Cultural inclusion, exclusion and the formative roles of museums

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Very diverse cultural practices develop within sufficiently large polities, in response to, and contributing to, a matrix of social relationships. Museums play a formative role in defining and reproducing those relationships through their policies and narrative practices. As importantly, how museums are construed, who uses them, and how they use them, are also defined within this web of relationships. Discussions of audience inclusion and exclusion should thus be grounded in an analysis of the complex socio-cultural roles that museums play, and specifically in regard to the user's search for shared narrative.

Keywords: inclusion; culture; museum use; museum policy; social responsibility; visitor studies

Introduction

How museums include and exclude individuals and social groups – as audiences, staff, trustees, or as other stakeholders – is an ongoing discussion. In recent years, this discourse has turned on the specific practices of the museum organization; what objects it chooses to collect, the presence or absence of specific interpretations and how those interpretation are framed, how it reaches out to underserved communities or potential users, and the ergometrics used to determine effective design or architecture.

As an important part of this discourse, various museum–audience interactions are considered, especially how the museum serves diverse audiences through the stories that are included in museum programming (Delin 2002; Sandell 2002; Young 2002). In the course of those considerations, museums may be challenged to avoid practices or policies that could be construed as socially engaged or advocative (Amari 2006; Chew 2004; Shore 2005). The argument for this avoidance turns on the premise that museums serve various and sometime conflicting audiences, so that while their role is to collect, preserve and educate, as complex organizations representing specific internal and external interests, they should not engage in specific advocacy (c.f. Becker 2005).

While specific collecting and programming practices are essential to promoting inclusion, no museum is an island. This essay analyzes several intersections of social forces with the museum and challenges museums to reconsider their social practice accordingly. That challenge proposes that it is problematic to examine inclusion or exclusion without foregrounding those actions against loci of social power and hierarchy. Nor can any museum effect broad accessibility if it does not intend to confront, at least episodically, the social forces that underlie or overlay its existence.

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At the beginning of the twenty-first century, global socio-economic conditions continue to induce specific intro- and inter-urban migrations. More people than ever before reside in urban areas and, as a consequence, many contemporary polities are now more culturally diverse than at any earlier time. However, these migrations also tend to increase the socio-economic polarity in those urban areas and the concomitant socio-cultural divisions, which we might describe as either exclusive or inclusive.

Many contemporary public museums, with missions and programs centered on mainstreaming the civic and educational values of the ruling strata, now sit within population centers in which many alternate socio-cultural affinities coexist and contend. Consequently, discussions of social inclusion and exclusion unfold in the light or shadows of those coexistences and contentions.

Museum use and museum users

Museums document social relationships represented in the languages, music and song, agriculture, architecture, contests of skill, visual art, religions, dramaturgy, educational systems, scientific disciplines, and the many other practices that symbolize those relationships. As storehouses of ideologies and cultural practices, museums become another of these practices; collections of symbols that have been pronounced normative and interpreters of how and why to understand those symbolizations.

It is worth noting that we use culture practices generally to interact with each other, to describe reality, and to transform ourselves and our groups. Accordingly, a key historical feature of museums has been the inclusion of some practices and the exclusion of others – nineteenth century French paintings show up in 'art' museums and nineteenth century Mangbetu sculptures are more often encountered in 'ethnographic' museums – revealing that culture practices are fundamentally social processes and not simply collections of things. The specificities of culture practices pose a basic challenge, especially to those museums with an explicit public mission to act as forums for multicultural exchange, rather than as fortresses of the status quo.

Museum *use* is also a cultural practice. It is shaped by the social relationships of the user, as well as those of the museum, and defined by whom it includes and excludes. The typical statistical profile of the *majority* of museum users in the USA describes a *minority* of the population as a whole: someone who is of Euro-American ancestry has a higher than average income and is college educated. Those same surveys also suggest that, across all socio-economic strata, most American adults do not visit museums very often (Bradshaw and Nichols 2004).

Within the Euro-American museum community, there are different perspectives on why people use museums. One conventional view is that users choose museums from among a variety of entertainment or leisure activity options. This view gained traction beginning in the neo-conservative Thatcher- and Reagan-era of the 1980s, as cultural organizations in North America and Europe were steered toward privately controlled and retail sources of revenue, while government financial support and other 'public' sources were reduced (c.f. Davies 2005; Jenkinson 1994; Sandell 1998). The subsequent 'earned income' market model has been described by Kotler (2001), critiqued by McPherson (2006), is periodically expressed as a given in essays by museum leaders (Lusaka and Strand 1997, 1998; Skramstad and Skramstad 2005), and remains valued by certain museum governance bodies (Smith 2007). In the 12 March 2008, *New York Times,* American Association of Museums president Ford Bell analogized museums with water parks and 'a zillion other things [that] are competing for our leisure time' (Vogel 2008, H1). This model tends to

favor the tourist looking for things to do on holiday over regional audiences who might be dissuaded by rising admission fees or attracted by collection-specific programming.

A longer-standing view – at least since the mid-nineteenth century in the UK and the USA – is that museums are valued for the opportunities and social context they provide users for informal and formal learning (c.f. Falk 1998, 2004; Hein 1998; Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 1998; Leinhardt and Knutson 2004). This framework prioritizes the museum's communicatory role through the affective and cognitive experiences it can provide to users, generally along a metric of encouraging social cohesion within the encompassing polity. Alongside these roles are identified additional and related functions for museum use: as sites that provide opportunities for aesthetic pleasure and contemplation (O'Neill 2002), as ritual instruments for promoting political identity (Duncan 1991, 1999) and to reinforce social strata and class distinctions (Bourdieu 1974, 1984; Bourdieu and Nice 1980).

In each of these perceived inclusionary/exclusionary functions, the specific act of museum use is also a signifier. The information shared, the processes by which it is shared, the criteria for the specific aesthetics presented, the ritual events leading toward catharsis, as well as self-definitions of 'leisure' – these responses all have corresponding, sometimes overlapping, ideological premises. It is possible that these differently perceived roles also describe distinct user attitudes or use values that are dynamically linked to changing sets of social relationships. Over a lifetime, each of us assembles a cultural repertoire that includes affinities that we have set aside or no longer employ regularly. This underscores the importance of studying the social formation of attitudes and interests (e.g., 'identity'), and of in-group and out-group concepts as these relate to museum use.

This understanding of cultural repertoire draws on the Geertzian view that culture is a matrix of affinities and skills that we devise or acquire through the course of our social practices. Culture is process and not reducible to collections of things or to ancestry or physical characteristics. Museum use, like our affinities for other symbolizing practices, emerges as part of an overarching search for shared narratives, among visitors, and between visitors and the museum.

Enabling conditions

Symbolizing activity – including the things that fill museums – is unique to humans and representative of our facility for shared intentionality. We recognize each other as intentional and autonomous actors. This ability develops in early childhood and sets the stage for further cognitive development through social practices (c.f. Tomasello 2001; Tomasello and Rakoczy 2003; Tomasello et al. 2005a,b).

Language is our primary and essential system of symbols (Geertz 1973; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986; Vygotsky 1986; Wertsch 1985), and vocalization is among the earliest of our physical developments. Our capacity for language suggests a behavioral plasticity far more complex than that displayed by other social animals, as well as a capacity for recursive thinking that enables open-ended symbolic systems (Hauser, Chomsky, and Fitch 2002). Importantly to the present discussion, language also plays a meaningful role in sensorial acuity (Kazanina, Phillips, and Idsardi 2006; Regier, Kay, and Khetarpal 2007; Winawer et al. 2007) and in forming in-group and out-group concepts (Kinzler, Dupoux, and Spelke 2007; Pinker, Nowak, and Lee 2008).

Vygotsky found that 'humans' active adaptation to the environment; their changing nature, cannot be based on signalization – the passive reflection of natural connections of various kinds of agents. It requires the active establishment of such connections that are impossible with a purely natural type of behavior.... They signify behavior and with the

help of signs create new connections in the brain that constitute external influence' (Vygotsky 1960). Semiotic activity does not emerge spontaneously from within the individual – it is acquired and developed through social interactions. Investigators since Vygotsky have demonstrated this dialectical relationship between social practice and individual cognition by way of various inquiries regarding psychology and epistemology, (c.f. Fernyhough 1996; Rogoff 1995; Tomasello 2001; Tomasello and Rakoczy 2003; Wertsch 1980, 1985, 1991), including within museum contexts (c.f. Ash 2003; Crowley et al. 2001).

Enculturation and socialization

While much culture transference is conscious and intentional, there are also instances where transfer is unintentional or unconscious and, in the process, specific tools are adopted to alternate uses, often obscuring the original symbolic intent (Griffin 2006). Consequently, practices may appear *sans* ontology: a parent demanding specific behaviors of a child, the syllabus for a literature course, friends sharing iPod ear buds, a spontaneously assembled game of basketball in a public park, or visiting an art gallery. However, each of these cultural practices contains patterns formed from broader social relationships: notions of in-group and out-group, the conference of status, or mapped according to social conventions of 'ethnicity,' gender, age, etc.

These practices exist simultaneously as discrete expressions and as components of larger systems of enculturation. In this dual role, the first capacity often masks the second. Accordingly, to understand why some people use a museum or exhibition, while others do not, we should investigate the ways in which the specific symbols engaged through that use promote ideological systems and thus reinforce social inclusion or exclusion.

As part of a larger survey of cultural specificity and museum use, conducted in 2007, the author interviewed persons along 110th Street in upper Manhattan.[1] Respondents included both frequent and infrequent users who collectively provided a range of associative descriptions for the term 'museum'. Recent users (those who had visited within the prior 12 months) provided associations such as 'art, history, different kinds of early events', 'love it, great places, more people should visit', 'old artifacts, to learn things', 'I like learning a lot, different cultures' and 'large building, natural history'. Less frequent users (those whose last visit was between one and two years prior) provided very similar responses: 'beautiful, it teaches you how people lived in those days, their cultures', 'a place where you can go, educate more', 'learning, culture', 'a place where you can see different things, portraits, history, learn about'. Those who said they very rarely or never visited museums provided only slightly different associations: 'Indians, (but) not since the 80s, the kids are grown', '(an) event people go to, art museums and Indian history', 'art, education', 'art, older things, ancient artifacts', 'I think about statues, skeletons'. These remarks are consistent with comments recorded in other studies (c.f. Davies 2005; Hood 1983, 1993; Mason and McCarthy 2006; Prentice, Davies, and Beeho 1997), which serve to illustrate that users and non-users share certain perceptions of the purpose of 'museum' as a place for the storage and presentation of objects or information that is rare, old, or privileged. Frequent users appear to seek out those qualities through museums, while non-users do not draw meaningful connections between museums and themselves.

Of course, museums are only one mechanism for enculturation. Formal educational systems and the mass media are much more extensive and formidable mechanisms. It is well established that school systems are efficient methods for reinforcing gender, class, ethnic and other socio-economic distinctions prevalent in the larger society (Adler, Kless,

and Adler 1992; Alexander, Cook, and McDill 1978; Bourdieu 1977; Bowles and Gintis 2002; Condron 2007; Eder 1981, 1985; Kessler et al. 1985; Lee, Marks, and Bird 1994; Lubeck 1984; Ortner 2002; Roscigno 1998; Wilensky 1964; Yerrick, Roth, and Tobin 2006). Not coincidentally, systems that segregate children into specific educational 'tracks' also constrain cognitive development and the subsequent command of important cultural tools that might be received through language, literature, the arts, history, etc., and this deprivation perpetuates social exclusion (Aptheker 1946; Eder 1981; Kaestle 1988; Massey and Fischer 2006; McSeveney 1987; Vasquez 2005).

Mass media are also major enculturation mechanisms. The US broadcast communications sector alone, with hourly audiences in the tens of millions, collects annual revenues (derived overwhelmingly from advertising messages) that exceed total annual expenditures for US primary and secondary education by $52 billion (Census Bureau 2006). The content and form of these mass media expressions exert a dominant influence among those audiences whose access to other forms of expression are wholly or largely restricted due to limited literacy, monetary cost, or by other implicit or explicit social proscriptions (Gee, Allen, and Clinton 2001; Hebdige 1979; Larson, Kubey, and Colletti 1989; Mahon 2000; Rodriquez 2006). While these cultural expressions may sometimes help shape attitudes about museums, they are more noteworthy for promoting aligned sets of culture practices as normative or conventional, including who or what belongs, or does not belong, in the museum.

Stereotypes vs. culture types

Museum sector discussions of multicultural inclusion often resolve into specific programming practices aimed at one or another broad social segment, such as 'African-Americans' or 'Asians', which are assumed to describe common interests or outlooks. Such broad generalizations are problematic to developing an accurate understanding of either cultural specificity or social inclusion. Whereas cultural practices emerge from and express ingenuity and diversity, cultural stereotypes are artificial containers imposed on population groups that reflect and reproduce unequal socio-economic relationships. A prominent example of stereotype theorizing is the concept of 'national culture', which first emerged alongside the political ascension of the bourgeoisie in Europe and America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries[2] and provided a guise for the theatre of capital relationships – market, labor, fixed assets, finances, etc. As capital does not confine its operation to a specific geography, in order to secure a geographic and demographic base of support, the ruling elites operationalize 'national identity' through social practices that engage the homeland citizen in specific ideologies and social roles (Burris, Branscombe, and Jackson 2000; Coombes 2004; Duncan 1999; Hobsbawm 1999; Liu 1999; Liu and Hilton 2005; Liu et al. 2005; Rydell 1984, 1993).

Stereotyping the 'others' is contemporary geo-political practice, with 'other' defined according to language, ancestry, skin tone, belief system, or geography, and against whom the homeland citizenry are judged and compelled to contend, whether via 'globalization' or outright warfare. Socio-economic contention is an essential aspect of capitalism and an enduring ideological metaphor (e.g., 'marketplace of ideas', 'the rat race'); masking the fact that 'otherness' is realized through social relationships that are highly unequal, super-exploitative and maintained through real or threatened violence (c.f. Arnove 2000; Diamond 1997; Gourevitch 1998; McMichael 1991; Phillips 2000; Rodney 1972; Wacquant 2005). During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these global relationships were glossed as 'manifest destiny' or 'the white man's burden' (Rydell 1993, 17). In recent

decades, the gloss has been reapplied as 'national interests' and 'global security'. All along, 'foreign' culture practices have been suppressed or distorted, including through the museum discipline of anthropology, which developed interactively with this process (Bennett 2004; Bourdieu and Sayad 2004; Brodie 2003; El-Haj 1998; Gruber 1970; Jenkins 1994; Kohl 1998; Thomas 2000; Turner and Fajans-Turner 2006; Trigger 1984).

The construction of socio-cultural stereotype is theorized in 'cross-cultural research' by those sociologists and social psychologists who allege that the 'secrets of entire national cultures' (McSweeney 2002a, 89) are manifested in shared behaviors such as 'hedonism', 'individualism' or 'benevolence' (Hofstede and McCrae 2004; McSweeney 2002a,b). Invoked repeatedly, these 'national culture' stereotypes are adopted as conventional (c.f. Bond et al. 2004; Coon and Kemmelmeier 2001; Johnson et al. 2005; Leung et al. 2002; Liu et al. 2005; Matsumoto, Grissom, and Dinnel 2001).

Stereotyping serves economic and political purposes. Within the USA, the defining effects of severe, caste-like, geographic, social and economic segregation enforced upon the poor, African Americans and other non-European 'minorities' have been repeatedly documented (Abu-Lughod 1997; Massey and Denton 1989; Massey and Fischer 2000; Ross and Turner 2005; Simkus 1978; Venkatesh 2008; Wacquant 1997). The social inequalities of 'race', gender, class, and ethnicity are enforced through persistent statutory and extra-legal violence designed – or tacitly condoned – to compel victim groups to remain subordinate; African-Americans and other 'minorities' are frequently subjected to police violence, unprovoked arrests, and subsequent disenfranchisement (Blee 2005; Collins 1998; Jeffries 2002; King 1999; Noakes 2003; Wacquant 2005).

All of this 'weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living' (Marx 1963, 15), and emerges in symbols, practices and beliefs such as self-referential terms of racist derision and by affecting sociopathic 'gangsta' posturing (c.f. Venkatesh 2008). The lifeways of the out-groups are portrayed as 'concentrated unruliness, deviance, anomie and atomization, replete with behaviors said to offend common precepts of morality and propriety' (Wacquant 1997, 345). Within the 'mainstream', the multiple effects of this segregation and discrimination are promoted through 'common sense' racist, sexist and ethnocentric ideologies, and the cultural practices, beliefs and symbols of 'others' are portrayed in stereotypic caricature or as naïve practices (Collins 2001; Giroux 2001; Rydell 1984), rather than according to their authentic complexity. All of this impacts how museums and users interact, such as one of Hood's informants confided: 'I don't want to see [the] security guard . . . coming after me [as if] I'm going to pick up that painting and walk out the door' (1993, 8).

Museums as class projects

Museums may reinforce in-group/out-group stratification through their curatorial judgments, definitions of stakeholders, or specific treatments of visitors (c.f. Hood 1993; Phillip 1999; Sandell 1998). While a subset of American adults (30M) visit a museum at least once per year (Census Bureau 2006), the ideological impact of museums is magnified by their function as repositories for normative examples of artistic expression, history, ideology and taste. The Louvre is described by Jacques Chirac, as an 'emblem of culture . . . place of symbolic consecration' (Amato 2006, 48). An explicit purpose of museums, as explained in scores of mission statements, is to communicate narratives so they will be adopted broadly. Through this communication, museums privilege or proscribe specific examples or general typologies, and provide templates for fashioning additional cultural tools. Through this

process, museums also reproduce attitudes regarding how museums should be used and by whom.

The public museum's origins are as media for social realignment, both practical and ideological. The initial impulse emanated from the need to qualify post-feudal society using shared concepts of 'public energy', 'national character' and the emerging bourgeois narrative (Boylan 1996; David 1966, 6). The symbolic displays were intended to 'improve the morals of the people, and render them both milder and more disposed to pay obedience to the laws' (Lenoir 1966, 275; see also Bennett 1995, 2004; Duncan 1999; Hobsbawm 1999; Rydell 1984). This ideological function remains dominant – though contested – within the sector. Pitt Rivers, speaking in 1891, stressed the urgent communicatory role of museum collections to divert 'the ignorant masses' from 'agitators who strive to make them break with the past' (Coombes 2004, 285). At the close of the Second World War, the American president Truman proclaimed, 'The US will take the lead in running the world in the way that the world ought to be run', and proceeded to enact a network of state-supported culture projects focused on Europe and Asia (Guilbaut 1983, 105). In the 1950s and into the 1960s, amidst the anti-colonial social movements and rebellions erupting throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America, the geo-political importance of cultural hegemony was reemphasized to 'meet the challenge of the Communists' cultural ideas in the world, on which they are spending great amounts of money for their propagation and which represent the key aspect of their activities, which are designed to "bury" the Free World' (US Senator Jacob Javits, cited in Zukin 1982, 441).

Attention was also directed inward, to counter the growing domestic social unrest over social stratification, unequal civil rights and ongoing military expeditions into Asia, Africa and Latin America.[3] A 1969 report noted that 'men like David Rockefeller, Arnold Gingrich of *Esquire*, George Weissman of Phillip Morris and Dr Frank Stanton of CBS,[4] recognized and promulgated an important concept – that a so-called amenity, such as the arts, was in reality the very lifeblood needed to inject hope, purpose and beauty into a troubled society' (cited in Zukin 1982, 444). In her survey of North American art museum foundings, Blau found a low annual rate (three/year) from 1870 through 1910, followed by a gradual rise to seven per year by 1945. From that point forward, foundings increased sharply, reaching rates of 17/year by 1960 and 27/year by 1980, the last year of her survey (Blau 1991). This expansion of the American art museum sector tracks the growing hegemony of US capital internationally (DiMaggio 1982, 2004; Guilbaut 1983; Zukin 1982).

Museums as agents of ideology

Cultural anthropologists and action sociologists generally agree that the manipulation of ideology, such as through style and iconography, is essential to defining, reproducing and contesting rank and power relationships in complex societies (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Geertz 1973; Hegmon 1992; Weiner 1980). In contemporary complex societies, museums may be used as instruments in that manipulation. On one hand, museum architecture and exhibits are employed to display national wealth and a triumphal message to audiences (Duncan 1999; Duncan and Wallach 2004). Natural history museums have provided technical arguments to support the social and global status quo (Allen et al. 2000; Haraway 1989; Rydell 1984). Ideology is also evident in exhibitions celebrating the triumphs of the ruling class, such as *Alexander Hamilton: The Man Who Made Modern*

America exhibition at the New-York Historical Society, or *The American Presidency: A Glorious Burden* at the Smithsonian (Coffee 2006).

The sources of ideological contention are both internal and external. Contention may erupt when curators or directors present alternative narratives, such as when the director of the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center sponsored a Robert Mapplethorpe retrospective and was criminally prosecuted for 'pandering obscenity'; when historians developing an exhibition attempted to explain the instrumental role of the US bomber *Enola Gay* in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Japanese non-combatants; and when the Brooklyn Museum of Art hosted the contemporary art exhibition *Sensation* and was publicly threatened with eviction by the mayor of New York.[5]

Likewise, calls for social inclusion are directed at institutions that are perceived to ignore or minimize subaltern narratives. About one year after its *Alexander Hamilton* exhibition, the New York Historical Society staged the exhibition *Slavery in New York*, which excavated some of the importance that slave labor, and the trade in slave labor, played in that city. In part, *Slavery in New York* appeared to respond to ongoing critiques from historians,[6] as well as by city residents, of the Historical Society's past affinity for narratives of the elite and established. Significantly, *Slavery* also resonated with wider audiences, reportedly drawing nearly twice as many attendees as did *Alexander Hamilton,* with at least one associated lecture about the African Burial Ground[7] in lower Manhattan, which attracted a capacity crowd to the Society's main auditorium. Malcolm Hamilton has offered the definition of ideology as systems 'of collectively held normative and reputedly factual ideas and beliefs and attitudes advocating a particular pattern of social relationships and arrangements', and/or aimed at justifying a particular pattern of conduct (Hamilton 1987, 38). Indeed, audiences recognize patterns of conduct in every museum's collection and public programming policies and practices, and form their understanding of the museum accordingly.

Visitor intentions and expectations

In her 1981 study of art museum users in Toledo, Ohio, Hood hypothesized that visitation choices were based on certain leisure activity attributes and on how users were 'socialized ... toward certain types of activities' (Hood 1983, 52). Viewed through the lens of the marketplace, museum use is interpreted as a form of commodity circulation, visitors are perceived as generic, and museum use is one of several analogous purchasing behaviors (Prentice, Davies, and Beeho 1997). Many advocates of this analytic trend (e.g., Burton 2000, 2001, 2002) seek a 'multicultural marketing theory' that can guide 'culture-specific' promotional strategies to target specific population groups. Parsing interest in museums as an expression of ancestry or socio-economic status, and conjuring further status categories based on power and class, this analysis of museum users as consumer types misconstrues both the potential users and the services provided through a visit. This misconstruction is acutely evident in those analyses that theorize culture practices as either 'low brow' (popular, outsider, or subaltern) or 'high brow' (Euro-American 'upper class' narrative) culture (e.g., DiMaggio and Mukhtar 2004; DiMaggio and Useem 1978; Peterson 1992).

Conversely, significant research supports the conclusion that it is not a generic discretionary expense or activity that is being selected. Rather, specific narratives communicated by the museum are being selected, and museum use or non-use is perceived as a culturally expressive act (c.f. McCracken 2003a,b; O'Neill 2007; Prince 1983, 1985, 1990).

Consider these explanations by adult visitors to a science center[8]:

'We've been here a few times in the past, but we come here especially for the kids ... to expose them, get them interested in science a little.' – *Adult male visiting with family cohort.*

'We do it on a regular basis, we pick a museum and then we go on a weekend. The basic reason is we want our kids to learn, everything that we didn't learn (laughs).' – *Adult male visiting with family cohort.*

'They're still a little young – four and six – to understand it all, but the fact that they can touch and feel, it just opens their eyes ... it's probably meaningful, they'll learn something.' – *Adult female visiting with family cohort.*

'We thought it would be a good way to spend some family time, doing something with the kids.' – *Adult female visiting with family cohort.*

Quite clearly, these parents chose visiting as an inter-generational learning opportunity and to bond the family through a shared appreciation of science.

Narrative frameworks may be built coincidentally, by curators and by audiences, each from their own perspective. For example, the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington, DC, intends to show that 'Indians are not just part of history (but) are still here and are making vital contributions to contemporary American culture and art' (NMAI 2004, 1), and the NMAI enlisted advisors from two-dozen Native communities to help the museum develop its inaugural exhibitions (NMAI 2005). On opening day, more than 20,000 Native People converged on Washington to celebrate the museum. The *Washington Post* (22 September 2004) quoted one attendee declaring that the museum represented 'the greatest thing to happen to Indian people in 500 years'.

Given the opportunity, visitors will explain the specific importance of narrative. Many of those who viewed the *Stereotypes vs. Humantypes* exhibition, at the Schomburg Center for the Study of Black Culture in New York, left extended statements reflecting on the personal or social significance of their experience.[9] The exhibition documented both African-American lifestyles of the early 1900s and the racist depictions of African-Americans promoted in mainstream Euro-American culture during the same period.

'The exhibits are very enlightening and our young people, our children, need to be brought to see the realities of the past. We must not forget where we came from, what we (our ancestors) had to endure, so we can appreciate their strength and resoluteness of character. In this way, we can appreciate where we are today.' – *11 May 2007.*

'A great portrait of the presentation and misrepresentation of people of color that shows the past two centuries; a source of pride and a source of sorrow. A. Schomberg said it best: "the American Negro must remake their past in order to make their future." This exhibition should be replicated and emulated to show the true essence of people of African descent.' – *15 May 2007.*

'The exhibit is very enlightening. It is interesting to see images (various images) of African-American. Unfortunately, some of the stereotypical images are being kept alive. I viewed the exhibit and took away the idea that I must be relentless in remaining positive and remember that there are people who only see African-Americans as negative images. I enjoyed looking at the photos of unidentified African-Americans, showing us as "typical" and positive beings.' – *18 May 2007.*

'The exhibition is very interesting. I think it is very important to show the difference between stereotypes and reality. I felt very sad to see those pictures of stereotypes because I'm a Jew and those are the same kind of ugly things like the Nazis and their anti-Semitic supporters showed of us. I hope those things will totally disappear from our society. Great museum, continue to do this important job!' – *23 May 2007.*

Descriptions of narrative affinity also emerge when users comment on their museum experiences more generally. For example, the above-mentioned *American Presidency* exhibition at the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, occasioned an extensive summative study conducted by their Office for Policy & Analysis (Doering, Dreibelbis, and Pekarik 2001). Thirty-two informants who were interviewed at length referenced their affinities, including the significance of the Smithsonian as part of touring the center of US national government.[10]

> 'We came her to see "American things," saw the sign and I asked her if she wanted to see it, so we came here first.' – *Homemaker, Michigan*.

> 'We saw Air and Space, did the Capitol, did the museum of art, tried to go – oh yes, Library of Congress and had to run around Jefferson's library in about 4 minutes, that was unfortunate. Vietnam Wall. Pretty much all the highlights.' – *Medical student, Louisiana*.

> 'I thought it was just spectacular and I would like the younger members of my family to see it, because it certainly brings to mind the different aspects of our country and the different Presidents and their terms of office.' – *Elderly frequent SI visitor, California*.

> 'I made a mistake when I was raising my kids, I didn't bring them to Philadelphia and Washington, DC. It's the kind of history that every junior high school kid ought to have, at least if that opportunity presented itself. We're losing our tradition in America, and it's something we shouldn't lose.' – *Banker/rancher, Wyoming*.

> 'We should be eternally grateful to the people who want to take that role [of US President]. When you look at it, it's hard to think that anyone wants that job. It's impossible to do and yet ... because it is so complex and there are people who want to do it.' – *Wife of retired financial analyst, New Mexico*.

Constraints of leisure

The very concept of 'leisure' is predicated on socio-economic constraints – the ability to 'spend' time not already committed to one's employer, economic role or for physical maintenance. Shaw reports that women in North American face leisure-decision constraints based on household and family obligations, lack of economic power, concerns about personal safety, and traditional views of 'femininity' (Shaw 1994, 2001). Philipp has found that racial segregation – geographic and insititutional – is the principal constraint on leisure decisions by African-Americans (Philipp 1998a, 1999, 2000), and theorizes that this is encultered 'society ... has already established a different set of standards for adolescent males and females, and those standards also seem to be different depending on one's race' (Philipp 1998b, 227).

Museum visiting is a leisure-time activity, but within those self-directed hours, individuals engage in practices that are multi-modal cultural expressions, bearing complex significance for the practitioners, and which derive from, and interact, with a range of specific social relationships (Chick 1998; Shinew, Floyd, and Parry 2004; Washington and Karen 2001). Even the terms 'leisure' and 'spare time' suggest what is 'necessary' in one's life and what is not, as well as the extent of options in a society stratified according to gender, ancestry, 'race', cognitive development, and socio-economic status. In short, leisure is an exclusionary concept.

Various demographic data have been collected about museum users in the USA (Census Bureau 2006; Peterson, Hull, and Kern 2000; Schuster 2000). Typical of these studies is the *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* (SPPA), which provides a snapshot of self-described art museum users (Bradshaw and Nichols 2004). A large majority of

SPPA respondents had attended some college, and almost half were college graduates. More than 60% of users had an annual income above $50,000, and 40% had incomes above $75,000, or more than twice the per capita income. The SPPA survey also categorizes respondents according to broad 'ethnic' containers (e.g., White, Black, Hispanic, Native, 'Other'). It is notable that the predominant ethic category also fitting the socio-economic profile is 'White', meaning Euro-Americans. This aggregate socio-economic description is corroborated by the audience research conducted by museums (c.f. Doering, Bickford, and Pekarik 1997; Giusti, Greene, and Scott 2001; Korn 2000; Karns 2006). Writing about the origin of museums, Duncan observed that they addressed their visitors 'as bourgeois citizen' (Duncan 1999, 309). The SPPA demographics appear weighted toward Duncan's 'bourgeois citizens,' and suggest that specific sets of social relationships and practices define the boundaries between 'in' and 'out'.

Conclusion

Inclusivity and exclusivity are neither abstract nor absolute qualities; they can only be measured according to specific socio-cultural relationships. Key among those is the ideological performance of the museum as exemplified in its collections and programming activities, and by the specific narratives privileged by the museum and shared with specific sub-groups, classes or strata within the population as a whole. Integral to this performance are both the museum's presentation and the visitor's interests, which constitute distinct coordinates within a connecting matrix of culture practices.

In addition to considering inclusion as a general goal, practitioners should work to better understand the specificities of social diversity by investigating the potential for museum use alongside the broader range of practice patterns and cultural distinctions lived by the individuals and groups in the encompassing society. We should also consider the possibility that not all organizations wish to extend inclusion to the realms of enabling policy and that, as in other spheres of society, the necessary impetus pushing the museum to hear from, and respond to, excluded populations will originate from without.

However, if any museum intends to fulfill an extensive public mission of collection, display and public programming, such as many well-established museums currently profess,[11] it needs to consider how its practices support or suppress the subaltern narratives co-existing with it in the larger society. Museums are not socio-cultural isolates – they are important actors within the cultural matrices described throughout this discussion. Museums are perceived by many of 'the others' as exclusionary institutions, and museums will spontaneously reproduce exclusionary relationships to subaltern narratives unless museum people plan and act otherwise. The inclusive solution, as Lola Young notes, is not simply to extend an invitation to 'come be like us' (2002, 211). Rather, the intention must be to seek out and embrace, on their own terms, the ingenuities that continually arise in the shadows or as subversions of the established narratives.

The twentieth century is rife with examples of cultural subversion, including blues, jazz, rock & roll, hip-hop, spoken-word performance, stream-of-consciousness poetry, street photography, graphic novels, non-objective art, conceptual art, performance art, situational art, etc. These and many other expressive forms have emerged, conjoined to a content of resistance to, or rejection of, mainstream narratives, with their symbolizing depth and breadth 'beyond the pale' of the dominant culture practices and institutions. Knowingly or unknowingly, museums are completely enmeshed in this contention. They serve to enable either privilege or subversion through their missions and policies; they reflect that same tension within their organizations, as well as through their public

programming. How any audience measures a museum will principally depend on that museum's narrative practice. Nevertheless, for any museum to affect how its narratives include or exclude individuals or groups, it must first understand how its current decisions mesh with the larger socio-cultural matrix.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1. Interviews were conducted on 13 and 27 May 2007, between Fifth and Lenox Aves. Respondents ($n = 58$, response rate 52%) were asked a series of questions including 'what do you think of when you hear the word "museum"?' The interviews were part of a larger study conducted January–June 2007, comprising 360 informants in the Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens boroughs of New York City.
2. 'The Nation' is distinguished from other polities by the replacement of hereditary social distinctions with the identity concept of '*citizens*' or '*patriots*', who possess an '*unalienable right*' to '*life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness*', with 'happiness' meaning 'property.' (as per John Locke, *Concerning Civil Government*).
3. For example, France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Portugal, and the USA in various parts of Africa, the Caribbean, the Near East, the Pacific Rim, and Asia. Domestically, the anti-colonial upsurges influenced social movements for civil rights and social equality and against colonialism, exemplified by various broad social movements in the USA and Europe.
4. *Esquire* magazine is an American monthly review of male bourgeois 'taste'; Phillip Morris is a tobacco processor (now Altria Group Inc.); CBS, the Columbia Broadcasting System, is a large US radio and television network. Rockefeller was chairman of Chase Manhattan Bank (now JP Morgan Chase) and later chair of the board of trustees of the Museum of Modern Art in New York.
5. Prior to its arrival in Cincinnati in 1990, *The Perfect Moment* was to show at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC, but those trustees acceded to political pressure and withdrew their involvement, prompting the show to move to the Washington Project for the Arts. The Cincinnati showing of *The Perfect Moment* was supervised by CAC director Dennis Barrie, who was acquitted at trial but subsequently dismissed by the CAC trustees. The planned *Enola Gay* exhibition at the National Air and Space Museum was suppressed by the US government. (see Linenthal and Englehardt 1996) *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection*, was exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum from 2 October 1999 through 9 January 2000. The mayor of New York, Rudolph Giuliani, publicly denounced the exhibition and unsuccessfully attempted to rescind municipal operating support for the museum and evict it from its city-owned building.
6. N-YHS explains that 'the story of New York's rootedness in the enslavement of Africans is largely unknown to the general public. For the last 30 years, scholars here and abroad have recovered many fascinating details of the hidden worlds of New York's enslaved people,' (N-YHS 2005) which appears to abrogate responsibility for earlier historical research or for telling the regional chapter of African-American history.
7. The African Burial Ground is a heritage site in lower Manhattan and a small section of an eighteenth-century graveyard in which the remains of some 40,000 persons of African origin are buried. The Burial Ground was re-discovered in 1991 during a construction project.
8. Interviews were conducted on 13, 14, 27 and 28 January 2007 by the author with visitors to the New York Hall of Science, Queens, NY.
9. *Stereotypes vs. Humantypes* was displayed 12 May through 28 October 2007. Approximately 1147 visitors (approx. 15%) shared their thoughts in the gallery comment book (Schomberg Center 2007).

10. The study authors are careful to note that 'because of the way visitors were selected, and the nature of the interviews and analyses, the results are not representative of all visitors who saw TAP' (Doering, Dreibelbis, and Pekarik 2001, iv).
11. Thus, the mission of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York is 'to collect, preserve, study, exhibit, and stimulate appreciation for and advance knowledge of works of art that collectively represent the broadest spectrum of human achievement at the highest level of quality, all in the service of the public and in accordance with the highest professional standards' (MMA 2000).

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