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A Call to Action:

The Necessary Diversification of the Museum Workforce

The majority of, if not all museums aim to collect, display and teach about many disparate objects and subjects. Every museum mission may not be the same, but there are definite similarities that occur in every museum mission statement. Similarities include phrases like the preservation, display, education, and interpretation of objects for the museum's public and surrounding community. If you consider the word museum in its most universal sense—as this paper will do—and as the American Alliance of Museums does—museums encompass cultural and education institutions from **A**rt museums to **Z**oos including historic homes, science centers, and botanical gardens.¹

The goal of this research is to understand why museums, A to Z, are not as diverse as they should be in terms of the workforce. This paper seeks to examine racial diversity—tackling every aspect of diversity at once would be a gargantuan task—specifically, and to identify some of these problems and offer solutions that can help advance the movement to diversify museums and the professionals who

¹ "About Us." *About Us*. American Alliance of Museums. Web. 20 Dec. 2015.

staff them. In order to examine the issue of lack of diversity a survey was conducted to gather first hand accounts of museum professionals.²

The American Alliance of Museums, the Museums Association of the United Kingdom, and the International Council of Museums have shared attributes in their descriptions of museums: museums hold their collections in the public trust, for the good and service of society.³ Considering communities are an integral part of museums existence it follows that museums should have their public's best interest at the core of every action. In order to do so they must know what their public looks like—they should know the demographic makeup of the community they reside in. They must know the people they represent: what these people care about, want for and from their collections, and finally the best ways to disseminate information and knowledge about their collections. It would be remiss to believe that a community can be known without representatives from said community being insiders of the institution. The persons in the workforce of museums—museum professionals—are the insiders. Volunteers, interns, and board members can also be considered insiders, but for the most part unpaid staff and especially high-level volunteers who are responsible for governance are beyond the scope of this research. Museum employees from directors and curators to educators and development officers are working to collect, care for, research, and educate the public about museum

² Unpaid professionals' answers were included if they responded to the survey

³ "About." *FAQs*. Museums Association (of the UK). Web. 20 Jan. 2015

"Museum Definition." - *ICOM*. International Council of Museums (ICOM). Web. 20 Dec. 2015. "Characteristics of Excellence." *Characteristics of Excellence*. American Alliance of Museums. Web. 20 Dec. 2015.

collections. It follows they should be reflective of the populations that they aim to serve in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, orientation and all of the other characteristics that make people who they are.

The public, or external stakeholders of museums include those in the geographic community, those who are represented by the museum's content and collections, as well as the audience and visitors of the museum. While it would be too simplistic and unwise to assert that the museum workforce must directly mirror the population of the community it is in—that may not be possible or necessary in some cases—it is not unreasonable to suggest that museums should mirror demographics of the population as a whole, which they do not by a long shot when looking at the findings of the census bureau and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

According to the United States Census Bureau in their publication “Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060- Population Estimates and Projections, Current Population Reports” published in March 2015 the U.S. Population will only increase in diversity.⁴ But, before discussing future racial diversity in the population of the United States of America it is necessary to take a look at current demographics considering we are aiming to begin making changes in the present.

⁴ “United States of America. United States Department of Congress. United States Census Bureau. *Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population: 2014 to 2060 Population Estimates and Projections*. By Sandra L. Colby and Jennifer M. Ortman. Washington DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015. Print. 8

Where are we now?

The 2014 national projections of the racial make up of our country estimate the U.S. population is made up of 62.2% Non-Hispanic Whites, 17.4% of people of Hispanic origin, 13.2% Blacks or African-Americans, 1.2% American Indian or Alaska Natives, 5.4% Asian, 0.2% Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, and 2.5% identifying as two or more races. The numbers listed above are excerpted from the chart below. Specifically, from the first category, which breaks the population down by one race and has a separate category for those who identify with two or more races.⁵

Population by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2014 and 2060

(Population in thousands)

Race and Hispanic origin ¹	2014		2060		Change, 2014 to 2060	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total population	318,748	100.0	416,795	100.0	98,047	30.8
One Race	310,753	97.5	390,772	93.8	80,020	25.8
White	246,940	77.5	285,314	68.5	38,374	15.5
Non-Hispanic White	198,103	62.2	181,930	43.6	-16,174	-8.2
Black or African American	42,039	13.2	59,693	14.3	17,654	42.0
American Indian and Alaska Native	3,957	1.2	5,607	1.3	1,650	41.7
Asian	17,083	5.4	38,965	9.3	21,882	128.1
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	734	0.2	1,194	0.3	460	62.6
Two or More Races	7,995	2.5	26,022	6.2	18,027	225.5
Race Alone or in Combination²						
White	254,009	79.7	309,567	74.3	55,558	21.9
Black or African American	45,562	14.3	74,530	17.9	28,968	63.6
American Indian and Alaska Native	6,528	2.0	10,169	2.4	3,640	55.8
Asian	19,983	6.3	48,575	11.7	28,592	143.1
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1,458	0.5	2,929	0.7	1,470	100.8
Hispanic or Latino Origin						
Hispanic	55,410	17.4	119,044	28.6	63,635	114.8
Not Hispanic	263,338	82.6	297,750	71.4	34,412	13.1

¹ Hispanic origin is considered an ethnicity, not a race. Hispanics may be of any race. Responses of "Some Other Race" from the 2010 Census are modified. For more information, see <www.census.gov/popest/data/historical/files/MRSF-01-US1.pdf>.

² "In combination" means in combination with one or more other races. The sum of the five race groups adds to more than the total population, and 100 percent, because individuals may report more than one race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 National Projections.

With clear evidence as to the diversity of the U.S. population it is now appropriate to look at the diversity of the museum field workforce. Unfortunately, there is a lack of data that represents the demographics of all museums. However, the field has recent information collected by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in partnership with the Association of Art Museum Directors and the American Alliance

⁵ Colby and Ortman, Projections of the Size and Composition of the U.S. Population, 9

of Museums. The information contained in the aptly named “The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey”—published in July of 2015—examines the demographics of Art Museum workforces specifically. While this paper examines the museum field as a whole, the research from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is useful for illustrative purposes and can provide a snapshot of the greater museum field. It must be explicitly noted that the numbers from this survey cannot be directly connected to each and every museum because other types of museums can have a different staff make up—especially considering fine arts museums are institutions that appear at the center of a cause of the lack of diversity due to perceived elitism. However, with an understanding that the demographic numbers the Mellon survey finds are not exact, the big picture trends can be identified and analyzed, and that is the purpose of this comparison.

According to Mariët Westermann, Vice President of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Roger Schonfeld, and Liam Sweeny, the authors of the introduction to the survey, “the underrepresentation of people of color on art museums staff and the preponderance of men in museum leadership positions are a well known phenomena, subject to regular discussion.”⁶ For the purposes of this research the findings of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation survey were reviewed and compared to the demographics of the United States Census Bureau and they illustrate the disconnect occurring: the museum workforce does not reflect the public it serves and must be changed to do so.

⁶ Schonfeld, Roger, Mariët Westermann, and Liam Sweeny. *The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey*. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Web. 1 Dec. 2015, 2

According to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Survey 84% of jobs that are essential to museums' content and function: curators, conservators, educators, and leadership are held by non-Hispanic whites.⁷ While facilities, security, and finance and human resources are no less important they have much less of a say in what goes on in the museum especially concerning programming—and are the positions most minority museum employees fill.⁸ When comparing the 84% of non-Hispanic whites to the non-Hispanic whites that make up 62.2% of the U.S. population there is a 21.8% discrepancy. This 21.8% deficit is made up at the expense of minority representation. Black or African Americans make up 4% curators, conservators, educators, and leadership; Hispanic Whites make up 3%, Asians 3%, and people of multiple heritage 3%.⁹ Furthermore only 5% of the 241 museums that belong to the American Association of Art Museum Directors have people of color—including African Americans, Hispanics, Asians—in senior management positions.¹⁰ A stark contrast to the 37.8% and growing they represent in the population. As Laura L. Lott, President and CEO of the American Alliance of Museum states in a recent column in *Museum* magazine this gap will only continue to widen as the U.S. population continues to become increasingly diverse.¹¹ While racial diversity in the museum workforce may never perfectly mirror the racial demographics of the United States, this discrepancy is unacceptable and has lasting ramifications.

⁷ Schonfeld, Westerman, and Sweeny, Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey, 9

⁸ Schonfeld, Westerman, and Sweeny, Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey, 3

⁹ Schonfeld, Westerman, and Sweeny, Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey, 9

¹⁰ Cole, Johnnetta B. "Keep Moving Forward." *Museum* 1 Jan. 2016: 27-32. Print. 30

¹¹ Lott, Laura L. "Our Commitment to Diversity." *Museum* 1 Jan. 2016: 7. Print. 7

Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole eloquently stated in her keynote address at the 2015 American Alliance of Museums Annual Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia “Museums were run by and largely catered to middle-aged and middle-income and upper class white folks. The collections, exhibitions, and educational programs reflected what one of my colleagues, Dr. Beverly Guy-Sheftall at Spelman College, calls the Three Ws: they were largely focused on **W**estern places and ideas, the overwhelming majority of the staff and the visitors were **W**hitefolks and the exhibitions were largely **W**omanless.”¹² While museums have been around for many years and this has begun to change they have not yet caught up with the times, especially in terms of race. Dr. Cole goes on to state that in the south where she grew up there were no museums or art galleries where black people could go.¹³ It is no wonder that African Americans and other minorities did not pursue careers in the museum field. How could they aspire to work in a place where not only their narratives and histories were excluded, but they themselves were not allowed. Dr. Cole is an exception because her mother loved the arts and was able to have them in her home—especially those that would not have been in museums, the art of African Americans.¹⁴ While Dr. Cole gives a look into a part of museums’ and America’s shared past there has been great change since the Civil Rights movement and legislation. People of color are able to enter into any museum they please. However the lack of representation still persists.¹⁵ If museums seek to survive in the future

¹² Museum Magazine, Johnnetta Betsch Cole, 28

¹³ Museum Magazine, Johnnetta Betsch Co, 28

¹⁴ Cole, Keep Moving Forward, 29

¹⁵ Cole, Keep Moving Forward, 29

then they must continue to diversify their representation and in order to do so they must diversify their workforce.

The issue of workforce diversity is not an easy problem to solve, but one fact is clear, there is a problem. Diversity includes many factors including race, gender, age, religion, and sexual orientation. As we move toward a more inclusive society it is imperative to the survival of museums that their workforces become representative of the population and demographics of the world around them. It is not a simple issue to solve. It is shrouded in nuance, tradition, and lack of initiative. There is no one reason that the museum workforce is not diverse, but rather a multiplicity of reasons.

In order to identify reasons why the workforce is not diverse a survey was conducted (by the author) to pinpoint factors that led to lack of diversity. The intention was instead of asking the question “why don’t more people of color go into museum careers” to examine the question of “why people, especially people of color who have more similar experiences to their counterparts who do not work in museums, go into careers in museums.” The study will identify trends and brainstorm ideas to replicate these trends in future generations of professionals in order to ensure the diversity of the museum profession in the future.

Literature Review

Cultural capital-Pierre Bourdieu’s term to describe “collection of symbolic elements such as skills, tastes, posture, clothing, mannerisms, material belongings, credentials, etc. that one acquires through being part of a particular social class” and

exposure to various jobs and opportunities in life make a difference in how careers are chosen.¹⁶ Before discussing the findings of the survey specifically sent to museum professionals, an examination of how people choose careers in general is necessary. What factors go into career choice? Are these factors primarily external or internal? How do they affect people and their final decisions?

Mackie Bobo, Bertina Hildreth, and Beth Durodoeye examine career choices among African-American, Hispanic, and Anglo children. They do so by examining elementary school children. They begin their article by stating prior research, which finds “the social, political and economic climate of the country over the past three decades (now arguably the past five decades) has fostered several change agents that have influenced the composition of the present day workforce.¹⁷ From this statement it can be concluded that these three factors-social, political, and economic-directly influence people and in turn the careers they chose. Some of the influential factors cited included the Brown v. Topeka court ruling that desegregated schools and allowed more opportunities and exposure to more information for African American students followed by new career paths.¹⁸ When examining elementary school students Bobo et al found that parents’ occupations, societal norms, and prestige all influenced the types of careers that children aspired to

¹⁶ "Cultural Capital." *Cultural Capital*. Web. 04 Mar. 2016.

¹⁷ Bobo, Mackie, and Bertina I. Hildreth. "Changing Patterns in Career Choices Among African-American, Hispanic, and Anglo Children." *Professional School Counseling* 1.2 (1998): 37-42. *ProQuest*. Web. 1 Dec. 2015. 37

¹⁸ Bobo, Hildreth, and Durodoeye, *Changing Patterns*, 37

pursue. This illustrates the importance of exposure to career types and also their reputations to children, even those as young as elementary school attendees.¹⁹

Bobo et al go on to further cite previous research that concluded socioeconomic status had an effect on children's career choices and that these career choices were shaped by their experiences, meaning children were informed of career choices and knew the availability of occupations from influential parts of their lives, parents, teachers, media and books, early on.²⁰ It follows that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds would not be exposed to as many careers—their parents and other family members most likely would not have a wide range of careers and access to other avenues of exposure to various occupations. They were much more limited than children whose family had capital, both cultural and monetary, to purchase books and other forms of media to influence them. Bobo et al also noted the disproportionate amount of African American and Hispanic children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds leading to the conclusion that “socioeconomic status is an important variable moderating the effects of ethnicity on career behavior” and perhaps socioeconomic status plays a bigger role in aspirational career choice than race.²¹ This unfortunate scenario informs readers that upbringing matters in the workforce. What occurs in childhood and early life is important to what will occur in the workforce of the future.

Teresa A. Fisher and Inna Padmawidjaja's findings also reflect that parents are influential in career development of both African American and Mexican

¹⁹ Bobo, Hildreth, and Durodoye, *Changing Patterns*, 38

²⁰ Bobo, Hildreth, and Durodoye, *Changing Patterns*, 38

²¹ Bobo, Hildreth, and Durodoye, *Changing Patterns*, 38

American college students. More specifically they find that parents are interested in certain domains of career choice including “encouragement, educational expectations, critical life events, vicarious learning and work identity.”²² Cited in their work is the finding from C.C. Lee which concludes that parents’ expectations had a greater impact on the career choices of the African American and Native American students than for White students.²³ This suggests there must be different approaches when attempting to recruit those of different ethnicities into the museum field. This fact is reiterated by Dillard and Campbell who conclude “African American and Latino American parents’ career aspirations contributed significantly to their children’s career development.”²⁴

“Factors Influencing the Career Choices of African American Collegians: implications for Minority Teacher Recruitment” published in the Journal of Negro Education states that “data regarding the nuanced factors that affect career choice of African Americans and their perceptions regarding various careers would provide beneficial insight for various venues of education.”²⁵ This assertion can be applied to museums—knowing which nuanced factors affected collegians of color and

²² Fisher, Teresa A., and Inna Padmawidjaja. "Parental Influences on Career Development Perceived by African American and Mexican American College Students." *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* 27.3 (1999): 136-52. *Jstor*. Web. 1 Dec. 2015. 136

²³ Lee, Courtland C. "Predicting the Career Choice Attitudes of Rural Black, White, and Native American High School Students." *Vocational Guidance Quarterly* 32.3 (1984): 177-84. *Jstor*. Web. 1 Dec. 2015. 177-184

²⁴ Dillard, John M., and N. Jo Campbell. "Influences of Puerto Rican, Black, and Anglo Parents' Career Behavior on Their Adolescent Children's Career Development." *Vocational Guidance Quarterly* 30.2 (1981): 139-48. *Jstor*. Web. 1 Dec. 2015. 129-149

²⁵ Shipp, Veronica H. "Factors Influencing the Career Choices of African American Collegians: Implications for Minority Teacher Recruitment." *The Journal of Negro Education* 68.3 (1999): 343-51. *Jstor*. Web. 1 Dec. 2015. 344

informed their career choices would also be helpful for museums to position themselves in a way that would entice collegians of colors to pursue a career in the teaching field. Findings of this study can be relevant to the museum field considering the education field, much like the cultural sector, is not as well paid as other professions. Shipp finds that education majors (most likely more similarly inclined to those with interests in museums) placed greater importance on contributions to society while non-education majors placed more significance on salary; it was noted in the survey that collegians often underestimated the salary levels of teachers—a perception that could be negatively affecting the amount of students of color pursuing this path.²⁶ The study also found that African American non-education majors, where potential museum workers can be found, place high importance on salary, advancement opportunities, and job security collectively labeled extrinsic values.²⁷ Shipp goes on to state that a qualitative study in which African-Americans were interviewed to gain insight into why they chose their respective career choice would be helpful and also a crucial step to further resolve the issue of minority recruitment if researchers understand why it is there and why it persists—the same end goal the museum field is currently attempting to reach.²⁸

²⁶ Shipp, *Factors Influencing the Career Choices of African Americans*, 346

²⁷ Shipp, *Factors Influencing the Career Choices of African Americans*, 349

²⁸ Shipp, *Factors Influencing the Career Choices of African Americans*, 350

Primary Research Methodology

For the purpose of this paper a survey was undertaken to better understand why people went into museum careers. From the above literature review it is evident that family, educators, and exposure to varying careers are often important factors in career choice for all people, but specifically students of color. To confirm these findings as transferrable to the museum field, which would then inform the field's action steps to diversify, a survey was created with the intentions of serving as a modified method to gain data since extensive interviews about career choice were out of the question. The survey was hosted on an online platform—Survey Monkey—for ease of use and dissemination. Some survey questions were generated by Survey Monkey to avoid bias and also ensure that certain questions (mainly demographic) were worded in an unobjective way. Specifically, the questions were those that asked how respondents identified themselves racially and in terms of gender.

The survey was kept intentionally short to encourage participation. There were fifteen questions. It began by asking for demographic information and moved in to more substantive questions that explored why they decided to work in museums, length of time in the field, desire to stay in the field, and finally feelings about the level of diversity in the field and their reasons for them. Initially, the aim was to only include responses from people of color and initial distribution reflects this desire. The link to the survey went to a handful of the author's personal contacts and those that MSTD Professor Martha Morris provided, for the sake of anonymity

which was promised in the survey their names are withheld.²⁹ From there additional potential respondents were identified. Word of mouth kept the survey moving and it began to be shared on social media, mainly Facebook and Twitter by popular figures in the museum and diversity conversation. Once this occurred responses exploded and the survey continued to be reposted and shared. The survey was closed about three weeks after its initial distribution on December 1, 2016.

Survey Results

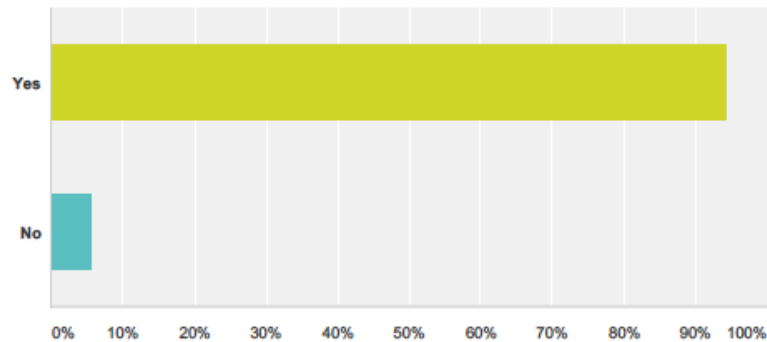
Different methods of analysis were considered once the responses were in including, using museum evaluation methods to turn the qualitative responses into quantitative data. Time and resource limitations made this particular analysis method unachievable. However, it is not necessarily out of the question for future pursuit. The below tables present some aspects of the data gathered.

Answer Choices	Responses	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1.29%	3
Asian / Pacific Islander	6.87%	16
Black or African American	12.45%	29
Hispanic	10.30%	24
White / Caucasian	59.23%	138
Multiple ethnicity / Other (please specify)	9.87%	23
Total		233

²⁹ The survey link was shared on The George Washington University Museum Studies listserv. A select number of people of color who were graduates of the Museum Studies program were also contacted and sent a survey link

Q13 Do you believe there is a lack of racial/ethnic diversity in the museum field?

Answered: 233 Skipped: 0



Looking at responses on an individual basis and in their original prose form lent itself to seeing the whole picture that the survey responses presented. Upon inspection of the 233 survey responses it was clear that many people regardless of color had similar motivations for going into the museum field so all responses were considered not just those by people of color. The most important aspects for this paper's purposes were qualitative and thus anecdotal. These narrative responses shed light on the issues, and four trends and commonalities were easily identifiable.

Trend one is socioeconomic. For those without capital—cultural, social, and monetary—there is lack of exposure. Without special exceptions, many children with low socioeconomic status do not have access to museums (or the things museums collect) and other cultural or arts institutions. They do not have the knowledge or experience to pursue these careers as adults. People that fall into this category also have the perception that museums are places that are not for them—this will be discussed more later. The following direct quotations from respondents, including those who do not identify as people of color reflect the fact that existing museum professionals had exposure to these careers. In these cases they had life

long exposure. In some instances it was later on, but it had to occur in order for them to be informed of the career. These are answers to question eleven, which reads "Please provide more information about the most influential factor and how you were affected?"

1. "Environment in which I was raised was most influential factor - there was an interest in the arts and history (mother an artist; grandmother operated antique business). Was taken to some, not many, museums and historic sites as a child; lived in a historic house (built 1860); was aware a resources in the local community in which I lived. Went to museums on field trips. Interesting "things" were always around and they all had some sort of story that was interesting. Objects, buildings and environments were tangible and told stories of people around the world."

2. "Growing up, my family took me to museums, zoos, and aquariums religiously. My folks are both artists/designers with an interest in ecological conservation so art and science are very important to my family. My mother is a textile conservation technician and my father is an industrial designer. When I was in college I had a work/study job at the local children's museum and that was where I fell in love with children's museums in particular."

Trend two is economic. This differs from socioeconomic because the focus is not on cultural capital and exposure, but purely on finances. If someone from an underprivileged background has exposure to the arts and museums they may still be excluded from the field because of the training necessary to obtain a position. In many museums today entry-level support and administrative positions require

advanced degrees. These degrees are expensive but deemed necessary. In many cases there is also not a lot of financial aid to attend these programs at the respective institutions and scholarships. In addition to the upper level degrees, extensive experience is required. This is often in the form of unpaid internships- some of which require fulltime work. Unless a support system is in place many students cannot take these internships and cannot gain the needed experience.

Many minorities who historically have not had the same economic opportunity as their non-minority counterparts cannot afford to take low or non- paying jobs that qualify as entry level, but also put workers on the career track. It must be mentioned that the return on investment is low. Salaries in museums barely pay for the loans the pursuit of higher education required and living expenses, until mid to late career pinnacle positions, including chief executive officers, chief operating officers, vice president, and department heads, are reached. Many minority families cannot support those pursuing these careers and there is no incentive to do so because of the low pay expected. Some students of color attending college and graduate school are the first in their families to do so. They are seen as the future and sometimes as a first step out of poverty. For these students it would be unwise to pursue this career for their own sake and the sake of their families. The following direct quotations reflect this trend. These are answers to question fourteen that asked respondents to elaborate on why they believed there is a lack of diversity in the museum field.

1. "It's not an easy field for people outside the top economic strata to pursue. I couldn't support myself, let alone a family, with a museum salary in the nearest

major city. In addition, you have to be able to afford post-graduate education and/or significant unpaid time as an intern, fellow, or volunteer to be competitive in the job market, requiring a large up-front investment for pretty limited financial return. Degree programs don't try to recruit a more diverse student pool (in part because of the resource drain). Finally, the institutions that CAN pay employees a living wage generally target white, affluent audiences, and are less interested/able to attract or retain a diverse staff base.”

2. “Lack of outreach or accessible/affordable avenues to enter the field, low wages, unconscious bias in hiring practices, inclusion not a priority”

Trend three, or recruitment of the same types of people, is a result of trends one and two. The applicant pools for museum positions are homogeneous-those from museums studies and other museum focused programs, or those who already work in museums. People who want to break into museums are often looked over for insiders. According to multiple respondents job postings often don't go to new pools of people. Announcements are often sent to the same places and within the same networks. The following direct quotations reflect this trend.

1. “Where to begin? So many reasons! The majority of museum studies/education programs do not prioritize diversity in their recruitment of students. They do not challenge the traditional academic programs of study that museum studies/education students usually come from so the same type of student is continually recruited (largely white cis females). They do not purposefully challenge the museum status quo through critical self-analysis, nor

do they actively build students' cultural competencies so that they are equipped to be change agents in the field. Except for a few voices, the field as a whole seems unwilling to address the systems of oppression that museums actively participate in that keep people of color, Indigenous peoples, and people with disabilities out of the field. Difficult conversations are not had and real action is not taken. I can go on, but I'll stop here.”

2. “Limited pool as a result of the following: - museums and higher education institutions not doing enough to encourage entry into the field - the field privileges those with privilege (socio-economic, political, etc.) - Museums have not made a strong enough commitment to diversity internally (board, staff) and are prone to hiring those with traditional education and training.”

People of color avoiding museum work because of the existing lack of diversity, or trend four is a result of trends one through three coupled with history. Because of the existing lack of diversity a cycle has been created. The homogeneity of the field is a deterrent. It has become a cycle that would have to be eradicated. Many people of color do not want to join fields in which they are an extreme minority, they have questions as to why this is so: is the field exclusionary, are there racial issues in the field etc.

In addition to the deterrent cycle that exists there is also a lack of mentors or educators due to already mentioned reasons and also conscious and unconscious hiring bias by those in the field. There are not many people of color in the museum field in upper level positions thus many potential professionals do not have the guidance needed. This does not mean that people of color cannot have mentors

from other races and ethnicities, but rather that it is necessary to be mentored in some fashion by a professional that has had the same life and cultural experiences.. People of color do not see their history in the content or field or in the professional make up of its workforce so they do not pursue these jobs.

1. "One reason I think is that the history of museums is a very "western" concept, originally representing and targeting certain populations and histories. This has shifted but I think reverberations of that still remain in certain ways in terms of audiences and who is in the field. For example, thinking about my story and history with museums, having not really visited them growing up, how can I picture myself in the museum if was never exposed to one? Additionally, I think the very fact that there is a lack of racial/ethnic diversity in the field is also a deterrent. I know for me that it is so powerful for me to see other people of color in the field and especially in leadership positions – with the lack I think sometimes I have a feeling of not belonging or that reaching a certain point is not possible. With that being said, I think having some kind of a pipeline or mentorship program to support students of color in pursuing these careers or showing that careers like these exist would be awesome, and I know there are various iterations out there. Also, to be frank, I think pay especially for entry-level positions is a deterrent. For those who may be coming from poverty or a working-class backgrounds, lucrative pay is almost a necessity to break the cycle and will thus make other fields look more viable."

2. "I don't believe there is much training or awareness of the role of cultural

competence in both serving people of color as visitors or as training, recruiting, or working with POC. Museums have long served as the bastions of white cultural supremacy and relinquishing that control is difficult for many, but even for those who wish to engage these challenges, there is little acknowledgement of the role of culture, expectations, and communication in working with people whose backgrounds are different from your own. This affects racial, ethnic, linguistic, socioeconomic bias very strongly, but also plays a role in many other conflicts between museum staff and their visitors (or non-visitors).”

From the 233 respondents—the overwhelming majority of which had quality utilizable responses—it became clear that respondents’ reasons were not completely different based on race, but rather the most significant difference appears to be based on socioeconomic status—which informs exposure to museums as viable career choices. Essentially, most respondents cited similar reasons for pursuing museums careers, which would be having had exposure as a child or a mentor or educator who encouraged pursuit, but considering there is still a lack of diversity it can be concluded that the reason is more based on exposure to opportunity, which unfortunately is correlated with race and ethnicity.

This conclusion mirrors Bobo et al’s findings, specifically that Whites have more exposure to various careers through their life experiences. Impetus for choosing a career is not mainly found in race, but rather socioeconomic status, which informs cultural capital, exposure to various careers and also the opportunities an individual knows about. It boils down to some races having a higher status and

thus more exposure and opportunity to learn and others having less exposure, however when those from lower socioeconomic status do have the opportunity to be exposed to careers in museums and the cultural sector they pursue them as much as their lifestyles allow. This is especially relevant to the museum field because museums have a perception of being an elitist ivory tower for only the rich, or white people. Because of their exclusionary history based on both race and class and also the current state of the workforce it is easy to see why this perception has persisted.

To dig deeper into the current state of the museum workforce more extensive research is needed to find the rates of exposure and subsequent career pursuit to make more informed connections between the two. This further study would also be useful in determining factors other than exposure that matter. These other factors include cultural perception and prestige, which undoubtedly differs between races much like their perceptions of museums do. However with the current data there is enough understanding of the root of the issue to begin to suggest how it can be rectified in the future.

Why Does This Matter?

Former American Alliance of Museums President Ford W. Bell states “if you go to a museum and you don’t see anyone who looks like you, from visitors to staff and the boards are not reflecting the community, you may be less likely to come

back or even to go in the first place.”³⁰ Nor to will you be likely pursue a career in the institution. It is a damaging cycle. People of color do not go to museums because they do not see themselves reflected and then they do not have the exposure needed to foster the desire to pursue this career path, thus leaving the workforce the same and perpetuating the cycle.

Many survey respondents noted that people of diverse backgrounds do not know about the career paths available in museums. Bobo et al’s findings inform the museum field that children should be exposed to these careers as early as possible. Children of diverse backgrounds must be exposed to museum careers. More children belonging to underrepresented groups should be brought into museums and exposed the multiplicity of careers with in and museum representatives should go into the community. Much like other professions are well known to children the museums field must make it a priority to become a well known and thus desirable. Children should be exposed to curators, educators, conservators, exhibition designers, registrars and collections managers. According to Bobo et al it is important to “acquaint children who are ethnically diverse and from lower socioeconomic backgrounds with career opportunities that might transcend their socioeconomic background.”³¹ If the field actively educated about how it functions from the outside in, in addition to their content and subject matter a more diverse pool of future workers could become a reality.

³⁰ Museum Magazine, Johnnetta Betsch Cole, 30

³¹ Mackie Bobo, Bertina L Hildreth, Beth Durodoye, Features: Focus on Elementary Schools Changing Paterns in Career Choices Among African-American, Hispanic, and Anglo Children Page 41

Currently there are some museums with efforts devoted to diversity. One noteworthy example is the Smithsonian Institution. The Smithsonian has an office of Equal Employment and Minority Affairs (OEEMA) has a mission to ensure compliance with regulations, and by doing so “they advocate and promote diversity and affirmative employment” amongst other initiatives that relate to the diversification of the institution.³² From perusal of their website their goal is not necessarily to attract more representative individuals to work at the museum, but rather protect and serve those who currently work there who are pursuing a position there in the case of hiring practices. While it does not seem to proactively pursue diversification it is a step in the right direction and its existence provides a starting point if the institution were to want to create programs to actively pursue diversifying itself and the museum field as a whole.

Where Does the Museum Field Go From Here?

Dr. Westermann wrote in the Mellon survey “At a time of unprecedented rates of demographic change in the United States...a concerted effort must be undertaken and supported by many organizations, to make the country’s art museums more representative of the growing diversity of the American people”³³ While they also argue that demographics should be based and mirrored on a local level-closer to stakeholders and community, it is necessary to start nationally, with the top

³² Smithsonian Office of Equal Employment and Minority Affairs

³³ Schonfeld, Westerman, and Sweeny, Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey, 3

organizations in the field setting standards and precedents. What does this start look like? How does the field begin to make change?

Top organizations in the field including Ford and Andrew W. Mellon Foundations, professional associations such as the American Alliance of Museums and the Association of Art Museum Directors, and large museum institutions such as the Smithsonian Institution, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Getty Trust, and the training programs, colleges and universities from which the a large number of members of the current workforce hails, could stand to look to the for-profit sector for guidance and adapt their practices. Darren Walker, President of the Ford Foundation, recently spoke with Agnes Gund, President Emerita of the Museum of Modern Art. During their conversation Walker reiterates that museums are public institutions and need to reflect the public. Museums would be wise to take heed from the for-profit sector, which has more successful diversity because “incentives and accountability metrics are in place.” It is financially advantageous to diversify board and the work force.³⁴ Dr. Johnnetta Cole’s American Alliance of Museums Keynote Address also discusses looking to the for-profit sector for guidance. She states, “there is a business case for diversity. It says if businesses are to compete effectively in this global economy, they must have within their company employees of diverse backgrounds who will bring different and innovative ideas to the table.”³⁵ If businesses whose main focus is ensure profit are actively diversifying, shouldn’t

³⁴ "Diversity in the Arts: Darren Walker and Agnes Gund." *YouTube*. YoutTube, 21 Sept. 2015. Web. 4 Jan. 2016.

³⁵ Museum Magazine, Johnnetta Betsch Cole, 29

museums be going above and beyond to do the same thing considering they belong to the public and the very people that they do not represent.

Agnes Gund in her conversation with Walker also discusses a solution to what many survey respondents cited as a reason more people of color do not go into museums: lack of field knowledge. According to Ms. Gund, the Center for Curatorial Leadership has a program that requires its members to mentor someone from a different background thus providing them with exposure and experience in a field that they would have never considered with out this program. Steps like this ensure that diverse audiences become familiar with the career options available to the will assist in the increase of diversity. This solution is an answer many reported in the survey. The importance of mentors is also reiterated in the findings of Bobo et al, which suggest pairing “individual children with mentors who can provide them with information and experiences in museum careers.”³⁶

The extrinsic values noted in the work done by Veronica H. Shipp including salary, job security, and career advancement opportunities should be evaluated and corrected if need be in order to be competitive in the job market and appear as desirable as possible to attract the very best talent to the museum field.³⁷ “Low salaries are a deterrent in the recruitment of African American teachers” and arguably a deterrent to museum careers.³⁸

³⁶ Bobo, Hildreth, and Durodoye, *Changing Patterns*, 41

³⁷ Shipp, *Factors Influencing the Career Choices of African Americans*, 349

³⁸ Shipp, *Factors Influencing the Career Choices of African Americans*, 349

Diversity in the For-Profit Sector as a Guide

For-profit organizations have been making a concerted effort to diversify their workforce. Some programs are exceptionally successful and can be used as an example for museums. PricewaterhouseCoopers is number three on DiversityInc's Top 50 list. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers Senior Partner, Bob Moritz, their diversity efforts lead to its success.³⁹ Diversity is a major initiative—Moritz states “We have a long-standing commitment to diversity and inclusion. A diverse organization generates diverse ideas, and that’s important to our clients, our broader stakeholder group, and to our ability to help solve the important problems facing the organizations we serve, the communities we operate in, and society as a whole.”⁴⁰ It is important to note the firm includes white men in the diversity and inclusion conversation emphasizing the importance of diversity and inclusion as a priority of everyone among their ranks. PricewaterhouseCoopers also employs a Chief Diversity Officer to ensure the company actively pursues this initiative.⁴¹ From the office of the Chief Diversity Officer a booklet called “Leveraging the Power of our Difference” highlights the positives that result from diversity and inclusion including increased innovation and creative solutions to issues, which in the end increases performance and drives better results.⁴² From this corporation and others our museums should adopt an organization- wide commitment to diversity; they should make every staff member understand the importance of diversity and educate staff

³⁹ "PricewaterhouseCoopers | DiversityInc Top 50." *DiversityInc*. 2015. Web. 5 Feb. 2016.

⁴⁰ DiversityInc, PricewaterhouseCoopers

⁴¹ "Our Commitment to Diversity." *PwC*. Web. 5 Feb. 2016.

⁴² PricewaterhouseCoopers, *Leveraging the Power of our Difference*, 2-5

to know that diversity is not just for the benefit of minorities, but everyone. The museum field should take heed and actively recruit to increase their audiences, those they reach with their programs and their budgets which can in turn increase salaries solving a problem noted as a deterrent in the field. It is essential to inform museum staff that diversity and inclusion is beneficial to the organization as a whole—including those the museum serves: constituents.

Target Corporation, a household name is also included on DiversityInc's Top 50 List.⁴³ At number 25, they employ similar strategies to PricewaterhouseCoopers. Target also has a top official devoted to diversity. Kim Strong, Vice President, Diversity and Inclusion states "At Target, Diversity & Inclusion is a mindset. It's about being different, each one of us, and having those differences celebrated, acknowledged and leveraged for the good of our team members, guests and company. At its best, Diversity & Inclusion is how we drive business outcomes. We seek out varied backgrounds, styles and perspectives because the more inclusive we are, the better we do as a team and a company."⁴⁴ From her quotation we see that once again final outcomes drive diversity efforts. If profits of these major corporations are increasing due to diversity and inclusion it follows that diversity and inclusion efforts are getting more customers in the door to use their services. This is an essential goal of museums to increase audiences and fulfill their missions by reaching as many people as possible in a positive and substantive manner. Brian Cornell the Chief Executive Officer of Target outlines this in a quotation provided to

⁴³ <http://www.diversityinc.com/target/>

⁴⁴ "Target | DiversityInc Top 50." *DiversityInc*. 2015. Web. 5 Feb. 2016.

DiversityInc-“Diversity and inclusivity play critically important roles in organizations like ours that serve consumers and guests. Providing a work environment where all feel welcome, respected and valued for their unique backgrounds translates into a meaningful and engaging guest experience. Diversity and inclusivity make our team and Target better for our guests and communities.”⁴⁵ Museums also aim to make their experiences meaningful to guests and communities-the field can use Target’s success as proof that diversity and inclusion works to successfully achieve this aim. By actively diversifying now the field future professionals will be more inclined to pursue a career in museums and the issue will only improve. The action steps that Target has taken to increase diversity include a cross-cultural mentoring initiative. A cross-cultural mentorship program would be especially helpful in the museum field considering many survey respondents attributed their pursuit of a museum career to having a mentor or someone they looked up to in the field or knowledgeable of the field encourage them to pursue this career path.

The final corporation considered was the Walt Disney Company appearing as number thirty-four on DiversityInc’s list.⁴⁶ As a corporation focused on entertainment it can be considered a major source of competition to the museum field in terms of attracting guests; however Walt Disney Company is also a partner or a service provider offering trainings in guest services that some museums can gain useful skills from. Walt Disney Company can also be considered an example in terms of diversity and inclusion. Again, we see the presence of a Chief Diversity Officer. Paul

⁴⁵ DiversityInc, Target

⁴⁶ "The Walt Disney Company | DiversityInc Top 50." *DiversityInc*. 2015. Web. 5 Feb. 2016.

Richardson serves as Disney's top diversity official. Richardson says the following of Walt Disney Company's commitment to diversity. "By making diversity and inclusion a priority we build a better company for our employees, consumers and guests because we create stories, characters and experiences that reflect the rich diversity of the world around us."⁴⁷ Again diversity advances business. And as a company most similar to the museum field in terms of goals (when considering the theme parks) of the museum field Richardson's quotation reflects what museums hope to do for their public-to create and tell stories and experience that reflect the diversity of the world around them, but rather than do this through entertainment museums seek to do so through mission driven exhibitions, collections and programs.

The museum field should note the repeat appearance of a top diversity employee and perhaps a counterpart should be established in museums. While museums may not have resources to hire someone for a position solely focused on diversification of programs and the workforce nor is a position necessary for these institutions, which are much smaller than the international corporations we are looking at a solution should be sought. Perhaps creating a diversity committee or team-which includes a human resources officer should be considered. These committees and employees can institute programs that inform children-the future of the workforce-of the career options in museums, they can also institute initiatives to further expose and institute initiatives to mentor young adults-if these things were to

⁴⁷ DiversityInc, The Walt Disney Company

happen museums would see a shift in the demographics of museum professionals that would potentially err toward a more representative workforce.

Conclusion

The unexpectedly high response rate of a survey that sought to gain insight from a small number of people illustrates how important diversity is to today's museum workforce. People recognize a change must be made and are eager to begin. While more guidance is needed it is clear that diversification of the workforce is imperative and possible.

In terms of finding solutions to mirror, I agree with Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole and Darren Walker when they suggest looking to the for-profit world. While the for-profit sector's initiatives regarding diversity and inclusion cannot and should not be mirrored exactly they provide templates and ideas that many of current talented workforce can adapt to fit museums and cultural institutions. However, in order for this to occur it is necessary to have strong leadership, guidance, support and encouragement.

There is a renewed focus on creating a diverse and inclusive museum field. Professional organizations are a part of this effort -the American Alliance of Museums has employed a fellow to actively research diversity in the workforce and the Association of Art Museum Directors has begun to raise awareness of the issue by facilitating conversations such as the aforementioned dialogue between Agnes Gund and Darren Walker. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Ford Foundation are focusing their programming, funding, projects and initiatives on

opportunities to increase diversity and inclusion in the arts and museums. With these efforts there is hope that years of apathy can be corrected and we can look forward to a future where the museum workforce better reflects the population. And when this future occurs we can be sure that museums will be able to better serve their communities and advance their missions to the fullest potential.

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