

Strengthening the Roots: Culturally Responsive Museum Education

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Abstract

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*“It’s one thing to say you value something, but it’s another thing for organizations to institutionalize a value”*

As the United States population becomes increasingly diverse, the museum field has recognized the ways in which institutions can exist for broader groups of people using culturally responsive approaches. The purpose of this research study was to understand what culturally responsive programming and education looks like in museums. Interviews occurred with six museum professionals involved in culturally responsive museum programming. Results suggest that the development and implementation of culturally responsive museum programming involve identifying connections between the institution’s mission and community needs, building relationships and trust with communities, developing a sustainable institutional framework to support cultural responsiveness, and recognizing opportunities for growth. It also points to preparation to deliver culturally responsive programming as focusing on self-reflection, leaning into discomfort, and being cross-institutional and continuous. The findings suggest that museums intending to develop culturally responsive educational practices be attentive and inclusive towards various communities and be accountable for their actions.

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review</b>	<b>4</b>
What is cultural responsiveness?	4
Being a Culturally Responsive Educator	6
Culturally Responsive Best Practices in Museums	8
Culturally Responsive Museum Practices	11
Importance of Cultural Responsiveness for Institutions and Communities	12
<b>Chapter Three: Methods</b>	<b>15</b>
Research Methods	15
Sampling	16
Site Context	18
Instruments and Protocol	21
Analysis Protocol	21
<b>Chapter Four: Results and Discussion</b>	<b>23</b>
Research Question 1	23
Research Question 2	28
Research Question 3	34
Challenges	41
Limitations	43
Recommendations	43
<b>Chapter Five: Conclusions and Implications</b>	<b>44</b>
Conclusions	44
Implications	47
<b>References</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>51</b>

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

The purpose of this research paper is to discover the extent to which museums have incorporated culturally responsive approaches into their public programming and education. At this stage in the study, culturally responsive programming and education will be defined as an intentional approach to relate material to an audience's cultural or personal experiences and understandings. Museums have a responsibility to be relevant and comprehensible to all members of their community (Weil, 1999). During the 1990s, culturally responsive education and teaching became a widely discussed practice that had many active proponents, such as James A. Banks, Geneva Gay and Gloria Ladson-Billings, for its incorporation into the formal education system. Similar discussions started to be held in the museum field around 10 years later, as the question of who museums have a responsibility to serve arose. Yet, differing from a formal classroom setting in ways, museums face the reality of having a mission they are working to fulfill, new guests from both near and far each day, and a limited amount of funds and resources.

A problem exists in that there has not been significant research on effective culturally responsive approaches in museum programming and staff members' roles in its creation and delivery. Incorporating cultural responsiveness is an important step in engaging a museum's community members that may otherwise feel the space is disconnected and irrelevant to their own lives. One way to address issues of cultural exclusion and feelings of irrelevance is with museum education (Anderson, 1999). As teaching and learning are cultural acts, it is important to recognize that norms and expectations may not be explicitly and inherently understood as the same between all peoples (National Center on Intensive Intervention). Culturally responsive education can be defined as recognizing that a teaching strategy does not exist that will actively

engage all learners, but instead the material can be related to their own backgrounds and perceptions (Ginsberg, Wlodkowski, 1995). Museums have the ability to address the fact that the public's composition includes diverse perspectives and experiences, which includes people who may demonstrate their views through not engaging in the museum space. Therefore, in addition to an Education Department, Community Engagement and Outreach and other departments within museums hold a stake in relating to the community and its potential audiences.

The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) Center for the Future of Museums released a report in 2010 which revealed that sometime between 2040 and 2050 the current minorities of the United States will become the majority. Although we cannot predict exactly how this general population change will carry over to the demographics of museum visitors, it points to a potential difference in the majority white visitors that museums currently work to engage and support. Therefore, these types of statistics are useful in understanding why discussions concerning cultural responsiveness within museums should be occurring. It is important to understand the audience museums work for and how they are effectively working to engage these peoples. It is also important to recognize the power that museums hold in determining who their audiences may be and how the institution will work to serve them; culturally responsive museum education balances control between the museum and the community (Lang, 2006). This type of engagement has been demonstrated in the work of community-based museums such as the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience in Seattle, WA and the Anacostia Community Museum in Washington, D.C.

The AAM recognizes that best practices within the museum field includes efforts to promote inclusion and diversity. Their Diversity and Inclusion Policy created in 2014 states “we

consider diversity and inclusion a driver of institutional excellence and seek out diversity of participation, thought, and action”. However, AAM has not released a statement concerning what it means for museums to be culturally responsive or relevant nor is there a written set of best practices concerning cultural responsiveness that museum professionals agree on and can draw from in doing their respective work. Instead, this information will need to be gathered from various sources and museum professionals who are actively attempting to do work that is culturally responsive.

This research will attempt to understand the ways in which museum professionals address multicultural communities and have integrated culturally responsive techniques into their practice. The study will use the following questions to guide the research:

- How do museum professionals define cultural responsiveness?
- What does culturally responsive museum programming look like in terms of development and implementation?
- How are the staff members prepared to facilitate programs in a culturally responsive way?

It will also investigate staff attitudes and preparation for delivering culturally responsive programming. For the museum field, this research will provide insight into the methods and mutual benefits of being culturally responsive and what that can mean for various institutions.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

This literature review describes the concept of cultural responsiveness and explores how some museums are focusing on cultural responsiveness as a way to be more relevant to diverse communities. The first section of the literature review defines the concept of cultural responsiveness; the second section describes ways the concept has been incorporated into educational practices; while the next sections highlight the importance of culturally responsive work for the museum field and what this looks like between institutions and various communities. Along with the currently existing literature and tools available for educators to work towards becoming culturally responsive, the results of this research study intend to provide additional guidance and support for museum educators.

### **What is cultural responsiveness?**

Cultural responsiveness focuses more on the educator and their perceptions and biases rather than explicitly on the curriculum (Hammond, 2015). Culturally responsive actions reflect awareness and appreciation of the specific needs of communities, groups, or individuals: “culturally relevant, responsive, [and] sustaining education is based on the idea that underrepresented students’ cultural and linguistic practices are assets rather than deficits or barriers to the learning process” (Amy Wilson-Lopez 2016). Working towards creating a culturally responsive institution can also be viewed as dismantling racism or becoming equitable and inclusive to people with diverse experiences and backgrounds. Becoming culturally responsive can be understood as a process that does not have a determined end or point of completion; instead, a person can continuously reflect on their own perceptions, experiences, and privileges in relation to those of other individuals.

Well-known for her research on multicultural and culturally responsive education, Geneva Gay suggests that “the fundamental aim of culturally responsive pedagogy is to empower ethnically diverse students through academic success, cultural affiliation, and personal efficacy”; Gay proposes that curriculum content must be accessible to learners and connected to their personal perspectives and experiences in order to effectively create knowledge (Gay, 2010). As an educator attempts to allow for the development of such connections to the curriculum, it can be supported through adopting the following characteristics: sociocultural consciousness, commitment and skills to act as agents of change, an affirming attitude towards audiences from culturally diverse backgrounds, and a constructivist view of learning (National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems). These characteristics can be developed personally through critical self-reflection with respect to one’s own biases and positionality within society.

### **Being a Culturally Responsive Educator**

In a school setting, tailoring information to students’ previous experiences and knowledge may be difficult because teachers are bound to textbooks that “tend to represent the interests of the European-US majority, have largely failed in presenting minority issues accurately and equitably” and have mandated curricula to follow “the process through which we have been socialized into thinking that biased practices- such as instructional tracking- are impartial and natural has a powerful impact on our thinking” and perception that schools, curriculum, and pedagogy are neutral, impartial settings (Villegas, 2002).

Museum education departments have more flexibility in their ability to develop diverse programming and curricula that target specific audiences without the pressure of having to fulfill national standards (Christal, 2003): “Today, when so many formal educational institutions are

faltering due to political and social divisiveness and a deflated economy, there has never been a more urgent need for museums to articulate their potential as learning environments that can support the well-being and intellectual empowerment of individuals and communities” (Garcia, 2012). Yet, museums still face the barrier of educators effectively delivering programs and communicating with people whose experiences, culture, or worldviews differ from their own. Rather than expecting visitors to conform to standard Eurocentric criteria, institutions can adopt strategies and approaches that acknowledge their audiences’ diversity.

While a well-intentioned and outlined document describing a program is a solid foundation, the delivery of the program must also reflect a degree of awareness in order to be considered culturally responsive. “In museum education, as in any education, the educators are the critical variable. It is they who make the goals of acceptance, appreciation, and respect attainable... the critical variable that begins with the teacher requires self-scrutiny” (Suina 1990). This statement recognizes the importance of ensuring that education staff members reflect on their own biases and prejudices, especially when interacting with audiences from cultures that differ from their own; he emphasizes that museum educators should refrain from encouraging ethnocentricity through insensitive dissemination of information (Suina, 1990). An Inclusion piece “Whiteness and Museum Education” claims that “too often educators avoid the topics [conversations about race] out of fear for speaking out of turn, offending someone, or citing incorrect information... in so doing, we avoid potentially difficult, however productive conversations” (Heller, 2017).

Culturally responsive instruction does not have one look, as it can vary across disciplines depending on the individuals, context, and situation. Instruction “does not have to replicate cultural features and procedures of ethnic groups in their entirety. But it should begin with being

informed and reflective of them” (Gay, 2010). This type of instruction supports that culturally responsive training be a part of teachers’ professional development. The understanding developed through trainings can aid in ensuring that educators unite culturally relevant content, attitudes and expectation, and instructional actions and views these components as inseparable.

In 2015, the Mellon Foundation conducted a demographic survey of art museum staff and boards that received completed responses of the staff survey from 77% of the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) institutions. Using the racial categories of the 2000 U.S. Census, the results demonstrated that 72% of AAMD staff is Non-Hispanic White and 28% belong to historically underrepresented minorities. Non-Hispanic White staff are also more highly represented in leadership positions, such as director, chief curator, or head of a department, within the institutions: 84% is Non-Hispanic White, 6% Asian, 4% Black, 3% Hispanic White, and 3% Two or More Races. The survey demonstrates a lack of representation of minoritized groups making institutional decisions; the statistics also show that the staff compositions at these institutions are not reflective of the changing demographics of the United States that point towards current minoritized groups becoming the majority of the population within the next 30 years (AAM, 2010). The survey exists as support for the importance of incorporating culturally responsive approaches and building cultural competencies amongst museum staff members, as the communities encompassing their institutions are increasingly reflecting backgrounds different from the makeup of their own staff.

Art museum educators Melissa Crum and Keonna Hendrick developed the multicultural critical reflective practice as a theoretical framework and practice for educators to analyze and challenge the cultural beliefs, values, and assumptions that have molded societal interactions between educators and learners (Hendrick, 2013). Multicultural critical reflective practice

(MCRP) intends to identify and address personal attitudes so that educators can critically assess their perceptions and associated actions. Culturally responsive education and programming creates positive spaces and experiences for learners from communities that are typically marginalized and discriminated against throughout the United States' racially and ethnically diverse society (Simpkins et. al, 2017). Facilitation of such a space can be accomplished through the guidance of a knowledgeable or experienced educator who understands the impact of specific curriculum and its delivery to individual learners.

### **Responsibility to Society: Culturally Responsive Best Practices in Museums**

There exists pertinent literature concerning museums' responsibility to society and typically underserved communities. John Falk claims that "the heart of the modern museum is its visitors" (Falk, 2009). Museums continue to exist depending on how reflective they are of consumer needs and relevance; thus, institutions must understand the public sector they occupy, the community needs they exist to fill, and how to offer programs that these audiences identify with (Kotler & Kotler, 2000). In being responsive to the community, cultural institutions navigate how to be of service to customers while also remaining mission-focused.

In 1992, the American Association of Museums, now the American Alliance of Museums, released the report *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums*, which called for museums to reevaluate their service to society: "Equity is a two-way street: If we want our communities to support us, to keep coming through our doors, we must ensure that we reflect their varied interests, that we tap everyone's strengths." Yet, the association also recognized that the point of obtaining equity was not to increase the amount of visitors museums receive, but to acknowledge their role within society. Looking at the future of museums, it can be argued that institutions must prove their worth to society; "existence today

should not be taken as an entitlement to exist tomorrow” (Davies, 2012). This existence relies on remaining relevant by serving the communities that can benefit from a museum’s resources, whether these resources are enjoyment, education, or a space in which they can participate. Reflecting on the 25th anniversary of the 1992 report, the director for professional development at AAM Greg Stevens interviewed members of the original task force and current and emerging leaders in the museum education equity and inclusion movement (Stevens, 2017). From these interviews, it can be concluded that the issues of discovering ways to connect and engage with ever changing audiences, shifting community demographics, and other social issues continue to persist in the museum field. Additionally, while leaders recognize that changes have occurred since the original publication, they also vocalized the need for continued work focusing on diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion to occur within museums; Cecile Shellman, the current diversity catalyst at Carnegie museums of Pittsburgh, does not believe there exists “an endpoint at which we can sit back and congratulate ourselves for finally being inclusive”.

To be responsive to changing communities, the museum field has started to focus on what it means for institutions serve these communities; discussions have been raised concerning the changing demographics of the United States’ population and the ideas of cultural responsiveness, cultural sensitivity, and cultural competency. The American Alliance of Museums states that the Center for the Future of Museums initiative that began 10 years ago aims to “equip museums to help their communities address the challenges of coming decades”. In 2010, The AAM’s Center for the Future of Museums predicted that between 2040 and 2050 the minoritized populations of the United States will become the majority. Recognizing a challenge in how institutions can engage diverse, multicultural audiences, the Center for the Future of Museums *TrendsWatch* from 2017 suggests that these cultural repositories consider

going beyond neutrality in order to effectively create social change, equity, and connect with the public (AAM, 2017). To achieve these connections, museums can open their doors as spaces for dialogue, empathy, and diverse interactions.

Similar to AAM's commitment to equity, The Association of Zoos & Aquariums released a Diversity and Inclusion Policy in 2016. In the policy, AZA states the recognition that zoos and aquariums should "take the initiative to develop comprehensive diversity and inclusion initiatives in their hiring practices, the services and experiences they provide their visitors and the way that they do business in their communities" in order to remain relevant to the increasingly diverse composition of the United States' population. The Association offers recommendations for institutions to adopt diversity and inclusion policies that fit their respective mission and communities; an additional recommendation suggests that these policies celebrate the unique qualities, experiences, and values of all potential stakeholders, create a dynamic, inclusive environment, and develop partnerships with diverse audiences to determine community needs.

Despite the current trend of museums, science centers, zoos, and aquariums focusing on inclusivity and community engagement, interest in these approaches does not necessarily translate into changed pedagogy (Dewhurst & Hendrick, 2017). Dewhurst and Hendrick emphasize the need for a structure that holds participants accountable for their actions to create effective social change. Without true diverse voices or perspectives, well intentioned actions can instead continue to enforce power dynamics that maintain the social status quo due to the racial imbalance between those with leadership roles within museums and the community members they work to serve. Instead, achieving equity and inclusion requires the representation and agency of those who are to be affected by the institution's work (Ng et al., 2017). Thus, the

literature points to culturally responsive best practices including community voice and recognition of the collective benefit power sharing between the institution and community can provide.

### **Culturally Responsive Museum Practices**

Examples of museums incorporating culturally responsive approaches into their museum programming and education demonstrate the practice as an ongoing development, rather than a one-time institutional investment for a specific gallery or program: “Educators have a responsibility to develop and implement culturally responsive curricula through inclusion of content that goes beyond cultural holidays and celebration days or months (Andrus, 2001)” (Powell, 2012). Such inclusion reflects an institutions’ understanding of what it means to be culturally responsive: continuously analyzing and evaluating existing programs and educational materials and its effectiveness in educational relevant and diverse communities.

The Corcoran Gallery of Art, that existed in Washington, D.C. until 2014, focused on incorporating culturally responsive teaching methods into their curriculum and programming. With 76% of Washington’s public school and 83% of public charter school students identifying as black, the Corcoran presented 49 exhibitions of African-American art between 1972 and 2012 and had a reputation for exhibiting, collecting, and teaching about works of art created by African-American artists (Powell, 2012). One exhibit in particular, *30 Americans*, led the institution to focus on how their work was relevant to the community, as the show was black artists’ work that had been collected and curated by white people. The Corcoran educators viewed an opportunity to develop a culturally responsive curriculum that could focus on both the art maker and the socio-cultural context in which the art work had been created, recognizing the cultural identities and experiences of the students, and acknowledging the

potential for a hybrid of identities. To support their focus on community and cultural responsiveness, the gallery's education department developed resource packets for teachers to feel confident educating their diverse students on the subject matter.

Another example of a museum recognizing its responsibility and role in responding to issues affecting communities is through the Minneapolis Institute of Art's project Museum as Site for Social Action, MASS Action. The initiative has prompted a gathering of professionals from 50 museums to engage in action-oriented conversations concerning equity within museums, community engagement, and how to develop relevant programming. In discussing the field's need for the project, Elisabeth Callihan, Head of Multi-Generational Learning at MIA and a co-organizer of MASS Action, states "I thought, initially, that we would be focusing on our external outputs, programming, community engagement, but quickly realized through our conversations that we couldn't address those, the metaphorical leaves on a tree, before we looked at the roots: the structures and internal workings and systems of museums" (MASS Action Toolkit, 2017, p. 6). The project's goals are to provide the tools and roadmap for institutions to respond to community calls for justice and equity. Similar to the institutions and their work analyzed in this research study, the Corcoran and the Minneapolis Institute of Art's practices have embraced a recognition of institutional power, positionality, and the resulting collective benefits.

### **Importance of Cultural Responsiveness for Institutions and Communities**

Museum education provides the institution with the opportunity to create interpersonal relationships; educational interactions in museums have the ability to increase visitors' motivation to learn, enable people to develop and explore passions, and make experiences more exciting and meaningful (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994). More than twenty years later, museum professionals continue to echo the need to relate material and experiences to their audiences in

order to remain relevant. The aforementioned opportunity to have a motivating, meaningful experience facilitated by an institution may not exist for participants who cannot relate to the material. The staff that designs the products of these institutions must realize that they cannot be all things for everyone, but that they do have the power and capabilities to fill specific niches and impact visitor's lives and perspectives in meaningful ways. Additionally, a recent American Alliance of Museums report *Facing Change: Insights from the American Alliance of Museums' Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Working Group* lists one of their main insights as "Inclusion is central to the effectiveness and sustainability of museums" (AAM, 2018, p.4). These realizations point to relationship building and developing understandings with communities as sources of success towards cultural responsiveness.

Social change can be achieved through recognizing that educational focuses provide museums with a redefined purpose that enables them to contribute to cultural development in society and its members (Anderson, 1999). Mark Christal, while recognizing the positive attributes that each students' cultural knowledge carries, also acknowledges that "It may be important to look beyond how teaching practices affect individual student learning to how they might serve local communities and improve conditions in the wider world as well" (Christal, 2003, p. 441). Thus, impacts from culturally responsive approaches can transpire beyond the walls of the institution. In contrast to the colonial origins of museums, current facilitation methods and educational materials can be used as a tool to help individuals of various backgrounds understand their identity and potential within society: "cultural exclusion has become an increasingly urgent issue for museums, and education one of the most powerful weapons against it" (Lang et al., 2006). Through developing positive relationships with community members of each generation and focusing on lifelong learning, museums can ensure

a prolonged support of their institution (Anderson, 1999). These relationships not only provide a larger body of support for institutions, but also allow for the development of informed educational and engagement practices.

## **Conclusion**

The literature suggests museum education and programming require institutional support and a long-term shift in their practices for culturally responsive approaches to be effective: “An important question is whether progress made by micro-level changes will endure over time, especially since the initiatives that produce them may have short lifespans or operate in relative isolation from other aspects of schooling” (Gay, 2010). The following research will build upon this body of literature and synthesize the work that has been done within institutions concerning cultural responsiveness and building staff capacity and competencies, so that they may act as resources for a diverse body of peoples.

### **Chapter Three: Methods**

The purpose of this study was to explore what culturally responsive approaches incorporated into public programming and education can look like for museums. The research attempted to understand what elements and approaches museum professionals have considered beneficial developments in cultural responsiveness and cultural competencies for museums and their communities. This study investigated the inclusion of these approaches by interviewing museum professionals who within education or community engagement departments and analyzing educational materials that have been developed at their respective institutions. Within the context of this study, culturally responsive programming and education has been defined as an intentional approach to relate the material to an audience's cultural or personal experiences and understandings.

The research was grounded in the following questions:

- How do museum professionals define cultural responsiveness?
- What does culturally responsive museum programming and education look like in terms of development and implementation?
- How are the staff members prepared to facilitate programs in a culturally responsive way?

#### **Research Methods**

This research used a qualitative approach. The research design is a descriptive, cross-sectional study utilizing interviews and documents to focus specifically on museums with culturally responsive educational practices. Interview questions were open-ended and the interviews were semi-structured in an effort to capture the various ways culturally responsive

education can manifest itself between multiple communities and diverse institutions. In addition, various forms of educator guides were reviewed; two were meant for school teachers to prepare their students for visits to specific exhibits within institutions and one had been developed as professional development for museum educators facilitating conversations with diverse visitors. Educator guides were used as they reflect how institutions' educators can be understanding of the knowledge students enter their space with, as the students have reviewed the subject at least once before. Interviews and document analysis were used to examine how beliefs and perceptions transfer into action and policies within education and programming.

### **Sampling**

Interviewees and sites were purposively selected. The intention of this selection was to receive internal perspectives concerning the development and delivery of culturally responsive programs and the museums' operations to support this type of work. Participants were recruited through emails. University of Washington IRB approved all protocols. The museum professionals contacted were from an institution that matches one or more of the following criteria: offers what the institution considers culturally responsive museum programming, works closely with multicultural communities, and/or has demonstrated efforts to increase staff members' cultural competencies concerning diverse audiences. The main method of finding sites within the criteria included researching which institutions had received Institute of Museum and Library Science grants for training their staff in cultural competencies and becoming more responsive to their communities' needs within the last 5 years.

The sites covered multiple geographic regions across the United States and had various institutional focuses. The variety of institutions were selected intentionally in order to

understand the ways culturally responsive education can manifest itself throughout multiple disciplines and for a vast range of communities. Five out of the six interviews focused on specific institutions and their projects concerning building staff capacity to facilitate and become culturally responsive and relevant to their communities, while one interview focused more on the interviewee's role as a cultural strategist and doing workshops concerning anti-racist work within museums. Aside from the cultural strategist, the interviewees were contacted based off their position in the Education or Community Outreach Department and/or their role in the institution's project concerning culturally responsive practices. Additionally, the three educator guides developed through projects focused on creating culturally responsive frameworks within their institutions were analyzed. The chart below outlines the institutions and interviewees that provided the data for this research study.

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Interviewee Position</b>	<b>Document</b>
Science Museum of Minnesota	St. Paul, MN	Vice President of STEM Equity and Education	<i>RACE</i> Educator Guide
Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art	North Adams, MA	K-12 Education Manager	Nick Cave Educator Guide
Oregon Museum of Science & Industry	Portland, OR	Director of Engagement Research and Advancement	<i>REVEAL</i> Project Educator Guide
John G. Shedd Aquarium	Chicago, IL	Vice President of Learning and Community	
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts	San Francisco, CA	Chief of Civic Engagement	
Not Affiliated	Brooklyn, NY	Cultural Strategist	

### Site Context

Four out of the five sites are in the process of enacting or wrapping up a project funded by an Institute of Museum and Library Sciences grant or a National Science Foundation grant. Although the grants are not given sole credit for creating culturally responsive practices within the institution, interviewees point to them as promoting these approaches across the organization and aiding in institutionalizing the value. The other site was identified for their reputation of culturally responsive practices and community engagement. An additional interviewee was not identified with respect to an institution nor did they speak to the work of a specific site, but rather was identified for their work as a cultural strategist, leading workshops on critical self-reflection and anti-bias approaches in informal educational settings.

### Science Museum of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota

In January of 2007, the Science Museum of Minnesota opened *RACE: Are We So Different?*, an exhibit the institution created in collaboration with the American Anthropological Association (AAA). The science museum and AAA aimed to create a space where individuals from various backgrounds could discuss ideas and attitudes concerning race (Penn, Laden, & Tostevin, 2008). Along with the exhibit, the project developed an educator guide to aid teachers in connecting the *RACE* themes to classroom curriculum. In 2015, the Science Museum of Minnesota received a Museums for America IMLS grant to hold public forums and town hall meetings concerning conversations about race and racism and train museum staff and volunteers on how to navigate interactions on these topics with museum visitors in a sensitive and culturally competent manner. The project intended to build the museum's capacity for community engagement and to continue working with pre-existing partnerships working on racial equity and inclusion, while also developing new relationships.

**Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, Massachusetts**

In 2016, MASS MoCA was awarded a two-year IMLS grant through the Museums for America program to develop an annual thematic-based community engagement framework called “A Responsive Museum” (ARM). To build awareness of social issues and focusing on the economically challenged communities nearby the museum, the project has initiated community forums for dialogue, free programs, and professional development for visitor services staff, tour guides, fellows, and interns on social justice issues. The project goals included fostering deeper community relationships and increased capacity for museum staff and the North Adams community to co-develop programs. ARM aligns with the museum’s mission to nurture and present exciting new art exhibitions and MASS MoCA intends to utilize their position and activities as a catalyst for community revitalization.

**Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, Portland, Oregon**

From 2013 to 2017, the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) conducted a research study funded by the National Science Foundation entitled Researching the Value of Educator Actions for Learning, REVEAL. In the study, the OMSI team, along with Oregon State University, investigated the role of museum educators in relation to family learning and engagement with interactive math exhibits. Concerned with supporting culturally responsive staff facilitation and interactions, REVEAL intended to develop and share evidence-based tools to support professional development and facilitation methods for educators in informal settings. The project produced the *REVEAL Responsive Museum Facilitation Guide* as a resource for educators, which provokes reflection and interpersonal understanding with respect to discussions between facilitators and visitors.

**John G. Shedd Aquarium, Chicago, Illinois**

The Shedd Aquarium received a Museums for America IMLS grant in 2017 for a two-year project to build the capacity of museum staff to successfully engage diverse communities by means of increasing cultural competencies. To ensure a sustainable commitment to diversity and inclusion, the project includes multiple departments and professional development opportunities. The project aims to create a diversity and inclusion roadmap for the aquarium to create a welcoming environment; Shedd has also been focusing on fostering culturally sensitive relationships throughout Chicago with various community partnerships, access programs, and local stewardship. Additionally, the John G. Shedd Aquarium received the Angela Peterson Excellence in Diversity Award, which recognizes significant achievement in work force and audience diversity, from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums in 2017 for *All Are Welcome: Accessibility and Inclusion at Shedd Aquarium*.

**Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, California**

The Yerba Buena Center is the only site whose work was not identified through an IMLS or NSF grant-funded project, but were asked to participate in an interview because of their reputable perspective on culture. The organization's mission states that "YBCA believes that culture is an essential catalyst for change". The Yerba Buena Center for the Arts has been identified as a site for the role that they play for their communities and their inclusive practices and programming. Acting as a civic asset and citizen institution, the center sees it as their responsibility to support the community and the relevant issues they face; particularly focusing on the marginalized and underprivileged populations of San Francisco, the center has developed community partnerships to empower the people in these areas.

### **Instruments and Protocol**

All interviews were recorded and took place using the video conferencing application *Zoom* or over the phone, lasting between 20 minutes and an hour. During the semi-structured interviews, questions for museum professionals included, but were not limited to:

1. What does cultural responsiveness mean or look like to you?
2. How did your institution's idea and process towards becoming culturally responsive begin?
  - a. When do you remember these conversations concerning cultural responsiveness beginning to occur in your museum?
3. Did community members express a need within the community for this program or staff training to be implemented?
  - a. How was this identified?
  - b. Can you tell me more about any community members you worked with and their involvement in this project?
  - c. What obligation or responsibility did the institution have to assume this role?
4. Has the museum staff received training on cultural responsiveness and competencies?
  - a. Yes: What have these trainings looked like?
  - b. No: Are there plans to have workshops or trainings with the staff concerning these topics?
5. What are your hopes for the future of your institution with respect to culturally responsive work, community relationship building, and program development?

**Analysis Protocol**

All of the interviews were transcribed; all instances of filler words such as “ums” and “you knows” from the interviews were omitted in the results section of this paper for readability. The interviews were then coded using a combination of a priori and emergent coding, where the a priori codes were drawn from the literature concerning how cultural responsiveness has been defined and how it has looked in educational settings; the documents were analyzed with these codes and used in support to the interviews. The a priori codes were also guided by Simpkins et al.’s framework for designing culturally responsive organized after-school activities (Simpkins et al., 2017). The framework focuses on the fact that program structure and staff are the immediate factors through which educational programs influence learners’ experiences and development.

## **Chapter Four: Results and Discussion**

The findings of this research are organized according to the research questions of the study: 1. How do museum professionals define cultural responsiveness? 2. What does culturally responsive museum programming and education look like in terms of both development and implementation? 3. How are the staff members trained and educated on facilitating culturally responsive programming?

### **Findings and Discussion**

The findings of the research study are categorized into themes and sub themes that emerged through data analysis. Acknowledging the differences between institutions with respect to their own particular projects, subject matter, and communities, the research largely focuses on the shared elements.

#### **Research Question 1: How do museum professionals define cultural responsiveness?**

Answers ranged from a focus on cultural responsiveness at an individual level to its representation at an institutional and collective level, but for both levels the main characteristics of what it means to be culturally responsive covered similar themes.

#### **Attentive**

With respect to this research study, attentive is defined as being perceptive, conscientious, and informed of community perspectives and needs. Cultural responsiveness, in this study, is characterized as: being attentive, listening to communities, asking questions for further clarity, and attempting to understand the perspectives of others.

In terms of this awareness and listening, the cultural strategist suggests that educators “really be in a conversation, not just preaching to someone else what you want them to

hear”. They also believe cultural responsiveness for museum educators can look like “asking more questions of them [students] to share what they know or talking to the teacher more about what they like to do, what they’re interested in”. Similarly, another professional from a cultural institution says “You have to be willing to listen to their [community] need and find whether you have the creative resource to support them and have something mutual. And it has to feel organic”. They state that the responsiveness stems from hearing this need and figuring out how to fulfill this request for a resource.

One museum professional defines cultural responsiveness as examining “How do you listen and how do you nuance the programs that you're doing, how do you build them with community and then how do you nuance them and select them for different audiences?” They went on to further say that these questions can be answered through listening and coming to genuinely know your audience in a non-stereotypical way.

This attentiveness allows for museums to develop an understanding of the perspectives and needs of their communities. One museum professional discusses OMSI’s attentiveness in the REVEAL project, stating that the National Science Foundation requires evaluation in order to ensure “evidence-based, evidence-informed decision making and programming”. The evaluation identifies the need and a potential response. Working to have these conversations with diverse audiences concerning cultural responsiveness, another interviewee says that MASS MoCA staff are navigating how to have both respectful and important conversations.

### **Accountable**

The theme of accountability encompasses the responsibility institutional staff members feel they have to members of the community that their institution exists within. Five out of six of the interviewees described cultural responsiveness as institutions being accountable to their

surrounding populations. The main code used to develop the theme of accountability was the term responsibility.

Working at an institution in the center of Chicago, one interviewee said, “cultural institutions in the city do have a responsibility to the city they're in”. The K-12 Education Manager at MASS MoCA thinks about how institutions come to understand what these responsibilities are: “What is our responsibility as the museum hosting this exhibition to the artists, to our visitors? And so, for visitors also, who are we already serving? And then, who should be involved in these conversations? Who's not yet?”

In terms of addressing the responsibility towards neighboring communities, museum professionals highlight the need to follow through claims with the corresponding actions. One interviewee stated, “you can't just brand yourself as such, you can't just say you are a creative home for civic action. You have to create sort of a structure and culture and policy within.” Another professional also illustrates a parallel between words and actions: “It’s one thing to say you value something, but it’s another thing for organizations to institutionalize a value”. They believe educators should reflect on how “I'm going to be accountable for my actions and my language and what I bring to this conversation”.

Along with this accountability comes the potential to make mistakes, thus the museum professionals recognize the risk associated with cultural responsiveness. While making efforts to become more inclusive in MASS MoCA’s education and hiring practices, the educator notes “If we can only do certain things and we can't do as much as we want, we’re an institution like anything that has some things that it's doing in an authentic, genuine way and other things where sometimes we mess up or sometimes”. Another museum educator echoes the potential to mess up: “what the staff is curious about is trying to not do it the wrong way”.

## **Inclusive**

Half of the interviewees define culturally responsive practices as being inclusive of a diverse range of peoples. In this research, inclusive means educational opportunities and programming exist for a diverse range of needs and backgrounds; it does not mean the material is broad or generalized, but rather all-encompassing and all-embracing.

The Vice President of STEM Equity and Education defines cultural responsiveness as ensuring “that the content of exhibition and curricula, how information is presented, design is presented in a way that embodies a broader group of people than just a sort of white, dominant European standard”. The Science Museum of Minnesota’s *RACE* Educator Guide reflects this inclusivity in stating that the goal of the project intends to “help individuals of all ages” and suggests that educators “choose the activities that best meet your needs”.

Along with presentation, museum professionals discuss inclusivity as a mindset. One interviewee states, “When we do this work, when we help support others in being included, in being seen, in seeing that their identities are valued, in having equitable access to institutions and resources, then that actually gives us a renewed sense of collective power”. Similarly focusing on equitable access, another professional states, “The people you have here [YBCA] and their ability to be really there for those communities, for what they need, or what they are looking at, so that we're not always trying to get people to engage with us just to make us look better or to make us have more money”.

The MASS MoCA educator guide for the exhibit *Nick Cave: Until* goes beyond the institutions’ interests and identifies potential audience needs, for example, stating “While this guide was designed with school audiences in mind, MASS MoCA educators would be happy to help you adapt the content to different audiences”. Additionally, the *Nick Cave: Until* guide

offers alternative ways to engage students who may not feel comfortable taking part in activities, such as suggesting students brainstorm verbally rather than demonstrate through performance, when showing how the meaning of objects can be transformed.

### **Asset-based**

Half of the professionals interviewed define cultural responsiveness as respecting the knowledge and experiences that people carry with them. Instead of asking visitors to leave these parts of their identity at the door, interviewees point to viewing these attributes as assets rather than deficits. Codes for this theme include respect and not stereotyping.

The *REVEAL* facilitator guide suggests to educators "The better that we can respect and value differences in identity and culture, the better we can work across these differences, serve visitors, and ultimately become more culturally responsive facilitators". Additionally, the guide advises that educators should be "focusing not on what we thought families were doing "wrong" at exhibits but instead identifying the strengths of family learning and finding strategies that facilitators could use to support and deepen the learning that was already happening" (OMSI, 2017). In these statements, the guide pushes facilitators to respect and acknowledge the validity of knowledge and perspectives that may not fit their idea of the norm.

Along with understanding the personal accountability that is associated with filling the role of an educator, a museum professional points out "it's the asset-based learning. So there's a fine line, obviously, between stereotyping a group, but also allowing them to bring the information that they're familiar with to experience it". Similarly, another interviewee defines culturally responsive practices as "figuring out how to understand who your audience is, know enough about them, not stereotypical knowledge, but enough about them". These

characterizations of cultural responsiveness also draw on the themes of attentiveness and accountability.

### **Synthesis of Results**

The data suggests that museum professionals define cultural responsiveness as being respectful and aware of various perspectives and values that individuals cannot be expected to disconnect from when entering an institution. Instead, interviewees characterized cultural responsiveness as identifying these values as assets and holding their own selves accountable to be attentive and to have conversations in order to understand others' perspectives in order to be inclusive.

### **Research Question 2: What does culturally responsive museum programming and education look like in terms of development and implementation?**

A number of questions were asked during the interviews to understand the process through which the institution or Education Department began incorporating culturally responsive approaches. These question included: When do you remember conversations concerning cultural responsiveness beginning to occur at your institution? Did community members express a need within the community for a specific program to be implemented? What obligation or responsibility, if any, did the institution feel it had to assume this role?

### **Identifying connections**

Museum professionals often introduced the theme of identifying connections between community needs and the institution's mission. One museum professional describes this approach as "We're letting the communities tell us... tell us what you're interested in...We can't go outside of our mission, but as you [the community] hear this, what resonates about our

mission with you and the folks that you work with and live with and serve”. Similarly, another professional emphasizes “You have to be willing to listen to their [community] need and find whether you have the creative resource to support them and have something mutual...What do we have? Where does it make sense for us to participate?”.

Finding these connections involves creating dialogue in order to understand which community needs exist and the resources institutions can offer. The REVEAL guide suggests that facilitators adopt the strategy of “balancing the educational goals of facilitators with the needs and interests of visitors” (13). As the museum professional at OMSI says, “It’s been the dialogue going back and forth [between OMSI and a partner] to help us understand what’s useful”. These types of conversations allow OMSI and partnering organizations understand, as an interviewee stated, “What can REVEAL offer your community that might be helpful?”. Identifying connections provides institutions with insight into what their role within an area, with respect to diverse communities may be.

### **Building relationships and trust**

All of the interviewees discussed the role of building relationships and trust with communities. The major component of building relationships and trust that arose through the interviews is allowing space to receive community voice. From this relationship, museum professionals feel they are able to respond and operate in an informed manner. Building relationships and trust developed from quotes relating to the codes community voice, neighbor, presence, and an informed understanding of community needs.

In order to develop relationships, one museum professional shared how their institution will be investigating how to best approach various audiences, considering “How do you sort of step back from what you would usually ask to figure out: is there a better question or a better

way to ask this question for a different audience?” Similarly, using community voice to shape programs and facilitation methods, another professional discusses her approach and goals in relationship and trust building as “once we have conversations and I learn about what they [community members] are hoping to do, I can tailor what I’m offering and they can see what’s available in that way”.

An interviewee spoke about the benefit of having a “multi-purpose, multi-person relationship”, reflecting on OMSI’s partnership with the Portland non-profit Adelante Mujeres, that brought “depth and breadth” to multiple projects at the institution. They said that these types of relationships require “checking in to see what we should be watching for that we might have blind spots around” or “are we seeing similar things or are we seeing different things?”. These conversations ensure that both parties are informed and understanding of one another’s intentions and needs, which can lead to a longer term relationship.

Another professional stated that being physically present in the community is important for building relationships and trust: “you can’t do good community work sitting in your community”. Instead, this professional states that the institution will go into the community in order to be more inclusive; from community forums and discussions, it has been shared that “They [community members] were pretty clear in saying that ‘because you haven’t been anywhere, you shouldn’t decide somewhere to be’”. Thus, the institution will continue to develop relationships in order to understand what role they can play and where they should exist throughout the city’s diverse neighborhoods.

Another interviewee also talks about physically inserting themselves into community events and conversations in order to begin developing relationships. They discussed their awareness of the history of MASS MoCA when entering the North Adams, MA communities. The museum

occupies an old factory building that used to employ 40 percent of the city before it closed in 1985 and when it opened as a museum in 1999, instead of offering working class jobs to the community, it brought in people from outside of the community with advanced degrees. Thus, this knowledge and attentiveness to the community's perceptions helped the educator understand that they needed to have in-person conversations with community members and develop authentic relationships in order to build trust and understand how the community defines themselves and how MASS MoCA can act as a resource to them.

### **Developing a sustainable institutional framework**

The museum professionals discussed how culturally responsive museum programming and practices should be implemented over multiple instances, rather than being a one-time development. This sustainability can be initiated and demonstrated through actions showing that the institutions view the work as a priority and that it is not only driven or supported by a single staff member or department, but holds across the institution. Codes related to this theme include institutionalize, systematic, structural, and intentional.

One professional stated that in the 17 years they have been at OMSI, the REVEAL project is the first time they can recall in which they're looking at key outcomes in "a real systematic, at the board level, at the senior level way". Also speaking to the multiple layers of a large-scale organization, another professional says, "You have to always have structures that allow for this [cultural responsiveness] to happen", such a structure that reflects support across the institution.

Similarly, in discussing the ARM program, the MASS MoCA educator reflected that "I think it would probably be the first time we approach it with such intentionality and really trying to build a framework that would not just disappear after Nick Cave [*Until*] closed". They

observed that the community engagement mandate came from Nick Cave himself, which encouraged the curatorial buy-in. For future shows, the interviewee has been thinking about how “often we don't get a lot of notice on upcoming exhibitions, so how can we work with curators more in advance and get them to buy-in to these programs? I think it's really key. And museum leadership, as well”.

With respect to institutionalizing the value of cultural responsiveness, the cultural strategist said that they measure the success of their workshops with museum staff members through the creation of new policies and programs out of her work with them. While discussing the accountability that institutions have to be culturally responsive to surrounding communities, They stated “You could have a department head, who is really championing this work, but if the leadership, the directors, and other department heads don't... that's a block to getting the buy-in and for people to actually implement the work”.

These interviewees have highlighted what it can look like for cultural responsiveness to be supported throughout an institution. Although the practice may be initiated by one member, its endurance appears to rely on multiple levels of integration and support.

### **Recognizing opportunities for growth**

Four out of the six interviewees characterize the development and implementation of culturally responsive programming as stemming from the recognition that the institution had an opportunity for growth. The theme arose from museum professionals discussing their recognition of institutional limitations and weaknesses; from these conversations within the museums and throughout the field, they also recognized the ability to adopt new strategies and practices.

One museum professional reflects that over the years, “In the course of those stretches, of course, we realized, as individuals and as teams and as divisions and departments, the limitations, the weaknesses, the long road of like “Wow, we have a lot to learn in these areas related to inclusion, honoring diversity, thinking about accessibility, and so forth”. They say that in their time at OMSI conversations about cultural responsiveness have been perennial, but the NSF funded project has provided the institution the chance to grow and learn more with respect to developing connections and community involvement. To this institutional recognition and project, the professional adds “Many institutions in the US are built on or have built in biases. So then these institutions are constantly trying to overcome what’s been created”. Thus, the *REVEAL* project provides OMSI and other institutions the opportunity to grow through evidence-based research to respond with relevant actions; the facilitation guide states “The better than we can respect and value differences in identity and culture, the better we can work across these differences, serve visitors, and ultimately become more culturally responsive facilitators” (12).

Also pointing to room for growth with respect to cultural responsiveness within the institution, another museum professional discusses how their programs department has developed tools for the audiences the institution typically sees, but also maintains the “recognition that those might not be the most effective tools outside”. Similarly, the interviewee from the Science Museum of Minnesota says that for the *RACE* exhibition, “We recognized at the museum that in order for us to be successful with this project that we needed to have input from the community”.

In both institutions that are starting to have these conversations around cultural responsiveness and competencies and throughout her workshops, the cultural strategist says “I

see a lot more people realizing like ‘... just because I went to that one training, I don’t know everything, this is my perception’”.

These statements reflect the museum professionals’ understanding that their institutions could do more with surrounding communities and that opportunities for collaboration and growth exist outside the walls of the physical building.

### **Synthesis of Results**

For the continued and informed perspectives necessary to produce culturally responsive programming, professionals describe the importance of identifying the crossovers between community needs and an organization’s mission and vision to understand how the two can work together. In developing and implementing culturally responsive programming, museum professionals discussed the importance of recognizing opportunities for growth in order to understand the ways their institutions and departments can become better prepared to support these types of programs and practices. The interviewees also discuss a need for institutional support or type of framework that allows for programming and relationship building to be sustainable and continuous, rather than a one-time occurrence.

### **Research Question 3: How are the staff members prepared to facilitate programs in a culturally responsive way?**

The following section presents the themes that emerged around how institutions have been preparing staff members to be culturally responsive and what that preparation can look like.

### **Self-reflection**

A majority of the interviewees discuss how the trainings at their respective institutions focused on reflection and interpersonal communication to encourage staff of the importance of acknowledging multiple truths and the validity of diverse perspectives. The process of self-reflection is also discussed as a method of recognizing one's own positionality. Along with positionality, self-reflection as a theme in this study also focuses on interpersonal communication.

An institutional professional states that their education staff has been focusing on nuancing programs for particular audiences: /“figuring out how to understand who your audience is, know enough about them, not stereotypical knowledge, but enough about them”. Another professional reflects on trainings and conversations around cultural responsiveness as an opportunity for “helping people to stretch, notice blind spots, think about their inclusion practices, reflect, talk to people”.

When asked if the staff members have partaken in trainings on cultural responsiveness or cultural competencies, one museum professional replied yes and says “that [trainings] was something we were definitely thinking about particularly because our staff is almost completely white”. The self-reflection component of these trainings can lead to the recognition of one's own social standing and associated privileges and disadvantages.

At both MASS MoCA and the Science Museum of Minnesota, the interviewees discuss how trainings focused on communication can aid in facilitation and communication amongst staff and diverse audiences with differing backgrounds and perspectives. Referring to an escalation of these differences as moments of conflict, one says that trainings have focused on techniques to manage these moments: “if someone says something that's inflammatory or insulting how to sort of handle that in ways that make sure that you're checking those comments

but also not shutting people down to learning”. The other says “The majority of our staff is not as diverse as our public... So the staff are trained on just interpersonal communication and how to address a visitor who may have some issue”; this museum professional also acknowledges that these interactions can also not be connected to identity or a visitors’ background, but that the trainings were focused on customer service skill such as interpersonal communication.

In terms of what these trainings look like, an interviewee from the Science Museum of Minnesota says that the institution does work around both abstract and concrete situations. For example, they state “Sometimes the discussion had to do with just self reflection and how people responded to the content of what we were having them look at”. To connect trainings in a more concrete way, they state that in the trainings they also discuss: “How would you respond to this? How would you respond to this section? How would you respond to somebody who reacted in this way to the exhibition?”.

When reflecting on one’s positionality, the cultural strategist suggests focusing on personal experiences that “have really molded your sense of self, whether that’d be a sense of racial superiority or inferiority or avoidance at times, as well. And then the other part is doing that work or reflecting on these issues with peers, especially from a diverse background”.

### **Leaning into discomfort**

Interviewees discuss that working towards cultural responsiveness involves leaning into discomfort. The discomfort can stem from the self-reflection process, in which professionals recognize their own privileges and role in the perpetuation of injustices: “We have to go beyond the individual. So we have to look at an individual themselves, but we also have to think about the collective. To think about systems and structures within our society and how institutions play into those systemic moments of oppression and inferiority building”. This museum

professional also states that their workshop goals include getting participants to “feel comfortable having conversations about the inequity because sometimes it's hard for folks just to acknowledge that we are operating in an unequal playing field”.

Another professional says that in their institution’s trainings “A lot of what we tried to do was just to create a climate of more of a comfort with talking about race even when there was disagreement. That trying to help people understand that the disagreement and the discomfort was natural and that that was not a reason to not have the conversation”.

Also believing in the importance of conversation in order to institutionalize equity, the cultural strategist describes how the reflecting process for workshop participants often causes them to recognize a need to go deeper, as they begin to face new challenges. Their response to these types of requests is “That's great. Because then you're growing and you're learning and you're leaning into the discomfort and all of those initial protocols for productive dialogue or group agreements that I laid out, that means you're actually trying those things and realizing that”.

### **Cross-institutional**

Multiple interviewees discuss involving multiple departments and institutional leadership in trainings and conversations relating to cultural responsiveness. Similar to the theme of developing a sustainable framework to support culturally responsive work, trainings on cultural responsiveness and building cultural competencies ideally involve multiple staff members and departments so that cultural responsiveness is supported across the institution, not solely from person or department. Additionally, these cross-institutional pushes are supported and encouraged by the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences and National Science Foundation funded projects.

One museum professional says, “They've [OMSI] also committed and they have hired a Head of People and Culture, who is helping to guide us in our learning around equity and inclusion”. The term “committed” echoes the theme of accountability used to characterize cultural responsiveness.

Speaking to the work done through the grant, another professional states “It [IMLS grant project] is doing training with our senior leadership, like the CEO and all the Vice Presidents around diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency”. They say that although culturally responsive work may have been occurring throughout the institution before, the grant brings this work together and “It [IMLS grant] really steps that course up, creates another course, like a deeper dive sort of course, but also works with the leadership of the organization in terms of increasing their cultural competency. And helping them to understand why this is important today.... beyond just: it's the right thing to do”. This professional adds that the training has been encouraging more interactions within the institution as well, stating “The other thing the grant is doing is taking the trainer model to allow staff to train other staff in terms of what it means to be culturally competent and how to build on that competency in their line of work”.

Building capacity across MASS MoCA with the A Responsive Museum project, the interviewee says “[With the cultural strategist] we were able to get some more visitor services staff involved, some of our development team came, one of our curators came, and so we hope that we can eventually get it to be... we'd love to have our security involved, everybody in the front lines, and so we're sort of working towards that”. The cultural strategist states “It's really important for leadership to be on board... to have that real change, that lasting change, leadership does have to be on board”.

Speaking to one of their upcoming projects, the cultural strategist states “We're going to be working together to have a multi-series, a multi-day workshop series, where folks from different departments are coming together voluntarily, because I think that's also really important for where they are, to really think about understanding what it means to do anti-racist, culturally equitable work in the institution within this sphere of influence”.

### **Continuous**

More than half of the museum professionals discuss how staff preparation for culturally responsive programming and institutional approaches will be a continuous, ongoing process. One museum professional introduced the idea of planting seeds; “A lot of what we talked about was how much can we achieve in an hour long tour of an exhibition? Or someone walking through an exhibition... We talked a lot about planting seeds and having a conversation with a group of students or a group of adults where there was some resistance or some sort of confusion and maybe it doesn't sink in that day, but it might resonate later on when they get that message reinforced in some way. And I think that applies to the staff as well”.

This professional also states “There's never like a moment where you're like “Yes, check. We're done, we're ready to have these conversations”. Another professional iterates this view of the preparation: “There is not a solution there and we did not arrive at a “we've done it”. It's a constant kind of keeping the conversation going”. A third interviewee states “People are slowly realizing that that's [a workshop or training] not enough, I don't think everybody's there, but I think I see a lot more people realizing like, ‘Oh, this is big, this is ongoing. Like just because I went to that one training, I don't know everything, this is my perception””.

Speaking to these workshops on cultural responsiveness and building competences, the cultural strategist explains their view of the role and its continuous nature; “I don't necessarily

see my job as to solve a problem, but my job is to start the conversation to help people get on the journey so that they don't end the conversation with me and that they're excited, enthusiastic, and motivated enough to want to be accountable to do their own work”.

### **Creating bridges**

Some of the data reflects preparing museum professionals by providing the resources and approaches to create bridges between institutions and communities. These preparations guide professionals in developing the relationships and trust that has been highlighted in response to Research Question 2. These approaches involve understanding the importance of community representation and voice in the institution, which supports the asset-based learning that cultural responsiveness has been characterized as.

When asked if the staff at their institution have taken part in any trainings on cultural responsiveness or cultural competencies, one professional replied that they hadn't and that while “that wouldn't be a bad idea”, they say that “I do think the organization has done a pretty great job of bringing in people who are really representative of the communities whom we relate to”. Trainings haven't been at the forefront of this center's work because the people representing the cultural institution are from the surrounding communities and understand how to create these bridges between institutions and community members. In contrast, other sites had discussed their concerns for potentially developing culturally responsive work in the wrong way, as many saw themselves as outsiders of the institution's neighboring communities. Therefore, along with building bridges through developing relationships and trust, institutions can also gain insight and connections by hiring directly from the communities they aspire to partner with.

### **Synthesis of Results**

Discussing staff preparation to deliver culturally responsive programming, interviewees highlighted the incorporation of trainings that utilized self-reflection and embraced leaning into discomfort in order to create space for change. Additionally, they described the preparation as being continuous and cross-institutional; thus, getting as many members of the institution involved in trainings and discussions whenever the chance was available and applicable, although it did not always appear to be an institutional priority.

### **Challenges**

In addition to answering the research questions, many of the museum professionals touched on the challenges that have surrounded initiating and institutionalizing culturally responsive practices. These challenges included a lack of resources such as time and staff capacity at respective institutions. OMSI's *REVEAL* facilitation guide acknowledges timing and scheduling challenges, stating "We understand that it can be difficult for floor staff to meet frequently or for an extended period of time, so each of the discussion sessions is between 1.5 to 2 hours long".

After being asked what their hopes for the future work of cultural responsiveness are, one interviewee says "I wish we could just do more. We don't have that ability to scale. It's just a question of resources [human and financial]". Another interviewee also speaks about the financial challenges that their institution faces, especially with the IMLS grant funding for the project coming to an end: "we're still articulating how that [internal professional development and community engagement] all fits into our funding model or funding structures for next year. So I know it's a priority, but we're still sort of figuring out how that works".

Discussing the organizational structure and its many branches, a museum professional says another challenge, on top of time, exists in the clustering of communication

channels. Similarly, another professional states that there has been a challenge of the pace at which the institution works versus the pace communities want events to occur: “we have people call us up and be like, “we'd love to do this next week”. And we would have to say no”.

Within these organizations, the cultural strategist and educator states that there may exist the fear of change, when integrating culturally responsive and inclusive approaches that haven't explicitly existed before; there is “the fear that sometimes exists within cultural organizations of “but that's not the way we've always done it” or “will our funders be upset” or “I don't want to step on any toes” or “I don't want to speak up because I'm nervous and I've never been a person to speak up””.

These statements reflect the barriers that can exist around culturally responsive programming and education becoming a part of an institution.

## **Conclusion**

The museum professionals interviewed for this research defined cultural responsiveness as being inclusive, attentive, accountable, and asset-based. They discussed the development and implementation of culturally responsive programming and education within various cultural institutions; the process came to be characterized under the themes of identifying connections, building relationships and trust, developing a sustainable institutional framework, and creating opportunities for growth. In terms of the preparation and trainings, the interviewees described the groundwork as reflective, cross-institutional, continuous, and creating bridges and conversations. Despite differing communities and projects, the institutions reveal similar intentions and approaches that can be adopted by other organizations hoping to do similar work.

## **Limitations**

The results of this research study have significant implications for how institutions can approach cultural responsiveness and developing relationships with communities. However, the results are reflective of the five institutions and six museum professionals that partook in the research study, which means it is difficult to generalize to the entire museum field. The responses to the interview questions related directly to the experiences of the interviewees and the communities that they have been developing relationships with. Thus, the research serves as an understanding of what culturally responsive approaches within museum programs can look like.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

As stated above, the limitations of this research study exist in the method of selection for sites and interviewees. For further research, it is recommended that there is a less purposive sampling to understand how a larger body of museum professionals and institutions envision and deliver culturally responsive programming. The more professionals providing their experiences and perspectives, the more that is available for others to connect with and build off of. Thus, it is suggested that there exists more documentation and story-telling of culturally responsive, anti-biased work occurring within institutions. As one interviewee stated:

“We need more people sharing their story and we need more podcasts, more interviews, and that’s honestly what has pushed this forward is because, whether we realize it or not, in museum education, so many of us have been looking outside of our fields to resources on Critical Race Theory, from community activists, from sociologists, from classroom

educators, other people that are in education, historians, who are having the conversation in their respective fields”.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusions and Implications**

The purpose of this research study was to understand what culturally responsive museum programming looks like. Six museum professionals affiliated with institutions practicing culturally responsive education were interviewed and three educational guides associated with projects occurring at these institutions were analyzed. Three questions guided the research: (1) How do museum professionals define cultural responsiveness? (2) What does culturally responsive museum programming look like in terms of both development and implementation? (3) How are the staff members prepared to facilitate programs in a culturally responsive way?

Although the interviewees discussed various culturally responsive approaches that were relevant to each institution's own learning goals, institutional mission and vision, and the interests of respective neighboring communities, they also shared commonalities in the development and implementation process of programs. From these commonalities, staff members at other institutions may understand the 'how' and 'why' behind producing and supporting culturally responsive approaches in museum education.

### **Conclusions**

This study described each professional's definition of cultural responsiveness, the reasoning behind culturally responsive program development and implementation, and the ways in which their institution prepared facilitators to carry out these programs in a culturally responsive manner. In line with the literature, interviewees acknowledge that cultural responsiveness has to do with having a mindset and attitude that respects individuals' personal experiences and perspectives; this does not necessarily equate only to people of color, but also pertains to people of diverse backgrounds. The interviews suggest that the museum professionals share common elements in their definitions of cultural responsiveness. AAM's

2018 report *Facing Change* lists one of the key components of effective museum diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion work as “Debate on definition must not hinder progress”. Thus, they did not have to have the exact same definitions of cultural responsiveness, but it is important that the museum professionals held a similar vision for the practice’s impacts and potential to create change. The museum professionals characterize cultural responsiveness as being attentive, which requires not only listening, but understanding the value of what is being said and how these discussion apply to one’s own work. Additionally, more than half of the museum professionals define cultural responsiveness as being accountable; accountability reinforces the need to not only listen, but to also act accordingly with respect to the information that has been disclosed. Other terms used to define cultural responsiveness are related to inclusivity and respect of others’ ideas and values.

Museum professionals emphasize the importance of being physically present within communities. Making proximity a priority demonstrates both an investment of the institution’s time, along with a genuine interest in creating a relationship with the community and a desire to exist as a partner and resource. As museums attempt to become relevant to the changing demographics across the nation, understanding the crossovers in which museum and communities can benefit from one another is vital.

Interviewees also stated that culturally responsive education and programming requires support from multiple branches of the institution in order to be sustained. The importance of institutionalizing the value is echoed by AAM’s Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion working group through the insight “Systemic change is vital to long-term genuine progress”; the point asserts “By prioritizing inclusion in their core operations, museums can ensure that progress is not just cosmetic or temporary but embedded into the systems that make them

function” (AAM, 2018, p.10). Museum professionals in this research study recognize the limitations of implementation when contributing members are not on the same page. The practices of understanding one’s positionality, leaning into discomfort, and recognizing opportunities for growth are all important.

Preparation concerning culturally responsive practices and attitudes across the institutions requires involved participation from multiple departments across the institution. Museum professionals characterize the workshops and trainings in their institutions as cross-institutional and continuous. These characterizations support the concern for culturally responsive programming to be sustained over time, not just occurring throughout the time frame of the funding supporting and potentially encouraging culturally responsive work. Interviewees of this research study also describe the workshops and trainings as being reflective, focusing on interpersonal communication, positionality, and feeling comfortable discussing inequity. These training focuses are similar to the descriptions of what culturally responsive programming development and implementation look like. To accomplish having these conversations and developing relationships in an impactful way, the research data outline the importance of what it means to be aware, how to create meaningful bridges between the institution and neighboring communities, and recognizing the validity and power of multiple perspectives.

### **Implications**

With respect to the literature gap this research intends to fill, results from this study suggest that culturally responsive museum education and programming draw from multiple lenses; culturally responsive approaches and attitudes do not exist with a one-sided perspective or self-benefiting goal. In order to stay relevant to surrounding communities, institutions must find the connection between their mission and the needs or wants of community members. To

achieve these connections and understandings, it is critical that staff members are transparent of their intentions and develop relationships grounded in trust.

I hope that this research can serve as a guide for institutions working towards culturally responsive educational practices. Although literature exists concerning culturally responsive education in formal classroom settings, there does not exist much on how these approaches can transfer into educational settings where it is not the same people participating in the experience each day. Additionally, attempting to understand how to connect with audiences from different backgrounds than your own runs the risk of producing programs based on stereotypes. Museum professionals in this research reframe weaknesses and limitations with respect to cultural responsiveness and community engagement as an opportunity to recognize the spaces in which an organization can grow. They discussed how this navigation may require risks and leaning into the discomfort.

While it may not be easy work, this research demonstrates the collective benefits of culturally responsive practices in museum education. The interviewees of this research expressed the challenges they have faced concerning the time, money, and resources needed to make cultural responsiveness a priority in their work. These challenges may alleviate frustrations or concerns that other institutions may have in either initiating or continuing to champion culturally responsive educational approaches. Furthermore, despite the challenges, the interviewees reflect a hope to continue supporting and directing resources towards culturally responsive programming benefiting neighboring communities.

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Appendix A: Coding Rubric

Research Question 1: How do museum professionals define cultural responsiveness?

Theme	Inclusive [3/6]	Attentive [6/6]	Accountable [5/6]	Asset-based [3/6]
Codes	include, embody	listen, ask, inform, recognizing	accountable, responsible	respect, not stereotyping
	<p>If I'm thinking about it in terms of education or any kind of museum education it means that the content of exhibition and curricula, how information is presented, design is presented in a way that embodies a broader group of people than just a sort of white, dominant European standard.</p> <p>Not realizing that, actually, when we do this work, when we help support others in being included, in being seen, in seeing that their identities are valued, in having equitable access to institutions and resources, then that actually gives us a renewed sense of collective power.</p>	<p>[On the path towards CR] OMSI, I give a lot of credit to the National Science Foundation for stretching the museum field, and part of that they've done through of course requiring evaluation and that kind of evidence-based, evidence-informed decision making and programming.</p> <p>How do you listen and how do you nuance the programs that you're doing, how do you build them with community and then how do you nuance them and select them for different audiences? Recognizing what the audience brings to the table.</p>	<p>Cultural institutions in the city do have a responsibility to the city they're in. And it's not just driving tourism dollars. It's to the people who live right there and she sees that. And so that kind of idea and feeling is written into the organization's strategic plan because as an aquarium who sits on Lake Michigan, from our mission alone, we have that obligation. Because Lake Michigan is so central to Chicago being the city that it is. So we have that obligation from our mission alone.</p> <p>I think cultural responsiveness means, from an organizational standpoint, we've really branded ourselves and made ourselves known as an organization that is a creative home for civic action.</p>	<p>Really think about how do we be accountable educators, but also it's the asset-based learning. So there's a fine line, obviously, between stereotyping a group, but also allowing them to bring the information that they're familiar with to experience it.</p> <p>So that's what I mean by just sort of figuring out how to understand who your audience is, know enough about them, not stereotypical knowledge, but enough about them.</p>

It [RACE] was a traveling exhibition, 5000 square foot traveling exhibition, about race and human variation and so the project team was in a position of having a lot of conversations about: cultural relevance, cultural responsiveness, about inclusion, about design and how design impacted people's experiences and how we wanted this exhibition to be ... to just present a different kind of design that was that that was more inclusive. And so, I guess, for this museum I would say 12 years ago.

You have to be willing to listen to their need and find whether you have the creative resource to support them and have something mutual. And it has to be... it has to feel organic. Otherwise, it will deplete the resources of your organization: the human resources, the financial resources.

And that'll look different for a classroom teacher versus the museum educator. Sometimes for the museum educator, It's just asking more questions of them to share what they know or talking to the teacher more about what they like to do, what they're interested in. I see that as a tool in a bigger tool box of anti-racist work.

Because power is at the crux of all of these conversations and it is the thing that will separate cultural exchange from cultural appropriation and it's the thing that will separate culturally responsive teaching from paternalism or you know, or racial pandering, so having a sense of what we're actually talking about is important.

So we're thinking about that not only in terms of: OK, so when we have school groups or visitors of multiple ethnic backgrounds or when it's a predominantly white group, how to have respectful, but also important conversations around this work?

You can't just brand yourself as such, you can't just say you are a creative home for civic action. You have to create sort of a structure and culture and policy within. So the culture is one in which everybody values the role that an arts center can play. And being a resource, you know, because for communities, for neighborhoods, for issues, for cities.... deploying sort of its many assets, which include its space, its people, its financial, its relationships, its leadership to find the right way in which we can activate our organization.

Really think about how do we be accountable educators, but also it's the asset-based learning. So there's a fine line, obviously, between stereotyping a group, but also allowing them to bring the information that they're familiar with to experience it.

“OK, I'm going to be brave. I'm going to be accountable for my actions and my language and what I bring to this conversation” and really be in a conversation, not just preaching to someone else what you want them to hear.

Paying close attention to how facilitator expectations and assumptions about family learning in museums are shaped by individual cultural backgrounds and prior experiences is essential, we believe, to creating positive experiences for visitors. "The better that we can respect and value differences in identity and culture, the better we can work across these differences, serve visitors, and ultimately become more culturally responsive facilitators".  
REVEAL

So that's what I mean by just sort of figuring out how to understand who your audience is, know enough about them, not stereotypical knowledge, but enough about them.

For example, in informal learning there's a tool around inquiry and asking questions. So what do you think, tell me what you know? So it's not delivering facts, but engaging the person in the process of learning.

People will want something and we must be responsive to the request for a resource and do the right thing that makes sense for us to sustain ourselves during the, during all of that.

If we can only do certain things and we can't do as much as we want, we're an institution like anything that has some things that it's doing in an authentic, genuine way and other things where sometimes we mess up or sometimes, you know, we're still a predominantly white staff and so that's something I want to think about is hiring practices and I only hire gallery teachers, but how can I try and get a more diverse team of gallery guides.

I think it is the most critical thing facing museums and I think museums are really challenged and a lot of museums are struggling with cultural responsiveness, with increasing diversity in their audiences, with increasing diversity amongst their staff. And unless museums are willing to really put themselves in a place where they are vulnerable and they make mistakes, that the industry, that the field won't survive because we know our populations are changing, demographics of this country are changing, and people will make a decision to not come to our institutions, if we aren't culturally responsive. You can break that down through the people you have here and their ability to be really there for those communities, for what they need, or what they are looking at, so that we're not always trying to get people to engage with us just to make us look better or to make us have more money.

You have to be willing to listen to their need and find whether you have the creative resource to support them and have something mutual. And it has to be... it has to feel organic. Otherwise, it will deplete the resources of your organization: the human resources, the financial resources.

So this project, which we call ARM, ARM for short, really came from learning from are curators about the Nick Cave exhibition that we had on view last year. And we sort of were thinking, OK, well, what is our responsibility as the museum hosting this exhibition to the artists, to our visitors? And so for visitors also who are we already serving and then who should be involved in these conversations? Who's not yet?

What the staff is curious about is trying to not do it the wrong way. They're very cognizant of... we realized that for our team, for some members of our team, how do we do it right?

Research Question 2: What does culturally responsive museum programming and education look like in terms of both development and implementation?

<b>Theme</b>	Connections between community & mission [6/6]	Building relationships & trust [5/6]	Develop sustainable framework [institutional buy-in] [4/6]	Recognize opportunities for growth [3/6]
<b>Codes</b>	conversations, connections	community voice, neighbor, presence, informed	institutionalize, systematic, intentional	limitation, weakness, conversations, strategies
	It's been the dialogue going back and forth to help us understand what's useful [with Adelante Mujeres].	How do you figure out what examples you might use or what questions you might ask? How do you sort of step back from what you would usually ask to figure out: is there a better question or a better way to ask this question for a different audience?	It's one thing to say you value something, but it's another thing for organizations to institutionalize a value.	And in the course of those stretches, of course, we realized, as individuals and as teams and as divisions and departments, the limitations, the weaknesses... the long road of like, "Wow, we have a lot to learn in these areas related to inclusion, honoring diversity, thinking about accessibility and so forth".
	What can REVEAL offer your community that might be helpful? And they decided that what would be helpful was if we could do some professional development with family advocates and the public school in their area.	Many institutions in the US are built on or have built in biases. So then these institutions are constantly trying to overcome what's been created.	For the first time in the 17 years, I've been there, they are trying to use some key outcome indicators and they're looking at participants and staff diversity, which they hadn't been doing before in that way, not in a real systematic, at the board level, at the senior level way.	I think they probably have been perennial. So I think... I've been at OMSI for 16 years. I arrived in 2001 and I would say the conversations had already started when I arrived there. Because you have an institution, you know, many institutions in the US are built on or have built in biases. So then these institutions are constantly trying to overcome

what's been created.

We're letting the communities tell us... And sort of reintroducing Shedd and saying: this is our new leadership, this is our mission. these are the kinds of things we want to accomplish, tell us what you're interested in.

We can't go outside of our mission, but as you hear this, what resonates about our mission with you and the folks that you work with and live with and serve.

We have an extraordinary number of spaces that we dedicate to a lot of different kinds of clientele, but one of them is the clientele of need. The people who need space to convene their communities around an issue or to put our thought, partnership in relationship to a community around an issue and host something with them. So the responsiveness is around what do people need? What do we have? Where does it make sense for us to participate?

So, I guess we had the good fortune of having a multi-purpose, multi-person relationship [OMSI with Adelaten Mujeres] at this point, that has given it some depth and breadth and gotten to work on more than one project.

We've worked on things where we've worked with their staff, we've worked with parents, we've worked with youth.

Right, so just kind of checking in to see like what should we be watching for that we might have blind spots around? Or, are we seeing similar things or are we seeing different things? Just to have that conversation as I say and help it inform things.

You have to always have structures that allow for this [cultural responsiveness] to happen.

The organization was designed to be an asset, an asset for the civic art, for the arts community and to sort of operate these spaces on behalf of the city and the state for the community.

I think it would be the, probably the first time we approached it with such intentionality and really trying to build a framework that would not just, it would also not just disappear after Nick Cave closed.

We have things that we do, we have tools that we use, we have strategies that we use, that certainly work well here at Shedd for the kinds of audiences that Shedd usually sees. But then the recognition that those might not be the most effective tools outside.

We recognized at the museum that in order for us to be successful with this project that we needed to have input from the community... we couldn't really do it and we needed both of it for both for credibility, but also just for content because the identities of the staff members who are working on it were, with the exception of me, was primarily white and we wanted to expand that so we needed to have... we needed input from a variety of people who identify differently but also just perspectives.

People will want something and we must be responsive to the request for a resource and do the right thing that makes sense for us to sustain ourselves during the, during all of that.

You have to be willing to listen to their need and find whether you have the creative resource to support them and have something mutual. And it has to be... it has to feel organic. Otherwise, it will deplete the resources of your organization: the human resources, the financial resources. We found our role inside of a sort of existing program that has already had some partnerships inside of it. So in a way, what we were doing is we didn't generate the thinking, we responded to a series of activities, inside of a community that we have relationships with, around food justice and the specific program.

No matter where you are, you can't do good community work sitting in your organization.

So they [community members] were pretty clear in saying that because you haven't been anywhere, you shouldn't decide somewhere to be. Because by doing that you exclude other people.

We're going to be more neighborly. We're going to be a neighbor to the community that has sprung up; that wasn't there 10, 15 years ago... We'll go broad, but we want to now understand where we should go deeper after going broad for a while.

And so one of the great successes of working on the Nick Cave exhibition was that this is also coming from Nick himself; the mandate to do community engagement work, which gave us the curatorial buy-in that we needed. And so I want to try and work... we're trying to work more... often we don't get a lot of notice on upcoming exhibitions, so how can we work with curators more in advance and get them to buy-in to these programs? I think it's really key. And museum leadership, as well. And so I see that happening, sort of slowly, which is hopeful.

It's not just about the ideas, at times, it's about the ideas, the values, and beliefs, but also how we enact those with visitors and how we enact those with our peers, our colleagues and that we work with every day.

I'm trying to think of a good one that has created new policies and new programs out of the work... like that's when I kind of see the impact.

So this project, which we call ARM, ARM for short, really came from learning from are curators about the Nick Cave exhibition that we had on view last year. And we sort of were thinking, OK, well, what is our responsibility as the museum hosting this exhibition to the artists, to our visitors? And so for visitors also who are we already serving and then who should be involved in these conversations? Who's not yet?

Who's not a regular MASS MoCA visitor; particularly focusing on our community here in North Adams. And so I started doing a lot of outreach to different communities. And so one of the angles we've been looking at historically is working with the schools and having sort of long term relationship building and trust building through school partnerships.... And then, once we have conversations and I learn about what they're hoping to do, I can tailor what I'm offering and they can see what's available in that way.

So now where we were never heard, we are starting to be heard more. Now we're also having these community meetings and sharing things that we know that the community is interested in like employment, like basic information on Shedd.

And then we're going to pilot test some programming the summer that is about making Shedd more mobile and taking Shedd out into the community. Because we're known for this, people come to us. But we also have long standing relationships of communities in specific neighborhoods that may not have immediate access to large structures that can support their program or their need or their issues. So we have a combination of both and we try to build most of that around our partnerships. We also want to be available to people who are coming to us who are not necessarily, you know, within our purview.

And I would say vice versa, you could have a department head who is really championing this work, but if the leadership, the directors and other department heads don't, they have an attitude where they don't think it's important or it's not a priority or it's not an issue, that's a block to getting the buy-in and for people to actually implement the work.

We knew the project would not be successful if we did not have involvement of people from the community.

The same way that there are qualified applicants who may or may not be choosing to apply to the jobs at that particular institution. And so you have to call them to attention of what is the cultural bring in? What is the cultural energy or attitude that is making some people feel like they do not want to invest in us? And sometimes the culture is branded on exclusion and elitism. I hope that with museum education that we can at least get to a place where we can recognize both the individual needs of people who are coming through our doors and the collective need to build equity and start to do work that really balances those needs.

You have to develop your work, your trust of each other, your interest in each other, your respect for each other. Then you both are available to them in the moments of what you call responsiveness, the need for response and support. And then they're also there for you when you need them to connect you with the communities that they represent.

We have five platforms: one of them is art, one of them is inquiry, one is incubation, one is a convening and one is coalitions. So we find as many ways to carry the relationships that we think are the most important thing. The actual most important thing at YBCA is not the program, but the relationships. And the programs are just a vehicle to develop it. I think that's one of the successes certainly in the civic engagement program is that the people who are in the community are really people who are from the city who have worked in the community and have come to us with relationships. And so they, they really are able to translate very strongly the sort of institutional thinking into... culturally... a fluid... breaking down the language barriers between institution and community

So this is what I mean, there's enough room for everyone to have a seat at the table. And let's be real, when we all eat at that table, everybody's not trying to eat the same thing either.

So we did a lot of programming once the exhibition was up. We invited a lot of people who I had, you know, not just me, but other department members had identified as stakeholders and the topic to a lunch with Nick and right after the exhibition opened, that was October 2016, and we started what we called a call and response. Sort of building relationships has been such a goal for us and thinking about "OK, well, we don't get to see these kids again, but if we can stay in communication with the teachers and invite them back the next year for a funded field trip and maintain that". And so how can we define for ourselves what North Adams is and what this community is. So we will be trying to reach out to a lot of the same groups to sort of maintain the relationship. I know that one of the things that makes a huge difference is being physically present and going in person and having a face for the institution as well. So that's why I was like at the very beginning making a lot of phone calls and not hearing back. But when I went to organizations meeting, that was when there was interest in sort of making that human connection first.

We don't develop or produce content in a vacuum. And so that if we're looking for our work to be relevant to lots of different kinds of people that it's really important to have input and have the people talk with us.

We worked with people who were local, who we called in our community advisors and who were: they ranged in both ethnic and cultural identities to some people were working in formal education, some people were working in the court system, some people were social activists, some people were artists, some people were restorative justice practitioners; it was just a range of people who were interested in working with the museum and interested in the topic and wanting to be a part of the project.

Research Question 3: How are the staff members prepared to facilitate programs in a culturally responsive way?

Theme	Self-Reflective [4/6]	Leaning into discomfort	Cross-institutional [4/6]	Continuous [4/6]	Creating bridges
Codes	interpersonal communication, positionality, self	disagreement, inequity, comfort	multiple departments, leadership	start, unfinished, ongoing, recurring	community voice, representation
	What I mean by just sort of figuring out how to understand who your audience is, know enough about them, not stereotypical knowledge, but enough about them... That's the kind of	A lot of what we tried to do was just to create a climate of more of a comfort with talking about race even when there was disagreement. That trying to help people understand that the disagreement and the discomfort was natural and that that was not a reason to not have the	They've [OMSI] also committed and they have hired a Head of People and Culture, who is helping to guide us in our learning around equity and inclusion.	For a while, [Shedd] had a series of trainings that are related to diversity, equity and inclusion, just looking at sort of the facets of different work styles and that sort of thing. And they do have like an intro course to diversity and inclusion. And so the	The educators that have been directly involved with REVEAL have gained the most... they receive training, they would have practiced as part of the project, and would have been part of the conversations. Some of them have been involved with the conversations with Adelante Mujeres, so there's been sort of that tier and that's a nice chunk.

nuancing work that we're working with our education staff on.

conversation.

work, particularly with the IMLS project, steps that up, because that course was developed a while ago.

That [trainings] was something we were definitely thinking about particularly because our staff is almost completely white. AT

Feel comfortable having conversations about the inequity because sometimes it's hard for folks just to acknowledged that we are operating in an unequal playing field

It really steps that course up, creates another course, like a deeper dive sort of course, but also works with the leadership of the organization in terms of increasing their cultural competency. And helping them to understand why this is important today.... beyond just: it's the right thing to do.

A lot of what we talked about was how much can we achieve in an hour long tour of an exhibition? Or someone walking through an exhibition... We talked a lot about planting seeds; and having, you know, maybe a conversation with a group of students or a group of adults where there was some resistance or some sort of confusion and maybe it doesn't sink in that day, but it might resonate later on when they get that message reinforced in some way. And I think that applies to the staff as well.

So it was definitely a place where we could have conversations and I think that the conversations make a difference. So if somebody was part of this or heard of it or knew somebody else was doing it, you have that awareness.

And so they helped us sort of, we have different techniques for managing moments of conflict during tours. And if someone says something that's inflammatory or insulting how to sort of handle that in ways that make sure that you're checking those comments but also not shutting people down to learning.

Hey, we've been doing the stuff that you told us and we tried some things and we came up with new things... but we've hit this roadblock now because we realized that there's so many things that we, questions that we never even knew we needed to ask. So now that we're starting to reflect more we realize we need to go deeper into this reflection process because we're meeting new challenges". And I'm like, "that's great". That's great. Because then you're growing and you're learning and you're leaning into the discomfort and all of those initial protocols for productive dialog or group agreements that I

It [IMLS grant project] is doing training with our senior leadership, like the CEO and all the Vice Presidents around diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency.

I think, you know, we could always use more. There's never like a moment where you're like "Yes, check. We're done, we're ready to have these conversations".

They [Shedd] do have a tradition of having a pretty diverse staff.

laid out, that means you're actually trying those things and realizing that.

[Cultural strategist] to come do a training for our staff on critical multiculturalism in museums. And so she was here for a day and she did... that was a little bit more of specific talking about race or talking about oppression in different ways. Then the Conscience was just more broadly, any kind of moment of conflict. Museum staff, all museum staff who were working here at the time and volunteers received over 100 hours of training to be prepared to work with the public and on this exhibition... There was a range of trainings. So watching a three part series called

The other thing the grant is doing is taking the trainer model to allow staff to train other staff in terms of what it means to be culturally competent and how to build on that competency in their line of work.

[With the cultural strategist] we were able to get some more visitor services staff involved, some of our development team came, one of our curators came, and so we hope that we can eventually get it to be... we'd love to have our security involved. Everybody in the front lines and so we're sort of

That's really helped as well. It's... There is not a solution there and we did not arrive at a, you know, "oh, this is so... we've done it". It's a constant kind of keeping the conversation going and helping people to stretch, notice blind spots, think about their inclusion practices, reflect, talk to people.

Think people are slowly realizing that that's not enough, I don't think everybody's there, but I think I see a lot more people realizing like, "Oh, this is big, this is ongoing. Like just because I went to that one training, I don't know everything, this is my perception".

... that's really cool, especially for education who will be working with the community to identify what programming makes sense, where does it make sense, how can we help, how can we help you achieve what it is that you want to do?

No. That's a really good question. We haven't gone through a kind of a process around that. It would probably be not a bad idea. I do think the organization has done a pretty great job of bringing in people who are really representative of the communities whom we relate to.

Race: The Power of an Illusion, which was three hours, so we had to split it up into hour long sessions and then after they watched this one hour we would then have another hour of discussion in small groups

working towards that. But in the meantime we're also trying to have on going conversations and readings and discussions with our gallery teachers.

There were articles and books that we required that they read and again be in discussion with others, with staff or training, but also with each other about what kinds of some times the discussion had to do with just self reflection and how people responded to the content of what we were having them look at and other times it was more concrete: How would you respond to this? How would you respond to this section? How would you respond to somebody who reacted in this way to the exhibition? We tried to connect that trainings were not necessarily abstract.

And it's really important for leadership to be on board... but to have that real change, that lasting change, leadership does have to be on board... So I think there are a lot of pieces in the institutional puzzle that makes this work important, but a lot of factors that make it challenging as well.

So, I don't necessarily see my job as to solve a problem, but my job is to start the conversation to help people get on the journey so that they don't end the conversation with me and that they're excited, enthusiastic, and motivated enough to want to be accountable to do their own work.

I think a lot of reasons why cultural competency is a necessity in organizations is because there has that... the people representing the organization aren't of the community. So you have to really understand how to bridge that, if they need training. Now, that isn't to say that we couldn't benefit from that, but I think one of the reasons why it isn't a, first and foremost, thing that we have to do, is because of the way the organization that has hired.

The majority of our staff is not as diverse as our public. We know that we are working on changing that and we know we need to change that. So the staff are trained on just interpersonal communication and how to address a visitor who may have some issue... I mean people, you know, there are a lot of customer service things that come up for visitors that have nothing to do with their identity, they have nothing to do with you know who they are or where they come from or how much money they have. And it's hard for folks sometimes to recognize that there is a marginalization and that they have to go deeper to also acknowledge what the consequences of that history or those histories are and have been or still remain today

So now we're going to be working together to have a multi-series, a multi-day workshop series, where folks from different departments are coming together voluntarily, because I think that's also really important for where they are, to really think about understanding what it means to do anti-racist, culturally equitable work in the institution within this sphere of influence. So we're not institutional wide now, but we are having a conversation across departments and particularly within your department: what can your department do... your sphere of influence.

So I think it's [conversations of cultural responsiveness] helped us move as an organization to... I can't say it is the reason why and I shouldn't say that... but it is a part of this movement to help us get to where we are now as an organization, which other organizations may be further along, but it's where OMSI is.

We have to go beyond the individual. So we have to look at an individual themselves, but we also have to think about the collective. To think about systems and structures within our society and how institutions play into those systemic moments of oppression and inferiority building.

So the workshops they're customized to an extent because each organization has a different brand or sense of self. Also, you have to think regionally what's going on and what's important to those folks in terms of their surrounding areas, but also recently how we think about these conversations and who's around: who's included and who's excluded.

And in some ways, I should say, have really molded your sense of self, whether that'd be a sense of racial superiority or inferiority or avoidance at times, as well. And then the other part is doing that work or reflecting on these issues with peers, especially from a diverse background. The first one is always us to get outside of our comfort zone and know that growing doesn't always happen when we're comfortable, you know, and so that we have to push ourselves a little bit and really kind of lean into discomfort so that we can start to unpack those problems of inequity and a little bit more about how am I feeding into it and how am I not feeding into it? I mean: what our goal really is to have staff be adept at making visitors feel welcome, feel comfortable, enjoy the museum, no matter what their potential needs are. And that means everyone.

And unless  
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they are  
vulnerable and  
they make  
mistakes, that  
the industry, that  
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populations are  
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Risk, it feels, it  
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Appendix B: Simpkins et al (2017) Rubric

Categories	Program Structure	Staff
<b>Physical &amp; Psychological Safety</b>	Have written policies and procedures about inclusivity that specify how the activity is welcoming to all adolescents and families	Be aware of potential culturally based contributors to interpersonal conflict and manage conflict when it occurs
	Provide clear structure and procedures for all adolescents to address safety concerns (e.g. racially motivated victimization, bullying) with staff and feeling comfortable doing so	Promote constructive culturally based conflict resolution among adolescents and staff
	Ensure that policies (e.g. paperwork, English-only policies) do not marginalize groups	Avoid use of language that is discriminatory, teases, or makes fun of a particular group or furthers stereotypes
	Provide an environment that is safe, accessible, and welcoming to adolescents and families of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds	Positively counter practices degrading to particular groups, biases, stereotypes, and discrimination
	Ensure that policies do not marginalize groups	Address specific safety concerns of adolescents who are marginalized, victimized, or have other safety concerns
<b>Appropriate Structure</b>	Actively seek input from all families and adolescents concerning culturally appropriate structure in the program	Use behavior management strategies based on cultural norms concerning limit setting, rules, and monitoring
	Ensure that all families and adolescents understand the program expectations and procedures	Be flexible and adapt structural demands to align with adolescents' cultural background while maintaining overall structural integrity
	Balance autonomy and structure that are consistent with adolescents' cultural norms	Co-construct rules and decision-making processes, as well as the structure of youth-adult with adolescents
	Structure groups and relationships in ways that adolescents are accustomed to	
	Adapt rules to recognize adolescents' responsibilities outside of the activity so that a particular group is not unduly penalized	
<b>Supportive Relationships</b>	Make all communication available in the languages and communication styles adolescents and families prefer	Have positive attitudes about all cultural groups
	Have relationship-building activities for staff and adolescents to get to know one another, including daily "check-in" times and more formal opportunities	Focus and build on individuals' assets and strengths
		Foster partnerships with adolescents where both culturally diverse adolescents and staff are viewed as skilled, knowledgeable individuals
<b>Opportunities to belong</b>	Provide opportunities, including leadership roles and decision-making opportunities, for all adolescents regardless of background	Foster positive interactions and shared ownership among adolescents from diverse cultural groups
	Make activities a place where adolescents' multiple cultural and social identities are respected	Actively include diverse adolescents in all group-based activities
	Structure activities to foster a sense of community through collaboration toward a common goal rather than competition across groups	Co-construct activity projects and decisions between adolescents and staff that places youth voice at the center
	Structure the activities and groups to minimize marginalization or segregation among participants	Assist adolescents in bridging cultural differences
		Cultivate a shared activity identity while honoring adolescents' unique identities
<b>Positive Social Norms</b>	Establish prosocial norms acceptable to all and do not give privilege to a particular group	Encourage prosocial norms and behavior among staff and adolescents
	Develop and cultivate program norms to integrate youth voice into developing the list of norms	Treat all participants, staff, and families with equal respect and consideration
	Have written expectations and discussions with staff, adolescents, and families on positive social norms around cultural differences, diversity, and integration	Promote adolescents' respect and value of diversity

		Have similar expectations for adolescents of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds
<b>Support for efficacy and mattering</b>	Include youth voice in identifying ways to make the program culturally meaningful (e.g. relevant issue they can address, materials, physical space, family events, how they are taught/how the group is structured)	Encourage adolescents to express their needs, interests, and opinions and support them with respectful feedback
	Provide opportunities to connect programmatic content to their daily lives or the lives of those in their community in a culturally meaningful way so that they better understand the relevance of the activity	Do not avoid or dismiss adolescents' questions about their culture or others' culture
		Support adolescents as they explore their cultural identity and resolve issues concerning culture
<b>Opportunities for skill building</b>	Provide opportunities for skill building (e.g. problem solving) that will help them successfully navigate multiple cultures and intergroup interactions as well as constructively handle bias	Seek teachable moments to discuss with adolescents their culture and others' cultures, teach adolescents strategies to bridge cultural differences in a positive manner, and about cultural capital to succeed in U.S. schools
	Teach adolescents about the history, traditions, and beliefs of multiple cultures, including mainstream American culture, in order to enhance cultural knowledge	Be aware of potential cultural differences in values skills (e.g. assertiveness)
<b>Integration of family, school, and community efforts</b>	Provide opportunities for all parents to be involved, get to know one another, and provide feedback on the program in ways that accommodate parents' schedules and ways of gathering	Know about the diversity and lives of adolescents and families in the area
	Consider adolescents' cultural events and familial obligations in the requirements and schedule	Provide outreach to families, especially for those that are "hard to reach"
	Capitalize on culturally diverse community resources (e.g. Asian American History Museum)	Be sensitive to families' cultural values and work with families to bridge any cultural differences or conflicts with families
		Actively seek out and communicate with all families and other important people (e.g. teachers, religious leaders, promotoros) about adolescents' overall well-being