

Abstract

The Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) conducted a study of a new exhibition, *American Stories*, at the National Museum of American History. The report is based on the analysis of 27 qualitative interviews with visitors at the exit, entrance and within the exhibition and Entrance and Exit Surveys with visitors. A total of 353 visitors completed the Entrance Survey (83% of eligible respondents) and 467 the Exit Survey (72% of eligible respondents). On the whole, visitors to *American Stories* enjoyed the exhibition as a well-organized (i.e., chronological with date and era markers) introduction to American history that was familiar to them. It brought back memories through the inclusion of iconic objects as well as familiar objects to which they could relate. It gave American visitors a sense of pride in America.

At the same time, visitors who had hoped to get a richer, more robust understanding of the American story were somewhat disappointed. In the qualitative interviews, a major theme delivered to visitors by the exhibition was one of progress and change over the span of American history, the “look how far we’ve come” idea. On balance, the exhibition came out with an average overall rating.