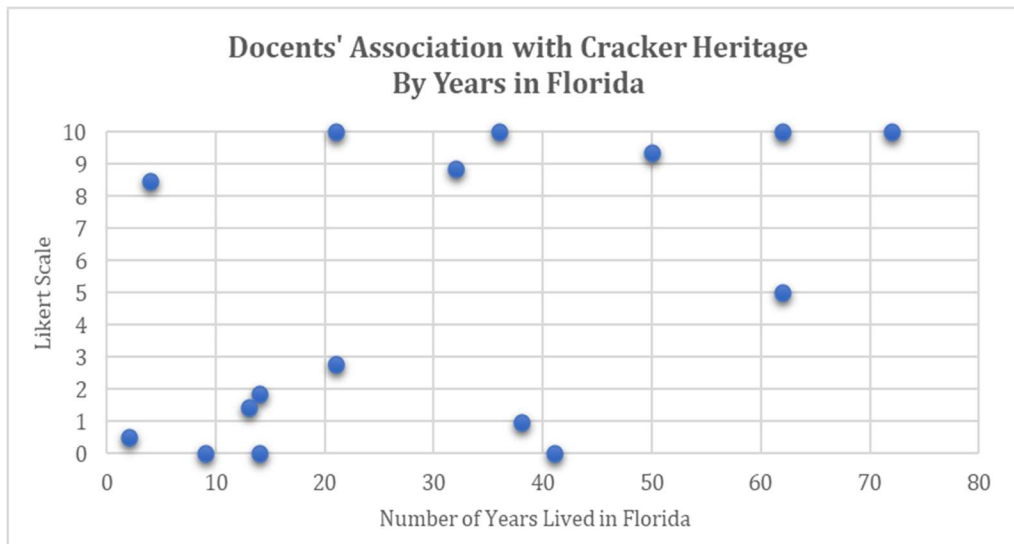


Figure 4.35: Docents' Degrees of Association with Cracker Heritage by Years in Florida

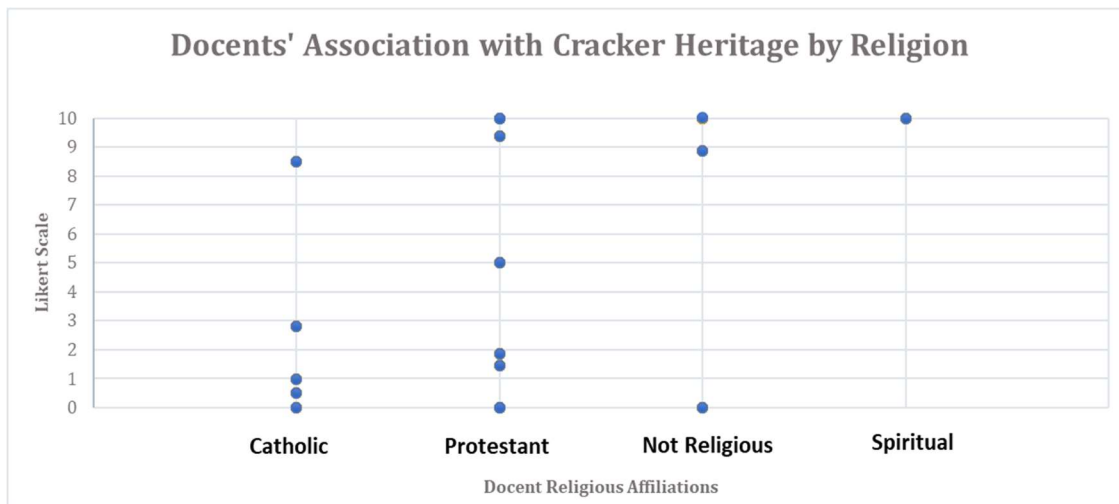


Figure 4.36: Docents' Degrees of Association with Cracker Heritage by Religion

Docents were asked to mark on a 10cm scale how much they identify with Cracker culture as part of their own personal heritage. Four of the docents claimed to be 100% Florida Cracker, and another four claimed to be at least 50% Cracker. Docents were most likely to identify highly with Cracker heritage if they were born in Florida or spent over half their lives

here (Fig. 4.35). Race and ethnicity are determining factors. All four respondents who claimed 100% Cracker heritage were White, born in Florida, and listed their ethnicity respectively as “Cracker”, “Southern”, “American”, and “Scotch/Irish”. Those who claimed 50% or more Cracker heritage were all of English or Scotch/Irish decent (Fig. 4.33). Religion, however, does not appear to be a determining factor for associating with Cracker culture. The majority of docents were protestant Christian, but docents were just as likely to rank themselves high on the “Cracker scale” if they were Catholic, not religious, or simply “spiritual” (Fig. 4.36). One of the more surprising findings was that age has very little to do with Cracker identity (Fig. 4.34). One docent who claimed to be full Cracker was only 21 years old. She is part of the 4-H Club, participates in rodeos and whip demonstrations and is proud to be able to pass on these traditions at Cracker Country.

Some docents suggested that to be a Cracker, “You have to be born in Florida.” Yet, the majority of docents I interviewed (53%) were born elsewhere in the United States (and one in England!). Of these, only three claimed no relation to Cracker heritage at all – a Puerto Rican/Lebanese woman from New Jersey and an African American man from Philadelphia (the two non-White docents) and a second-generation Polish man from Hamtramck, Michigan. Everyone else could be considered – as one non-Florida-born docent put it – “Crackers in training.”

Visitors’ Degrees of Association with the Overall Heritage Represented at Cracker Country

Because I was asked not to question state fair visitors about the meanings of the word “cracker,” I asked them instead to rate on a scale from 0-10 how much they personally identify with the heritage being represented at Cracker Country. Their answers were interesting:

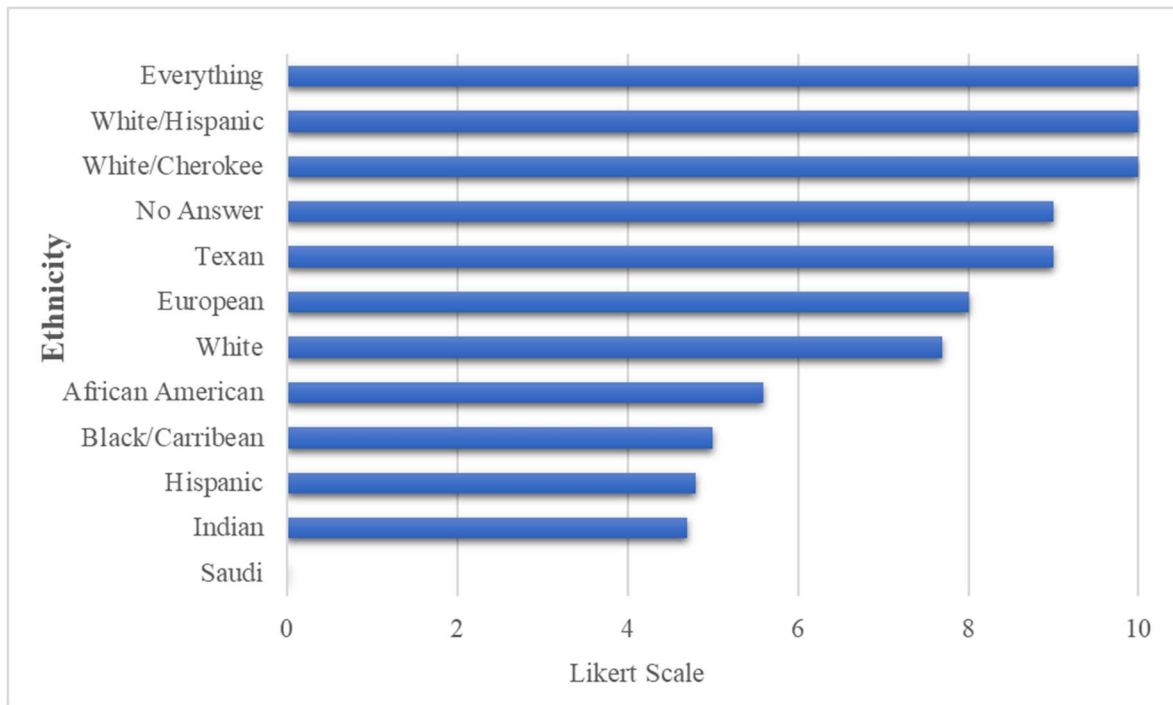


Figure 4.37: Visitors' Average Degree of Association with the Heritage Represented at Cracker Country by Ethnicity.

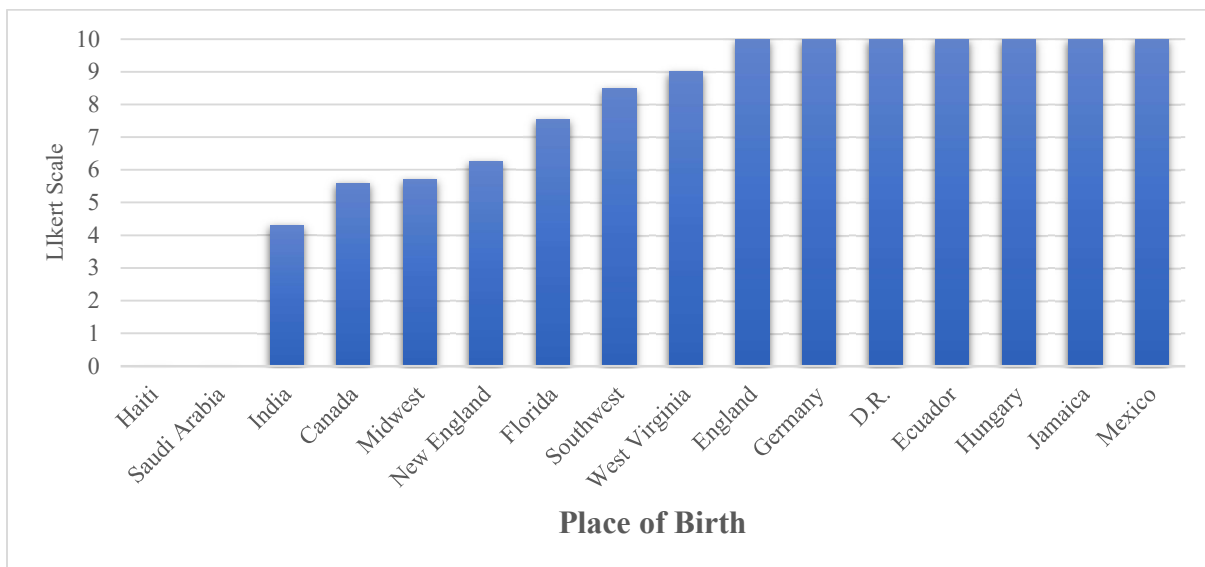


Figure 4.38: Visitors' Average Degree of Association with the Heritage Represented at Cracker Country by Place of Birth

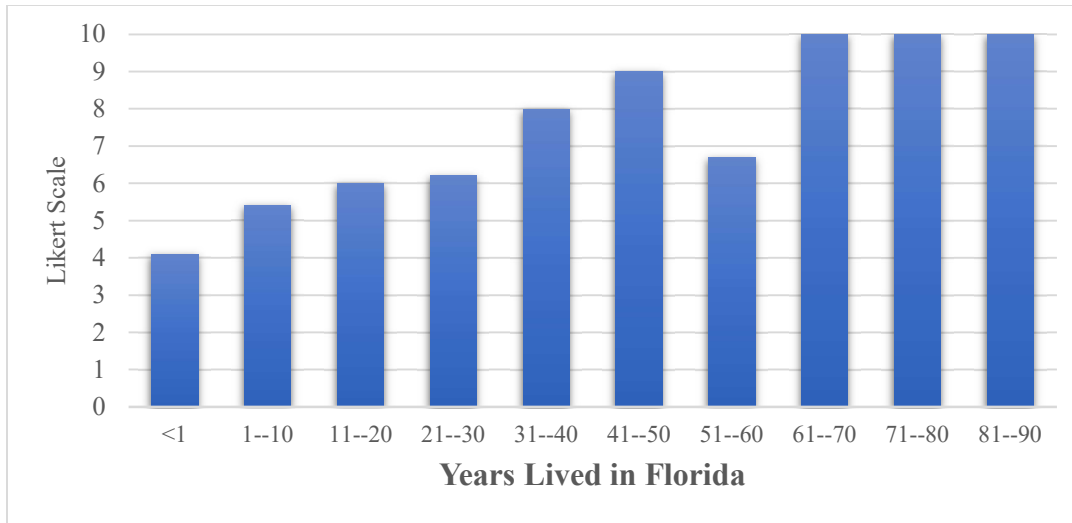


Figure 4.39: Visitors' Average Degree of Association with the Heritage Represented at Cracker Country by Years in Florida

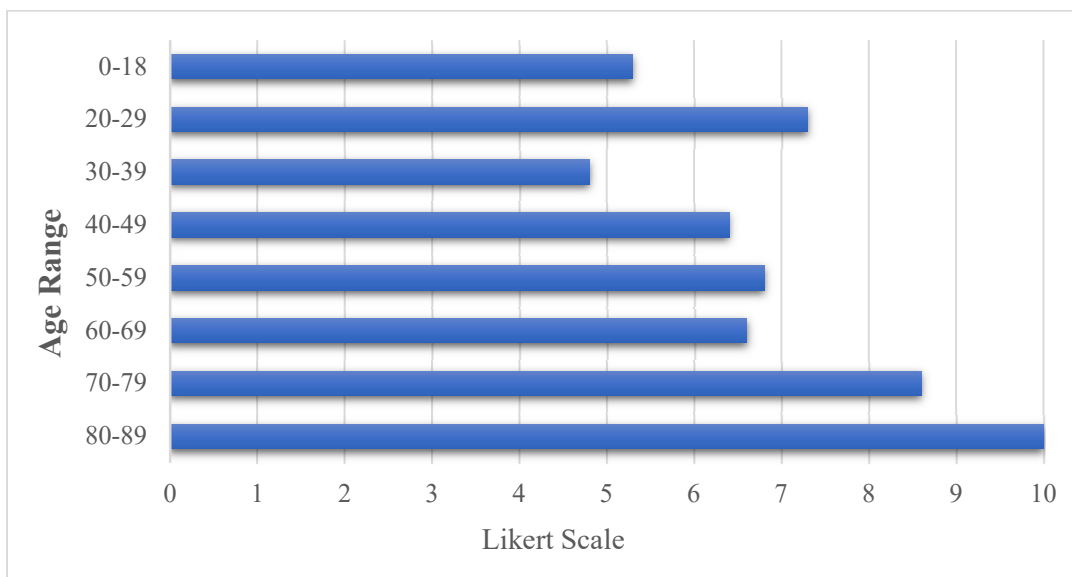


Figure 4.40: Visitors' Average Degree of Association with the Heritage Represented at Cracker Country by Age Range

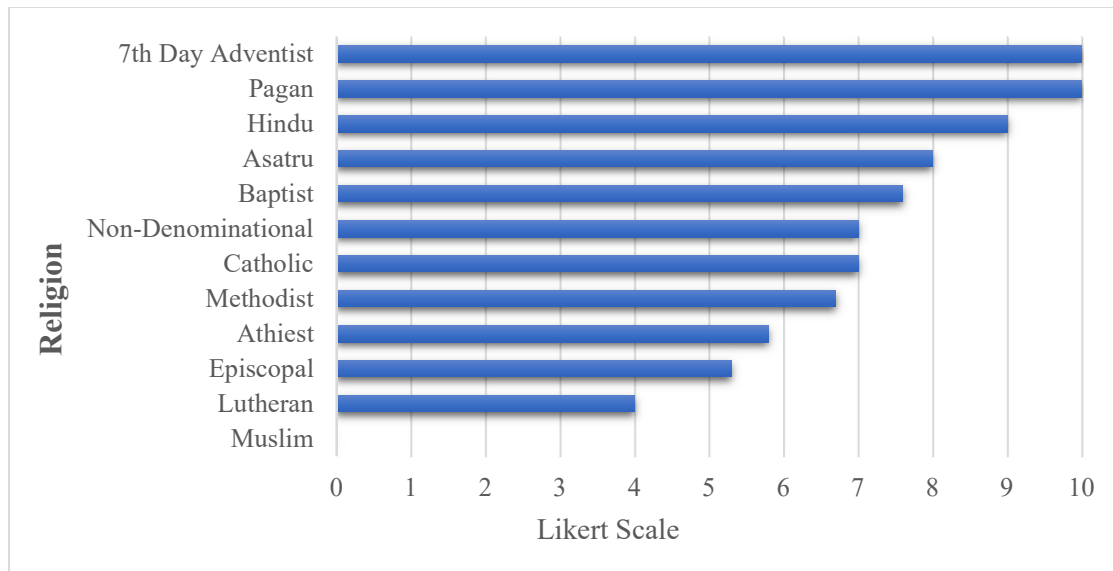


Figure 4.41: Visitors’ Average Degree of Association with the Heritage Represented at Cracker Country by Religion

Visitors’ racial identity seems to have the biggest impact on how much they associate with the representation of Florida heritage presented at Cracker Country. On average, White visitors, as well as those who identified as “European”, “Texan”, and “Everything”, were more likely to mark 5/10 or more on the Likert scale (Fig. 4.37). However, when you break the identities down into different ethnic groups or geographical backgrounds, things become more complex (Fig. 4.38). For instance, out of the three individuals who identified as Black/Caribbean, two of them marked a 10 on the scale, suggesting that they 100% associate with the heritage presented at Cracker Country. These respondents were from Jamaica and the Dominican Republic. On the other hand, a woman from Haiti marked 0/10, meaning the construction of heritage at Cracker Country does not relate to her at all. Otherwise, almost every visitor who was born outside of the U.S., rated their degree of association a 10 on the Likert Scale. This suggests that whatever the cultural background of visitors, there is something about Cracker Country that resonates with them personally.

Looking at the data, this could be related to how many years visitors have spent living in Florida (Fig. 4.39). There is, on average, almost a direct correlation between how long visitors have lived in Florida and the degree to which they personally relate to the heritage presented at Cracker Country. Visitors who lived here for 50-60 years were a smaller sample than the other ranges.

In general, visitors seemed to associate more with Cracker Country's heritage reproductions the older they were (Fig. 4.40). However, 18-29-year-olds on average, marked a significantly higher degree of association than 30-39-year-olds. This may be because the majority (85%) of 18-29-years-olds lived in Florida over half their lives, while 41% of 30-39-year-olds have lived here for less than 10 years. Additionally, the latter were more likely to be there with their kids to enjoy the fair. Many were less concerned with the history being represented than the "peace and quiet" of the museum and the chance to let their kids "run around" in a safer area.

Religion seemed to have little impact on visitors' association with Cracker Country heritage (Fig. 4.41). Seventh Day Adventists, Hindus, Asatru, Baptists, and even a self-proclaimed Viking Pagan all marked 8 or more on the Likert scale. Catholics on average marked it a bit lower at 7/10. Muslim was the only religion identified that claimed no association with Cracker Country.

Teachers' Degrees of Association with Florida Cracker Heritage

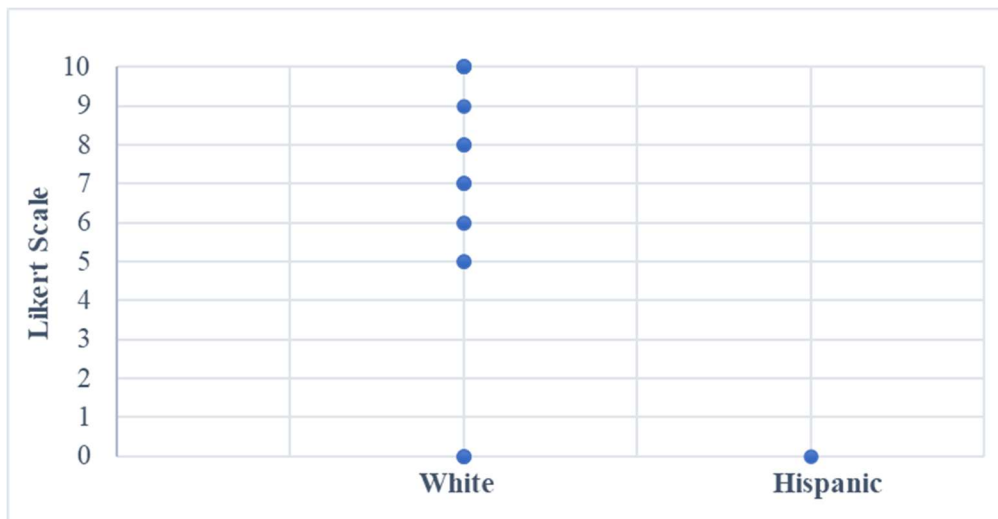


Figure 4.42: Teachers' Degrees of Association with Cracker Heritage by Race/Ethnicity

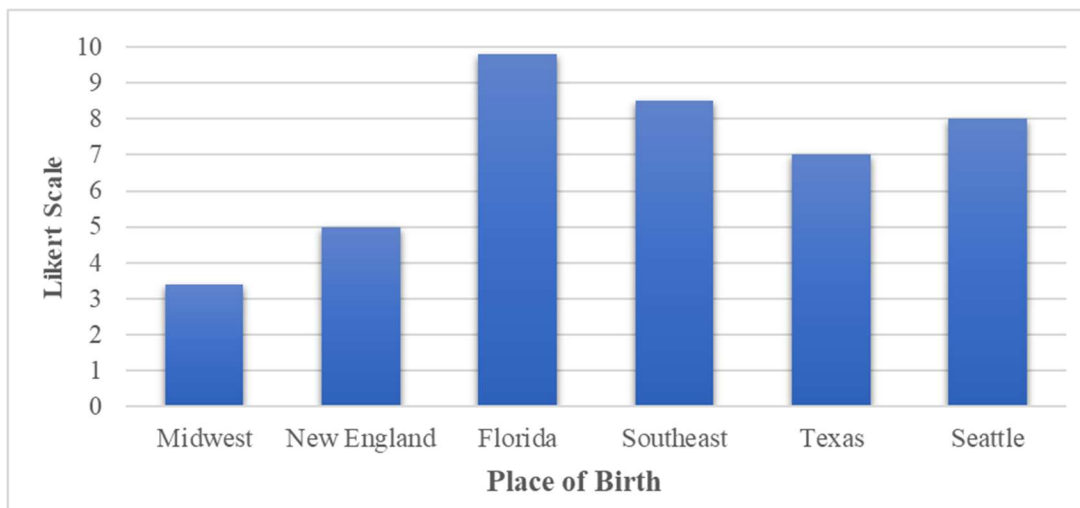


Figure 4.43: Teachers' Average Degrees of Association with Cracker Heritage by Place of Birth

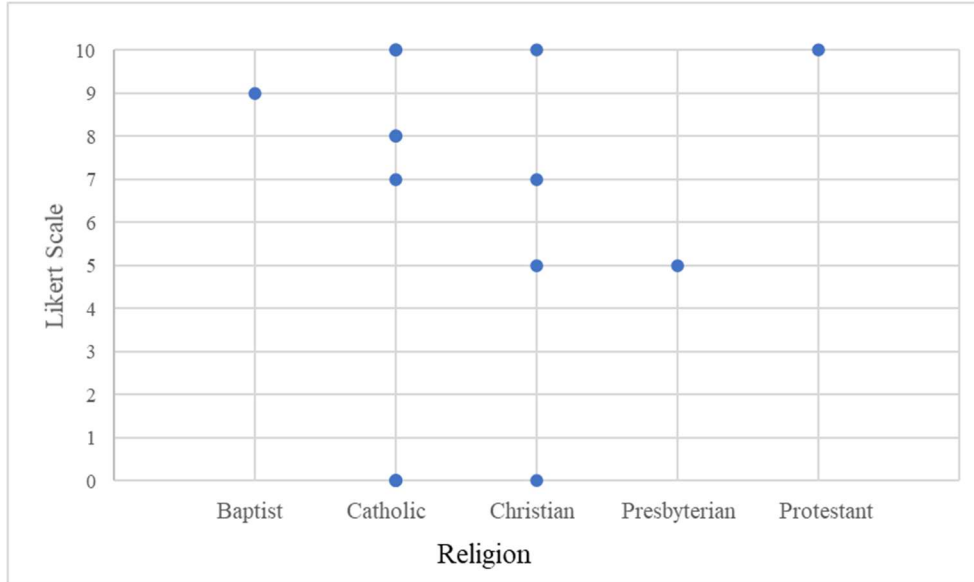


Figure 4.44: Teachers' Degrees of Association with Cracker Heritage by Religion

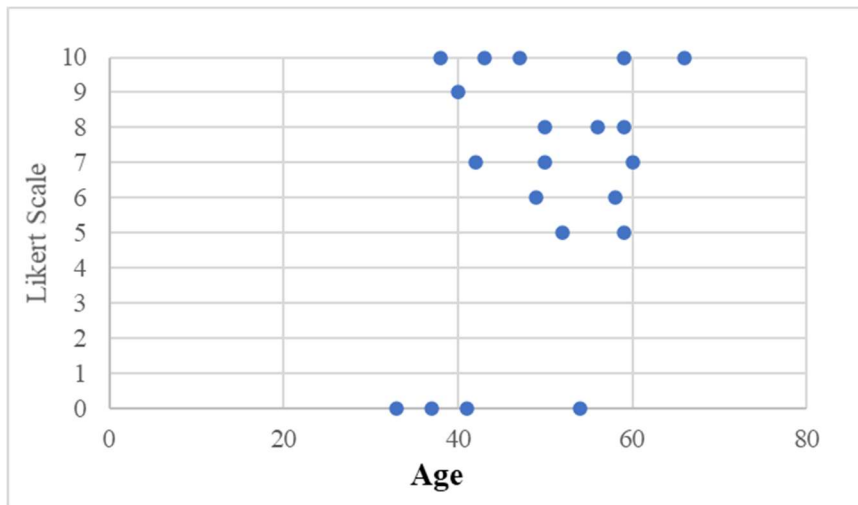


Figure 4.45: Teachers' Degrees of Association with Cracker Heritage by Age

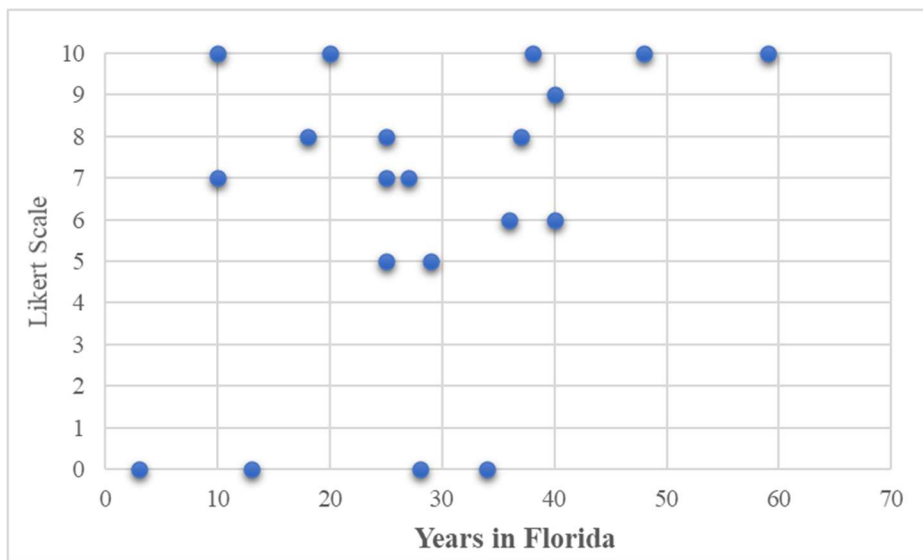


Figure 4.46: Teachers' Degrees of Association with Cracker Heritage by Years in Florida

Since teachers were less forthcoming about their ethnic backgrounds, I could not trace any patterns in cultural background and how teachers associate with the Florida Cracker heritage. And since all but one respondent identified as White, it is not clear how much race plays a role in teachers' perceptions of their relation to Cracker culture. The only non-White respondent, who identified as Hispanic, marked 0 on the Likert scale. But, so did five White teachers (Fig. 4.42).

Birthplace (Fig. 4.43). seems to play some factor, as those teachers who were born in Florida (n=4) identified the most with Cracker heritage at 9.8 out of 10 on average. Those from other Southeast states identified with it the second most at 8.5 on average. The two teachers from Texas and Seattle also claimed a high degree of association with Cracker heritage. On average, the teachers who identified with Cracker heritage the least were from the Midwest and New England. Only four teachers from New Jersey, Kansas, and Indiana marked 0 on the Likert scale.

Once again, religion does not appear to play much of a role in determining Cracker identity (Fig. 4.44). Of the 15 teachers who identified with a religion, all were Christian and a majority (n=8) were Catholic. 3 Catholics and 1 non-denominational Christian marked 0 Cracker affiliation, but everyone else, including those who did not identify with a religion, marked 5 or more on the Likert Scale. For the teachers, age also does not appear to play too much of a role in determining Cracker identity, although no one over 55-years-old marked 0 on the Likert Scale (Fig. 4.45). Unlike with docents and state fair visitors, Cracker identity does not seem to be impacted by how many years teachers have lived in Florida (Fig. 4.46).

Overall, the demographic data provided by docents, teachers, and state fair visitors, shows varying degrees of association with Cracker heritage across different spectrums of identity. What, then, do modern-day Florida Crackers have in common? What are the factors that lead different individuals to identify strongly with Florida Cracker heritage as it is produced by Cracker Country?

Florida Crackers and the Reproduction of Cultural and Racial Identity

More than any other aspect of identity, race seems to play the biggest role in determining Cracker identity. Of course, White respondents made up the vast majority of research participants among docents, visitors, and teachers, which could potentially skew the results for how strongly different groups associate with Cracker heritage. However, the very fact that non-White groups are underrepresented among Cracker Country visitors and staff, suggests that if anything, the Likert scale data from these groups is skewed upward, as those who participated in the survey are also those who chose to visit Cracker Country. Thus, it is safe to conclude that those who identify as White are far more likely to claim a high degree of Cracker identity than non-White individuals.

However, different degrees of Cracker association can be found among both White and non-White respondents due largely to cultural background. According to several of the docents and teachers, a true Cracker must be Florida-born; however, the data reveals that place of birth has minimal bearing on how strongly a person might identify with Cracker heritage. While those born in Florida tend to associate highly with Cracker identity, several people from Jamaica, Germany, Hungary, Mexico, and India also claimed a high degree of association. For those born in the U.S., people from western states like Texas and Nevada associated more highly with Cracker heritage, on average, than those from the Midwest or New England. But this was not the case for every individual. In general, place of birth appears to have less importance than the particular lifestyle a person lived in that place. For example, a docent who was born and raised in Nevada, said she identified with the story of the Florida cowmen, because she witnessed many cattle drives growing up. Similarly, one of the state fair visitors from Jamaica said she related strongly with the heritage represented at Cracker Country, because the buildings reminded her of the one-room school house and church she grew up with, and a visitor from Wisconsin marked a 10 on the Likert scale because, “I was country before country was cool.” Meanwhile, a woman from New Jersey marked only a 2 because “I’m modern,” she said.

This distinction between “country” and “modern” is an interesting one. Those who associate more highly with Cracker heritage tend to see it as a way of life that still exists—specifically, a rural, Southern country lifestyle, defined by farmland, cattle, and close-knit family groups. For example, an 82-year-old man from Lakeland, Florida, said he identified with Cracker Culture because his “clan is still very close.” On the other hand, for those who do not identify with the heritage presented at Cracker Country, particularly those from more urban areas, the Cracker lifestyle must seem like a thing of the past, a museum reproduction of “how things

were”, rather than a “way of life” to be passed on to future generations. This could also explain one of the patterns revealed by the data: that those who have lived in Florida longer feel more connected to the Florida Cracker narrative. According to one of the docents, a 71-year-old who has lived in Florida for nearly 40 years, a true Cracker is someone who is native to Florida, whose ancestors raised children and cattle and oranges here. But if you’ve lived here long enough, you could consider yourself a “Cracker in training.”

Perhaps the most “authentically” Cracker person I met in the course of this project, would be Mr. Ray, Cracker Country’s whip master, who gave me explicit permission to use his name. Ray is a 74-year-old White man who grew up on a farm in Florida and got his first cattle whip from his father when he was 9 years old. He identifies his race as Caucasian and his ethnicity as both “American” and “Cherokee” due to his grandmother’s Cherokee family. He also identified as 100% Cracker on the Likert scale. When I asked him to explain why, he replied, “I *am* a Florida Cracker.” Another native-born Florida Cracker is a young docent who has also grown up with a whip in her hand. This 21-year-old identifies as White, “Southern”, and 100% Cracker. She belongs to the 4-H club and Future Farmers of America and hopes to master whip cracking herself. Among her list of words that come to mind when she hears the word “cracker,” are “Me” and “Florida”. When asked to explain, she replied that “heritage is you” and “place makes the person.”

But not everyone who identifies as fully Cracker is Florida-born. The five teachers who marked 10/10 on the Likert scale were from Florida, North Carolina and New York City; although, the one from NYC has lived in Florida for nearly 50 years. For these teachers, the first words that come to mind when they hear the word “cracker” are “whip”, “cowboy”, “Florida native”, and “saltine”. One of these teachers assured me that the more derogatory meaning of the

word “was an outdated term not used politely”. At the same time, however, teachers who did not identify as fully Cracker were more likely to list the more impolite uses of the word as the first to come to mind.

Docents were all aware of the more negative connotations of the word. Every docent said it could also be used as a “derogatory” term. Most recognized it as racial slur for poor, uneducated White Southerners. However, only one docent that I spoke with commented on the impacts such meanings could have on the museum and its visitors:

The kids note it; especially the Black kids are not thrilled with the word, because Florida has a terrible history with Black folks. So, I think that's the major reason the Black kids are more sensitive to the word. They've heard it from their parents that, ‘These are people that aren't good, that aren't nice to us.’ And one of the things I try and do is dispel that notion and show that not everybody's redneck that's a cracker. They're not synonymous. This docent was born in Long Beach, California and has lived in Florida for 13 years with her native-born Florida husband, who is also a docent. She identifies as 15% Cracker; her husband 100%. When asked how *he* feels about the derogatory meanings of the word, he said, "They don't bother me. I think they're hilarious. I mean, I've got an MBA, my son has a masters, my grandfather was a superintendent, my dad was a doctor . . . We came from education. So, I think it's hilarious that people think that somebody from the South is dumb.”

In general, docents were not bothered by the derogatory use of the word “cracker”, because they did not feel that it related to them personally. This was especially true for the non-White docents. As the woman from Perth Amboy explained,

It's not my cultural heritage. I'm not really White, not born in Florida. I was raised in Tampa, not a farm. My dad is Lebanese and my mom is Puerto Rican. I'm a first-generation American. Growing up, I knew it as a racial term, so hearing people say it so openly was a little weird because I didn't know people positively identified with that!

A White docent from the Midwest also said he had never heard the word used in a positive way growing up. When he told his brother that he was working at Cracker Country, and told him the origin of the name, his brother didn't believe it. "He said, 'They just made that up!' And for all I know, they did!" This theory may have some merit, as one older docent who grew up in Florida said she remembers a time when being called a "cracker" was not a positive thing. "It was like calling a Black a n****r," she said. "Middle class Whites called poor Whites 'cracker' in the 50s. There were no visible positive vibes then. Some people were proud of it, maybe. I wouldn't have been."

These days, however, many White Floridians do positively identify as Crackers. As one docent put it, "It's a thing of pride." For these folks, any negative connotations of the word "cracker" have nothing to do with "Florida Crackers." Anyone who uses the word in such a way is either uneducated about the "true" history of the word, or as another docent said, "just being a bully." The few who identified most strongly with their Cracker heritage did in fact express discontent with the word being used as a slur. "I find it offensive. It's ignorant, racist, and hurtful," said the young whip master-in-training. "It's demeaning and it's hateful, and undeserved," said another.

In the next section, I will further discuss how teachers interpret the various meanings of the word "cracker", and what this all means for the elementary school students who are Cracker Country's main audience. Through interviews with 20 teachers who attended Cracker Country

field trips, as well as discussions with docents, I explore the various roles teachers and docents play in the reproduction of cultural and ethnic identity among school children, and discuss some strategies for making museum education more inclusive and representative of all children.

V. **Research Question 3: What are the implications of packaging the "Florida Cracker" heritage for school children, and how can local educators and museum staff navigate the domains of power to respond to the challenges of reproducing the past in the present?**

Which Schools Attend Cracker Country Field Trips?

The 20 teachers interviewed for this project all attended a Cracker Country field trip with their class in 2019. Each participant represents one class from one of the 172 schools that visited the museum that year. The teachers interviewed came mostly from Hillsborough County (55%), as well as Pasco (15%), Pinellas (10%), and Sarasota (10%). One teacher also came all the way from Clermont in Lake County, while another teaches online and brought students from all over Tampa Bay (Fig. 4.47). The teachers represent 7 (39%) private Christian schools, 7 public schools, 3 charter schools (17%), and 1 online charter school.

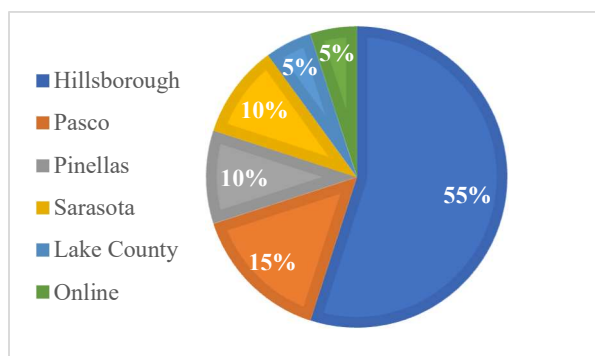


Figure 4.47: Percentage of schools by county that participated in a Cracker Country field trip in 2019 (among teachers interviewed)

Crackers in the Classroom: Social Studies Curriculum and the Cracker Country Field Trip

My interviews with teachers who attended Cracker Country field trips revealed a surprising amount of overlap between what is taught at the museum and the social studies curriculum prescribed by Florida Statute 1003.41: Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. For instance, the social studies standard for first grade is “Life Then and Now”, which focuses on how technology as a whole has changed over the centuries. This is a recurring theme among docents’ historical interpretations during school tours. In fourth grade, students focus specifically on Florida History, and one of the standards (SS.4.A.4.2) requires that teachers “Describe Pioneer Life in Florida.” All teachers agree that the field trip fits perfectly with Florida’s education standards, but not everyone agreed on the adequacy of the standards themselves. One fourth-grade teacher said, “[Cracker Country] fits in with the history of Florida somewhat, but we do not have enough time to teach about it before we go. Unfortunately, social studies is not emphasized very much in our curriculum.” A second-grade teacher echoed this sentiment, stating that “[Cracker Country] does fit into our curriculum, but this is not a high priority in elementary school. Unfortunately, a lot of time is not devoted to teaching social studies.”

Whatever the pitfalls of Florida’s social studies education in general, all the teachers were happy with Cracker Country’s ability to bring the curriculum to life for their students. As one first-grade teacher explained:

It is one thing to read about washing clothes by hand, and going to school in a one room class with your entire family, but to walk around and see that played out really makes a connection in students’ schema that cannot be achieved by books or videos alone. Young learners especially retain information by practicing and experiencing.

Before their Cracker Country field trip, teachers prepare their students in different ways. 50% of the teachers said they use Cracker Country's own lesson plan materials, which include worksheets and activities that foster historical thinking and help students compare life "then and now". These worksheets reiterate many of the overarching themes of Cracker Country, such as the value of hard work and self-sufficiency, gender roles, and the Crackers' complicated relationship with Florida's natural environments (see Appendix E). Most of the teachers who used the museum's classroom materials were pleased with them. However, one teacher said that while the lesson plans were "well written and easy to implement, [they] need more information about what life was like for non-Whites in Florida during the time frame represented."

None of the other teachers mentioned the lack of representation in Cracker Country's educational materials. This seems to be due to the fact that elementary school social studies standards are centered around generalizations about what life was like in "the past", rather than for specific groups. For example, two first-grade teachers said they usually schedule their field trip around Thanksgiving, when students are learning about Native Americans and Colonial America. According to one, "a first-grade standard is comparing life long ago to your life today and this [field trip] and learning about the country's beginnings really fall in line with our social studies standards." Several said their class reads *A Land Remembered*, by Patrick D. Smith, which one second-grade teacher said "ties our curriculum to Cracker Country even more."

A Land Remembered

When Patrick D. Smith published *A Land Remembered* in 1984, it became an instant classic. The book tells the story of three generations of the McIvey family, who came to Florida from Georgia in the mid-1800s. Readers follow the McIvey men as they rise from humble Cracker beginnings, struggling to carve out a life in the harsh Florida wilderness, to become

millionaire tycoons. Throughout the journey, each generation of McIvey men faces challenges and triumphs. Tobias McIvey is conscripted by the Confederacy to herd cattle for the cause, despite wanting to keep his family out of the war altogether. Afterward, Tobias makes a name for himself as a cattle rancher and a friend to the most vulnerable. He befriends Seminoles and provides jobs for a former enslaved man named Skillit and the town drunks named Frog and Bonzo. Zech, the second generation of McIveys, has a youthful affair with a daughter of Tobias' Seminole friends, resulting in an illegitimate child named Toby. Zech later marries and has another son, Solomon, with a White woman. Zech follows in his father's footsteps as a cattleman until his wife is impaled by one of the bulls. He kills the bull in revenge, but maims his foot in the process and dies soon after. Although Toby is Zech's first son, it is Solomon who we follow for the final generation of McIveys. Solomon, enraged with the world after the death of his parents and later his wife, is overcome with greed. He becomes a millionaire real estate developer, draining swamps to make farmland, and building a dike around Lake Okeechobee, destroying his half-brother's Seminole village in the process. The book ends with Solomon McIvey dying sad and alone, guilt-ridden over the destruction he brought to the beloved land he remembers.

This book has been included in Florida classrooms for decades, and in 2001, Pineapple Press, Inc. even came out with a young readers' version of the book along with a teachers' manual. The introduction to the teachers' manual says,

In our classes, we are concerned with preserving our quickly disappearing heritage and environment. *A Land Remembered* lends itself to an integrated, across-the-curriculum study of Florida—its history, geology, and ecology. . . In your journey through this book, you will find a representation of many of the early cultures that made Florida what it is

today. Patrick Smith gives you a true picture of what it was like to be an early cow hunter who relied on the Seminole Indians for help with rounding up the wild cattle left behind by Spanish conquistadors. Smith also interweaves Florida's role in the Civil War and the plight of African Americans after the war. *A Land Remembered* also gives an accurate and vivid picture of the early days of Florida's cattle industry (Smith 2001).

In the forward to the 2001 student version, Florida's then Secretary of State Katherine Harris wrote a glowing review of the book, saying:

It is a great pleasure to introduce a new generation of readers to one of my favorite books, given to me years ago by my grandfather, who also loved it. It tells an authentic and exciting story set amidst Florida's unique historical and cultural heritage. As you follow this family through several generations, you will see our state as it was then and understand better how it came to be as we know it today.

As two teachers commented, the social studies curriculum in Florida is not highly prioritized. Because of this, certain topics are bound to be left out. Despite efforts in past years to make education more multicultural, in practice, this tends to result in different groups taking on supporting roles in the overall story of White Florida. This story includes narratives of the Lost Cause, which normalize, sanitize, and glorify whiteness. White Floridians are casually credited with the state's every social and technological advancement, for transforming Florida from an uninhabitable swampland to the booming tourism and agricultural economy it is today. The fact that Native groups were living on and developing the land for millennia before Europeans even knew about it is irrelevant to this story. So, too, is the fact that most of the land developed in the 19th century was in fact a result of the skilled labor of enslaved Blacks. Popular histories of Florida from the 1930s onward brush over the violence and complexities of the Seminole Wars,

erasing the existence of free Black communities and Black Seminoles, and painting Native groups as either savages or peace-keepers (Knight 2014). Similarly, the racial violence and oppression of Blacks in the post-Civil War years is glossed over and sanitized, especially in school textbooks (Williams and Agosto 2012). Students may know that segregation was something that happened “back then”, but they are not made aware of its lasting social ramifications. *A Land Remembered*, like many works of popular culture to this day, reinforces stereotypes of non-White people and presents them as one-dimensional characters, serving as props to teach the White character an important lesson about life, or to show how “not racist” a certain White historical figure was.⁵

When combined with Florida’s standards for social studies education and the narrative being reproduced through *A Land Remembered*, Cracker Country can serve as a tangible testimony to this notion of White Florida history, but it doesn’t have to. Ultimately, it is up to each teacher and docent to decide which parts of Florida history their students should know, and to help them think critically about the information that is being presented.

Interpreting Difficult Histories: The Role of Teachers and Docents

Narratives of the Lost Cause

“Difficult histories”, as one docent called them, are those historical moments characterized by racial violence, White supremacy, political upheaval, and other things the average visitor might find unsavory. So, how do teachers and docents decide which stories to tell

⁵ Such narratives have been criticized in recent years, especially in the film industry, as the “white savior” or “magical negro” tropes. See: Hughey, Matthew. 2009. “Cinethetic Racism: White Redemption and Black Stereotypes in ‘Magical Negro’ Films.” *Social Problems*, 56(3): 543-577.)

and the best ways to tell them? The interviews suggest that this depends largely on the age group of the children, as well as the docents' and teachers' own views on the history of race and racism in America. For instance, one docent said they were "upset" when they heard another docent talking about slavery in the school house. This docent does not believe slavery was as bad as the history books say. "Well, history was written by the Northerners," they told me and claimed that during the Civil War, "legend says my great grandpa was protected by his slaves in Georgia."

Another docent, unhappy to discover slaveowners in their family tree, reframed slavery this way:

You know, I don't like the part about them owning slaves, but everything wasn't like these big giant plantations with 100 slaves on it. I get the impression that the slaves were more like, just household servants or maybe worked out in the field, but they were more part of the whole family. I ran across one census form, 1856, before the Emancipation, and they had a Black cook, which is fine. And they had a mulatto child living there, and she was listed as a child of the owner. Which is kind of interesting, because you don't see that very often.⁶

The themes of the beneficent White master, which arose with the myth of Lost Cause, are clear in both of these examples. However, docents differed wildly in their opinions regarding race. For example, one docent who identified as Hispanic and Middle Eastern said that it is

⁶ This docent was surprised that the mulatto child was recorded as the owner's own offspring.

One did, in fact, see many mixed-race children on plantations, usually as the result of rape, considering the power imbalance at play. It is unclear how many mulatto children went unrecognized or unrecorded by their parents/masters.

important to “find a way to bring in race and introduce more nuance.” In their own tours they talk about the Cuban Revolution and Tampa’s economic opportunities for Cubans and free Blacks. Another said they wish Cracker Country would use more photographs in the exhibits, because it would illustrate the diversity of the state. “I wish that we had some way to have those pictures readily available,” they said, “because I always feel so bad when I see kids speaking Spanish or I see other kids. And it's really hard, especially because, like, even our docents don't look that diverse.” This same docent said they always “try not to overgeneralize” during tours.

However, when I asked teachers if Cracker Country *should* interpret difficult histories on field trips, their answers were complicated. As one teacher commented,

That is a difficult question to answer. We certainly want to teach history honestly even the ugly parts. I teach first grade and I am not sure how much of the “dark” part of our history I want talked about on a field trip. If that were to become a part of Cracker Country, I certainly would want information so as to prepare my students.

This answer pretty much encapsulates teachers’ thoughts and concerns on this issue. 15 out of the 20 teachers said they think it is important for kids to learn about difficult histories, but that the interpretations should be objective and carefully considered for each age group and grade-level Florida standard curriculum. Most teachers were hesitant to lay such a responsibility on docents’ shoulders. As one respondent explained, “I think [docents] should focus on the positive impacts of this time period. I’d leave the teaching of difficult curriculum to the trained classroom teacher. A docent has a limited time. Topics like slavery, segregation, and so on need time and understanding to unpack.”

Four other teachers agreed with this sentiment. Two first-grade teachers said they felt their age group (6–7-year-olds) were too young, and according to one, the topics “too difficult

for them to understand.” Two others said they didn’t think the topics would be appropriate to Cracker Country. As one explained, “I don’t think it’s that type of field trip. If they were to offer a different type of tour to focus on more difficult histories, then that would need to be the focus of the teaching before the trip.” In general, most teachers just want to make sure that if these histories are going to be presented, they are done so using the best practices for each age group, and preferably with the teacher’s knowledge.

But many of the teachers I spoke with do seem to think that finding ways to teach history more fully and honestly would be worth the effort. Several teachers are already adding books, movies, and other resources to their social studies curriculum to do just that. One teacher in particular was kind enough to provide a list of resources that Cracker Country could look into to design effective, age-appropriate interpretive strategies:

We read about Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks. Through class discussions we discuss how people used to be segregated based on their skin color. We use the TCI Social Studies Alive! curriculum as a resource but it does not go into depth about either of these topics. When we create our lessons, we look at the social studies standards (CPALMS) and then pull in our reading series and other books to help create meaningful background knowledge for the students. We use Readworks.org and Epic! for Kids for digital resources to help us. We are required to teach the standards but we have flexibility in the resources we use to deliver the instruction.

Judging by the Sunshine State Standards curriculum, elementary school students are ready for this kind of information. But a majority of teachers I spoke with warned that such stories must be told in a factual, non-biased way. As one teacher passionately explained,

YES! Those issues should be addressed. Elementary school children (and sometimes adults) need and deserve to have those histories explained, but in the context of seeking information about what happened and why it was allowed (or encouraged) to happen at a time and place in history. If we merely look at the events of the past and slap on a label (ex. racist, sexist) we fail to help students grasp the circumstances that allowed certain practices and events to occur at the time. That can be accomplished by explaining to children that throughout history, and even today, there are groups of people that did not (and do not) receive the respect, recognition and opportunities they deserve. It is okay to feel sad, and even mad about the way some were treated, but our purpose as historians is not to look back and judge – it is to look back and learn, so we can take what we learned about the past to create better tomorrows for all humans.

Of course, finding a way to share such emotionally-charged histories while promoting “better tomorrows” without inserting personal bias is quite the tall order. In the next section, I’ll demonstrate an example of how “sticking to the facts” of history is often an inherently biased activity, and see how teachers and docents would go about improving Cracker Country’s representation to include broader, more diverse audiences.

Suggestions for Improving Representation

Representation and the Sharecropper's Cabin that Almost Was

During one of my interviews with a Cracker Country docent, I learned that a few years back, while Ann Singletary was still the director, the museum almost gained a sharecropper’s cabin. This exhibit would have been the first in the museum to openly represent the lives of Black rural Floridians in the late 19th century. However, it would hardly have been telling the whole story of Southern Black labor and agricultural practices. For example, Hine, et al.

(2006:357) point out that by the turn of the century, “more than 100,000 Black families owned their own land in the eight states of the deep South... Black land ownership increased more than 500 percent between 1870 and 1900.”

As Antoinette Jackson (2012) has noted, the sharecropper is a common trope in Southern historical narratives, in which the “descendants of enslaved Africans were represented as having progressed along a hierarchy from former slaves to sharecroppers.” Jackson explains that “the sharecropper category refers to a farmer who is given credit for seeds, tools, food, housing, and access to land, with part of the harvest going to repay the landowner. This description typically implies that the sharecropper is not a landowner” (2012:99). Therefore, choosing to represent Black Floridians with a sharecropper’s cabin at Cracker Country would “fail to recognize the land-ownership status and distinctions in employment patterns of many descendants” (Jackson 2012:99).

For better or worse, however, Cracker Country ended up scrapping the idea, not because it would potentially misrepresent Black Floridians, but because Singletary “was definitely not fond of the idea.” The docent told me this story as a cautionary tale after I asked him how he thought Cracker Country might go about creating more inclusive representations. He explained,

Politically, I'm not sure how it would go over, but I really think that as a museum, we sort of need to get into some of that stuff, to address the population that's here. And I don't think that would take away anything from the Carlton family. I think showing that there was a Black presence here, that it wasn't all about slavery, if we brought a little more focus into what was happening in the Black community, too, during this time. We have a few Black docents, and I think they bring something to the mix that is helpful, especially pointing out that the church here is from Gretna—a Black community—which doesn't get

talked about much. And maybe, if someone's opposed to just [representing] people of color, then do it as just a representation of the different groups that were here, because they were here. So, you're not making a political statement. So, maybe there's a way to work around. I think it would be a good idea, but whether it would get any further than that, I don't know.

Teachers' Suggestions for Improving Representation

I asked teachers if there was anything they would change about the Cracker Country field trip in order to make it more engaging for students from diverse backgrounds. Six of the teachers said they wouldn't change anything because they're students "enjoy all of the activities" and "are just happy to be away from school." One said that she "never felt like anything was ignored or not addressed" during the field trip. Seven teachers who did see room for change, felt that the pacing of the tour could be better organized to maximize students' attention spans and prioritize active, critical engagement. For example, one teacher said,

I would make sure that the docents (I know they are volunteers and do a great job) can keep the kids focused with short descriptions or possibly more interactive conversations—make the kids think, rather than just the docent talking to them. Also, I think sometimes the kids don't get to see all the different buildings.

Beyond the practicalities of actively engaging students throughout the field trip, six teachers had some advice for how Cracker Country could better resonate with students from diverse cultures and backgrounds. One teacher was particularly interested in the interpretations of the Church and the Okahumpka Train Depot:

I think there would be immense value in talking about the depot and church. I think the kids could understand. It's nothing they haven't heard about before. It's an interesting

part of that building's history, so I think it would be valuable. I have seen Cracker Country evolve over the past 24 years into a well-run, outstanding experience for all children. Others expressed a desire to see more visual representation of all Floridians during the time period presented, such as photos, illustrations, or "maybe an introductory movie". One teacher even said that Cracker Country should "purposefully recruit and include non-Caucasian living history volunteers and provide representation of important individuals of other ethnic backgrounds—maybe instead of the governors' portraits."⁷

Another teacher commented that Cracker Country could reach even more students if they offered virtual tours and videos. She explained that when she was teaching at a Title 1 school in Tampa, "the kids there didn't get to go on many field trips because of a lack of money. However, those are the kids whose families have been here in Florida for generations and I think they would enjoy the experience." The majority of students in Title 1 schools in Florida are Black and Hispanic (<https://datacenter.kidscount.org/>). Therefore, this teacher is recognizing the fact that many of the students who are multi-generational Floridians are not, in fact, descended from White Florida Crackers. And as this number rises, it would only be beneficial for both the

⁷ Cracker Country contains the only complete oil portrait gallery of every Florida governor from Andrew Jackson to Ron DeSantis. The gallery is displayed in the building known as the "Governors' Inn", which was originally a post office and general store built in 1912 in Lily, FL. The gallery is not usually included in school tours, but is open to visitors during the state fair and other public events.

<http://crackercountry.org/index.php/come-visit/what-to-see/governors-inn>

museum and local communities to find ways to make these students feel connected to Florida history and heritage. Without this connection, many students and parents may feel that they are being left out or purposely excluded from Florida's history. Such feelings are sometimes amplified by the contested nature of the word "cracker". On several occasions— and twice just during the time I was there—students of color have actually had to stay behind either at school or on the bus during Cracker Country field trips, because their parents were highly concerned about the name of the museum. Only one of the 20 teachers said that they personally had experienced such complaints from parents, but that it happened more than once. "I have had to provide several parents with the historical context for the term 'Cracker'," she said.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

I. Theoretical Applications

This project explores the role of power and local heritage discourses in the reproduction of cultural and ethnic identities within the context of a local living history museum called Cracker Country. Throughout this paper, I have demonstrated how heritage discourses are constructed, silenced, and challenged at various levels of power within the museum. This project utilized a case study methodological approach involving ethnohistorical research, participant observation, interviews, and visitor surveys, in order to identify changing perceptions of heritage, the past, and what it means to be a “Florida Cracker.”

In Chapter 4, this thesis explored three main research questions:

1. How are key issues of heritage expressed in the production of the Cracker Country museum?
2. How are racial and ethnic identities and boundaries produced or reproduced in the context of the Florida Cracker?
3. What are the implications of packaging the "Florida Cracker" for school children, and how might educators navigate the domains of power in order to respond to the challenges involved in representing the past in the present?

These questions were answered through extensive archival and historical research along with interviews and surveys among the museum’s docents, state fair visitors, and teachers who attended Cracker Country field trips. The results of this research indicate the potential for three broad theoretical applications:

- Centering local heritage discourses and practices, and decentering the AHD
- Recognizing multiregional forms of Whiteness
- Engaging local communities to represent

Centering Local Heritage Discourse and Practice

According to Laurajane Smith (2006), the normalization of White middle-class values has been shaped by what she calls the Authorized Heritage Discourse. Stemming from 19th century Enlightenment ideologies and nationalism, the AHD espouses certain themes that have gained global authority since the development of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in 1972.

Figure 5.1 shows the 5 main themes of the AHD:

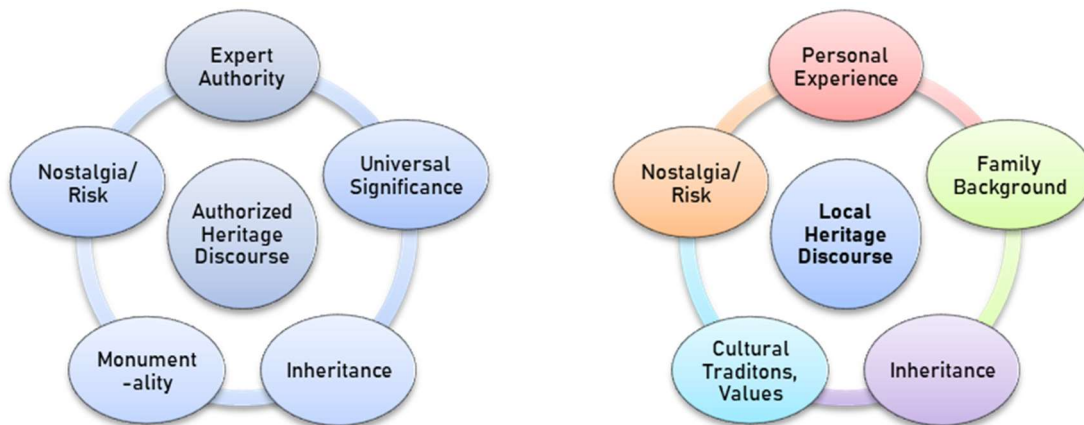


Figure 5.1: Authorized Heritage Discourse vs. Local Heritage Discourse

However, I argue that the discourses most responsible for shaping heritage practice are those that are formed at the local level, rather than universal or even national. Local heritage discourses incorporate particular historical silences as well as the personal memories and cultural meanings of local heritage practitioners and the diverse communities they serve. The local heritage discourses at Cracker Country both reflect and challenge various aspects of the AHD:

Expert Authority: While the power structures of the museum dictate the overall themes and stories told about the past at Cracker Country, docents and visitors tend to share in the process of heritage reproduction, through conversations about history and stories about their own families and childhood memories.

Universal Significance: In general, local heritage discourses are highly personal and particular. Respondents were less concerned with grand sweeping narratives of “the past”, than with their own family histories, cultural values and traditions, and personal life experiences. Heritage is also expressed as person’s genealogy and geographical origins, often referred to as “roots” and “where you come from.”

Inheritance: This is one aspect of the AHD that is also apparent in the local heritage discourses at Cracker Country. The majority of docents, visitors, and teachers expressed a degree of gratitude for the accomplishments of their “forebears” and “ancestors”, as well as the expectation that “what is left behind” by one’s ancestors must continue to be “passed down from generation to generation.” However, unlike the authorized discourse of heritage reproduction, many respondents, especially among docents and teachers, also recognized that how we understand history and our own place within it changes over time. As one docent put it, “We don’t all have to follow the same footsteps. You can’t choose the past because it’s already there. But you can choose the present and the future.”

Monumentality: Monumentality, in the sense of outstanding relics material culture does not play a role in the local heritage discourse at all, despite the prominence of the 13 original historic buildings encircling the museum. Instead, respondents almost unanimously defined heritage as an intangible concept, with a particular focus on one’s cultural “way of life”, including traditions, values, stories, and beliefs.

Risk and Nostalgia: The heritage discourses at Cracker Country are ripe with nostalgia for “the good old days,” which seem to be steadily disappearing. This is especially concerning for those who consider themselves true Florida Crackers, who have witnessed Florida’s natural and social landscapes changing drastically throughout their lives. The conservation of natural resources and respect for the environment are major interpretative themes at the museum. However, this complicates the simultaneous messages of self-sufficiency, entrepreneurialism, and technological progress that Florida Crackers are said to have brought to the state. The Man vs. Nature motif is dual sided in the local heritage discourse. Visitors are taught to both fear and respect Florida’s harsh environment. They are encouraged to preserve the idealized cultural values and social norms of the “simple” and “peaceful” agrarian Cracker lifestyle, while also being thankful for the modern conveniences we have today.

Clearly, the Authorized Heritage Discourse does not fully account for “the work that heritage does” (Smith 2006: 276) in the context of a local history museum like Cracker Country. Just like the participants in this project, Smith argues that heritage should be thought of not as a material asset, but as a cultural practice, because “as ‘something that is done’, it offers the possibility of the negotiation of change and reworking of meaning” (Smith 2006:65). In particular, she identifies the “performance of remembering” as an “act of heritage” that reproduces cultural meanings about the past in the present (Smith 2006:67).

At Cracker Country, such performances often take the shape of generic domestic activities, such as churning butter and doing laundry. This allows visitors (especially older ones) to reminisce about a fantasy of “simpler times” when men farmed, women cooked, and everyone got along. However, while a number of Cracker Country’s activities can be found at living history museums across the country and even the world, there are certain aspects that are very

much local, and in some ways “authentic.” The cracking of the whip is the most obvious example. The whip demonstration at the end of every tour is a way to reinforce the story of the Florida Crackers, generations of pioneer cattlemen, whose families still hold a place of high regard throughout the state today. During the fair, there are also vendors selling “swamp cabbage” made from palmetto hearts and a “Cracker camp” consisting of a rugged looking pioneer family, who appear to be living out of a covered wagon, along with their 2 cracker cows. During the Christmas in the Country event, visitors enjoy “homemade holiday décor and trimmings of native plants” (<https://crackercountry.org/index.php/come-visit/when-to-visit/christmas-in-the-country>), like palmetto palms, holly, citrus, and magnolia.

In addition to such seemingly age-old Cracker traditions, the docents of Cracker Country have many “invented traditions” that only add to the authentic quality of the museum experience. Over the years, Cracker Country has become a cultural institution in itself. It no longer simply passes on the traditions and life-ways of 19th century Florida Crackers; it passes on the culture of Cracker Country— a unique cultural heritage constructed among museum docents, visitors, and staff—complete with traditions, stories, foodways, and even funerary customs.

However, in the process of reproducing this construction as “Florida heritage,” Cracker Country silences the histories and perspectives of the majority of Floridians, including the museum’s main audience: elementary school students. All four instances of Trouillot’s historical silencing can be seen at Cracker Country, starting with the most glaring, the lack of representation of non-White groups. This silence began at the source as there is little documentation of the lives of non-White, rural Floridians. The second silence occurred in the creation of the museum itself, when Doyle Carlton Jr. decided to preserve his family’s cattle-ranching lifestyle in the form of living history museum. The third silence involves the production

of historical narratives that reimagine the late 19th century as “the good old days” when “everyone got along.” Such narratives silence the histories of racial violence during the height of Jim Crow, and reinforce the notion of a homogenous, White, Florida history. This is most obvious in the Church and Train Depot exhibits. The fact that the Church served an African American community for over 100 years, or that the Depot contains a hidden, segregated waiting room, is rarely deemed necessary information for visitors. This all leads to the final silence, the moment of “retrospective significance.” In this case, the very existence of a “Cracker heritage” seems to have been retrospectively constructed to reclaim a sense of White, Southern identity, in a way that silences the realities of racism.

Florida Cracker as White Cultural Identity

Whiteness is a relatively recent invention, that historically has only existed in opposition to blackness. In America, when whiteness is not immediately being used to challenge the political gains of non-White groups, it appears to lie dormant in the psyche of White Americans. White Americans often consider themselves simply “American” or “normal”. Because they make up the dominant cultural group, many White Americans do not recognize that they even have “culture.” This means that “Whites are free to see themselves as ‘individuals,’ rather than as members of a culture. Individualism in turn becomes part of White resistance to perceiving whiteness and indeed to being placed in the category ‘White’ at all” (Mahoney 1997:331).

At least, this is the conclusion that many critical whiteness scholars have come to over the years. But such analyses stem from generalizing theories of cultural assimilation that don’t take into account the vast array of cultural experiences and histories within America’s socially and geographically diverse landscape. According to McDermott and Samson (2005:256), scholarly “attempts at specifying concrete ways in which the process of White racial identity

formation varies or experiences of whiteness differ have been considerably lacking.” This thesis is an attempt to fill this theoretical gap by exploring the notion of the Florida Cracker as a particular expression of White cultural identity. This study moves beyond the old “melting-pot” theories of assimilation that have defined whiteness studies in America, and instead sheds light on the Florida Cracker as one of many regional White identities that have developed over the course of American history.

For the Crackers of Cracker Country, whiteness is not necessarily equated with “American”, but it is often normalized as “Floridian”. However, Crackers are certainly aware of their whiteness when they feel it is under attack, such as when they are accused of racism. They take pride in the notion that they “had black friends” growing up, “were taught to respect everyone”, and some cannot conceive of the idea that their own ancestors would have ever been cruel to the people they enslaved. Despite this, Florida Crackers associate their heritage with the overall history and progress of Florida, which ultimately (even if inadvertently) silences the histories and accomplishments of all other groups. This claim to Florida heritage, then, is a form of privilege that non-White Floridians are effectively denied.

Diversifying Southern Heritage

“Southern Heritage” is more than just the decades long battle over Civil War monuments and interpretations of slavery. These controversies have long divided the South along racial and political binaries, but the realities of Southern life are far more complex. Southern heritage incorporates the histories and cultures of a vast array of people from many different regions. It is constantly expanding and transforming as new generations and groups emerge and interact in novel ways to solve modern goals.

At Cracker Country, Southern heritage was specifically modeled after the early years of Florida's 25th governor, Doyle Carlton, by his son and grandson in order to memorialize their family's particular way of life, while encouraging the next generation of Floridians to respect history and the environment. This version of Southern heritage is passed on in the form of a well-preserved reproduction of late 19th century rural Florida. But for all that Cracker Country appears frozen in time, the museum cannot escape the inevitability of change.

As Florida becomes more diverse, so too does the museum's audiences, and even its docents. Because of the museum's popularity with the school system and among state fair visitors, people of all stripes have come to experience Cracker Country. How Florida's heritage is presented to and perceived by different groups depends largely on the unique life experiences and world views of both docents and visitors. Many of the docents that I spoke with, especially the younger ones, agreed that Cracker Country needs to be more representative of all visitors. Several said that they strive to be as inclusive as possible in their own interpretations, trying not to overgeneralize about the past. A couple said they try to give the teachers an opportunity to address issues of racism and segregation in the Church or the Train Depot. Meanwhile, a handful of docents said they believe "difficult histories" should be left to the teachers or parents, and a couple expressed doubt about the history of racial violence experienced by Black Southerners in the 19th century.

How audiences—teachers, students, and state fair visitors—respond to such interpretations depends on their own backgrounds and life experiences. There is no one-size-fits-all version of Florida Heritage that can be packaged and delivered to all audiences. And Florida heritage, for all its diversity of history and meaning, is only one example of the many different forms Southern heritage can take.

II. **Applied Outcomes**

Addressing Heritage Discourses and Historical Silences at the Local Level

Using the interviews with Cracker Country docents, I was able to create a poster showcasing all of the relevant data regarding docents' heritage discourses, associations with Florida Cracker heritage, and ideas for how to improve museum interpretation, representation, and community outreach. Docents' interviews also shed light on how narrative themes in a local history museum can change depending on the interpreters' experiences and worldviews. This poster was shared with the museum director, program coordinators, and members of the Florida State Fair Authority. It has been used to develop improved training programs and address conflicting heritage narratives and silences. Since this project began, Cracker Country has made efforts to discuss the "difficult histories" more openly among docents and staff. This included an hour-long presentation about the history of the Gretna Church, and a detailed training on the various ethnic groups living in Florida in the late 19th century.

Using Visitor Survey Data to Improve Community Engagement and Representation

The insights from visitor surveys and teacher interviews have also been shared with the museum, in order to provide a starting point for engaging more closely with local communities and schools in the future. Visitors provided interesting insights about what brings visitors to the museum, which exhibits and activities visitors enjoy the most, and which are being underutilized. They also offer a lot of suggestions for how Cracker Country can better market the museum in order to make it more appealing to a broader audience, including an improved social media presence, TV ads, job booths at USF and other local colleges, virtual tours, and in-school fieldtrips. How these insights will be used by the museum is yet to be seen, since the museum was closed for a year due to Covid 19.

Using Teacher's Best Practices to Enhance Social Studies Curriculum

Teachers provided a lot of information and resources that Cracker Country could use to improve upon their educational programming and level of student engagement. By broadening the museum's relationship with local teachers and schools, Cracker Country could partner with educators to find innovative ways to enhance the standard social studies curriculum. With teachers, museum coordinators, and docents working toward the same goal, Cracker Country could surely develop age-appropriate field trips that represent students of all backgrounds and do not shy away from difficult histories.

Future Research

There is much more applied research, community outreach and negotiations that must be done before Cracker Country will ever be ready to change any of its exhibits or programming to reflect the true diversity of Florida heritage. However, in order for that to happen, all stakeholders involved will have to be open to at the very least having honest conversations about race and different meanings of the word "cracker." It is my hope that this thesis has been just the first step toward engaging museum stakeholders in this conversation.

The next step would be to carry out more widespread community research into the public's perceptions of Cracker Country. Despite the Fair Authority's concerns about public relations, it is especially necessary to survey different definitions, uses, and experiences of the word "cracker" among various communities throughout Tampa Bay. These surveys could be done among teachers at different schools as well as other community-based institutions, but they must include a cross-section of different racial, ethnic, and other group identities. Starting this conversation with members of the public might bring attention that the museum is not ready for at this exact moment. But with a commitment to engaging honestly with local communities in

order to improve representation for all Floridians, any public scrutiny would be expected, and its impact mitigated. Once these conversations have taken place within various communities, the next step would be to foster this new stakeholder relationship by conducting focus groups and workshops among all relevant parties to truly begin the process of negotiation and honest communication about what different groups actually want to get out of the museum.

Ultimately, the goal for this thesis and any future research is to help Cracker Country more fully engage with local residents, teachers, and their own historical interpreters, in order to produce more inclusive narratives and representations. I believe that the museum can do so without compromising Doyle Carlton, II's vision of a rural Florida living history museum dedicated to preserving the Florida Cracker way of life. The Crackers did not live alone out there in the Florida wilderness. They shared the land with Seminoles, Muscogee, Blacks, Spanish, English, Germans, Italians, Greeks, Jews, Cubans and more. By simply recognizing the existence of other groups who played important roles in the history of the state, not only would Cracker Country be contributing to the positive self-concept of thousands of school children each year, they would also ensure that the legacy of the Florida Cracker remains relevant in the present, and for future generations.

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APPENDIX A: DOCENTS' INFORMED CONSENT AND SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk

Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

Title: Re-Presenting “Cracker Country”: exploring local heritage discourses at a Florida living history museum

Study # 000386

Overview: You are being asked to take part in a research study. The information in this document should help you to decide if you would like to participate. The sections in this Overview provide the basic information about the study. More detailed information is provided in the remainder of the document.

Study Staff: This study is being led by Blair Bordelon who is a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of South Florida. This person is called the Principal Investigator. She is being guided in this research by Dr. Antoinette Jackson.

Study Details: This study is being conducted at Cracker Country, a living history museum in Tampa, Florida and is supported by the museum director Cindy Horton and program manager Jennifer Wanecski. The purpose of this study is to find out how local communities define and practice cultural heritage in different ways and to determine how heritage professionals, such as museum interpreters, can balance cultural preservation with the need to engage diverse and changing communities. This study will include ethnographic research in the form of participant observation with museum docents and staff, one-hour semi-structured interviews with docents and visiting teachers, and a 10-minute questionnaire with museum visitors.

Participants: You are being asked to take part because you are a docent at Cracker Country. Your participation will provide deeper insight into various perspectives of cultural heritage and the everyday practice of cultural heritage preservation at a local history museum.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate and may stop your participation at any time. There will be no penalties or loss of benefits or opportunities if you do not participate or decide to stop once you start. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your job status, employment record, employee evaluations, or advancement opportunities.

Benefits, Compensation, and Risk: We do not know if you will receive any benefit from your participation. There is no cost to participate. You will not be compensated for your participation. This research is considered minimal risk. Minimal risk means that study risks are the same as the risks you face in daily life.

Confidentiality: Even if we publish the findings from this study, we will keep your study information private and confidential. Anyone with the authority to look at your records must keep them confidential.

Why are you being asked to take part?

My research aims to discover how cultural heritage is understood and expressed in different ways in a local setting, and how local history museums strive to preserve cultural heritage while staying relevant in a changing society. To answer these questions, I will conduct participant observation and one-hour interviews among the Cracker Country docents in order to learn what cultural heritage means to them. The goal of this research is to aid museum directors in producing more inclusive narratives and exhibits to better engage with an increasingly diverse community of visitors.

Study Procedures:

During this study you will be asked to participate in the following ways:

You will be asked to consent to ethnographic research, including participant observation and one-hour, semi-structured interviews.

Participant observation will include shadowing docents during school tours and observing and recording the everyday practices of Cracker Country. You will have at least 48 hours after reading this document to decide if you would like to be shadowed. No information that is revealed or observed through this research will be recorded without your consent. You may refuse or change your mind about participating in any part of this research at any time. All personal information will be confidential and all identities will be obscured in the final product.

Between 15-20 docents will be asked to participate in semi-structured interviews, which will last up to one hour. The interviews will consist of qualitative and quantitative questions regarding your understanding of “Cracker” heritage, motivations for working at Cracker Country, and

personal background. These interviews can take place at Cracker Country or a location of your choosing, and will remain anonymous.

Audio recording will be used for semi-structured interviews with teachers and docents. Participants have the right to refuse being recorded. Audio will be digitally recorded and stored, and will be accessed only by the Principle Investigator in order to ensure accuracy. Audio recordings will only be maintained until after the final report is submitted and approved, at which time all files will be deleted. USF policy states that audio recordings may not be maintained longer than 5 years after the final report is submitted to the IRB.

All fieldnotes, interviews, and survey data will remain confidential and anonymous, and identities will be obscured in the final writing process.

Total Number of Subjects

At least 20-30 Cracker Country docents will take part in this study, including participant observation and interviews.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You do not have to participate in this research study. You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. Decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your job status.

Benefits

We are unsure if you will receive any benefits by taking part in this research study.

Risks or Discomfort

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

Compensation

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

Costs

It will not cost you anything to take part in the study.

Conflict of Interest Statement

There are no conflicts of interest associated with this research.

You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints.

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, call Blair Bordelon at
If you have questions about your rights, complaints, or issues as a person taking part in this study, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at RSCH-IRB@usf.edu

Consent to Take Part in Research

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

Date

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent and Research Authorization

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent

_____ Date _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Defining Cracker Culture: Survey and Semi-Structured Interview

Part I: Survey

Age:		Birthplace	
Gender:		Years in Florida	
Race:		Previous/Main Occupation	
Ethnicity:		Time at Cracker Country	
Religion:		Museum Position	

What does the word cracker mean to you? List the first 5 words or phrases that come to mind.

Rank the words in order of importance to you. Does one word stand out on your list?

What other ways have you heard the word cracker defined outside of Cracker Country?

Are there ways of referring to or interpreting the word “cracker” that are troublesome to you?
Y/N

Likert Scale: Mark on the scale how much you agree with the following statement:

“I identity with Florida Crackers as part of my cultural heritage”



Explain your answer. How do you define heritage?

Part II. Interview

Tell me about where you grew up. Describe the community. How would you describe your family's status within the community?

Was everyone in the community you grew up in about the same? (i.e., in terms socio-economic status; religion; ancestry; ...) In what ways were people in the community alike and what were some differences?

Are you affiliated with any religious institution? How important is religion to your family?

Where do you live now? Where do you call home and why?

When did you first learn about Cracker Country and what made you want to work here?

How do you typically interpret Cracker culture to tour groups? Give me your best spiel.

What is your favorite thing about working at Cracker Country?

What is the most challenging part of working as a historical interpreter? Are there any specific experiences with leading tours that stood out as particularly challenging or uncomfortable?

What do you think Cracker Country has to offer the public in terms of education or heritage conservation? Why is Cracker Country important today?

What, if anything, might you change about the interpretations or activities offered at the museum in order to attract and resonate with visitors from diverse backgrounds?

APPENDIX B: VISITOR SURVEY AND VERBAL CONSENT DISCLAIMER

Visitor Research Survey

You are being asked to take part in a research study led by Blair Bordelon, a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of South Florida. I am working with the Cracker Country museum to explore different meanings of cultural heritage and determine what local history museums can do to balance historical preservation with community engagement in a changing society. If you would like to participate, please fill out this anonymous questionnaire. It should take no more than 10 minutes. Your participation will help the Cracker Country museum improve visitor experience and engage broader and more diverse audiences.

Verbal Consent Disclaimer

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate and may stop your participation at any time. There will be no penalties or loss of benefits or opportunities if you do not participate or decide to stop once you start. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your job status, employment record, employee evaluations, or advancement opportunities.

Benefits, Compensation, and Risk: We do not know if you will receive any benefit from your participation. There is no cost to participate. You will not be compensated for your participation. This research is considered minimal risk. Minimal risk means that study risks are the same as the risks you face in daily life.

Confidentiality: Even if we publish the findings from this study, we will keep your study information private and confidential. Anyone with the authority to look at your records must keep them confidential.

Would you like to participate in this research? Yes ☐ No ☐ Date: _____

1. Tell us a little about yourself (only answer what you are comfortable sharing).

Age:		Birthplace:	
Gender:		Years in Florida:	
Race/Ethnicity:		Where do you live?	
Religion:		Occupation:	
Politics:		Do you have children?	

2. Did you or do you plan to visit the Cracker Country museum today? Yes ☐ No ☐

a. If yes, what is/was your motivation for visiting Cracker Country today? _____

b. If no, why not? _____

3. Have you visited Cracker Country before today? Yes ☐ No ☐

a. When was your first visit? _____

b. How many times have you been? _____

c. Have you been to any of the following Cracker Country events?
Homeschool Day ☐ **Tall Tales** ☐ **Christmas in the Country** ☐ **Museum Day** ☐ **School Field Trip** ☐

4. Where did you first hear about Cracker Country?

a. This Survey c. School Field Trip e. Other _____

b. Florida State Fair 2020 d. Previous State Fair

5. How would you rate your experience at the museum today; 0 = extremely negative, 10 = extremely positive.

Overall Experience	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Entertainment Value											
Educational Value											
Cultural Value											
Friendly Staff											
Knowledgeable Staff											

Please describe your overall experience: _____

6. How much do you agree with the following statements on a scale of 0 to 10?

❖ Cracker Country offers an authentic representation of 19th century Florida.

❖ I personally relate to the cultural heritage represented at Cracker Country.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

**** Please Continue on Reverse Side ****

7. How do you define **Heritage**? _____

- How do you define **Authenticity**? _____

8. What was your favorite exhibit or activity? _____
Least favorite? _____
9. Will you come back next year? **Definitely** ☐ **Probably** ☐ **Maybe** ☐ **Unlikely** ☐ **Very unlikely** ☐
10. Will you recommend Cracker Country to a friend? **Definitely** ☐ **Probably** ☐ **Maybe** ☐ **Unlikely** ☐ **Very unlikely** ☐
11. Is there anything you would like to see changed or added to improve the visitor experience? _____

12. What can Cracker Country do to increase community engagement? _____

APPENDIX C: TEACHER INTERVIEWS AND VERBAL CONSENT DISCLAIMER

Cracker Country Teacher Survey

This survey is part of a research study led by Blair Bordelon, a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of South Florida. I am working with the Cracker Country museum to explore how different people define cultural heritage, particularly in relation to the word “Cracker”. With this research, I hope to determine what local history museums can do to balance historical preservation with community engagement in a changing society.

You are being asked to take part because you are a local school teacher who has attended a Cracker Country fieldtrip with your class. This survey will serve as an assessment of Cracker Country’s educational objectives and outcomes. The goal is to determine best practices for producing more inclusive historical representations and interpretative materials that are age appropriate for school tours.

If you would like to participate, please fill out this anonymous questionnaire. It should take no more than 10 minutes. Your participation will help the Cracker Country museum improve visitor experience and engage broader and more diverse audiences.

Verbal Consent Disclaimer

Voluntary Participation: Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate and may stop your participation at any time. There will be no penalties or loss of benefits or opportunities if you do not participate or decide to stop once you start. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your job status, employment record, employee evaluations, or advancement opportunities.

Benefits, Compensation, and Risk: We do not know if you will receive any benefit from your participation. There is no cost to participate. You will not be compensated for your participation. This research is considered minimal risk. Minimal risk means that study risks are the same as the risks you face in daily life.

Confidentiality: Even if we publish the findings from this study, we will keep your study information private and confidential. Anyone with the authority to look at your records must keep them confidential.

Would you like to participate in this research? Place X next to box Yes ☐ No ☐
Date: _____

Age:		Birthplace:	
Gender:		Years in Florida:	
Race/Ethnicity:		Years Teaching:	
Religion:		# of Cracker Country field trips:	
Political Party:		What Grade level do you teach?	
		School or District:	

Tell us a little about yourself (only answer what you are comfortable sharing).

What does the word “cracker” mean to you? List the first 5 words that come to mind.

Which word stands out to you the most and why?

Have you heard “cracker” defined in ways that differ from your own definition? If so, how?

How much do you agree with the following statements on a scale of 0 to 10?

I personally relate to the cultural heritage represented at Cracker Country.
Cracker Country offers an authentic representation of 19th century Florida.

How do you define **Heritage**?

How do you define **Authenticity**?

What do you think Cracker Country has to offer your students in terms of education about the past? Do you think Cracker Country is relevant to kids today? Why or why not?

Does this field trip fit into your class's history/social studies curriculum? Why or why not?

How do you prepare your class for a Cracker Country field trip?

Have you used any educational resources offered on the Cracker Country website? Yes____
No____

YES. Which ones and how did you like them?

NO. What sorts of materials would you like to see available for pre- or post-field trip lesson planning?

What do your students enjoy the most about Cracker Country? What do they find least enjoyable?

What, if anything, might you change about the historical representations, interpretations, or activities offered at the museum in order to better engage students from all backgrounds?

Have you ever heard any complaints or concerns from parents about the Cracker Country fieldtrip? If so, what were their concerns and how would you address them?

Do you think that Cracker Country docents should address difficult histories (i.e. slavery, segregation, gender inequality) during school tours? If so, what are the best practices for doing so in age-appropriate ways?

APPENDIX D: DOCUMENTS FROM MUSEUM ARCHIVES


ROUGH DRAFT - July, 1982

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
CRACKER COUNTRY

OKAHUMPKA RAILROAD STATION

KEY WORDS

<i>cedar shake roof:</i>	a roof made of wood, split into shingle size pieces
<i>freight:</i>	goods to be transported by train
<i>short rail lines:</i>	trains that ran small distances between towns
<i>rural:</i>	country - outside the city
<i>telegraph:</i>	a method of communication, using coded signals



The railroad station was built in 1898 in Okahumpka, Lake County, by the H. B. Plant Railway System. It later became the property of the Seaboard Coastline Railroad System. Seaboard Coastline runs through Hillsborough County, as well as other parts of Florida.

The railroad station is made of unfinished pine with a cedar shake roof. The "Okahumpka" signs were placed on the building when it was built. A boarding platform runs across the front of the building. (The hand railings along the platform were installed in 1980, after it was moved to Tampa). The inside of the station is finished in natural wood.

The waiting room is at one end of the building. There are two ticket windows where people could buy railroad tickets or pay to ship freight. A doorway leads into the station master and telegraph offices. Toward the center of the room is a wood stove. On one side of the room is the station master's desk. The telegraph operator's desk is by the front window. The telegraph office was important because it kept communities in touch with each other. The next room is a storage room for baggage and freight. An open freight platform is located at the other end of the building. This was a busy area because freight was loaded on and off of trains here.

After the mid 1800's, railroad building became important to Florida's growth. Most of the railroad building in Florida was the work of four men - William D. Chipley, Henry B. Plant, Henry M. Flagler, and John S. Williams. Short rail lines were built to move agricultural products between cities and rural areas.

The great railroad builder of central Florida was Henry B. Plant. After the Civil War, Plant acquired the Atlantic and Gulf Railroad, and the railroad running from Savannah to Charleston. He then bought the railroad running from Sanford to Kissimmee. In 1883, he built a railroad into Tampa, which was a village of less than one thousand people. After the railroad was completed in 1890, Tampa grew to a population of 5,522.

Figure A1: Okahumpka Train Depot Educational Resource, from July 1982



CHURCH

This building was constructed in the early 1900s of heart pine originally to serve as a one room black school in Gretna, (Gadsden County). From 1946 it served as a church when the original Holy Ghost Church burned and as a meeting hall for The Grand United Palibearers Home Society Union.

The benches are original with the building.

Figure A2: Early Interpretative Material for the Gretna Church.

AFRICAN Methodist Episcopal

Springfield AME Church
Gretna

Pallbearer's Hall was next door
to church - It was used for a
school - when it got too full they
used the church for school -
Old church had not been in
use for 15 to 20 yrs. when it was
moved - Church members had
built a new one -

Started around 1914 or earlier
Black school - Black church

Figure A3: Handwritten Notes about the Gretna Church

APPENDIX E: MUSEUM LESSON PLAN

The following is an example of one of Cracker Country's several lesson plans that are freely available on their website. This one is designed to provide 1st-3rd grade teachers with a follow-up lesson for the Rural Home Life Tour. The PDF can be found under "Daily Life" at <https://www.crackercountry.org/index.php/educators/lesson-plans/rural-home-life-lesson-plans>.

Post-Trip Lesson Plan Daily Life

- I. Grade Level: grades 1-3
- II. Objectives:
 - a. To understand the different roles of the family members living in Florida in 1898.
 - b. To examine the daily life of children their age living in Florida in 1898.
 - c. To discuss the differences between life in 1898 and today in Florida.
- III. Standards:
 - a. Sunshine State Standards (2006):
 - i. Social Studies: Time, Continuity, and change: Standard 2: know methods of communication from long ago and the technological developments that facilitated communications (e. g., speaking by gestures; transmitting stories orally; the use of pictographs, hieroglyphics and different alphabets; writing by hand and printing with machines).
 - ii. Social Studies; Time Continuity, and change: Standard 1: compares everyday life in different places and times and understand that people, places and things change over time. And knows a family history through two or three generations.
- IV. Vocabulary:
 - a. Candle: a wax or tallow cylinder with an embedded wick that is burned for illumination.
 - b. Wick: a fiber core in the center of a candle; this is the part of the candle that is burned for illumination.
 - c. Paraffin: a waxy white or colorless substance that comes from petroleum and used to make candles.
 - d. Churn: a device in which cream is beaten vigorously to make butter; can be made of wood or pottery.

- e. Livestock: the collective term for the animals found on a farm, i.e. horses, mules, cattle, pigs, chickens, etc.
- f. Rope Winder: a hand cranked machine used to twist several pieces of twine into rope.
- g. Hoe: a garden implement with a long handle and a thick, flat blade that is used to break up and move soil.
- h. Lamp: a vessel holding liquid fuel that is burned through a wick for illumination.

Activity 1: Story Telling (Mother)

- I. Materials: None.
- II. History: During this time there were limited resources in photography and printing. A printer would only come to a local town if the community was large. And if this printer came to a Florida community most likely he would be producing newspapers and advertisements for local businesses. Most printing production was in far off cities. Therefore, information about a family's heritage and knowledge would be passed by word of mouth. The mother of the family was in charge of keeping track of kinfolks and relatives. Mothers also remembered and passed down folk rhymes, stories, songs, party games, and folk remedies. When no school teacher was available, the mother taught her children everything she knew.
- III. Procedures: Discuss the importance of storytelling and the mothers' role in passing down information. Then as a class create your own (oral) fictional family, family tree and stories that a mother living in Florida in 1898 would share with her children.
- IV. Assessment: This is a collaborative project within the classroom and can be graded based on assessing your students understanding of the history of storytelling and the daily life of someone living in Florida in 1898.
- V. Open-Ended Questions:
 - a. What do you know about your family history?
 - b. Who told you about your family history?
 - c. How is family heritage preserved?
 - d. What rhymes, stories, and songs have your mother and father taught you?

Activity 2: The Daily Life (Father)

- I. Materials:
 - a. Construction paper
 - b. Crayons, colored pencils, markers
 - c. Scissors (only if constructing an image)
- II. History: The father cleared the land, built the home, plowed, planted, and hunted the surrounding area for game for the table. His was a constant battle, both a conflict with wildlife as well as nature. He was responsible for all heavy outdoor chores and for assigning chores to the boys in the family. He taught them the proper use of the muzzle loading rifle or shot gun, the axe, saw, knife, and all other tools necessary. He taught hunting, trapping, and fishing skills. The father shared his knowledge of livestock care,

- herding cattle, riding, and plowing. These skills were necessary in order to help when extra hands were needed around the homestead.
- III. Procedures: Discuss the history of passing skills down between father and child as explained above. Then hand out construction paper to the students in your class and have them either construct or draw an image based on a skill or piece of information that their father (or possibly mother) passed down to them (e.g. how to ride a bike, how to catch a fish, how to wash the dog). Post the drawings/constructions around the room and see the variety of skills and information learned. Discuss the open-ended questions.
 - IV. Assessment: The students should be graded based on the completion of their construction and how they used the information they learned from the history of the daily life (father).
 - V. Open-Ended Questions:
 - a. What skills have your father and mother taught you?
 - b. What skills were children taught by their father in 1898?
 - c. How are these skills similar and/or different?

Activity 3: Worksheet: Children and Chores

- I. Material:
 - a. Worksheet: Children and Chores
 - b. Writing utensil
- II. History: When children became old enough to do so, they went to school. When not in school, they were busy with their chores around the home. Since there was always much to be done, the family would get up before daylight and go to bed after dark. Families would try to finish chores before dark since they did not have electric lighting and would be forced to rely on candles or lamps when dark. These candles would be made by the children by dipping the wick into wax or paraffin. The children were also in charge of making butter for the family to eat. This was done by milking cows, turning the milk into cream, and using this cream to churn the butter in a butter churn. Usually, the boys in the family were in charge of the livestock (or animals) on the farm; they would feed and tend to the animals daily. While the girls in the house would sew, do the laundry, and beat rugs.

The family would have a small vegetable garden with green beans, cow peas, tomatoes, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, collard and mustard greens, beets, watermelons, herbs, and sugar cane, which the children and mother would tend. This was done by using a hoe, a garden implement with a long handle and a thick, flat blade that is used to break up and move soil. When rope was needed the children would use a rope winder to twist twine into rope. A final chore of the children was to sweep the yard. This kept the debris away so that dangerous animals could be spotted, the tracks of hunting prey would be seen, and during the dry season created a barrier for fire. As you can see children had many chores to complete daily, along with school tasks, social gatherings, and games, a child's life was full of activity.

- III. Procedures: Discuss the history of children and their chores which is written above (the vocabulary words for this lesson plan are underlined throughout the paragraph). Then hand out the worksheet Children and Chores to the class. Have the children complete the worksheet. Then answer the open-ended question collectively.
- IV. Assessment: The students can be graded based on completion of the worksheet.
- V. Open-Ended Questions:
 - a. What chores do you do around your house?
 - b. What chores did children do at your age living in Florida in 1898?
 - c. How do you think life was different in 1898?

APPENDIX F: CRACKER COUNTRY RESEARCH POSTER

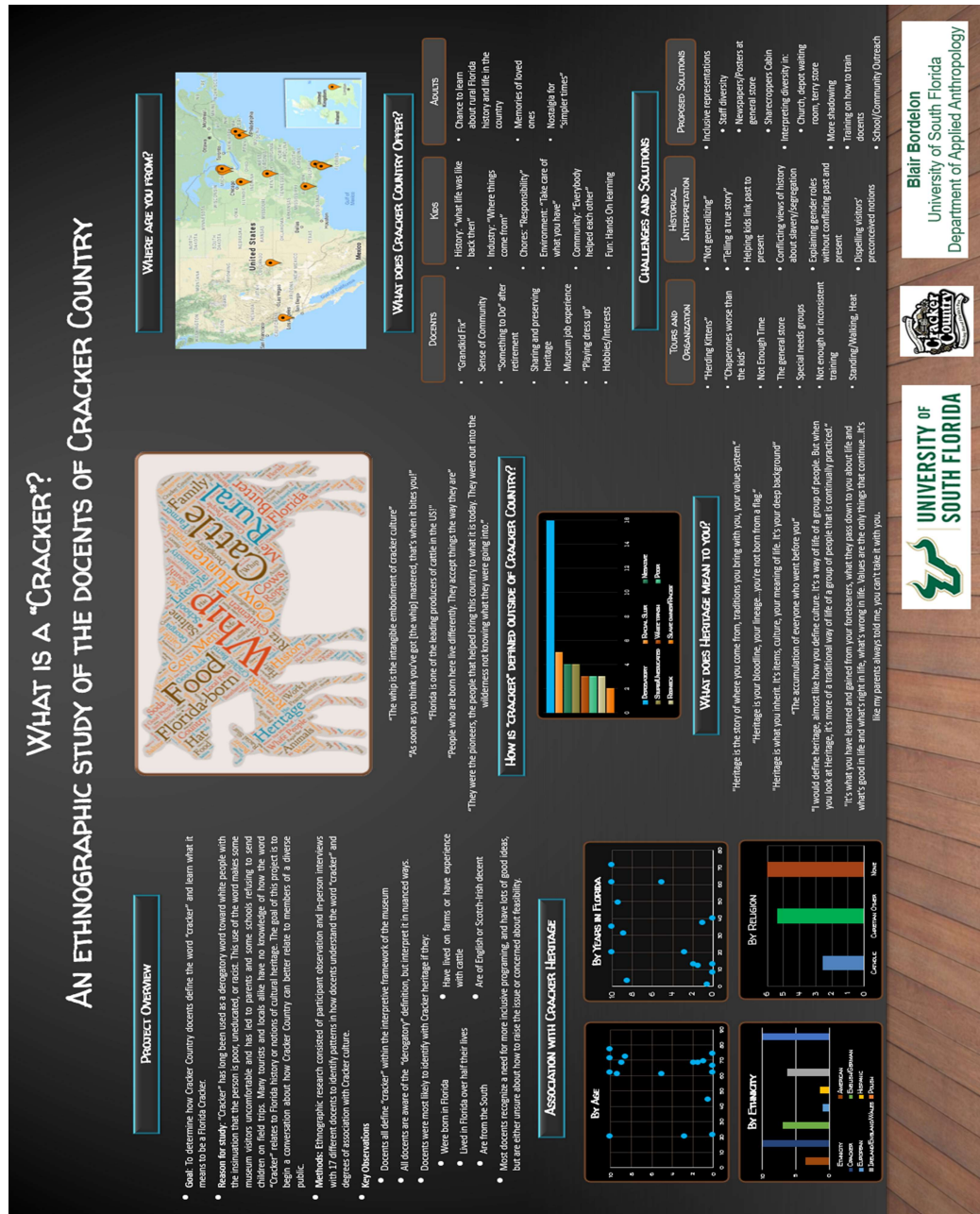


Figure A4: Cracker Country Research Poster for Issues in Heritage Tourism Class, Fall 2019