Museum Program Facilitators: Working Within Carceral Space

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Abstract

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This study was an exploration of the effects that outreach programs for the incarcerated have on those who facilitate them in order to increase understandings of the motivations, emotional impacts, and needs of these museo-carceral workers, with a view towards fostering sustainability of such programs. Implementing a phenomenological approach, five participants who had experienced working with incarcerated people in the course of facilitating museum outreach programming inside sites of imprisonment were interviewed. The results of this study coalesce around broad themes of conflict between museological versus carceral values, rewards which are imbricated with the challenges of working in a carceral environment, and the need for an organized on-going support system built into museo-carceral programming.

Keywords: affective labor, arts education, carceral, critical prison studies, critical emotional labor, emotion, empathy, facilitation, incarceration, museology, museum programs, museo-

carceral, organizational psychology and behavior, phenomenology, prison, museology, workplace well-being

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This work is dedicated to the memory of my father.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In the autumn of 1937, guards from Ramsey State Farm killed prisoner number 82993. The Ramsey was, and still is, a Texas prison situated on the former sites of several antebellum-era slavery plantations. This plantation prison is part of a network of penal farms which have "never been touched by free labor." (Ancestry.com, 2012; Perkinson, 2001, p. 102; Perkinson, 2010, p. 250). For my family, though, this imprisoned man was more than just a number. We called him Chochi, and over eighty years later, his killing continues to haunt us. I come to this research then, in part, because the passage of time has not erased our family's grief; the legacy of the prison has entangled itself within my family history. As one of the history keepers in my family, I still see Chochi attempting his escape from the prison plantation - decades later, he is still legible within our family story. We understand that his escape attempt was non-negotiable, that he understood that there would be no rescue except through his own action, because there were too many who believed that the site of his captivity was simply a part of his natural habitat. These are the histories we keep.

And yet, Chochi's story ripples through and connects my family to a larger narrative of the American prison. As a nation that incarcerates almost a quarter of the world's prisoners (Walmsley, 2013, p. 3), the ubiquity of the prison system within the United States demands a reckoning with how mass incarceration has affected the museum profession. Museums have responded during the era of mass incarceration by reaching out to incarcerated people through innovative programming (Forster, 2016; Jackson et al, 2017; Kopplin, 2016; Stafne & Gaugler, 2011). In the course of such work, museum workers facilitating programs within prison walls encounter a unique environment that brings along with it added stressors. Those who implement prison programming under the aegis of the museum are performing a kind of emotional labor

(Hillman, 1996, p. 20; Stafne & Gaugler, 2011). What does an inquiry into the inner life of such workers reveal? What are the issues facing facilitators of museum programming in the prison setting, and how do they experience this challenging environment? What types of institutional supports does the source museum provide for these workers?

Recent writings and scholarship have studied the links between the prison and the museum in terms of the positive impact museum outreach programs have upon the incarcerated individual (Bechtler.org, 2018; Jackson et al., 2017; Johnson, 2011). Literature which examines how workers from diverse professions experience labor within the carceral space helps to inform understandings of the impacts of this affective labor (Castro, 2017; Denson, 2014; Nadkarni, 2014; Smith, 2017), but a museum-specific exploration is needed, an inquiry which is informed by my current explorations within critical prison studies acknowledging issues of race and gender (Browne, 2015; Davis and James, 1998; Hartman, 2007). There are inherent tensions present while working in a space which is, in many ways, a site that inverts the values of museums today – while equity, diversity, and inclusion are sought in the museum space, the prison stands as a place of deep inequality, exclusion, and hyper-racialization (Gilmore, 2007; Perkinson, 2010). These conflicting values and purposes need to be addressed.

The aim of my study is to contribute to building strengthened support structures for those implementing museum programming inside prison walls. In addition, there is the linked goal that this mitigation of adverse impacts on museum workers will lead to the ongoing sustainability of museum-prison partnerships. The bodies of literature consulted in the course of this research include works in the realms of museology, affective labor, workplace well-being, organizational psychology and behavior, history, and critical prison studies.

This study is an exploration of the effects that outreach programs for the incarcerated have on those who facilitate them in order to increase understandings of the motivations, emotional impacts, and needs of these workers who are engaged in museum-prison outreach, with a view towards fostering sustainability of such programs. This research seeks to explore: what are the challenges facing those who facilitate museum programs within correctional institutions? How do these workers cope with facilitating museum programming within such a unique and potentially stressful environment? What supports does the host museum have in place to prepare these facilitators? How are the source museums taking into account a museum worker's emotional well-being within carceral environments? Are there ways in which these supports can be strengthened?

I am engaging with this research in hopes that those implementing museum programs within prisons might have ever-strengthening support structures in place as they engage within the carceral space. A key element in fostering the sustainability of these programs involves deepening our understandings of how best to nurture and prepare those who work with imprisoned people. As museo-carceral workers strive to treat imprisoned people as more than just a number, it is crucial that we explore their experiences, care for, and support these workers.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Museums Meeting a Need

Due to the ubiquity of the mass incarceration project of the prison industrial complex, the United States has the highest rate of imprisonment in the world - almost half of its adults have had a family member serve some measure of time behind bars (Fwd.us & Cornell University, 2018, p. 43; Walmsley, 2013, p. 1). Because so many communities in the United States have been impacted by mass incarceration, museums which seek to fulfill their charge of being in service to their communities have become responsive to this reality (American Alliance of Museums, 2018; International Council of Museums, 2018). This responsiveness reflects an ongoing movement—the historical journey of United States museums becoming part of a continuous decolonization process which involves honesty regarding the historical connections between museums (particularly anthropological museums) and settler-colonialist "removal, genocide, and legal dispossession of Native American tribal groups." This movement away from primarily valuing a "cultural authority coming from their collections," towards a greater responsiveness and engagement with historical and ongoing injustices is being led by the efforts of "those most impacted" by ongoing legacies of colonialism (Bieder, 1998, pp. 168-170; Corrin, 1993, pp. 302-313; Mesa-Bains, 2004, pp. 99-109; Skramstad, 1999, pp. 112-113; Wheeler & Falchuk, 2019).

The arts programming that museums carry out inside of carceral spaces is one of many diverse enrichment activities which fall under the category of "prison education programs" (Smith, 2017, p. 85). Museums across the country engaging with incarcerated people via outreach programs do so with the view of an overall improvement in the quality of life for the incarcerated and often with the specific aims of rehabilitation (Berlucchi, 2018; Delgado, 2001,

pp. 143-144), reinforcing positive behaviors (Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, 2018; Huberman, 2007), increasing empowerment and self-efficacy (Lazzari, Amundson & Jackson, 2005, pp. 169 & 182-183), and even as a component of alternative sentencing schemes (Ostheimer, 2016). The museum work taking place inside of sites of incarceration often centers on mitigating the effects of a challenging environment experienced by the people held as prisoners within carceral spaces (Gardner, Hager & Hillman, 2019, pp. 5-8). The narrative regarding the reasons why programs are brought into sites of imprisonment often aligns with the idea that paying attention to the experiences of people held in places of incarceration has a ripple effect in the greater society, and thus it is in the best interests of all for incarcerated people to be treated fairly in anticipation of their eventual return to the world outside the prison gates. The rationale of this way of thinking is that, upon release, people who have participated in programs (such as arts outreach programs facilitated in partnership with museums) while incarcerated, improve their social navigation skillset, which will in turn will improve society at large, and also lessen the likelihood of re-entry into sites of incarceration, (Brewster, 2014, pp. 23-25).

The Way of the Carceral

The prison and other carceral spaces, such as juvenile detention centers or county jails, are commonly understood as places of terror, rigid control, violence, punishment, and rehabilitation. An examination of museum programming within the carceral space through the lens of Critical Prison Studies deepens, and at the same time, complicates our understandings of the structures of incarceration. This is because engaging with Critical Prison Studies lays bare carceral space as a hyper-racialized structure and gendered space. As places of profound control over the human body, jails, prisons, and other sites of incarceration hold within them an inherent tension for

those who facilitate museum programming, in part, because it is a space which is, in many ways, an inversion of the stated values of museums today (American Alliance of Museums, 2018; International Council of Museums, 2018). While equity, diversity, and inclusion are sought in the museum space, the way of the carceral is a path of deep inequality, exclusion, and hyper-racialization. In his history of the control of the human body, Michel Foucault explores the carceral space as a place of inequality, where power asymmetry is played out as a "non-reversible subordination of one group of people by another" (Foucault, 1977, pp. 222-223). For example, in the course of implementing museum programs within sites of incarceration, the protocols emplaced by those in authority within such carceral spaces must be strictly followed by all; any deviation can result in a stressful situation for any facilitator seeking entry to perform museum outreach programming. Acknowledging the realities of prison confinement is a necessary process in museums' programmatic efforts to mitigate the psychological damage caused by confinement (Haney, 2006, p. 170). The ways in which studying museum work within the carceral space via Critical Prison Studies can open up richer understandings is evident when one considers the theory's exploration of incarceration in the United States as a chain stretching through space and time across the Atlantic Ocean, linking the U. S. prison with the slave castles that dot the west coast of Africa (Hartman, 2007, pp. 6-7).

Critical Prison Studies invites those who are engaged with museum programming within sites of incarceration to reckon with the processes at play in an era of mass incarceration, including the uneven enforcement of nominally race-neutral legislation (Alexander, 2012, pp. 200-207; Better, 2008, p. 79-81). It is an invitation to reflect upon its discussion of the carceral space as an expression "of the racialization of punishment" (Davis & James, 1998, pp. 96-105). Critical Prison Studies asks us to consider the words and histories of those who have been sentenced to

live in the prison full time and to meditate over their experiences of "complete alienation" (Jackson, 1970, p. 63, 123), regimented time (Reed & Smith, 2016, pp. 144-148), violence, and boredom (Shakur, Davis & Hinds, 2001, pp. 53-55).

Emotions of the Imprisoned

One of the elements of museum work and prison outreach involves tactile opportunities which may otherwise be unavailable for incarcerated people. Museum staff who enter the carceral space to facilitate these opportunities are fostering the abilities of imprisoned people to establish linkages between touch and learning informed by imagination (Chatterjee, 2008). The examples of educational prison programs originating from places other than museums are a vital entry point into the ways in which emotional impacts on imprisoned people have been examined. The exhibit-like experience of a peaceful "blue room" set up inside the prison by forest ecologist Nalini Nadkarni, which features a projection of outdoor scenes onto the walls of a room, accompanied by soothing sounds of nature, has been studied for both its immediate and long-term positive impacts on the calming effects and socialization of the prisoners (Denson, 2014, Nadkarni et al, 2017). The co-creative activity of painting a mural inside of a women's prison serves as a way for the women incarcerated there to experience a collaboration imbued with positivity, support, and stability (Williams, 2003, pp. 138-152). A creative writing class inside a men's prison becomes a site where those imprisoned within its walls build up a sense of community and dignity (Smith, 2017, pp. 96-97).

Collaborations between museums and carceral spaces also evidence a strong commitment to implementing programming which has deep emotional impacts. Examples include museo-carceral programming where child prisoners engaged with in-jail art programs that resulted in a

deep sense of enjoyment and increased ability to regulate their behavior in healthy ways (Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, 2018; Huber, 2007). In another museum, a program was created which facilitated incarcerated mothers synchronously dancing with their daughters via an internet connection. This “mother-daughter distance dance” strengthened bonds between imprisoned mothers and their daughters on the outside, with the incarcerated participants evidencing development in their collaborative skills, a reduction in stress levels, and an elevation in feelings of happiness (Johnson, 2011, pp. 88-90).

Emotion and Museum Workers in the Carceral

What exists alongside the responsive work that museums are doing within places of incarceration are the inherent contradictions of facilitating an expressive learning environment within a brutal system. The way of the carceral assures an abrading friction between museological principles grounded in inclusion and equity with the aim of fostering the “joys of learning” and the reality of "everyday violence" present in sites of imprisonment (American Association of Museums, 2005, p.9; Castro & Brawn, 2017, pp. 117-118). Today’s museum educators are challenged by an outreach experience that is taking place after the emergence of educational theories which are at odds with the “rituals of control” present within the prison system (Hooks, 1994, p. 5). Besides the pursuit of positive outcomes for individuals about to be released from prison, there is also a purpose in providing this kind of outreach to those imprisoned long-term. This too can be a source of challenge for the museum staff, for they may grapple with the fact that it may be decades before the prisoners with whom they are interacting (and perhaps bonding) with are eligible to return to life outside of the carceral (Smith, 2017, pp. 90-92). Doing outreach with incarcerated children may also bring up complex emotional

responses within museum outreach staff (Bellamy, 2017; Stafne & Gaugler, 2011, pp. 53-56). The demands on the emotional labor of these museum workers points to a need for supportive reassurance that they are not walking this path alone in the course of their work within a potentially isolative experience. This demanding environment points to a risk of "artist burnout" (Hillman, Gaffney, & Strickland, 1996, p. 20). Rather than individual efforts, collaborative endeavors aimed at addressing these challenges are needed (Maslach, 1982, pp. 110-117). In investigating ways in which source museums equip their staff for work inside of the prison, more could be said regarding how this preparation for engagement within the prison is processed internally by museum outreach staff (Jackson, Pharaon, & Bormann, 2017). How do museum programming facilitators navigate their interactions within carceral spaces? What emotional impacts have museum workers walked away with post-experience?

Chapter Three: Methodology

This study was an exploration of the effects which museum outreach programs for incarcerated people have on those who facilitate such programs within prisons, jails, and other sites of incarceration, in order to better understand the motivations, emotional impacts, and needs of these workers who are engaged in this kind of museum outreach, with a view towards fostering sustainability of such programs.

This research sought answers to the following questions: What are the challenges facing those who facilitate museum programs within correctional institutions? How do these workers cope with facilitating museum programming within such a unique and potentially stressful environment? What supports does the host museum have in place to prepare these facilitators? How are the source museums considering a museum worker's emotional well-being within carceral environments? Are there ways in which these supports can be strengthened?

Methodology Rationale

Since I wanted to advance deeper understandings regarding the emotional labor of workers who are facilitating museum programs within the carceral space, I implemented a phenomenological approach, which is well-suited for drilling down into the lived experiences of these museum workers via gathering the perspectives of the workers themselves through interviews.

Participant Recruitment

Participants were museum program facilitators who had experienced working with incarcerated people in the course of facilitating museum outreach programming inside sites of imprisonment. Initially, I considered the goal of interviewing as many participants as possible from across the United States who engaged in this kind of work. Because of the time parameters

I was working with in which to coordinate and conduct the interviews, I chose to interview at least five participants, a number which fell within established phenomenological practice standards. The five participants' experiences with facilitation of museum programming in sites of imprisonment span across a wide spectrum, from working in a carceral space a handful of times for one participant, to another who has done this work for eight years. I used non-probability sampling, with a purposive sampling method to identify participants who had experience with the phenomenon being studied. This involved my use of internet searches to identify participants, and also the use of snowball sampling to locate participants. The eventual composition of the participants' host museums sites included art museums located in three major metropolitan areas within the United States: in the South, Southwest, and East Coast. The participants include two people who have been doing this kind of work for between six and eight years and continue to do so; two people who engaged in this work in the past, no longer do it, and are describing experiences which took place a decade ago; and a participant who engaged in this work as part of a short-term project, wished to continue, but was prevented from doing so due to the political climate. The incarceration sites where the study participants work include jails and prisons, and the incarcerated people whom these program facilitators interact with include people housed in female and male living areas, comprised of both minors and adults, and took place in two of the sites with English and Spanish languages being spoken.

The interviews were conducted as one hour semi-structured, person-to-person telephonic audio-recorded interviews of five participants. I supplied the participants with my list of questions pre-interview. I emailed participants the questions beforehand because I value transparency, and importantly; because this research involves interview questions that explore personal experiences that may give rise to emotional discomfort. I used a plan to manage this

risk by centering an empathetic response, reassuring participants that they could decline to answer any question they want, they could reschedule, and also since their participation was voluntary, ensuring the understanding that it was alright if at any time they felt the need to end their participation in the study. After transcription of the interviews, I subjected each interview to a qualitative analysis using formal and informal word frequency techniques. In addition to this, I utilized an approach which sought not only to uncover the themes which revealed themselves in the course of our interviews, but also paid close attention to the silences in the interviews – in other words, what potential topics, which are inextricably linked with carceral environments, (for example, issues of race) did the participants not mention?

Analysis of Data

My analysis procedure aligned with Hycner's and van Manen's guidelines (Hycner, 1985; van Manen, 2016). Of key importance to this analysis was the transcription of the interviews. This was followed by a conscious suspension of what my notions and interpretations of the experiences were of the participants in order to access the existential realities of their lived experiences. By attempting to allow the participants' lived experiences to find expression without my presuppositions standing in the way, I hoped to more fully enter into the meanings of their worlds. Following this, I revisited the interviews and then identified themes. I then wrote a brief summary of each interview which highlighted these themes. Once this was done, I was then able to identify common and discrete themes across interviews in relation to the research questions to describe the experiences of my study's participants.

Researcher's Positionality

In earlier chapters, I referenced how the United States histories of incarceration are bound up with my own family histories. And one might wonder, why, beyond illustrating this connection, I decided to include this information. My decision to disclose these linkages to the personal is also motivated by a desire to build a more complete phenomenological document. In order to do so, my own presuppositions, and why they exist are relevant to this study.

Like a mighty river that threatens to escape its banks during flood season, the presence of the carceral has always loomed in the lives of my family as a very real threat to our freedom. I have long understood the prison as a place to where you could be sent away, whether or not you were actually guilty of any crime. This means that I have no illusions about the ways that a person's existence is treated as a crime itself. Streams and rivulets that flow from the wild river of the carceral then, have managed to seep even into the quiet corners of my existence. Traumas enacted within sites of incarceration, even generations ago, intrude upon my life still: a great uncle disappeared and obliterated within the Huntsville prison system, another family member, closer in time to me, released from County an altered being.

I must also consider the fact that, with the exception of areas set aside for visiting those imprisoned there, I have never been inside of carceral spaces. In speaking with someone who participates in education within prisons in association with the University of Washington, I was struck by their invitation for me to consider how the impacts of entering carceral spaces as part of an educational cohort are unevenly distributed, depending on one's personal and family histories, race, gender, and so on. Based on this information, I was asked to interrogate whether the decision for me to enter a prison was the right choice for me, a question with which I still sit (Anonymous, personal communication, October 22, 2018). So this study then, besides being an

exploration into the lives of museum program facilitators working within carceral space in view of sustainability, is also part of the path I walk in my search in understanding what has happened to my family, and why, always keeping in close company my traveling companions: a commitment to bearing truthful witness, and a promise to always carry a burning ember of hope in my heart.

Walking with these things, however, does not preclude the presence of assumptions and presuppositions, and entering this study, I had a few. For example, I speculated about if working in concert with carceral sites was tantamount to colluding with systems of oppression. Relatedly to this, I also wondered if a prolonged presence within sites of incarceration would cause some of that energy, those elements of hyper-control-violence-racism extant in carceral space, to rub off, if you will, on those who worked there, or cause such workers to become inured to the inequalities extant within the carceral. Another assumption I carried into this research revealed itself in the phrasing of my questions, and will be explored further in Chapter Four, which is a discussion of the results of this study. I ventilate these presuppositions as a way of recognizing and containing them, in order to better see the world of a facilitator, not as I imagine or wish to see it, but through their eyes.

Chapter Four: Discussion of Results

This study was an exploration of how museum outreach programs for incarcerated people affect those who facilitate such programs within sites of incarceration, in order to better understand the motivations, emotional impacts, and needs of these workers who are engaged in museo-carceral work, with a view towards fostering sustainability of such programs. The five questions situated at the core of this exploration were:

- What are the challenges facing those who facilitate museum programs within correctional institutions?
- How do these workers cope with facilitating museum programming within such a unique and potentially stressful environment?
- What supports does the host museum have in place to prepare these facilitators?
- How are the source museums considering a museum worker's emotional well-being within carceral environments?
- Are there ways in which these supports can be strengthened?

The motifs that arose during the interview data analysis evidenced overarching broad themes taking shape around rewards and challenges; as well as supports and coping mechanisms. In structuring my analysis of the interview data, I aligned my path with phenomenological practice, through which rising themes begin to distinguish themselves within the interview data through combing through transcribed interviews and disentangling the rising themes or motifs found within the participant's own words. In exploring and attempting to make sense of the worlds in which these museum program facilitators inhabit as a result of working within carceral spaces, the analysis is sensitive to whether or not, without being explicitly asked, participants would

speak on themes that are inherently bound up with and/or associated with carceral space – for example, racism, violence, systems of control, and assaults to the humanity of imprisoned people. This point was of interest to me because these themes have a profound bearing on how carceral space is experienced, and thus by extension play an important part in program sustainability and facilitator lastingness in this role.

I have organized Chapter Four by each of the five overarching research questions. Discussion of the broad themes that emerged during analysis of interview data includes the relevant interview question(s) and also illustrating examples of such themes.

Discussion of Research Questions

- **Research Question One: What are the challenges facing those who facilitate museum programs within correctional institutions?**

The way that the data answers this question is multi-layered. The responses to the following interview questions revealed these broad themes:

Finding 1:

Museo-carceral program facilitators' challenge at root is the tension that exists between museological values versus those that exist within sites of incarceration.

The answer of one participant to questions (number 16 on the interview instrument) which asked them to share what they found emotionally rewarding about facilitating museum programming within sites of incarceration, and also what they found emotionally challenging about it, illustrates this theme regarding the **tension between the power of art and the power of the carceral**:

What I would say, is that from a human to human perspective, and generally, and this is complicated because we were in a very large classroom [at the incarceration site] with a lot

> *of students so some students were very young and fun to talk to. Students are students, and when you're in the zone of working on art projects with kids… we were doing one scenario… to do theatre programming with them. That was a lot of fun, in that kids can be kids, and these were young men, like young middle and high school students that we were working with, and there's always surprise and fun in talking to an individual, and in the moment it is very rewarding, but what sort of sours it is that you walk out and the people who are around you, you know, the wardens and the stewards and the people who are there quickly sour the experience by reminding you that the students that are in there are there for a particular reason and you have to be careful about how interactive you get with any of them. So while you're not allowed to ask them why they're there, it's very much assumed that you're always in danger*.

This tension is also revealed in responses to Interview Question 11, which asked: Would you describe any opportunities you had to process the experience with your peers/other facilitators? If so, was this organized by the host museum, or was it informal in character? Although the rationale for this question had the goal of examining the support system of the participants, the response to its asking revealed a theme of resistance to carceral rules which require facilitators to keep imprisoned people at arm's length. **This resistance is evidence of the clash between the values that museo-carceral workers embody versus those of carceral space.** Challenging the assumptions underlying Interview Question 11, one participant gently pushed back, and highlighted the fact that, despite their working in a space that demands separation, the incarcerated people whom they worked with *are* their colleagues and peers. This viewpoint is illustrated by their choice, in answer to the Interview Question 11 query regarding how they

processed their experiences with their peers, to refer to *incarcerated people* as their peers. This participant answered:

> *I processed it with them [incarcerated peers], we processed it together and everybody clapped, and it was just a really nice moment, right?*

The theme of conflict between museological values and those of the prison also emerged in answers to Interview Question 12 (Can you describe any effects you may have felt from this experience that went beyond the program site?) This conflict in values is laid bare in how museums and carceral sites differ regarding the value they place, respectively, on building human connections. A disharmony exists between making human connections with incarcerated people via art versus carceral edicts that restrict building long-term connections. Answers to this question reveal the contradiction that museo-carceral facilitators must grapple with, namely, the way of the carceral discouraging of building on art-centric human connections which sprang from museum engagement work within carceral spaces:

> *I don't believe that this was set up as any kind of - this relationship was not set up as a success because there was no transparency between you as an educator, or a teaching artist, in [incarceration site], there was no transparency of who you were, where you were from, because you had to keep everything secret. So to me, that being you were not allowed to say who you really were or what kind of person you were, or - you were just there to do* something *right? Like even knowing that you were from [host museum] - like that wasn't really even something that- because the fear on the other end was that well,* what if they try and come and find you afterwards? *Which is sort of devaluing human experience because well, why wouldn't you want to have an experience with somebody you know that you might get close to? But your own, personal safety is at base. So that really did activate that emotion*

of not being able to truly serve that community in the way that museum educators are best able to serve, in terms of being friendly. You know, you could be surface friendly, but you couldn't be yourself.

A different facilitator shared a similar sentiment:

This conversation has kindled a real delight in remembering the people I got to [create art] with and wondering like, where are they, and just hope that their worlds are happier and easier and that they have good relationships with their families… we're all people. We're not only creating art, we're creating relationships. But I get to leave, I get to leave. They don't get to leave… Oh my gosh! One of these teenagers is now an adult! Is it appropriate for me to maintain contact and a relationship? And if so what would that look like? And for who would that happen?

The themes unearthed in analyzing participants' responses to these questions from the interviews underscore conflicts in values when the museological is juxtaposed with the carceral. The inclusion and equity increasingly sought by the museum live in tension with the exclusion and inequality inherent within sites of incarceration. This broad theme of **challenge being the very contradictions and conflicts between the values of the museum versus that of carceral space** plays out in the stressful experiences of the participants of this study:

You know, I would have to say that the emotion that I probably most felt was anxiety… anxiety because you basically give up your rights as a free person because you submit all of your identification the minute you are through the door - it's very clear to me that there's no guarantee that they will let you out. Yeah, because it was handled in that way. So I would say anxiety. That was probably the deepest emotion that I felt probably at every turn.

Another participant related the fear and anxiety they felt during a prison lock-down, illustrating how the uncertainty of carceral life affects even those who have not been sentenced to live it, but are, however briefly, exposed to its environs:

> *All of a sudden this noise starts, and I see officers running down the hallway basically in riot gear, and the officer outside my room left. There was noise, it sounded like chairs being thrown against the walls, which I later found out is what was happening. And you could just see the panic on the students in my classroom faces… it was a moment of pure panic for them, and I felt like, "I'm the adult in the room, but I have no idea what I'm supposed to do right now."*

Finding 2:

These challenges are imbricated with the rewards and joys of doing such work.

The broad theme of the **rewards of museo-carceral programming being imbricated into the challenge of conflict between museological and carceral values** is also in evidence in these participants' experiences. In other words, **the rewards and challenges of this kind of work are inextricably intertwined**. In response to Interview Question 16 (What do you find emotionally rewarding about facilitating museum programming within sites of incarceration? What do you find emotionally challenging about it?) one participant said:

> *I feel like I'm more compassionate, I feel - or maybe not more compassionate, but more aware and more generous with my compassion, if that makes sense. I feel like I'm giving a lot of myself. You know, just like in that previous question, it takes a lot of work to take care of myself sometimes, but that's just in general teaching, and teaching in jail is just one of the factors that plays into that, but I think on the other hand it gives me a lot of strength because I*

> *feel like emotionally, I'm much richer. And I think that my experience of the world is much more informed.*

A participant working within a different site of incarceration also referenced, in answer to Interview Question 16, this growth in empathetic response when they said that:

> *Yeah, I think, in retrospect, the development of empathy, and just, I don't know, understanding, and being something completely foreign to me and my experience. I never had any close family or friends who were incarcerated, so I never had the experience of going to visit somebody. So for me being able to be there, I don't know that I would have said that at the time, that that was the rewarding part. But I think, in hindsight, it was very eye-opening for me in a way, that I think the challenges at the time were outweighing the benefits. I saw the benefits of teaching individually when I was there, but I would see the same thing in any classroom that I might go to, where the kids responded well. And you know, perhaps I felt like they were even more responsive because they were hungry for someone to do something with them and show them attention and say, "Hey, I care about you, I want you to do this thing and I care about what you have to say about it."*

Another example of how participants grappled with how challenges are entangled with the rewards of being within carceral spaces is revealed in the answer to Interview Question 9, (Would you describe anything you found rewarding about this experience?) a facilitator shared, describing their carceral classroom experience as "interesting" and "amazing," yet also as "hard." This intertwining complex mix of reward/challenge was illustrated by the ways they wrestled with questions regarding racism and inequality that arose in response to the experiences of a class that was composed of both incarcerated and non-incarcerated students:

When I was there with the [non-incarcerated students], it was really interesting watching a group of twenty year olds - they were nineteen, twenty, they were not very much older than the [incarcerated] students themselves - their interactions. And they had this really amazing rapport with each other. The [non-incarcerated students] were coming up with their own one-day workshop with materials we were allowed to bring in. So we'd lead the students in an artmaking conversation activity. And I think I had, out of the ten kids who went five times, they were in pairs, and we did workshops. And the [incarcerated students] responded so well to these, like, basically, privileged, all white kids… I remember this one boy from [the non-incarcerated students] saying to me like, "I have all this guilt and I don't know what to do with it. I'm here, and they're responding to me, but I can't help them." And I still don't have those answers ten years later, but I think about it a lot. And I think - for me it was the [incarcerated and non-incarcerated students] having these moments of connection and conversation… but I had [non-incarcerated students] who were so difficult in that class that just, were kind of like, "Racism doesn't exist," and it was just- it was hard, to have a couple of very opinionated kids, and then those that were like, "I just want to help people," you know? It was literally what I'd read about, talking about race, it was literally, it was like a little micro-version of all the different reactions people might have talking about race, from the "white guilt" to "it doesn't exist," to you know, "this experience happened to me," to, "I just want it to all go away, I just want it gone." It was really interesting, and I wish in retrospect that I could have been able to help facilitate that more.

Finding 3:

Intentionality in choosing museo-carceral work matters.

One of the challenges facing the participants of this study has to do with the significance of actively choosing this work versus being assigned to do it. All the participants in this study had a deep investment and desire to make a positive difference in the lives of the incarcerated people with whom they facilitate museum programming. However, some of the participants in this study did not set out to work in places of incarceration specifically as part of their professional trajectory, and this appears to have had made a difference for some in terms of stress levels experienced within carceral spaces. One study participant who did not intend this career choice, shared in answer to Interview Question 5 (Why does this kind of programming interest you?) that:

> *I kind of walked into this job without any particular agenda searching for it. It kind of fell into my lap and… this was a challenge. I like challenges. So starting this work was very scary for me because I never had experience with working in facilities like that.*

Later during the interview, this same participant tearfully related in answer to Interview Question 15 (Do you have emotional supports in place outside of what is facilitated by your museum? What do these entail?), when discussing their personal support systems, that:

> *For me to get through the week, to come into the jail classroom, and stay focused and in control of what I had to do, I would shut everyone out just to cope. Which is not a good thing. It's unhealthy long-term doing this. So I communicate much more now, and this is like, a conscious effort, whether I want to or not.*

And a different participant who had not made the intentional choice to do museo-carceral work had this to say in response to Interview Question 18 (Is there anything else you would like to share with me?):

Your whole body and core being is so sapped from the emotions from working there… because you were literally – every ounce of your being was sapped. That's *because we were not prepared for, nor did we choose to enter into that experience. Like, you might choose to do that kind of work, but that was not our choice and so that took so much more energy and effort out of us to do it.*

- **Research Question Two: How do these workers cope with facilitating museum programming within such a unique and potentially stressful environment?**

Commonalities of participants' ways of coping with museo-carceral work emerged in their answers to Interview Question 15, (Do you have emotional supports in place outside of what is facilitated by your museum? What do these entail?)

Finding 1:

Museo-carceral workers depend on informal personal networks for healing and self-care.

The participants talked about being able to talk with their friends and family and process their experiences within imprisonment sites. One respondent tearfully shared about how sometimes the stress of carceral work emerged within the context of their interactions with loved ones:

So my partner hears a lot about that. And it's really interesting because the first several times that I did that, I didn't realize how much I was shutting down throughout the week. I was not emotionally available to [my partner] at all during the week until, like, the last day. So [my partner] wanted to have a conversation, and was asking questions, [my partner] was very curious. [My partner] just wanted to sit down and talk about anything and I was not engaging at all. I was very dismissive, or just pushing [my partner] away, not willing to open up or make myself available for more, until the program was over. And then, that Friday, it just all

came pouring out. So I did that a couple of times without realizing it and then we both kind of noticed this pattern… Now I try so much harder to allow myself some time to reflect throughout the week, so it's not so exhausting, and it's also not affecting everybody around me. Because if it's just me, that's one thing, but I have a lot of people in my life and I didn't realize how much my behavior was affecting them. I didn't see it.

Others related that they also spoke with friends and family as an emotional support system:

Other than my partner at the time, and friend, who would have informal conversations with me about it, there was nothing formal in terms of personal support to help me navigate the work that was being done.

In line with this, another participant responded:

I called my momma more!

Finding 2:

Some museo-carceral workers informally process with imprisoned people.

Circling back to Interview Question 11, which explores how facilitators processed their emotional experiences, a participant brought forth the possibility that imprisoned people can be the source of support as well.[1]

Finding 3:

Museo-carceral workers seek out processing experiences with other carceral facilitators through professional networks.

One interesting dimension of support had to do with the time spent traveling to and from incarceration sites. Because the process of getting to/from and gaining entry/exit could

[1] See the first paragraph of page 19 this document for relevant participant interview quote.

sometimes involve a substantial amount of time, facilitators who had the opportunity to travel to and from the carceral site together would use this time to talk with each other for support and processing of their experiences. In another response to Interview Question 11 (Would you describe any opportunities you had to process the experience with your peers/other facilitators? If so, was this organized by the host museum, or was it informal in character?) a participant recalled:

> *There was a lot of travel time, so I would say it takes over an hour and a half to get in and out of [the incarceration site], so that type of feedback and reflection was something that happened informally in conversation.*

Later, this same participant, in response to Interview Question 18 (Is there anything else you would like to share with me?) shared how sometimes this time was used for talking, processing, and support over a meal of comfort food:

> *We would often talk about eating comfort food afterwards, like going to McDonald's and having a hamburger or having a pizza…*

Another participant revealed that they made efforts outside of the course of their museo-carceral related activities to meet up with other people who were doing similar work. This participant explained, during their answer to Interview Question 1 (How long have you worked with [host museum]?) that they might have been able to build up much needed supports on their own, if given enough time:

> *So during that work I sort of found that there were other people doing that work. I know I went to a couple of meetings, I had to look up what it was called, [networking group of carceral arts educators] which I don't even know if that still exists, but there were a few folks I knew, sort of informally, from other museums and from other places that worked there, and I*

think that if I had continued to work at [incarceration site], if I had stayed in [the area] and continued working there, that would have been a network that would have helped me… But I think that I was also sort of naïve about a lot of what I was trying to do.

This participant expanded upon this search for support in their answer to Interview Question 11 (Would you describe any opportunities you had to process the experience with your peers/other facilitators? If so, was this organized by the host museum, or was it informal in character?):

I would go to the [networking group of carceral arts educators]events- they were one of our grant funders at [the host museum]- and sometimes they would have meetups, and so I would end up meeting people who said, "Oh, I work for this organization and I'm doing it." It was not like an organized thing. It was purely me trying to reach out to some folks - I kind of was, "Oh, you work with- you work in prisons. Help!" Or as I said, reaching out to my friends who had done this thing in [a prison arts program in another state]. And it was just me trying to find it. There was absolutely nothing structured or organized about it.

- **Research Question Three: What supports does the host museum have in place to prepare these facilitators?**

In answer to Interview Question 13, (How would you describe preparatory orientation and training given by the host museum? How about the one given by the incarceration site? What are the effective elements of this training? What areas could be strengthened?) which, in part, sought to explore museum-led preparation to support orienting facilitators to working within sites of incarceration, participants report receiving little to no such support from their host museums.

Finding 1:

Museo-carceral workers report a lack of formal preparation from their host museums.

One respondent explained in their answer to Interview Question 13 (How would you describe preparatory orientation and training given by the host museum? How about the one given by the incarceration site? What are the effective elements of this training? What areas could be strengthened?) that:

> *There was none. So we'll just say on both sides there was a packet of reading that was available that was based off this packet of reading to talk about working with incarcerated youth. But other than that there was no other training.*

At another site, a participant explained in response to Interview Question 13 that while they received no museum-based orientation, they believed that the museum had evolved to better prepare newer program facilitators:

> *I only received the training at the jail, this is a county facility. So I went through a general orientation which was incredibly helpful. I also visited the facility before starting, so this was a familiar experience of walking in and understanding how the place worked, how to engage with people when I'm there. But in terms of training as a teacher or anything from the museum, that would be really helpful in the program itself, there was nothing available at the time. Now the program has changed a little bit… So I assume that right now if somebody started in this position, they probably would receive way more training and much more information.*

Another facilitator answered Interview Question 13 in this way:

> *There was no training… It wasn't like I received training when I started with the museum. Maybe there is training now, but there wasn't any when I started. It was just creatively starting a project, then learning on the job, basically. There was stuff in writing. The*

> *trainings just happen based on the demand of the jail… Really we just created a curriculum and them followed the rules of the jail, and that was really how it happened. And the training provided me with a dress code, how you physically have to present yourself in that room. And the dress code is very strict, and then you have to go through this process of learning how things work and how people have been taken advantage of by the jail inmates, and how you have to prevent that. You know, like giving you stuff to take out, or putting a move on you that ends up as a relationship, sexual relations, all kinds of stuff like that. I just kind of learned on the spot. My experience was that I just really had to train myself and really follow the physical boundaries [the jail] established.*

Some participants, in particular those who no longer facilitate museum programs within imprisonment sites, shared that they received little to no training, preparation, or museum-hosted pathways to process what they experienced inside the prison. In response to Interview Question 1 (How long have you worked with your host museum?), one such participant said:

> *I honestly had no preparation and no training to go to [site of imprisonment] …*

- **Research Question Four: How are the source museums considering a museum worker's emotional well-being within carceral environments?**

Even when a museum is perceived by a facilitator as having evolved to better prepare museo-carceral workers for the carceral environment, there is a lack of ongoing efforts on the part of some participants' host museums in considering the emotional well-being beyond preparatory orientation. The answers to Interview Question 14 (What kind of emotional support system does your source museum have in place? What is being done well? Are there areas that could be strengthened?) illustrate this need.

Finding 1:

Museo-carceral workers cite a lack of emotional support.

Most of the respondents' answers to Interview Question 14 indicated that there were no such supports in place, and one participant critiqued the lack of having such a support system in the wake of experiencing a riot and subsequent lock-down:

> *No. I don't think museums in general have much of an emotional support system that's really thought through. I think it's more, you know the people who are your colleagues who you can talk to. And when my experience started at the museum, with [the incarceration site], I think, you know, when I had that experience with the lockdown, I think literally being told, "You're being too emotional about this," I think was coming from higher ups, not from my direct colleagues… I don't think museums do a good job emotionally, I don't know. I'm sure there's, you know, if you went to HR they'd probably say, "Oh, we have this system, you can call this number," I don't know.*

At another site another participant responded to Question 14 in this way, comparing their experience facilitating museum programming with their experience facilitating another arts program with a non-profit organization that serves previously incarcerated people :

> *Once in a while [the host museum] would have a party or a get together and we could talk about it. So every once in a while we would meet and ask if there were any issues, so they made somewhat of an effort but there was no real constant effort to see how we were doing. They have ten other programs going on, right? So there wasn't really that effort - that effort was not made. And maybe it's being done now, I don't know… just as a comparison, I know what you are talking about because [the non-profit serving previously*

> *incarcerated people] do a lot of this stuff; they are very supportive. There are meetings and self-care and wellness Wednesdays - and this museum didn't do any of that, none of that… If they're going to do this kind of work, maybe that is something that they should consider more, you know?*

One participant indicated that when proper support systems are not in place, being open to the consideration that actually shutting down a museo-carceral program is a responsible choice. This respondent explained, in answer to Interview Question 17 (Is this something you see yourself continuing to do long-term? Why or why not?), how bringing the program to a halt was best response in consideration of museum workers' emotional well-being:

> *No, I mean since I stopped the program, I don't think that it was. Why I didn't feel it was appropriate to work with this particular population at that time, was as an employer, supervisor, and guardian for [other museo-carceral workers]: we're putting people in unnecessary danger, who did not necessarily understand what kind of experience they were in. I didn't want to propagate hegemonic, like, "We have to do this program because we're getting paid to do it."*

One participant responded to Interview Question 14 by gently questioning the need for museum-based supports:

> *I am torn about how much emotional support structures to be put in place, because I don't want it to be laden as hard emotional labor. Is it possible that the artistic process can allow a certain kind of space of safety within that? Or do we really need to be taken care of by people that provide special services? I don't really have an answer for that. I know that I felt safe and I felt supported.*

- **Research Question Five: Are there ways in which these supports can be strengthened?**

Finding 1:

Museo-carceral workers describe a need for mindful and intentional partnerships.

Participants shared what they felt were necessary components in order for museums to have strengthened museo-carceral programming. In answer to Interview Question 18 (Is there anything else you would like to share with me?), a respondent shared that in a museum's consideration of how to build a strong support system for people who facilitate museo-carceral programming, the museum should first consider the possibility that other organizations might be better suited to do this work:

> *I think that there are very appropriate organizations to do this kind of work with very passionate people, I just don't know that a museum was the right match for that particular group. And I think that museums have to really,* really, *always consider when they are doing engagement programming what population they are doing it with, and how to best suit both populations, there are other organizations who specifically focus on incarcerated youth who have that experience who are not worried about also functioning as a museum, who are solely worried about that arts programming within a space of people with a special or a particular need. So I think that museums have to be* very *considerate about where their efforts are best placed, to not put museum staff in danger, to not make them have to do emotional labor that is not necessarily part of their job description, to be honest… If they are going to be working in those spaces, museums educators have to be really,* really *mindful of their emotional energy.*

Finding 2:

Museo-carceral workers describe a need for increased staff preparation and support.

Another participant, in their answer to Interview Question 3 (How would you describe your process and contribution in facilitating this program?), shared that many of the people they got to know, who taught within carceral space, were in therapy because of their experiences teaching within the prison. This suggests that museo-carceral programming workers have a need for their museums to have ongoing supports for them:

> *But then actual time spent with students was the worthwhile part of it. And I say it was heartbreaking because then I got to leave. And I knew they were there, and it was just heartbreaking because these kids had barely been in this country to learn English, and they were already in the jail system. So I think that was the other part of it, was the guilt leaving and feeling sort of helpless. You gave them an hour respite, but the bigger picture is sort of so much more dire and you sort of feel hopeless in leaving. And I spoke with the [incarceration site] staff and* ***a lot of them were in therapy themselves… especially those who are teaching. Like, they're not there as correctional staff, they weren't correctional officers, they were there as teachers. I don't know if you can imagine being there every single day and then you get to leave at the end of the day and just taking all that trauma with you.***

One participant expressed a greater need to be supported by the host museum in the areas of increasing museo-carceral program visibility, including support in getting the facilitator's work published. In answer to Interview Question 15 (Do you have emotional supports in place outside of what is facilitated by your museum? What do these entail?) this participant responded:

> *I think the support that was lacking in the museum was a way of making this project visible, really visible… using social media, doing whatever they could, to talk at conferences, having me be involved more in the dialogue about all this. I couldn't afford to go to all these*

conferences and travel, they should have had a pot of money available for that… I'm completely invisible on that level. And that can be frustrating, right? So to somehow show all this knowledge, there hasn't been resources to do that. So I think that would be their fault. The fault is theirs. And I don't care if you write about it, because they should know about it anyways. They should have helped me try to get something published, they should have had more conversations with [the incarceration site] and [the museum]. Of course I was willing to do any of this stuff, but they should have gone and advocated this for me. As an individual it's much harder, but as an institution, an institution is a whole other thing, a whole other approach. But they just didn't really… They should have advocated more for that, they still could.

Discussion: Characteristics of Museo-carceral Facilitators

It is important that a description of the type of people who choose to enter a jail or prison in order to facilitate museum programming first be addressed. The participants are people who have been doing this kind of work for between six and eight years up to the current time; people who no longer facilitate within carceral spaces and are sharing experiences which took place approximately a decade ago; and a participant who engaged in this work as part of a short-term project, wished to revisit this work with a similar project within carceral space, but was denied the opportunity to do so due to the local political climate. The following are emergent characteristics held in common by the facilitators who have taken part in this study:

- **They are driven by a passion for what they do.**

The overarching characteristic these participants in my study have in common is a passion for their respective crafts. Valuing the power of the arts, and the role the arts play in human happiness is a core value of each of these educators. Some of these workers did not set out to

work in places of incarceration specifically, yet reported feeling enthusiastic about working in carceral space. In answer to Interview Question 5 (Why does this kind of programming interest you?) one such participant said:

> *I jumped in with both feet because I really enjoyed the in-classroom procedures... So that was sort of why I jumped into it to begin with, and I think I really kept trying because I felt like the students needed it. And if I had the right support I would have kept doing it.*

And this passion is resilient in the face of the sentiment that participants may have to deal with from the public, namely, that imprisoned people should not be afforded these types of programs, as shared by a participant in response to Interview Question 15 (Do you have emotional supports in place outside of what is facilitated by your museum? What do these entail?):

> *And of course you have the public in general you know, where jail stuff is not exactly the most popular – if you're helping someone who's blind, that's one thing, but if you're helping someone that's incarcerated that's a whole other, you know, there's a lot of prejudices against that, right? "Let them just rot in jail," or "if they [committed] a crime, why help them?"*

But because of their artistic calling, museo-carceral workers have a desire to actively engage with all people through the arts, whether they chose at the outset to intentionally work with incarcerated people or not. As one participant expressed in answer to Interview Question 3 (How would you describe your process and contribution in facilitating this program?):

> *I work with all different kinds of people of all different kinds of ages, all different kinds of places. And in working with incarcerated people, people who are incarcerated, I don't necessarily distinguish them in any kind of particular; we're all people. We're all people! I see the people, I don't see their sentence.*

This sentiment includes those facilitators who may not presently be engaged in work within carceral spaces. The factors for them not continuing to work with incarcerated people include feeling a lack of institutional support and training specific to working within jails and prisons; political issues; and a calling which involves the desire to get involved with many different kinds of communities not limited to incarcerated people. Expressions by participants that are emblematic of this dynamic include the following response to Interview Question 5 (Why does this kind of programming interest you?) from a person who no longer works within sites of incarceration:

> *I think anyone who's working in specialized museums really understands the power of museums to affect people, especially the power of the arts, you know, to be able to have transformative moments… I have a deep experience with the transformative power of the arts, and when you know that that's possible, and that there are communities that are disadvantaged and cannot have access to that, including communities of incarceration, there are families that are affected by incarceration, then you know very well that there's a lot of great things that can come out of it.*

Another participant had this to say in answer to Interview Question 2 (Would you tell me something about your work with incarcerated people?):

> *I find that incarcerated people have very little resources to do art, and I think art plays an important role in the life index of a human being, so I think that in general that's one of the reasons that inspires me, that drives me to work with them.*

- **They have an awareness of the roles race and inequality play in the way of the carceral.**

One participant shared in answer to Interview Question 10 (Would you describe anything you find challenging about it?)

> *There's a conversation about race that happens in my classroom and just in general. So I think that's the positive impact.*

This is what a different participant in response to Interview Question 7 (Did this perception come from reading about it, was it due to experiences your colleagues shared with you, and/or was this from hearing from incarcerated/formerly incarcerated people who participated in this kind of museum programming?) shared regarding uneven enforcement of the law:

> *I realized so much more about the school to prison pipeline, and just all of the issues that I feel like I'm still exploring and trying to talk to people about. I think it changed my perception about both prisons, and who's in them, and how they get there… most of these kids are here because they were caught with marijuana is also heartbreaking that these kids are just sitting there maybe awaiting a trial for something that their peers in another school in another city wouldn't be in prison for… it was just heartbreaking because these kids had barely been in this country to learn English, and they were already in the jail system.*

Discussion: Broad Themes

- **The rewards and challenges of this kind of work are inextricably intertwined.**

In sharing their answers to questions seeking to explore the rewards and challenges of working within jails and prisons, the joys of facilitation are bound up with very real carceral stressors. In their answer to Interview Question 16 (What do you find emotionally rewarding about facilitating museum programming within sites of incarceration? What do you find emotionally challenging about it?) the complexities of this twin reward/challenge situation is

related by one participant in terms of the conflict between coming away with a sense of fulfillment from working with incarcerated people but then subsequently having to deal with carceral staff who would emphasize the dangerousness of imprisoned people.[2]

Another participant shared a moment of recognition in answer to Interview Question 10 (Would you describe anything you find challenging about it?) of how rewards intertwined with the challenges within their description of their experience of a riot. The fact that the children with which they were doing museum facilitation were just as stunned as the facilitator during this disturbance brought the humanity of these children into stark relief against the atmosphere of the carceral:

> *And you could just see the panic on the students' in my classroom faces… it was a moment of pure panic for them, and I felt like, "I'm the adult in the room, but I have no idea what I'm supposed to do right now"… I never felt scared for my safety, I didn't feel threatened by these students… I can sort of like picture that room, and these were boys. They were like sixteen, seventeen. They looked frightened. I'm sure they were frightened. But they were trying to be tough and like, cool. And I think there was something in that experience that also sort of made me realize that these kids shouldn't - that they shouldn't be here. It was – "rewarding" is the wrong word. But it was a very human moment.*

- **The challenges facing these facilitators are linked to conflicting values of the museum versus that of carceral space.**

One evidence of the contrast between museological values such as equity and inclusion and the carceral inversion of those values emerged in the very phrasing of the questions of this study.

[2] See pages 17 and 18 of this document for relevant participant interview quote.

When speaking on questions about peer and colleague interactions, more than one participant holds the viewpoint that incarcerated people *are* their colleagues and peers. When asked about how they process their experiences with their peers, in answer to Interview Question 12 (Can you describe any effects you may have felt from this experience that went beyond the program site?), a facilitator made clear that the imprisoned people they are engaging with *are* their peers. The participant chose to answer this question by sharing a processing experience they had with the incarcerated people they were working with, reaching back to a collective processing experience with a group of imprisoned people who had created a piece of art especially for this participant.[3] The idea of a separateness, of drawing a distinction between themselves and the imprisoned people they worked with, is not part of their worldview. Participants shared that carceral regulations admonished these facilitators to keep a certain emotional distance from the incarcerated people with whom they worked – but this admonishment was critiqued more than once, In answer to Interview Question 6 (Before you began working with incarcerated people, how did you imagine it?) they said:

> *And then when you go through the training, it's problematic somewhat because the way that the incarcerated are looked at is as somebody that you can't trust and who will take advantage of you at any moment. You have to sort of contain yourself and be very - just very- just keep your distance. Just not reveal any of yourself and your personal - all of that kind of stuff, right? Just be very, very distant. And of course art doesn't do that.*

A facilitator working on a different site explained in response to Interview Question 12 (Can you describe any effects you may have felt from this experience that went beyond the program site?)

[3] See the first paragraph of page 19 this document for relevant participant interview quote.

that the dictates of the carceral site clashed with what the facilitator believed in: transparency, friendliness, and the transformational power of art.[4]

The question of who participants in this study consider to be their colleagues and peers also highlights the tension between the values of the museum and the carceral environment. **A major challenge then, is the very contradictions and conflicts between the values of the museum versus that of carceral space.** Yet another facilitator, in response to Interview Question 18 (Is there anything else you would like to share with me?), had this to say about the disconnect between making connections with incarcerated people through art, while at the same time, not being able to grow those connections.[5]

- **Facilitators need an organized support system built into museo-carceral programs that compliments their existing support and coping mechanisms.**

Most respondents' critiqued the lack of having such a support system, sharing that this was an area in which museums in general could do better. One example was the response to Interview Question 14 (What kind of emotional support system does your source museum have in place? What is being done well? Are there areas that could be strengthened?):

> *... I don't think museums in general have much of an emotional support system that's really thought through. I think it's more, you know the people who are your colleagues who you can talk to... I don't think museums do a good job emotionally...*

This participant also had this to say in answer to Interview Question 5 (Why does this kind of programming interest you?) about the connection between having support and their ability to

[4] See pages 19 and 20 of this document for relevant participant interview quote.

[5] See the second quote on page 20 this document.

continue doing museo-carceral work:

> *I jumped in with both feet… I think I really kept trying because I felt like the students needed it.* ***And if I had the right support I would have kept doing it.***

Comparing their museo-carceral programming experience with their experience facilitating a similar program with a non-profit organization which helps previously incarcerated people, a participant highlighted the differences, and suggested that museums engaging in these kinds of partnerships with carceral spaces do more in the way of support for museo-carceral facilitators, citing supportive initiatives like "wellness Wednesdays".[6]

Summary

Several themes arose via an analysis of the interview data. These overarching themes, which will be further discussed in Chapter Five, coalesce around the main issues of: **rewards** and **challenges**; and **supports** and **coping** mechanisms, namely that:

- The rewards and challenges of this kind of work are inextricably intertwined
- The challenges facing these facilitators are linked to conflicting values of the museum versus that of carceral space
- Facilitators need an organized support system built into museo-carceral programs that compliments their existing support and coping mechanisms

[6] See top of page 32 this document for relevant participant interview quote.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Implications

This study seeks to explore the experiences of people who facilitate museum programming within sites of incarceration, and the effects museum outreach programs for incarcerated people have on those who facilitate such programs within prisons, jails, and other sites of incarceration, in order to better understand the motivations, emotional impacts, and needs of these workers who are engaged in this kind of museum outreach, with a view towards fostering sustainability of such programs. The questions this research looks toward answering can be classified under the main categories of rewards, challenges, supports, and coping mechanisms:

- What **rewards** and **challenges** face those who facilitate museum programs within correctional institutions?
- What **supports** does the host museum have in place to prepare these facilitators? How are the source museums considering a museum worker's emotional well-being within carceral environments? Are there ways in which these supports can be strengthened?
- How do these workers **cope** with facilitating museum programming within such a unique and potentially stressful environment?

Within the participants' sharing of their experiences in facilitation of museum programming within sites of incarceration, along with emergent themes which go towards answering these questions, a picture of the kind of person who chooses to do this work has also emerged. While Chapter Four examines the rising themes which have emerged during the course of this study, this chapter situates these themes within the literature I reviewed, and also discusses the implications for research and practice.

The People Who Facilitate

In Chapter Four, I detailed some of the characteristics of people who facilitate museum programming in carceral spaces. These include an enthusiasm for their work in the carceral:

I jumped in with both feet…

A deep desire to engage with and see the humanity of incarcerated people:

We're all people! I see the people, I don't see their sentence.

And a deep commitment to their work despite unsupportive sentiments they have heard from some members of the public indicating that incarcerated people don't deserve to participate and benefit from museo-carceral programming.[7]

This commitment is found even within the words of those museo-carceral workers who declined to participate in this study, as those who decided not to participate did so from a principled stance of protective caution, for their peers, both museo-carceral facilitators and incarcerated people (Anonymous, personal communication, April 4, 2019).

What significance do these characteristics hold for institutions? The answer lies within a consideration of just *why* jails and prisons would agree to have museum programming facilitators enter into carceral spaces in the first place and is connected with the work of building museo-carceral partnerships. Incarceration sites partner with arts education programming with certain goals in mind, including rehabilitation (Berlucchi, 2018; Delgado, 2001, pp. 143-144), encouraging self-efficacy (Lazzari, Amundson & Jackson, 2005, pp. 169 & 182-183), and as a part of alternative sentencing (Ostheimer, 2016). Because of the idea that the carceral should solely function as a punitive space:

"Let them just rot in jail"

[7] See page 36 of this document, second interview quote.

an idea which echoes scholarship regarding the nature of the carceral (Foucault, 1977, pp. 222-223), there sometimes exists a challenge of securing buy-in from carceral staffs and administration (Denson, 2014). Museums should consider the possibility that the characteristics of facilitators which emerged from interview data are a significant factor in the beneficial impact on the incarcerated people who participate in these programs, and evidence this consideration with tangible supports.

Of note is one of the ways that the museum facilitators who participated in this study relate to incarcerated people – as their peers. What became clear regarding Interview Question 11 was how participant response exposed within this question an inherent supposition I did not initially recognize, one which I had carried with me coming into this research, resulting in a framing of this question that reinforced a false dichotomy between museum program facilitators and imprisoned people. In other words, the question replicated the lines being drawn between facilitators and imprisoned people, the very lines of demarcation that these participants were resisting. The phrasing of Interview Question 11 echoed earlier problematic phrasing in Interview Question 7 (which distinguished "colleagues" from "incarcerated/formerly incarcerated people") and suggests a cleavage between "peers/other facilitators" and incarcerated people. Although there are obvious differences between facilitators and imprisoned people, the most prominent being that one group lives free, while the other is held in captivity, at the same time it should also be recognized that within certain phenomenon, a shared experience, like that which was shared between these facilitators and the imprisoned people that they worked with, binds together the people who hold that experience in common.

Another consideration museums should take into account involves the differences in effect of working in the carceral between facilitators who deliberately choose museo-carceral

programming versus those who did *not* self-assign to do this kind of work. When the experiences of those who did not deliberately choose this role are contrasted with those who were more intentional, the results suggest that intentionality has an influence on the differences in their perceived experiences, the impact carceral work has on facilitators, and is a question that calls for further study. The following words of one who *did* choose to enter spaces of incarceration contrast with those workers who did not, even though all had similar experiences with a lack of a support system specifically designed for them to process their emotional experiences, and speaks to the need for further investigation in this specific area:

> *If we give people a lot of, like, "This might be hard! Warning! This might be emotional! Warning! This is going to be tumultuous!" then people are prepared for pain, you know? Where there can actually be a lot of pleasure, there can be a lot of joy, there can be a lot of fun and play. So I am torn about how much emotional support structures to be put in place, because I don't want it to be laden as hard emotional labor. Is it possible that the artistic process can allow a certain kind of space of safety within that? Or do we really need to be taken care of by people that provide special services? I don't really have an answer for that. I know that I felt safe and I felt supported.*

Interestingly, this particular participant's viewpoint echoes existential psychological theory which cautions against the creation of "anticipatory anxiety" which is connected to a "hyper-reflective" state, a state in which focus has shifted too much on the self, which in the case of museo-carceral facilitation, could lead to inhibition and inability to successfully facilitate carceral programming, resulting in negative impacts on program sustainability (Boeree, 2006; Frankl, 2006, p. 129).

Interwoven Rewards and Challenges, Conflicting Values

This study also found that the rewards and challenges of this kind of work are inextricably intertwined, and also that the challenges facing these facilitators are linked to conflicting values of the museum versus that of carceral space. People who are familiar with the work of facilitating the arts in a carceral context have long cautioned about the conflict of co-creating an empowering experience within an "invariably depressing" site, especially when doing this work for a sustained period of time (Hillman, Gaffney, & Strickland, 1996, p. 20). Hochschild's work touches on the situation of facilitators finding themselves confronting a profound disharmony between the directives issued by jail and prison staff to keep imprisoned people at arm's length, to steer clear from "'too much' liking or disliking," strangely coupled with concomitant expectations of empathy (150). Underscoring conflicts in values when the museological is held in contrast with the carceral, the inclusion and equity increasingly sought by the museum (American Alliance of Museums, 2018; International Council of Museums, 2018) exists in a state of tension with the inequality inherent within the carceral (Foucault, 1977, pp. 222-223). In Chapter Two I touched upon the dynamic in which areas of conflict, where museological principles grounded in inclusion and equity (American Association of Museums, 2005, p.9) grate against the gritty reality of the carceral environment (Castro & Brawn, 2017, pp. 117-118), creating a space of abrading friction, within which the facilitator must carry out their work. Beside the resultant stress created by this conflict dynamic, therein also lies the possibility that this abrading friction can be seen to function, not only as a factor in wearing away at the facilitator until they experience burnout (Hillman, Gaffney, & Strickland, 1996, p. 20), but also as an abrading force against the very systems of incarceration, a sanding down of the carceral. Considering program facilitation within the carceral in this way brings into focus the concept of

reform, and also abolition, of the prison. Could it be that these workers are part of a process that encourages accountability and reform of carceral space? If, as one participant suggested, every college student took part in program facilitation on the inside of sites of imprisonment, would the expansion of this first-hand knowledge of the realities of what is happening within prison walls then make it more difficult for society to deny the starkness and inhumanity of carceral conditions?

> *I feel like I had such a narrow experience with it, but it was such an emotional, impactful experience, I do wish that every college student had to go do this, you know, like every college student should have to go teach something, with inmates at some point.*

Connected with the abrading of the walls of the carceral, these participants discovered that within the course of working in museo-carceral programs, rather than their experiences inuring them to the inequalities within carceral space, they reported increased feelings of compassion and empathy, which is a reaffirmation of museological values and a valuable coping mechanism. In addition, an increased acute awareness on the part of museo-carceral workers of uneven enforcement of nominally race-neutral laws (Alexander, 2012, pp. 200-207; Better, 2008, p. 79-81), and also what Davis and James call "the racialization of punishment" (1998, pp. 96-105) is connected with these increased levels of empathy on the part of these workers.

Findings of this study have shown that facilitators need an organized support system built into museo-carceral programs which compliments their existing support and coping mechanisms. Attempting to locate and build professional networks of support on their own as a means of coping adds additional pressures on these workers, with one worker describing themselves as "naïve" during their process of trying to build such a network. Museo-carceral facilitators benefit

if there are organized support system already built into the museo-carceral program to complement their existing support and coping mechanisms.

In answers to questions about their experience with support, participants reported that support systems from within the host museum could be greatly strengthened. In particular, it is crucial that a key element of support be in the form of extensive training and preparation in advance of entering carceral spaces and as ongoing support. The lack of support from their hosts museums worked to effectively disappear these facilitator's emotional labor and experiences; thus their "emotional labor became invisible" (Hochschild, 2012, p. xii).

Because of the size of my study, there are some limitations as to final conclusions regarding the state of museum facilitation in carceral spaces. Another limitation may simply be a reflection of the overwhelming complexion of those who are engaged in museum programming: all of the participants, whatever their racial identification, code as white. This opens up other avenues of inquiry which have to do with how work within the carceral is experienced by other racial identities, including Black, Indigenous and Asian people. Another limitation involves the need for investigation into the ways that LGBTQIA museo-carceral facilitators experience this type of work. In addition, in circling back to the carceral as a gendered space, does the fact that museum work is a "pink collar" profession feed into gendered expectations of emotional labor within carceral space? Questions about gendered emotional labor as a "silent job description" within museo-carceral space deserve more study (Baldwin, 2019; Hochschild, 2012, p. 170).

However, what this study does accomplish as an entry point into the lived experiences of these facilitators is a consideration of ways that museo-carceral programs can be sustained. Two such points of sustenance are:

- Clarity on what to expect going into carceral spaces. Possible routes to ensuring that this happens may involve the retaining of professionals who have expertise and specialize in Critical Prison Studies and Race theory. Museo-carceral workers must be prepared to engage with issues involving race. Also, it is important that facilitators understand and have the means of processing the fact that the chance to grow positive connections with incarcerated people that are sustained beyond the carceral space may not be possible.
- A strong yet adaptable support system which works in concert with museo-carceral programming. One strand of support would be museums being supportive in helping museo-carceral workers publish their relevant work. In addition, seeking out professionals who have a deep understanding and extensive experience facilitating ways, either singly or in groups, to help workers process the emotional impacts of program engagement within carceral spaces is key. Leaving the responsibility to search for this kind of support up to the facilitators alone adds unnecessarily, and unfairly, to their burden of labor.

The people who opened up a window into their experiences facilitating museum programming within carceral spaces did so with a transparency, a generosity of spirit, and an openness that they shared, sometimes tearfully, sometimes with laughter. Whether working in an ongoing capacity inside of an incarceration site, looking back at a year engaged in this work, or doing a one-time project inside carceral space, all the people doing this work are deeply committed to being “socially engaged” as artists, teachers, and relations to other human beings, whether they are being held in captivity, or are free.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Query and Follow-up Template

Subject: Request to Interview You for Research on Museum Program Facilitators Working with Imprisoned People

[Greeting]

Body: I'm a Museum Studies graduate student who, as part of my master's thesis research study, is conducting interviews with people who have facilitated museum programming by working with incarcerated people. I am interested in increasing understanding of how this type of work is experienced by the facilitators themselves. Because you have done this type of facilitation with incarcerated people in connection with [museum], I am very interested in interviewing you.

I would like to request an hour of your time for a phone audio-recorded interview. Only I will hear these recordings, and your information and data will be anonymous to an extent. I say to an extent because when I eventually write about our interview, although I will be talking about your museum in very general terms, without naming it, and you in very general terms, without naming you, it may be possible that these might be inferred.

There is no compensation for participating in this study, but your participation will be a valuable contribution to my research and could lead to a better understanding of the motivations, emotional impacts,

and needs of facilitators who engage with incarcerated people through museum outreach programs.

Thanks so much for considering my request. If you are able to participate, please let me know your availability. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via this email.

[Closing]

Follow-Up Response Template to Participant Opt-In:

Body: [Interview appointment timeframe coordinating information]. I am also adding my phone number and the questions list at the end of this email. Thank you for your response and for your participation!

[Closing]

[Phone number]

[Questions list:]

Appendix B: Instrument: Consent Talking Points and Interview Questions

Consent Talking Points

- Data collector's name, affiliation, contact phone number, and email
- Study's purpose
- Inviting participants to ask any questions they may have about the study
- Explanation that participation will take place in the form of a one hour, audio-recorded interview, and that only I will hear these recordings for the purpose of transcription
- Explanation that participation is voluntary
- Participants are free to decline to answer any of the interview questions, and can end their participation in the study at any time, without penalty
- Explanation that information and data will be anonymous to an extent. I will be talking about your museum in very general terms, without naming it, and you in very general terms, without naming you – direct quotes aren't attributed beyond "a member of x museum," however it may be possible that your place of work might be inferred
- Explanation of possible emotional discomfort due to this research involving interview questions that explore personal experiences within incarceration facilities
- There is no direct compensation or benefits as a result of participation in this study
- Asking participant's consent and restating invitation for any further questions they may have

Interview Questions

- Question 1. How long have you worked with your host museum?
- Question 2. Would you tell me something about your work with incarcerated people?

- Question 3. How would you describe your process and contribution in facilitating this program?
- Question 4. How would you describe your personal connection with museum work?
- Question 5. Why does this kind of programming interest you?
- Question 6. Before you began working with incarcerated people, how did you imagine it?
- Question 7. Did this perception come from reading about it, was it due to experiences your colleagues shared with you, and/or was this from hearing from incarcerated/formerly incarcerated people who participated in this kind of museum programming?
- Question 8. Please describe an experience(s) which had an emotional impact within the course of your work.
- Question 9. Would you describe anything you found rewarding about this experience?
- Question 10. Would you describe anything you find challenging about it?
- Question 11. Would you describe any opportunities you had to process the experience with your peers/other facilitators? If so, was this organized by the host museum, or was it informal in character?
- Question 12. Can you describe any effects you may have felt from this experience that went beyond the program site?
- Question 13. How would you describe preparatory orientation and training given by the host museum? How about the one given by the incarceration site? What are the effective elements of this training? What areas could be strengthened?
- Question 14. What kind of emotional support system does your source museum have in place? What is being done well? Are there areas that could be strengthened?

- Question 15. Do you have emotional supports in place outside of what is facilitated by your museum? What do these entail?
- Question 16. What do you find emotionally rewarding about facilitating museum programming within sites of incarceration? What do you find emotionally challenging about it?
- Question 17. Is this something you see yourself continuing to do long-term? Why or why not?
- Question 18. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?