

A Theory of Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics

An Examination of the Psychological Underpinnings of
Human-Object Relationships with Implications for Museum Exhibitions

Phase IV. Case Study with Object Donors, Staff and Visitors to the Derby Museum
and Art Gallery, Derby, England

*“It gives me confidence that I am a part of that identity, that family.
It associates me with that tribe, my ancestors; it gives me the will to survive, to conquer.”*



Photo: Joe Clark

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Introduction

The intent of this research is to define and examine the psychological underpinnings of the intrinsic relationships between people and objects, and from that understanding develop impactful strategies for generating museum exhibition experiences that explicitly promote health and opportunities for healing. Data for the study to-date comes from over 73 qualitative individual interviews across three international museum settings and a therapeutic wilderness facility, as well as 16 open sourced qualitative surveys administered online. The sample groups targeted adults aged 18 and older from a wide range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, and a range of types of museum participation. Evidence shows that across this diverse sample, exhibition experiences are potent and unique in their ability to foster wellbeing and contribute to psychological healing, suggesting that by further identifying and articulating the inherent role that objects play in our everyday health and wellbeing we can explicitly design experiences with objects that foster healthful outcomes. This document presents the theory of *Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics* (Cowan 2015) and provides summaries of the first three phases of research, and complete documentation and analysis for the fourth phase case study with the Derby Museum and Art Gallery. Implications and direction for continued study conclude the document, including information regarding a fifth museum-based study that is currently underway.

Background and Body of Scholarship

This research is founded upon the irrefutable knowledge that objects are both deeply meaningful and necessary in the lives of people. The journey of the study begins with the question why. It can be said that people have an innate and primal dialogue with objects, an inextricable meaning-based relationship that functions in the manner of a continuous and often subconscious or unintentional nonverbal dialogue. Objects can extrinsically communicate our own concepts and thoughts with intent; conversely, they can internally translate complex concepts, thoughts and actions; they can prompt memory, connect us with others, access subconscious experiences and emotions; they can foster transpersonal experiences that include heightened creativity, spirituality, and self-awareness, and they can prompt us to action. This study seeks to understand and articulate the reasons people attribute these characteristics to objects and have such profound object experiences. Moreover, the study delves into the underlying psychological underpinnings of human-object relationships and explores the premise that at its core, the human-object relationship is necessary to psychological health and wellbeing.

This study was prompted by foundational work in the museum and material culture professions particular to the phenomenological and evocative nature of objects, the influence of everyday objects in the lives of people, the nature of object-based meaning making and the defined

characteristics that shape those meanings. Essential research in the human-object relationship are provided by John Dewey and his landmark work with the interconnections of self, objects, identity and activity (1934), and likewise, the more recent work in semiotics by Taborsky who looks at the formation of meaning making through object engagement (1990). To understand the nature of visitor relationships in the museum environment, we look to the fundamental works of Lois Silverman (1999) and George Hein (2000) whom provide us with a framework for studying object relationships and examining the role of the exhibition to foster meaning making where objects hold the power to illustrate, explain, captivate and enable visitors to relate to content in a personally significant manner. Additionally, Eileen Hooper-Greenhill's relevant work looks at the relationship between the 'seer' and the 'seen' (2000) where an exhibition space is the forum for union between an individual's life experiences and interpretations provided by the museum.

More recently, Latham and Wood present to us their essential work, the Object Knowledge Framework (2014): a framework for identifying the multidimensional people-object relationships in museum environments. Their study looks at interrelationships between work in phenomenology and the ways in which humans on an instinctual level seek to make meaning out of objects, as explored in museum-based research. In their *Object Knowledge Framework*, Wood and Latham have contributed the definition of 'Unified Experience,' that asserts four key characteristics of object experiences including Unity of the Moment (fusion of the visitor's 'lifeworld' and object world in a moment); Object Link (objects as repositories); Being Transported (the transpersonal); and Connections Bigger than Self (numinous qualities including reverence, spirituality and connections with higher things). The work of Dr. Helen Chatterjee provides insight and leadership in the exploration of the relationship between objects, emotions, touch and healing, with particular attention paid to the opportunities museums provide for cultivating touch experiences with healthful outcomes. Her own clinical work in hospitals with museum touch boxes provides the therapeutic and museum communities with a baseline for examining the therapeutic benefits of touch with hospital patients, staff and students (2008).

Additional foundations for this research are found in psychoanalytical, cultural and sociological theory in which objects signify human factors such as self and identity, the relationship of individuals to family/society (Rochberg-Halton, 1984, Fowler, 2010), and personal power/primal self (Nguyen, 2011). Cultural theorist Meaghan Morris brings us *critical proximity* (2006) which defines the relationship between a lived past and its representation in the object where the convergence of the two effect change. The work of developmental psychologist Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi has provided an essential guiding definition of overarching object characteristics, including power (vitality and energy), self (personal identity and continuum), and society (relationship and hierarchy) (1984). Social theorist Sherry Turkle's work with objects contributes the theory of *evocative objects* (2012) as silent partners and life companions, repositories for memory and history, and as provocateurs of thought and action. Of additional particular interest is the work of Pierre Lemmonier who describes objects as being

multidimensional devices of non-verbal communication that perform social intercourse, or communication that is a part of everyday life yet not always consciously recognized. The object converges, or instantaneously activates a coalescence of feelings, circumstances, and domains of experience in the context of its making or use. Lemmonier refers to objects in this respect as *perissological resonators* (2012) whose material use triggers emergent, nonverbal statements that speak what words cannot and can communicate “unspeakable truths.”

In his work, historical anthropologist Greg Dening explores human-object actions that are prompted by emotionally disturbing prior experiences or history (1996). This theory is very applicable to the September 11th Memorial Museum and War Childhood Museum case studies as well, and provides significant underpinning to defining the dynamic of ‘Synergizing.’ Of particular relevance to the object dynamics of ‘Touching’ and ‘Making’ is Dudley’s concept of *materiality* (2010), where sensory engagement can be the leading factor in the development of interpretive value, even when in the absence of content knowledge. Additionally important is the work of Hugo Critchley in the neuroscience of touch and its relationship between the skin’s role in homeostasis and the conveyance of sensation to the emotional regions of the brain (2008). Critchley likens the impact and affect of the emotional touch experience to the notion of a *hypnoglyph*; touch can stimulate positive emotional power and calming impact directly attributable to wellbeing and health.

Finally, two researchers of note provide information on the relationship between therapy and museums, each suggesting that exhibition visitation has a direct healing impact on audiences. The insightful work of Andree Salom (at the Center for Transpersonal Studies in Colombia) describes the *numinous characteristics* (Harding 1961) in certain objects, and the emotive quality of exhibition spaces, as kindlers of transpersonal experience in exhibitions, opening up visitors to flow states, spiritual inspiration, self reflection, deepened awareness and mindfulness (2009). In similar fashion, *Muse Therapy* is the term used by Manoru Adachi at the Nagoya University Museum, where he has studied the healing impacts of arts-based museum programming – in conjunction with object-based exhibitions – on primary and secondary school-aged students (2003). He focuses on mental stress in students, and how multiple visitations and multi-sensory interaction with museum specimens indicated “recovery from the problems” (of mental stress). Altogether, this groundwork has encouraged three phases of research defining the theory of Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics, and will continue to underscore the work towards practical museum-based applications.

Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics

Objects are on a fundamental level, essential to psychological health, wellbeing and healing, evidence of which can be seen in seven specific universal actions comprising the theory of Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics. The theory refers to the inherent relationships between an object and its characteristics, the dynamic actions between the object and a person, and the resultant psychological impact of those actions. The theory that objects are primary to psychological health, in everyday wellbeing, and when in stages of healing, explains why objects have undeniable and common evocative and phenomenological characteristics inherent to meaning making. Data from the research to-date illustrates that individuals, regardless of ethno-cultural, geographic or socioeconomic bearing, are activating primary states of mental health, stages of the healing process, and illustrating fundamental elements of human development via their object actions, including power, self identity, and connections with family and society.

The seven dynamic actions comprising the theory are: *Composing, Associating, Making, Releasing/Unburdening, Giving/Receiving, Touching* and *Synergizing*. These highly interrelated and multidimensional domains coalesce around fundamental scholarship in the disciplines of material culture, museum studies, psychology and psychotherapy. In application, the theory suggests that object-based exhibitions can be explicitly designed to enhance the psychological healing capacities of museum visitors and to attend to the everyday psychological health and wellbeing of museum participants.

Each Object Dynamic is comprised of specific object characteristics and healthful/healing impacts as follows:

Releasing/Unburdening

The action of releasing an object from a state of highly associative ownership into another place or state to permanently remove it from its former association (meaning) and state of ownership.

Object Characteristics

Unified Experience (Latham, Wood), Bearing Witness (Hoskins), Life Companions (Turkle), Critical Proximity (Morris)

Healthful/Healing Attributes

Resilience, self-efficacy, containment, empathy, stabilization, self-regulation, mindfulness

Associating

The action of maintaining and keeping within close physical proximity to an object in an effort to perpetuate the knowledge/memory of the object's associations including experiences, states of being, places and people.

Object Characteristics

Unified Experience (Latham, Wood), Bearing Witness (Hoskins), Life Companions (Turkle), Critical Proximity (Morris)

Healthful/Healing Attributes

Self-efficacy, mindset, self identity, mindfulness, self regulation, trauma recovery

Giving/Receiving

The action of donating or offering to another person or people an object with the intention of its being accepted, and the resultant act of its being received with its attributed meaning being mutually understood and held intact.

Object Characteristics

Unified Experience (Latham, Wood), Bearing Witness (Hoskins), Life Companions (Turkle), Provocations of Thought (Turkle)

Healthful/Healing Attributes

Resilience, trauma recovery, stabilization, connection with family/society, perspective-making

Composing

The action of juxtaposing objects with the intent of forming and expressing a concept or idea in order to coalesce, examine and convey a meaning that cannot otherwise be fully explained or expressed.

Object Characteristics

Unified Experience (Latham, Wood), Bearing Witness (Hoskins), Provocations of Thought (Turkle), Perrisological Resonators (Lemmonier)

Healthful/Healing Attributes

Self expression and communication, connection with society, self awareness, mindfulness, self identity, containment

Making

The action of generating an original or newly-formed object as a means of experiencing and implementing the phases of the fundamental creative process.

Object Characteristics

Primal Power (Nguyen), Unified Experience (Latham, Wood), The Transpersonal (Salom), Materiality (Dudley), Perrisological Resonators (Lemmonier), Hypnoglyph (Critchley)

Healthful/Healing Attributes

Self awareness, endurance, stabilization, emotional grit, mindfulness, resiliency, containment, self-regulation

Synergizing

The action of contributing an object to a collective whose components produce a meaning larger than the individual alone.

Object Characteristics

Unified Experience (Latham, Wood), Bearing Witness (Hoskins), Provocations of Thought (Turkle), The Transpersonal (Salom), Life Companions (Turkle), Critical Proximity (Morris)

Healthful/Healing Attributes

Resilience, endurance, wholism, perspective-making, stabilization, empathy, mindfulness, connection with society

Touching

The action of touching an object either consciously or unconsciously when thinking or speaking about its meaning.

Object Characteristics

Hypnoglyph (Critchley), Materiality (Dudley), (Chatterjee), Perrisological Resonators (Lemmonier), Unity of the Moment (Latham and Wood), Primal Power (Nguyen)

Healthful/Healing Attributes

Resilience, endurance, wholism, stabilization, mindfulness, emotional grit, containment, self-regulation

Summary of Fieldwork and Case Studies 2015-2017

The theory of Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics was developed via field research by Associate Professor Brenda Cowan in 2015. This initial study examined potential areas of confluence between object interpretation and meaning making in museum practice with objects as used in therapeutic practice. Grounding the study in the body of scholarship defining the phenomenological and evocative nature of objects, their influence in the lives of people, and the characteristics that shape those meanings, I explored the reason for those meanings: their fundamental psychological underpinnings. Converging the disciplines of museum and object studies, psychology and psychotherapy, I followed the premise that people have an innate and necessary relationship with objects that I call “primal dialogue,” that is essential to personal meaning making and to an individual’s psychological health.

I determined that object-based therapy would be an appropriate and unique arena for study and conducted field research in the use of objects at an adolescent therapeutic wilderness program in North Carolina (Trails Carolina), and also interviewed Ross Laird, a psychotherapist and expert in the making of objects as a means of self-discovery and actualization in Vancouver, British Columbia. The therapeutic work with objects at these venues correlated with research in the roles and interpretation of objects in museum exhibitions, as well as objects in relation to sociocultural identification, self-identification, power, and humanity. The study’s focus was placed on self-made objects and those found in nature, as opposed to branded and commercially mass-produced objects. At Trails Carolina (Lake Toxaway, North Carolina), interviews were conducted with the facility’s Clinical Director, Director of Students, a Therapist and Field Manager. Additionally, two days were spent in the field with a group of 9 adolescents engaged in the therapeutic process where observations were made of object-based individual and group therapy sessions, as well as wilderness lifestyle practices. At the Museum of Cultural Anthropology (Vancouver, British Columbia) I interviewed Dr. Ross Laird about his approach to creativity-based therapeutic practice and his expertise regarding the psychological impact of objects. The primary research findings resulted in the new theory of Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics that illustrates how objects are inherent to an individual’s wellbeing and psychological health. Phase I research documentation can be accessed at: www.psychotherapeuticobjectdynamics.com

Following the initial fieldwork and development of the theory, in 2016 I formed a partnership with Jason McKeown MS, LMFT, CPE, DCC, Director of Clinical and Family Services Trails Carolina, and Ross Laird, PhD, Interdisciplinary Creative Process, MA, Counseling Psychology. We entered into an empirical research phase to seek evidence for the theory of Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics by way of concrete examples in a museum environment. In coordination with

the National September 11 Memorial & Museum (New York, NY), a case study was conducted with object donors to the institution's collection. <https://www.911memorial.org>

The National September 11 Memorial & Museum was selected because of its unique collections-donor relationship that suggested explicit demonstrations of Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics. Eleven in-depth interviews were conducted between June 8th and June 11th, 2016. Participants included five widows, three survivors (including one who also lost a husband and one who lost a cousin), one mother who lost a son, one first responder, and one on-location journalist. The case study explored the therapeutic impacts of the participation of the object donors in the institution's acquisitions, the personal identification of the donors with their donated objects, and the psychological experience of the donors through the process of donation.

The interviewing methodology utilized a heuristic approach focused on generating qualitative data that captured participants' reflections on the idea of donation, the event itself, the meaning(s) of the donated object(s), and what if any, healing/meaning was found in the dynamic object experience. The data collected reinforced commonly held understandings of the meaningfulness of objects in everyday life, the potency of objects within museum environments, the value of participation, co-creation and open-content generation in exhibitions, and identified particular modes of design that are psychologically and interpretively impactful. Multiple subjects referred to their objects as "witnesses" to the event and to their own experience, and as the means by which the story of the event and their roles within it will be told. Most subjects referred to the need for the objects to keep the memory of their loved one alive, and/or the need for the objects to provide an accurate accounting of their experience. Most subjects referred to their objects as carrying a great deal of weight (responsibility). Subjects referred to the Memorial & Museum as a place where their objects will be kept safe, protected, and in that regard the institution is a "therapeutic ally."

Our review of the data revealed multiple examples of *Associating*, *Releasing/Unburdening*, *Synergizing*, *Touching*, *Composing*, *Making* and *Giving/Receiving*. Anecdotes from the subjects regarding the meanings of the objects, their relationships with the objects, their decisions for and actions of donating, and the impacts of those experiences provided supportive illustrations of the Dynamics as well as further information regarding the healthful and healing impacts of the donation process. Throughout the interviews, subjects also provided information that firmly represented established object characteristics and experiences including: objects as repositories of experience, bearing witness, perrisological resonators, life companions, materiality, calls to action, self identity, life continuum, and primal power. Phase II research documentation can be accessed at: www.psychotherapeuticobjectdynamics.com

In 2017 a third phase of research was conducted to further examine, contribute to and refine the theory of Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics via case study in a museum environment. Building upon the data collected from the National September 11 Memorial and Museum case study, the researchers sought to broaden the subject and geography of their empirical work, and expand their sample to include museum visitors and staff in addition to object donors. The War Childhood Museum (WCM), Sarajevo Bosnia-Herzegovina (<http://museum.warchildhood.com>) was identified as a logical collaborator with which to further the study. The WCM is a new and unique institution whose collection is solely comprised of personal objects donated by individuals who were children during the war in Bosnia (1991-1995) and whose intent is to contribute to healing and wellbeing in its participants.

Between the dates of June 18th – 23rd, following the same methodology and heuristic process, seventeen in-depth interviews were conducted at the museum site with ten object donors and seven post-visit audience members, followed by an informal interview with five members of the museum staff and leadership. Profound expressions of pride, ownership, agency, resilience and community overwhelmingly emerged as the most prevalent and coalescing themes of this study. Throughout the interviews with object donors and visitors these feelings and convictions were strongly and repeatedly described, and they were likewise echoed in the subsequent informal interview with museum staff and leadership. Subjects expressed strongly felt beliefs that the War Childhood Museum is an agent of personal and societal change where their singular contributions, stories and voices altogether express an impactful message of fortitude, endurance and strength unique to their unifying experience of a war childhood. Their participation with the museum is seen as a means of illustrating the innocence and endurance of childhood, and projecting a message of resilience and power specifically to and for the people of Sarajevo and Bosnia, as well as to others currently experiencing the tragedies of war elsewhere in the world. Their contributions of personal objects and stories, and the broader work of the museum, are not viewed solely as markers of historical events, but as vehicles through which to engage in positive civic action. The experience of object donation and viewing the collection encouraged a deep kind of openness, a perception of the unity of human experience, and an urgency to contribute, in small and personal ways, to healing the world through empathy and connection.

Illustration of numerous object characteristics emerged throughout the study including objects as repositories of experience, numinous, bearing witness, perrisological resonators, life companions, materiality, calls to action, self identity, life continuum, and primal power. Evidence of the seven tenets of Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics were found in the data analysis including *Associating*, *Releasing/Unburdening*, *Synergizing*, *Touching*, *Composing*, *Making* and *Giving/Receiving*. Phase III research documentation can be accessed at: www.psychotherapeuticobjectdynamics.com

Phase IV Case Study Overview: Derby Museum & Art Gallery

June-July 2018, Cowan, Laird, McKeown

Introduction

The fourth phase of research was conducted to further examine, contribute to and refine the theory of Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics via case study in a museum environment. Building upon the data collected from the first 3 studies, the researchers sought to broaden the sample and geography of their empirical work, and expand their pool of subjects to include museum visitors, volunteers, staff and object contributors. The Derby Museum & Art Gallery in Derby, England, was selected due to its innovative approach to museum participation, breadth of cultural artifacts as well as everyday objects within its collections, and its open source project titled “Objects of Love.” “Objects of Love” is a digital collection of personal objects and their meanings contributed by global participants, presented as a digital display within the institution’s World Cultures exhibition gallery. Another important factor in the selection of Derby Museums is its highly socioeconomically, culturally and ethnically diverse population, including a large population of immigrants from around the world, and a growing number of refugees from Africa and the Middle East. Brenda Cowan, Ross Laird and Jason McKeown conducted interviews with 35 individuals from across these diverse populations, including contributors to “Objects of Love,” museum staff, volunteers, and visitors post-visit.

Derby Museums

Derby Museums is an independent charitable trust and organization run for, and on behalf of, the people of Derby, UK. Derby Museums manages three museums: Derby Museum & Art Gallery, Pickford’s House and the Silk Mill (an UNESCO world heritage site), where broad public co-production and experience design experimentation are the core ethos that shapes all exhibitions and programming efforts. Derby Museums’ collection includes more than 250,000 objects in the areas of archaeology, social and industrial history, natural sciences, and world cultures. Central to the narrative of the city, the institutions’ collections focus on the subjects of industrial heritage and innovation, and scientific discovery in the natural world, and altogether enable a critical discourse around the context of socioeconomic and natural resource sustainability. Derby Museums is an affiliate of the UK’s Happy Museum Project, a global consortium of museums and institutions that conduct and support research and development initiatives centered around the guiding principles of: creating conditions for wellbeing in museums and communities, environmental stewardship, citizenship and social action, cross-disciplinary public and professional relationship building, and individual and societal resilience.

Overview of Findings

In addition to evidence of the seven Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics, the Derby Museum study revealed overarching themes that are highly consistent with our prior studies, as well as several that are unique to the museum and its constituency. These overarching themes as defined below, compose a portrait of highly personalized human-object relationships within a thriving community-museum relationship. As with prior studies, the overarching themes speak to concepts of self-identity, objects as storytellers, objects bearing witness, and the museum as a place of nurturance in a myriad of ways. The theme of *connection* was a predominant concept as it has been in every study. Connection, as described by subjects in the Derby Museum interviews, included very specific references to self (awareness and identity), to family, to friends, to heritage, history, place, and to the museum. The applications of the concept in this study were broad in scope and powerful in their explicitness and depth of meaning.

The concept of objects giving permission has come up in prior studies but was especially prevalent in this study, where objects were described as providing an allowance for an individual to share their story, and to be “seen” or “heard.” These experiences were often linked with fond descriptions of the museum in turn allowing subjects to share, be seen and “leave their mark” via its participatory practices and ethos. Likewise particular were the concepts of mindfulness and descriptions of feelings of wellbeing. Here, subjects described objects being used as prompts for conversations to activate feelings of “being present,” and also as generating feelings associated with wellbeing such as respite, calm, love, acceptance, acknowledgement and a sense of “constancy.”

Connection

The theory of Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics emerged from the premise of humans having an inherent “primal dialogue” with objects wherein psychological health is fostered. A defining element of primal dialogue is the concept of connection, which is also a keystone in the practice of therapy. The concept of connection, to family, community and society, is core to human self-identity, health and wellbeing, and we can likewise draw reference to the meaning of connection from John Dewey’s landmark work with the interconnectedness of self and identity via objects.

The need for connection is primary in humans, as is the role of objects in our awareness of connectivity, the creation and preservation of connections, and our understanding of connectivity to other people, places and times. In this manner, the relationship of object meanings to the concept of connection was one of the most frequently described feelings, notions or experiences among subjects in the Derby Museum study:

“With the totem I can share with others the meaning, educate them, and we can learn that we have much in common.”- *Object Contributor, Zimbabwean Refugee* (lion plaque)

“It’s a link to my family, to growing up and that love. It feels like I’m connected to my memories, my family. I feel like I’m touching the country.” - *Museum Administrator* (father’s road atlas)

“It reminds me about my dad. It’s about family. Family is important.”- *Volunteer Preparator* (ceramic cat)

“The tin and its contents have become even more precious....What does it represent? Inheritance, family and memory, ultimately, a sense of being and belonging.”- *Volunteer Preparator* (tin of photographs)

“I carry my children with me. I like having my family with me. I can show them I appreciate them. If the Queen invited me to a garden party I would wear all of them (jewelry) so I can share it with them (children and grandchildren).”- *Visiting museum professional* (collection of jewelry given by children and grandchildren)

“(The statue) is about sentiment and family connection. The culture that represents my parents who gave it to me. It helps me share my culture and what I believe in.” - *Object contributor* (Ganesh statue)

“As I track my father’s life (through photographs) I was thinking about his broader family as well, the overlapping of lives. I was doing it for him but really doing it for me in the moment. It was like a collaboration.” - *Object contributor* (box of family photographs)

“(The art school) was unusual for its time and place, it was ahead of its time, a time of change. They (the artists) were voices in the wilderness. It’s like a tribe – I’ve joined a tribe! It’s like a family; it’s there but you don’t understand the bond until you marshal your thoughts, think deeply and process.” - *Object contributor* (Glasgow School of Art memorial pin)

“I feel a part of the culture. It speaks to me. It was a gift. He (mentor) is like my father, he has one too and it connects him to me. It’s like a spiritual link.” - *Object contributor* (Celtic amulet)

“It relates to my children. I knew I wanted to keep things of my children. Hair is involved in the ritual of caring.” - *Object contributor* (box of children’s hair clippings)

“(Seeing the artifacts) connects with the depths of history. The objects have a sense of time, history, culture and meaning. It takes you back to ancient times. A transportation.”- *Visitor, Syrian Refugee* (reflecting on World Cultures exhibition)

“One item connects to another and suddenly a whole string of relations appears.”
- *Volunteer preparator* (reflecting on World Cultures collection)

“When you hold something that is so old you are holding history.” - *Volunteer preparator* (reflecting on World Cultures collection)

“(Working with the objects) Makes me think of honoring family stories. How other world stories make me think of my own family ancestry.”- *Volunteer preparator* (reflecting on World Cultures collection)

“I went through cancer and they (family) are the most important things to me. I carry them with me.” - *Object contributor* (photograph of family)

Identity

People described the concept of identity in various ways, most often related to self awareness and self definition. In many instances throughout the interviews, subjects’ descriptions of identity coalesced with the concept of connection, particularly when talking about family:

“It associates me with my tribe, my clan, my ancestors. It’s like I carried my ancestors with me. It gives me a confidence that I am a part of that identity, that family. My having something of next of kin with me in a foreign country, I draw a lot from that.”- *Object contributor, Zimbabwean Refugee* (lion plaque)

“I continually relate things back to my family and history. It’s about identity.”- *Volunteer preparator* (reflecting on World Cultures collection)

“My whole life is wrapped up in these things.” - *Object contributor* (grandmother’s pillbox and thimble)

“I think it’s quite nice to share the objects. People will maybe see the continuity. It gives you a sense of place, of identity.” - *Volunteer preparator* (reflecting on World Cultures collection)

“I wasn’t sure if I could talk about them and I can, and it’s affirmative, like my identity. I did something that’s really important and it’s really good. I’m naturally a nervous person.” - *Object contributor* (stone tool, plastic birds, bell, plaster mold)

Psychological Relationship with the Institution

Participants’ relationships with Derby Museum & Art Gallery were referred to and described in many ways. In many instances the concept of connection was again drawn upon, in this application as coalescent with the meaning of the institution. Mindfulness and expressions of health and wellbeing were also often expressed in direct connection with the museum:

“(Working in the Museum) Whetted my appetite! I feel supremely aware and excited about the other cultures. I feel revised, mindful.” - *Object contributor* (glass pig sculpture)

“It’s about connections. Being in the museum and being a part and with the objects improves my life.”- *Volunteer preparator* (ceramic cat)

“I wanted to be a part of something, a group. You feel valued. Here there is a sense of purpose and achievement. Connecting with people.”- *Volunteer preparator* (reflecting on World Cultures collection)

“I have fellow like-minded people who I get to bounce ideas off of. I’ve been enriched here.”- *Volunteer preparator* (reflecting on World Cultures collection)

“Suddenly everything has life and I will appreciate better. I will be more present.”
- *Visitor, Syrian Refugee* (reflecting on World Cultures exhibition)

“I enjoyed the experience of this (sharing with the museum). This is a continuing process of therapy that I share these things.” - *Object contributor* (family photographs)

“It’s familiar and comforting to wear them in today (to be photographed).” - *Object contributor* (pair of bracelets)

“(As a result of contributing) I feel passion, spirit, mission, past lives, ambition. Probably this will be a museum that I will never forget. I don’t get to share much. It’s important what you are doing here in this museum. The public, they have their own stories of life behind the objects.”- *Object contributor* (Celtic amulet)

“It’s more important (the photograph) as a result of this experience. (Contributing to “Objects of Love”) This is very intimate and people don’t often get to have intimate experiences like this and this has changed its importance.” - *Object contributor* (Photograph of family)

“I feel more relaxed. I feel more reposed here as a result (of seeing the objects). Totally different.” - *Visitor, Syrian Refugee (reflections on World Cultures exhibition)*

“When holding it (clay artifact) I feel contentment.”- *Volunteer preparator* (reflecting on World Cultures collection)

“I was proud to share my objects. I felt valued. I felt part of Derby Museum’s history. I felt passionate. I felt like part of a team. It was joyful and fun!” - *Object contributor* (box of paper cranes, photo, marathon award)

“I specifically came here so I could participate in sharing my object (with the museum). Being a participant is important. I can just let go, be quiet. Feel respite.” - *Object contributor* (Photograph of family)

Mindfulness and Wellbeing

Explicit evidence of mindfulness, health and wellbeing associated with personal objects emerged from the data in several instances. In some cases the feeling of “being present” was articulated, while others identified feelings of being “constant,” part of a continuum with others and not being alone. Objects were used as devices to prompt conversation, with the intent of being present and mindful with others through sharing their object stories and associations. As with the examples of wellbeing and mindfulness directly affiliated with the museum experience identified above, the following contribute significantly to the research study’s intent to identify wellbeing impacts specifically within the human-object relationship:

“I’ve become acutely aware of my gratefulness. Things that were once negative can now be positive. These things help me build myself up through a bad time. Each item represents a part in my healing journey.” - *Object Contributor* (box of paper cranes, photo, marathon award)

“(Playing the piano) Is being in the moment. The association of that struggle (of learning) and to take the risk. I like it when I invite others to play and they are a part of a shared experience with me.” - *Object contributor* (piano)

“(The blanket means) A time of relaxation, for chilling out. It’s very constant.” - *Object contributor* (childhood blanket)

“Whenever I look at this idol I feel that some superior force is helping me out. An enhanced sense of gratitude. I feel a lot of introspection. A lot of room to explore.”
- *Object contributor* (Ganesh statue)

“They (grandfather’s medal and diary) are anchor points in my life. A physical anchor point where I can find respite.” - *Object contributor* (Grandfather’s WWII medals and diary, stones)

“The biscuit tin had lots of buttons in it and when I was extremely ill as a child I would touch the buttons and imagine where they were from and that’s what healed me. I associate it with getting well.” - *Object contributor* (biscuit tin with buttons)

“Life is always changing, exhibits are always changing, but my house and my things are constant.” – *Visiting museum professional* (Cordial glass)

Permission

The concept of objects giving permission was mentioned in different ways and often described as an individual being allowed to share their story, and to be “seen” or “heard.” Of “no longer being invisible.” The feelings associated with permission were positive, often prideful, and even a little defiant. Their objects and the opportunity to publicly display them at the museum together enabled them to do – or – be something that was uncharacteristic or exciting:

“I feel proud to be photographed and showing off for the first time. I won’t be invisible. I’m leaving my mark! I have a family legacy of low profile. I don’t want to be low profile anymore.” - *Object contributor* (ceramic cat)

“(Display of the object) Is weirdly exciting. It’s putting myself out there. Out of my comfort zone. I get to be a part of the storytelling.” - *Object contributor* (box of paper cranes, photo, marathon award)

“The box I put the objects in (to transport them here) is special, a statement. The objects gave me purpose and permission to use this box and to wear this coat that I typically wouldn’t.” - *Object contributor* (stone tool, plastic birds, bell, plaster mold)

“People will notice them (jewelry) and we get to talking. I get to feel proud of my children!” - *Visiting museum professional* (Collection of jewelry given by children and grandchildren)

“I know that a lot of people will see me with the blanket and they’ll see it’s mine.”
- *Object contributor* (childhood blanket)

“(Grandmother) would let me spin it and not get scolded. She trusted me. That made it very special and it evokes memories of the house and food and her.” - *Volunteer preparator* (reflecting on World Cultures collection)

Overall, responses and anecdotes from subjects regarding the meanings of and their associations with objects, their experiences with working/volunteering/donating/visiting the museum, and the positive impacts of their individual experiences with its collection, provided clear evidence of the Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics. Examples from the data are detailed in the upcoming Collected Data and Synthesis sections of this paper. In the process of data analysis, information garnered from the interviews provided overwhelming and irrefutable evidence of a new, seventh object dynamic specific to the human-object action of touching objects. This information has been entered into the theory’s definition, data examples have been recorded, and a delineation of its meaning provided in the Collected Data and Synthesis sections of this paper. In light of the new dynamic of *Touching*, a fresh review of data from the first three research studies was conducted, resulting in examples from each. This information is likewise incorporated and presented in the Synthesis section of this paper.

The inclusion of the Dynamic of *Touching* is particularly significant due to the extensive scholarship in the healthful and healing impacts of touching objects, specifically in relationship with museums. Dr. Helen Chatterjee, among others, presents extensive important research in this area and seeing concrete evidence of this dynamic activity within our own data is logical and very satisfying. It should be noted that during interviews in every study, when a subject’s object is present it is common for subjects to touch it or hold it when speaking about it. This has often appeared to be an unconscious activity that is also often seen in daily life. Including *Touching* within the framework of Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics gives us the ability to focus with intent on identifying further evidence and illustrative examples, and contribute to what is an already robust body of scholarship.

Subject Recruitment and Protection

On behalf of the research team the institution sent out a voluntary call via mail to a prospective interview population. The researchers prepared a letter of invitation for selected individuals whom the museum determined would be willing and valuable to the purposes of the study (see Appendix A). Each participant was introduced to the inquiry, its purpose, and to the questions so as to make an informed decision. In keeping with NIH Human Subject Research specifications, participants provided consent prior to the interviews. No identifying information was collected or requested of the participants, and consent was also received for audio recording of the interviews.

Methodology

Between the dates of June 18th – 30th 2018, 35 in-depth interviews were conducted at the museum site with 27 object contributors to “Objects of Love” (included staff and volunteers who also contributed), 4 post-visit audience members, and 4 museum staff/volunteers who did not also contribute to “Objects of Love.” Performing the case study on site were Brenda Cowan, Associate Professor of Exhibition & Experience Design, School of Graduate Studies at SUNY/FIT, Ross Laird, PhD, Interdisciplinary Creative Process, MA, Counseling Psychology, faculty Kwantlyn Polytechnic University, and Jason McKeown MS, LMFT, CPE, DCC, Director of Clinical and Family Services Trails Carolina. Data analysis was subsequently conducted and the information synthesized into this report document by Brenda Cowan with Graduate Associate Melisa Delibegovic.

The interviews utilized script instruments: one specifically for object contributors, one for staff/volunteers and one specifically for post-visit audience members. (see Appendix B). An additional script of two follow-up questions was distributed to subjects to capture reflections on the interview and museum experience. (see Appendix C). The duration of the interviews ranged from 30 to 60 minutes in length. The differences in interview duration were due to the personal manner in which individual participants answered each question and the amount of information they were willing or able to share. The scripts and interview protocols utilized the same methodology and questions as used in the previous case studies to ensure consistency and control with data collection.

Collected Data

Data collected among 35 individuals presented evidence of the tenets of the Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics as follows: *Associating* (15/35 respondents), *Composing* (9/35 respondents), *Giving/Receiving* (9/35 respondents), *Making* (6/35 respondents), *Synergizing* (3/35 respondents) and *Releasing/Unburdening* (1/35 respondents). Of great importance to the study and to the delight of the researchers, a new object-based dynamic experience described by participants was one that hadn't emerged very strongly in the first three studies, but can now be contributed to the theory due to its strength in the data. In the Derby Museum interviews, a significant number of participants (8/35 respondents) described an object experience involving the action of touching or holding, most often with their hand or fingers. Touching was described or demonstrated as either a conscious or unconscious activity when the subject was thinking about or explaining their object's meaning. These descriptions were positive, empowering, and impactful, leading to the addition of *Touching* to the Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics' defining object experience domains.

The following information is organized per interview type in order of the interview questions asked. The most representative responses to each question have been selected from among the data and presented below via defining and qualifying quotes and/or anecdotes.

Object Contributor Interview Questions

27 object contributors (includes museum staff/volunteers who also contributed)

Why did you choose to donate or share an object with the Museum?

Participation is important. Many respondents wanted to participate in the museum itself as a member of the community:

“Because of my association with the museum. My whole life is wrapped up in these objects. I don’t know what’s triggering all this.” (overwhelming emotional response to the question.) (grandmother’s pillbox and thimble)

“I specifically came here so I could participate in sharing my object. Being a participant is important.” (Photograph of family)

“It’s important to give people the chance to look back and see value. Getting them fired up to participate.” (collection of jewelry)

“If I’m in the mix I can see where I stand. I want to see what it feels like.” (biscuit tin with buttons)

“I’m interested in the museum community. I’m excited about the story (of object) and to share how important it is to me.” (ring)

“Because I believe in what you are doing and wanted to participate. I believe in the power of objects.” (charm bracelet and bag)

“Because I am involved in the museum community.” (box of paper cranes, photo, marathon award)

“Because Andrea asked me to. I try to help when I can. Reciprocity.” (cordial glass)

Story is important. Many respondents wanted to share their object’s story or meaning with others:

“So I can share a totem from Africa and the cultural heritage. So people can be aware.” (lion plaque)

“I’m really interested in history and the stories of objects.” (father’s road atlas)

“It’s a chance to tell my story for a change. I can help the museum.” (ceramic cat)

“I have a professional interest in objects being vehicles of stories. The story that sits behind the objects.” - (box of photographs)

“It’s thought provoking. You don’t often get to share.” (family photo)

“If you don’t remember their story what good is yours?” (Grandfather’s WWII medals and diary, stones)

Several respondents expressed a deep awareness of the emotional power of objects which prompted their participation:

“I’m aware that objects have meaning to me. I wanted to learn why I feel so much about my objects.” (two cameras)

“It (the opportunity) fascinated me. I do hospice work and when I engage with people I see how important objects can be at the end of a life.” (glass pig sculpture)

“I’m intrigued because I put a lot of emotion onto objects. I have always loved objects and thought it was weird and it was powerful to hear it was a “thing” for others.” (Grandfather’s WWII medals and diary, stones)

“I am aware of the meaning of objects and helping to explain that.” (bracelets)

Why did you select the object that you did?

Respondents wanted to share their family, heritage, and culture through their objects:

“It helps me share my culture and what I believe in.” (Ganesh statue)

“Personal family memories. My children.” (box of children’s hair clippings)

“It reminds me of my dad. Love, joy, moments. The camera was my dad’s constant companion.” (two cameras)

“It reminds me of my dad. It’s about family.” (ceramic cat)

“One is from family, “given,” and the other is from the people in my arts fellows program, “chosen.” (bracelets)

“This is my family totem. In Africa each family has a totem passed down from father to the children. It’s a way of keeping identity even as they split up.” (lion plaque)

“The birth announcement makes me smile. It’s so formal and they were so playful. I’m fortunate to have them (parents).” (birth announcement)

Respondents wanted to keep the memory of an important person or place alive:

“The school burned to the ground and so much was lost. ” (Glasgow School of Art memorial pin)

“It’s important that my grandparents’ story is out there.” (Grandfather’s WWII medals and diary, stones)

“It’s like I’m keeping my grandma alive a little bit.” (glass pig sculpture)

Objects related to childhood is another theme that was important to respondents:

“These are related to my childhood. Found things and things from my school years.” (stone tool, plastic birds, bell, plaster mold)

“My grandmother knitted this for my brother. I took this from him when I was two and it’s been inseparable ever since.” (knit blanket)

“It was my grandmother’s and it brings me back to so many memories.” (glass pig sculpture)

“I have very few objects and this is a link to growing up and that love.” (road atlas)

“I relate to my own childhood. You remember the stories and they are reanimated.” (box of photos)

Objects related to health and healing is another theme that was important to respondents:

“The biscuit tin had lots of buttons in it and when I was extremely ill as a child I would touch the buttons and imagine where they were from and that’s what healed me. I associate it with getting well.” (biscuit tin with button collection)

“I am in a new relationship now and have a strength and pride in myself. The ring symbolizes healing and a change in my life.” (ring)

“These objects are about my healing journey. I’ve become acutely aware of my gratefulness.” (box of paper cranes, photo, marathon award)

What associations or meanings does the object hold for you?

Memories of family and fond moments together were mentioned most often:

“It feels like I’m connected to my memories, my family. It opens up vistas and navigating through the countryside. Memories of my father swearing while driving!” (road atlas)

“A deep commitment to a happy time we had as a family, less than a year ago.” (photo of family)

“I feel happy and accepted because he is holding me as a child. It takes me back to past moments and future as well.” (photograph with dad)

“Family. It is about my dad. In giving me this object he was telling me I was his favorite.” (ceramic cat)

“It’s just the two of us and that moment. My memory of him are about having tea and him sharing his wisdom. ‘Don’t take anything in pain’.” (photograph with grandfather)

Feelings of strength, health and protection were powerful associations for respondents:

“It gives me a strength. Whenever I look at this idol I feel that some superior force is helping me out.” (Ganesh statue)

“It gives me a confidence. It gives me courage and the will to survive. To conquer.” (lion plaque)

“The bracelet is like good luck and I feel safer when I wear it.” (collection of jewelry)

“I’m a new person. The change in my life, mentally. The ring represents a distinct change and a new beginning.” (ring)

Creativity and the act of making was a strong association for respondents:

“They are about production and they are authentic. There was a joy in making the cake, in decorating it. The plaster mold is fragile and loaded with meaning but I don’t know why.” (stone tool, plastic birds, bell, plaster mold)

“The association of that struggle (of learning) and to take the risk. Sometimes there’s frustration that comes with learning. I sat and played almost as if I were possessed. Being in a state or a zone.” (piano)

“I just went away and made it and I remember how ridiculous I can be. It makes me want to try making things. The whole cycle of the making of it was ridiculous and I love it.” (ring)

“I work out some of my feelings when I use it. It helps me work things out. The creative process.” (two cameras)

Loss was another common response, most often for people but sometimes for other places and times:

“It’s like a big hug. And a sense of grief and loss. She had dementia.” (glass pig sculpture)

“You’ve got to take the bad and the object represents the trauma of the loss of the building. It was unusual for its time and place. A time of innovation and change.” (Glasgow School of Art memorial pin)

“These were always in her handbag which she would carry up to bed with her every night. She never became distant. She was always special. We (family) don’t talk about how we feel, ever, because we feel so much.” (pill box and thimble)

Can you share the process you went through as you shared your object with the museum?

For many respondents it was important to have a special or particular bag or box in which to transport their object:

“I wanted a box but I couldn’t find one good enough so I put it in my bag. I held it safe.” (Ganesh statue)

“I selected a special, fun, strongbox to put them in. The box is a statement.” (stone tool, plastic birds, bell, plaster mold)

Safety was another major consideration:

“My husband wrapped it extra carefully. I carried it in my bag and was a little nervous.” (glass pig sculpture)

“I needed to protect it. I realized that it was precious and wanted to keep it safe. I was surprised.” (box with children’s hair clippings)

“I wrapped it in bubble wrap and put it in a safe place in my bag.” (ceramic cat)

“I kept it in the safe section of my backpack.” (photograph with father)

“I was in a hurry and grabbed it and went. Then worried if it would be ok.” (charm bracelet and bag)

“I put it in a special bag, my new one, and wrapped it in bubble wrap.” (cordial glass)

Some subjects changed their typical manner of commute because of bringing in their object(s):

“It would have been convenient to bring it in by car, less convenient by train. I usually keep it in the boot of my car. I carried it in my backpack instead of driving my car in.” (road atlas)

Many subjects wore their objects:

Glasgow School of Art memorial pin; collection of jewelry; ring; pair of bracelets; Celtic amulet

Is public display of the object important to you? If so, why?

For some respondents it is most important that viewers learn the meaning/content of their object:

“It will make people think and understand my culture and that will feel great. The values of my culture.” (Ganesh statue)

“People will understand its importance and connection and they will have more respect. It’s more than just display.” (lion totem)

Display of their object was a significant emotional experience for some respondents:

“I felt a moment of hesitation to release the permission. I have to get over myself.”
(bracelets)

“I will feel joy. The actual objects are joyful.” (pill box and thimble)

“It’s a big thing to have a part of your life out there.” (stone tool, plastic birds, bell, plaster mold)

“Displaying it and participating with others makes me feel good.” (box with children’s hair clippings)

Empathy and enabling others to connect with their own experiences were important to several respondents:

“I was hoping other people would see it, the empathy. People will look at it and you never know, they might be interested and it will expand - the tribe will be formed.”
(Glasgow School of Art memorial pin)

“It’s nice that people are interested in it. I’ve kept it quite secretive. Maybe people will see it and reunite with their own nostalgia.” (knit blanket)

“People might have a similar photograph of themselves with someone and that’s a nice feeling.” (photograph with grandfather)

Displaying their object gives some respondents the feeling of being seen, or sharing themselves in a positive way:

“I feel proud to be photographed and showing off for the first time!” (ceramic cat)

“It means so much. It lets people in to a side of me that I don’t share much. This is new and I’m ready now but wouldn’t have been before. I’m strong enough now.” (ring)

“It’s weirdly exciting. It’s putting myself out there. Out of my comfort zone.” (box of paper cranes, photo, marathon award)

Family was again another important theme, and display of objects related to a loss was important:

“People will be able to see my dad.” (photograph with father)

“It’s important that my grandparents’ story is out there. I like it.” (Grandfathers WWII medal and diary, stones)

“I like that the glass will go on. My grandmother’s story will go on.” (cordial glass)

Do you feel changed in any way as a result of your experience sharing your object?

Almost every subject expressed positivity about their experience, ranging from feelings of calm and pleasure about being able to share, to much stronger emotions, even relief:

“I feel ok. More relaxed.” (two cameras)

“I feel really happy and comforted. It’s nice to share it with other people.” (biscuit tin with button collection)

“Nice. I like sharing my stories and this feels good.” (box of paper cranes, photo, marathon award)

“There’s something natural about it, like talking about a favorite author. Like opening up a world.” (piano)

“I feel passion, spirit, past lives, mission, ambition. Probably this will be a museum that I will never forget. I don’t get to share much.” (Celtic amulet)

“I am ecstatic! I am happy. I can share the knowledge.” (lion totem)

Some respondents described their feelings of introspection and greater self awareness:

“I feel stronger. I didn’t realize I was this strong and I’m confident talking about it.” (ring)

“I never thought about this object so deeply. I feel a lot of introspection. I have a lot of room to explore.” (Ganesh statue)

“I feel delighted. It’s really rich and I wasn’t sure if I could talk about them and I can. It’s affirmative, like my identity. I did something that’s really important to me and it’s really good.” (stone tool, plastic birds, bell, plaster mold)

Others reflected and determined the need to make change as a result of their experience:

“It feels nice to be included. I now understand that I need to take more time out of my day to take quiet time for myself. I now appreciate that time for myself is sacred and needs to be cherished.” (cordial glass)

“I will probably carry it (photograph) more now. It’s more important as a result of this experience.” (photograph of family)

“I felt very weepy and slightly angry. I realized how much was invested in this tin and its contents and it was much more than I had reckoned prior to the interview. At home I immediately pulled out some of my artwork and writing (poetry) and decided to continue working on the subjects of memory, inheritance and family.” (biscuit tin with button collection)

Post-Visit Audience Interview Questions

(4 subjects reflecting on the World Cultures exhibition gallery, all Syrian refugees)

What made you decide to visit the museum?

“To explore new things that I wasn’t aware of.”

“We are seeing the objects in their final stage.”

“The museum encourages respect for knowledge.”

What content or emotions did you anticipate experiencing during your visit?

“Impressed. The place has charisma.”

“Excitement to know more, to see the details.”

“I feel excited to bring my children.”

“I feel that I can see the value of things, even small things.”

What do you remember most about the objects that you saw?

“I think of how much work must have gone into making the original (clay artifacts).”

“I realized the beauty of the earth. I didn’t know it was so beautiful. The stones from the earth’s layers are more beautiful as originals.”

“I think of how we can build up our healing over centuries, and the connection between myth and reality.”

“It takes you back to the ancient times – a transportation.”

Describe the impact that those objects had on you.

“I feel calm, relaxed. More reposed as a result.”

“A sense of more confidence.”

“That the past is important to our present and our future.”

Do you feel changed in any way as a result of your experience at the museum?

“I feel bad because I remember my grandmother and I used to throw away everything (instead of preserve their objects).”

“I will go home rethinking the making behind the objects and things around me. Their meaning.”

“I will go home rethinking the making behind the objects and things around me. Their meaning.”

“Connected with the depths of the history. Suddenly everything has life and I will appreciate better. I will be more present.”

Volunteer/Staff Interview Questions (non-object contributors)

(4 subjects)

Can you describe any impact you believe the World Cultures gallery exhibition has had on individuals who have visited it? ('Individuals' is fully inclusive of all publics as well as individuals from all areas of the Museum)

“People tend to go through more slowly. People are looking harder because there aren't labels.”

“People are shocked at certain objects that are on display and organized in the way they are.”

“There are a breadth of ages and ethnicities, and arousal of wonderment and love. People directly relate to the use and depth of meaning of things similar to their own objects.”

“The fact that they're (collections) in drawers makes them seem even more important.”

What content or emotions did you anticipate yourself and/or others experiencing during the exhibition visit?

“People react to the bangles used in the slave trade with sadness and weight.”

“Women react to the sculptures of women with an intimacy of relationship.”

“I think people are revulsed by the visceral (grotesque, violent) objects they see.”

“Curiosity, excitement. I don't see how you couldn't hold these things!”

What do you remember most about the objects that you saw?

“The clay oil lamp and seeing the finger impressions and its quick making. I wonder that someone kept it and cared for it all these years. The Punch and Judy heads are sad because they don't have bodies and aren't in motion. Sadness.”

“The headdresses. I think of the families making them. I like thinking what they are for. The little oil lamps and the rooms they lit up. The humanity in the objects.”

“The tiny Chinese shoes. That something so beautiful could come from something so grotesque. It's poignant for us because we know what they are.”

Describe the impact that those objects had on you.

“The thumbprints in the clay (oil lamp) and the smell of the lamps. You can still see and smell them after thousands of years.”

“Wanting it!”

“Contentment when holding it. You lose yourself in the activity.”

“The lamps illuminate me. My mind, heart, creativity.”

“I feel sad about the puppets because you can’t move them. They’re lifeless.”

“I feel rapture over everything! With the oil lamp I feel like I could almost be making it.”

Do you feel changed in any way as a result of your experience at the exhibition?

“It whetted my appetite! I have become supremely aware and excited about the other cultures. I feel revised and more mindful.”

“I wanted to be a part of something, a group. You feel valued. A sense of achievement, purpose. The objects enable me to connect with people.”

“I’ve become enriched here. I continually relate things back to my family and history. It’s about identity.”

Data Demonstrating the Theory of Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics

Altogether, the 35 interviews produced data that specifically illustrated the seven object dynamics as follows:

Giving/Receiving

“In giving me this object (ceramic cat) he’s telling me I’m his favorite. Some day I will pass it on to my niece. She’s *my* favorite.” - *volunteer/object contributor*

“It was a moment of silence in the storm. Transcendence because the other siblings were squabbling over their possessions. It was a moment of recognition that I hadn’t been forgotten. They came out in the middle of the arguing siblings and handed them to me (WWII medals and diary). They handed them to me in my hand and closed it around the objects. I will pass them on to my three children.” - *object contributor*

“The bracelet is from my grandchildren and a ring from my daughter. These earrings are from Lynda (daughter). It’s loving. These being together and I can show them I appreciate them.” - *visiting museum professional*

Two gifted cameras: “One camera belonged to my father and the other belonged to the widow of my friend. - *volunteer/object contributor*

“The object (Celtic amulet) was a gift. He is like my father, he has one too. It connects him to me. It’s like a spiritual link.” - *object contributor*

“This one is my tribe, the found, the other is family, the good part of the given. The family bracelet is from my grandmother – she was very resilient. The string bracelet is a validation from the Arts Fellows. A personal and professional overlap.” - *object contributor*

Subject’s box of family photographs includes many of his grandfather’s. The family was tumultuous and the grandfather traumatized by war. His father discovered the hidden box of photographs on his grandfather’s death. His father would gift photos to his aunts despite having a difficult relationship with them. Giving the photographs was a way of sharing himself with them. This caused the subject distress because he wanted to preserve the family history. - *object contributor*

“Someday I will give this to someone and it would be keeping me with them. It would be a present to someone (lion totem).” – *object contributor*

“My parents gave it to me (Ganesh statue). There are a lot of hopes attached to me. I will let my mother know how it makes me feel.” (strength, love, protection) - *object contributor*

Making

“The lamps illuminate my mind, heart creativity.” (She went home and wrote a poem about her object.) - *volunteer/object contributor*

“I work out some of my feelings when I use it (father’s camera), it helps me work things out. It’s the creative process. I think out the image and frame it out, and it’s a process, and it’s iterative, the finished speech of the final photograph. I do my best work when I’m not feeling well. It focuses my attention on changes. - *volunteer/object contributor*

“I just went and made it and I remember how ridiculous I can be. It makes me want to try making things. It’s ridiculous and impractical and I would never wear it but I love it. The whole cycle of making it was ridiculous and I love it.” - *museum administrator*

“I knew I wanted to keep things of my children’s in it.” (made a special box) - *object contributor*

“There was a joy in the making of the cake, decorating it.” (small plastic bird cake decorations) - *object contributor*

“It’s fragile and loaded with meaning. (plaster mold made when he was a child) I don’t know why.” - *object contributor*

Associating

“I carry this in my purse with my money. (bracelet)” - *visiting museum professional*

“I always keep it (tin with family photos) in the living room.” - *object contributor*

“It’s on a shelf kept safe. I see it every day.” - *object contributor*

“It’s very constant. I used to hide it (when a child) so no one would take it. I will never get rid of it. It’s under my pillow every day.” - *volunteer/object contributor*

“These are the things I’m happy to see every day. (pill box and thimble) They aren’t ever far from each other.” - *object contributor*

“I always want to see it (Ethiopian flag). It makes me so happy to see it every day (on bedroom wall).” - *Ethiopian refugee, object sharing*

“I keep this (father’s camera) on my bookcase and I can see it every day. It was a part of so many places and moments.” - *volunteer/object contributor*

“It stays in the car always (road atlas). Sometimes in the boot sometimes under the seat.”
- *Museum administrator*

“I wear it every day. Always.” (Celtic amulet) - *object contributor*

“I always wear the string bracelet. On my right wrist” (from Arts Fellowship) - *object contributor*

“I carry it in my bag (photograph of family). I really want to keep it with me. I carry them with me.” - *object contributor*

“I carry it with me always, in my purse in a special pocket. (photograph with grandfather)
- *object contributor*

“I see it daily. The feeling that it’s there is enough (lion totem). It’s like my car keys.”
- *object contributor*

“It always stays on my bedroom shelf (ceramic cat).” - *volunteer/object contributor*

“I will wear it from here on out. (Glasgow School of Art memorial pin) - *object contributor*

Composing

Interview with object donor: Her two cameras are placed on the table in front of her during our interview with their lenses angled in to each other and just touching. They look like they are nuzzling. The subject is deeply moved throughout the interview and emotional talking about them and their meanings to her. When she was asked about the positioning of the two cameras – why she placed them in the way she did – she couldn’t speak. She said it was too emotional for her to talk about. (in composing the objects they said what she couldn’t put into words.) - *volunteer/object contributor*

“Family photos are in the tin now and those *have* to be together.” - *object contributor*

“I carry all my children with me. I like having my family with me. If the Queen invited me to a garden party I would wear all of them so I can share it with them.” (Wears collection of jewelry from children and grandchildren altogether) - *visiting museum professional*

“It’s important that they stay together (set of grandmother’s glassware). I want to have things in their right place. They live in the open kitchen shelves together.” - *visiting museum professional*

“The two always go together (two bracelets). This one is my tribe, the found, the other is

family, the good part of the given.” - *object contributor*

“I will keep these two things together.” (charm bracelet in a Japanese bag) - *object contributor*

“The objects are kept together. They are old friends. The rock is hers and the other three items are theirs (WWII medals and diary) and they are always together.” - *object contributor*

“Billy’s tooth and my ring kind of go together. They are both alike. We are alike in our eccentricity and silliness and needing to put something together.” - *museum administrator*

“They aren’t ever far from each other. They are both sides of her (grandmother).” - *object contributor*

Touching

“I feel the thumbprints in the clay (oil lamp).” – *volunteer preparator*

“Something like this bowl feels good. The texture, the tactile. When I hold it I feel contentment.” - *volunteer preparator*

“Handling the objects is like Christmas every day! I just want to hold everything. (Pulls hands into chest.) - *volunteer preparator*

“I would touch the buttons and imagine where they were from and that’s what healed me.” (biscuit tin with button collection) - *object contributor*

“When I’m flipping through the book it’s like I’m touching the country.” - *museum administrator*

“Grandma would allow me to play with it (glass pig sculpture) and I would spin it every time I went over.” - *object contributor*

“The tactile is very important. I like the way it feels when I put my fingers into it (knit blanket).” - *volunteer/ object contributor*

“It’s the tactile. The wonder of it. The history. (old stone tool) I think of others’ hands holding it.” – *object contributor*

Synergizing

“One item (artifact) connects with others and a whole string of relations appears.”

- *volunteer preparator*

“Being in the museum and being a part with the objects (contributing) improves my life.”

- *volunteer/object contributor*

“Displaying it (object) with the others, participating, it makes me feel good.” -

volunteer/object contributor

Releasing/Unburdening

Subject's box of family photographs includes many of his grandfather's. The family was tumultuous and the grandfather traumatized by war. Grandfather kept the photographs in a box locked away but grandmother would sneak into it and throw some away. Wanting to move on from the traumatic memories. - *object contributor*

Synthesis

The following information delineates the meaning of each dynamic and includes illustrative examples for each, drawn from all research work to-date including the initial field research study with Trails Carolina and Ross Laird, the National September 11 Memorial & Museum case study, the War Childhood Museum case study, and the Derby Museums case study.

Releasing/Unburdening

Definition: The action of releasing an object from a state of highly associative ownership into another place or state with the intent of entirely and permanently removing it from its former association (meaning) and state of ownership.

The Object Characteristics found within the examples of Releasing/Unburdening include:

- Bearing Witness (Hoskins)
- Unified Experience (Latham, Wood)
- Life Companions (Turkle)
- Critical Proximity (Morris)

The healthful/healing attributes of Releasing/Unburdening include:

- Resilience
- Containment
- Stabilization
- Mindfulness
- Self-regulation
- Self-efficacy
- Empathy

Examples that illustrate this dynamic and its healthful/healing impact include:

- Students carrying Burden Rocks of personal grief (Trails Carolina)
- Widow who burned her late husband's blood-covered wallet in fire pit. (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum case study)
- Widow who donated her late husband's cellphone, watch, suspenders, dollar bills and soccer ball (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum case study)
- Survivor who donated work ID card and bank cards from wallet. (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum case study)
- Widow donated late husband's tie and gun. (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum case study)
- Donated hospital discharge form and photo of self as young child (War Childhood Museum)
- Donated handmade cookbook/journal (War Childhood Museum)

- Visitor consideration of object donor experience (War Childhood Museum)
- Donated handmade humanitarian aid doll (War Childhood Museum)
- Grandmother sneaking into grandfather's photos to throw them away (Derby Museum)

Giving/Receiving

Definition: The action of donating or offering to another person or people an object with the intention of its being accepted, and the resultant act of its being received with its attributed meaning being mutually understood and held intact.

The Object Characteristics found within the examples of Giving/Receiving include:

- Bearing Witness (Hoskins)
- Life Companions (Turkle)
- Provocations of Thought (Turkle)
- Unified Experience (Latham, Wood)

The healthful/healing attributes of Giving/Receiving include:

- Resilience
- Stabilization
- Connection with family/society
- Perspective-making
- Trauma recovery

Examples that illustrate the dynamic and its healthful/healing impact:

- Phase achievement beads (Trails Carolina)
- Widow donated deceased husband's wine to Memorial and Museum and her relatives. (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum case study)
- First responder whose object wasn't accepted into a different institution's collection. (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum case study)
- Donated collection of chocolate candy wrappers (War Childhood Museum)
- Donated eyeglasses (War Childhood Museum)
- Donated food wrappers and brother's flak jacket (War Childhood Museum)
- Donated Wax Apple (War Childhood Museum)
- Ceramic cat from father to be passed on to niece (Derby Museum)
- WWII medals and diary (Derby Museum)
- Collection of jewelry from children and grandchildren (Derby Museum)
- Camera from father and camera from widow of friend (Derby Museum)
- Celtic amulet from mentor (Derby Museum)
- Bracelets from art fellows and bracelet from family (Derby Museum)
- Subject's box of family photographs from which his father would gift photos to his aunts (Derby Museum)

- Planning to pass along the family totem (Derby Museum)
- Gift of Genesh statue from parents (Derby Museum)

Composing

Definition: The action of bringing together and juxtaposing objects with the intent of forming and expressing a concept or idea in order to coalesce, examine and convey a meaning that cannot otherwise be fully or entirely explained or expressed to its fullest capacity.

The Object Characteristics found within the examples of Composing include:

- Bearing Witness (Hoskins)
- Unified Experience (Latham, Wood)
- Perrisological Resonators (Lemmonier)
- Provocations of Thought (Turkle)

The healthful/healing attributes of Composing include:

- Mindfulness
- Self expression and communication
- Connection with society
- Self-awareness
- Self-identity
- Containment

Examples that illustrate the dynamic and its healthful/healing impact:

- Students constructing found object labyrinths (Trails Carolina)
- Survivor who donated series of items that were with him on the 90th floor through his escape and eventual release from medical care (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum case study)
- First responder donated boots and uniform (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum case study)
- Dual survivor and widow's home shrine with medal and late husband's objects in a curio box. (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum case study)
- Widow donated dogtags and binder outlining safety plans for the World Trade Center. (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum case study)
- Mother who donated deceased son's equestrian ribbons and memorabilia. (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum case study)
- Donated hospital discharge form and photo of self as a child (War Childhood Museum)
- Two cameras positioned with lenses touching (Derby Museum)
- Family photos in tin (Derby Museum)
- Wearing collection of jewelry from grandchildren and children (Derby Museum)
- Grandmother's glassware always kept together (Derby Museum)

- Two bracelets always together (Derby Museum)
- Charm bracelet always in Japanese bag (Derby Museum)
- WWII medals, stones, diary always kept together (Derby Museum)
- Pill box and thimble always kept near each other (Derby Museum)

Associating

Definition: The action of maintaining and keeping within close physical proximity to an object in an effort to perpetuate the knowledge/memory of the object's attributed associations including experiences, states of being, places and people.

The Object Characteristics found within the examples of Associating include:

- Bearing Witness (Hoskins)
- Unified Experience (Latham, Wood)
- Life Companions (Turkle)
- Critical Proximity (Morris)

The healthful/healing attributes of Associating include:

- Self-identity
- Self-regulation
- Mindfulness
- Mindset
- Trauma recovery
- Self-efficacy

Examples that illustrate the dynamic and its healthful/healing impact:

- Students naming, labeling and marking their bows (Trails Carolina)
- Students taking home dirty and worn mountain clothing (Trails Carolina)
- First responder continuously carries a piece of steel from the site in his pocket, (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum case study)
- Survivor's burned and damaged contents from wallet (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum case study)
- Donated handmade humanitarian aid doll (War Childhood Museum)
- Donated grandfather's books (War Childhood Museum)
- Bracelet carried in purse next to money (Derby Museum)
- Tin with photos in living room (Derby Museum)
- Glass pig statue on shelf (Derby Museum)
- Knit blanket under pillow (Derby Museum)
- Pill box and thimble seen every day (Derby Museum)
- Ethiopian flag on bedroom wall (Derby Museum)
- Father's camera on bookcase (Derby Museum)

- Road atlas kept in car (Derby Museum)
- Wear Celtic amulet every day (Derby Museum)
- Wears string bracelet every day, on right wrist (Derby Museum)
- Carries family photograph in purse every day (Derby Museum)
- Carries photograph with grandfather in purse every day (Derby Museum)
- Lion totem on wall in living room (Derby Museum)
- Ceramic cat on bedroom shelf (Derby Museum)
- Glasgow School of Art memorial pin will wear every day (Derby Museum)

Making

Definition: The action of generating an original or newly formed object as a means of experiencing and implementing the fundamental creative process, therein undergoing the progressive stages of therapeutic growth and healing.

The Object Characteristics found within the examples of Making include:

- Unified Experience (Latham, Wood)
- The Transpersonal (Salom)
- Perrisological Resonators (Lemmonier)
- Materiality (Dudley)
- Primal Power (Nguyen)

The healthful/healing attributes of Making include:

- Self awareness
- Self-regulation
- Stabilization
- Mindfulness
- Emotional Grit
- Resilience
- Containment

Examples that illustrate the dynamic and its healthful/healing impact:

- Bow drilling (Trails Carolina)
- Journalist's four books subsequent to the event (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum case study)
- Donated handmade cookbook/journal (War Childhood Museum)
- Donated class photo/school diploma/cookbook (War Childhood Museum)
- Donated student-made school magazine (War Childhood Museum)
- Volunteer went home and wrote a poem inspired by her object experience (Derby Museum)
- Taking photographs with father's camera (Derby Museum)

- Making ring (Derby Museum)
- Made box for children's hair clippings (Derby Museum)
- Making and decorating the cake (Derby Museum)
- Plaster mold made in childhood (Derby Museum)

Synergizing

Definition: The action of contributing an object to a collective whose components produce a meaning greater than the individual's alone.

The Object Characteristics found within the examples of Synergizing include:

- Bearing Witness (Hoskins)
- Unified Experience (Latham, Wood)
- Life Companions (Turkle)
- Critical Proximity (Morris)
- The Transpersonal (Salom)
- Provocations of Thought (Turkle)

The healthful/healing attributes of Synergizing include:

- Perspective Making
- Connection with Society
- Stabilization
- Mindfulness
- Empathy
- Resilience
- Endurance
- Wholism

Examples that illustrate the dynamic and its healthful/healing impact:

- Journalist's press badge and triage tag (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum case study)
- Donated hospital discharge form and photo of self as a child (War Childhood Museum)
- Donated Student-made school magazine (War Childhood Museum)
- Donated class photo/cookbook/diploma (War Childhood Museum)
- Donated Handmade cookbook/journal (War Childhood Museum)
- Visitor consideration of object-donor experience (War Childhood Museum)
- Visitor working with war refugees (War Childhood Museum)
- Donated handmade humanitarian aid doll (War Childhood Museum)
- Donated food wrappers and brother's flak jacket (War Childhood Museum)
- Donated wax apple (War Childhood Museum)
- Donated collection of chocolate candy wrappers (War Childhood Museum)

- Donated bicycle/ humanitarian aid box/drawings (War Childhood Museum)
- Collections objects being gathered into larger collection (Derby Museum)
- Working at museum and contributing to “Objects of Love” improves life (Derby Museum)

Touching

The action of touching an object either consciously or unconsciously when thinking or speaking about its meaning.

Object Characteristics

Hypnoglyph (Critchley)

Materiality (Dudley)

Perrisological Resonators (Lemmonier)

Unity of the Moment (Latham and Wood)

Primal Power (Nguyen)

Healthful/Healing Attributes

Resilience

Endurance

Wholism

Stabilization

Mindfulness

Emotional grit

Containment

Self-regulation

Examples that illustrate the dynamic and its healthful/healing impact:

- Parent using steel striker (Trails Carolina)
- Husband’s hand carved top rock (Trails Carolina)
- Survivor who carries steel remnant in his pocket (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum)
- Widow touching the necklace from her husband while interviewing (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum)
- Visitors wanting to touch steel from the towers on display in museum (The National September 11 Memorial & Museum)
- Visitors touching children’s dresses and flack jacket out on display (War Childhood Museum)
- Woman touches and holds her necklace covering cancer scar during her interview (Derby Museums)

- Woman describes touching and holding special collection of buttons she now keeps in a tin when recovering from sickness as a child (Derby Museums)
- Preparator describes holding artifacts and feeling like it's Christmas every day (Derby Museums)
- Woman describes how she likes the feeling of security that comes from digging her fingers into knit blanket from childhood (Derby Museums)
- Woman describes spinning grandmother's fragile glass sculpture with permission and pleasure (Derby Museums)
- Curator describes rapture that comes when touching clay artifact and feeling the finger impressions of its maker (Derby Museums)
- Preparator also describes pleasure of touching the same clay artifact and the impressions of the maker's fingers (Derby Museums)
- Man describes holding crude stone tool as prompting wonder and a feeling of history (Derby Museums)
- Man touches road atlas when describing its meaning and says it's like touching the country (Derby Museums)

Implications and Next Steps

Further Research

The findings of the first four phases of research warrant a continuation of empirical and applied work. Continued studies should continue to seek broad-spectrum findings, from healing to wellbeing, and across a highly diverse demographic. A fifth case study is being conducted August 13-18th at the Museum @ FIT in New York. The study will center around the exhibition *Fashion Unraveled*, featuring clothing that has been personally altered by the owner, as well as an open-source online exhibit *Wearing Memories*, featuring items of clothing with deep personal significance to their owners. *Wearing Memories* is viewed as a digital collection in the exhibition gallery with images and stories provided by the contributors. The intimacy of clothing in the lives of people makes this a very potent opportunity, and interviews will be conducted with object contributors, museum staff, and visitors post-visit. This will follow the intent of identifying a broad spectrum of data and will continue to diversify the pool of subjects.

Application

Evaluation Instrument

The Therapeutic Object Dynamics could reasonable be utilized as an evaluative instrument. They could be formed into a metric with which an existing institution could measure the healing, healthful and wellbeing impacts and outcomes of their exhibitions.

Exhibition Development

The Therapeutic Object Dynamics could be utilized as a strategic methodology for the co-creation of an exhibition(s) with the intent of providing healthful and healing opportunities and outcomes for museum staff, audiences and community constituencies. In this instance the researchers could collaborate with an existing institution, and/or a foundation or trust, and/or a targeted community. The exhibition initiative could customize and use any or all of the Therapeutic Object Dynamics as appropriate.

One strategy to target would be an environment that actively changes over time as a result of audience engagement: open source collecting and contributing (Synergizing; Releasing/Unburdening); design that encourages composing and re-composing exhibits (Composing); creative activity spaces (Making) and opportunities for reciprocity within the space (Giving/Receiving). (Touching) would be inherent within all of the exhibition spaces and could also be a specific gallery unto itself.

Best Practices for Museum Leadership, Staff and Participants

As a result of the three museum-based case studies, it is clear that the Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics framework lends itself to the creation of a model or instrument for exploring health and wellbeing experiences in museum participants of all types.

Appendix A

Invitation to Participate – Open

Info Derby Museums <info@derbymuseums.org>

Dear xxxx,

In a museum full of objects we're interested in the emotional value that people place on their belongings; the things we carry with us everywhere we go, the objects we keep close to ourselves or are simply irreplaceable.

During the week commencing 25th June we'll have three special guests from the USA in the gallery. The three researchers are carrying out a global study into loved objects to learn WHY we have special connections with our belongings. They'll be asking questions about the meaning of objects in people's lives, and looking into how they help people maintain wellbeing, health, and healing.

We'd like to invite you to join us in this important piece of work. Please call the museum on 01332 641901 or email info@derbymuseums.org to book a 30 minute conversation. Places are limited and we'll contact you again before the date with the questions that will shape the conversation. You'll also be given a written promise that your personal identifying information (name, etc) will not be used in the study.

Alternatively, please join us anytime on Saturday June 23rd or Saturday 30th between 10.30am and 3.30pm to help build an 'objects of love' collection. Bring along something that is special to you and share your story. We've invited talented photographer Ofilaye to capture portraits of you and your objects of love. These photographs will be displayed in the gallery with the museum collection.

If you'd like to tweet your own object photograph from home please do with the tag

#ObjectsofLove

Our research partners are:

Brenda Cowan, Professor of Exhibition Design, School of Graduate Studies at FIT/State University of New York

Ross Laird, PhD, Interdisciplinary Creative Process, MA, Counselling Psychology, Faculty,
Kwantlen Polytechnic University, British Columbia

Jason McKeown MS, LMFT, CPE, DCC, Director of Clinical and Family Services Trails Carolina

Very best wishes from Andrea and the World Cultures project team

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Appendix B

Interview Scripts

Interview Script – Object Donors/Sharing

Facilitators: Professor Brenda Cowan, Graduate Exhibition & Experience Design; Ross Laird, PhD, Interdisciplinary Creative Process, MA, Counseling Psychology, faculty Kwantlen Polytechnic University; and Jason McKeown MS, LMFT, CPE, DCC, Director of Clinical and Family Services, Trails Carolina.

Individual interviews

- *Why did you choose to donate to or share an object with the museum?*
- *Why did you select the object that you did?*
- *What associations or meanings does the object hold for you?*
- *Can you share the process you went through as you donated or shared your object with the museum?*
- *Is public display of the object important to you? If so, why?*
- *Do you feel changed in any way as a result of your donating or sharing experience?*

Interview Script – Museum Audience Members Post-Visit

Facilitators: Professor Brenda Cowan, Graduate Exhibition & Experience Design; Ross Laird, PhD, Interdisciplinary Creative Process, MA, Counseling Psychology, faculty Kwantlen Polytechnic University; and Jason McKeown MS, LMFT, CPE, DCC, Director of Clinical and Family Services, Trails Carolina.

- *What made you decide to visit the museum?*
- *What content or emotions did you anticipate experiencing during your visit?*
- *What do you remember most about the objects that you saw?*
- *Describe the impact that those objects had on you.*
- *Do you feel changed or impacted in any way as a result of your exhibition experience at the*

museum?

Interview Script – Museum Staff/Volunteer Focus Group

Facilitators: Professor Brenda Cowan, Graduate Exhibition & Experience Design; Ross Laird, PhD, Interdisciplinary Creative Process, MA, Counseling Psychology, Faculty Kwantlen Polytechnic University; and Jason McKeown MS, LMFT, CPE, DCC, Director of Clinical and Family Services, Trails Carolina.

- *Can you describe any impact you believe the World Cultures gallery exhibition has had on individuals who have visited it? ('Individuals' is fully inclusive of all publics as well as individuals from all areas of the Museum)*
- *What content or emotions did you anticipate yourself and/or others experiencing during the exhibition visit?*
- *What do you remember most about the objects that you saw?*
- *Describe the impact that those objects had on you.*
- *Do you feel changed in any way as a result of your experience at the exhibition?*

Appendix C

Post-Interview Inquiry

July 9, 2018

Psychotherapeutic Object Dynamics Research Case Study

Post-Interview Inquiry

Facilitators: Professor Brenda Cowan, Graduate Exhibition & Experience Design; Ross Laird, PhD, Interdisciplinary Creative Process, MA, Counseling Psychology, faculty Kwantlen Polytechnic University; and Jason McKeown MS, LMFT, CPE, DCC, Director of Clinical and Family Services, Trails Carolina.

Dear Participant,

Thank you so much for sharing your object experience and story with us. We received incredible information from every person we interviewed, and saw many examples of the ways in which objects help us stay well, and even help us heal through challenging times in our lives. Your openness and giving made a big impact on our work and we are grateful. Now that a little bit of time has passed, we are hoping that you might be willing to share with us any experiences that you might have had following our interview session. If you could answer the two questions below, you will be providing an even deeper drink of the meaning of objects in people's lives, and it would be a great contribution to our study.

You can email your responses directly to me at Brenda_cowan@fitnyc.edu, and all of your information will be kept anonymous as per our written consent agreement.

On behalf of our team, thank you so much again,



Brenda Cowan

*How do you feel changed as a result of sharing your object with the Museum?
How do you feel as a result of your sharing experience in the interview?*