

Queer Representation and Inclusion within U.S. Museums

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Research Capstone

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Queer Representation and Inclusion within U.S.-based Museums

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Abstract

The purpose of this research capstone is to provide an overview and examination on the landscape of queer-themed art held within U.S.-based museums, and to identify methods of incorporating substantial queer-themed exhibitions within U.S.-based museums. I chose to focus my examination on the landscape by looking at the forms of representation and inclusion of queer art and artists within U.S.-based museums. Historically, the depiction of queer-themed art and artists within U.S.-based museums have been portrayed in a few specific ways. While these portrayals are important, I argue that when museums continue to portray queer-identified people in these specific ways it perpetuates stereotypes and the social construction of what is thought to be normal. This research also looks at the use of power, oppression, and socially constructed ideas of heteronormativity to inform the common queer-themed exhibitions. The discussion about the effects of power and socially constructed ideas of heteronormativity surfaced while researching the various queer-themed exhibitions due to many of the exhibitions featuring many common stereotypes and tropes. Using two literature reviews and a comparative case study, I examine and analyze various queer-related exhibitions within U.S.-based museums in their relation to representation and inclusion. This research capstone was conducted to gain a better understanding of the types of queer-themed exhibits that are commonly featured within U.S.-based museums. The research was also done to examine the impact that these common exhibition themes have on the representation of queer-identified people, and to identify possible methods for creating more substantial forms of representation and inclusion for queer art and artists.

Keywords: Queer, Representation, Inclusion, Censorship, Narrative, Museum Practice

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Study

Problem Statement and Background

Traditionally, within U.S.-based museums, there have been a few ways in which queer art has been portrayed. The few ways in which queer art or the LGBTQ community in a general sense have been depicted in museums has the tendency to fall into two main categories: overtly sexualized or de-sexualized. The exhibits focusing on the overt sexualization of queer individuals tend to be graphic or erotic in nature, and the de-sexualized exhibits focus on the horror stories of living with and dying of HIV/AIDs. These two dimensions of presenting queer art have been deemed "queer junk" (Bak, 2008, p.332) by Paul Gabriel, a former Exhibits Director of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society of San Francisco. These common trends in the ways that queer art is shown in museums have contributed greatly to negative associations, stereotyping, and have affected how museums make queer art available. For the purposes of this research, the examination of queer art and artists in museums and the subsequent findings will be primarily focused on U.S.-based museums. That is not to say that the any of the findings won't be applicable to museums outside of the US, but the information gathered within this research will be drawn from U.S.-based museums.

Both museum foci have become so common, almost the norm; so much so that they have contributed greatly to queer stereotypes and have neglected to present a more realistic and well-rounded picture of the LGBTQ community. Within many museums, there has been the tendency to produce queer exhibits (regardless of the subject matter) that are big one-off exhibitions or that focus on flamboyant behavior. When taking stock of the queer art and artists within U.S.-based museums today, it can be very difficult to locate

queer art, queer-themed art¹ or queer exhibits that are not an occasional specialty exhibition. As recently as 2011, many U.S.-based museums had done little to represent the LGBTQ community. And some museum staff expressed that telling queer stories was viewed as a risk. Nonetheless, there have been great strides in representation since the Equality Act of 2010. In 2012, Richard Sandell, author of *Museums, Equality, and Social Justice*, discussed the changes of subject matter and amount of LGBTQ exhibitions in U.S.-based museums within the previous fifty years. However, there has been an even greater demand for increased representation of queer art in museums since the enactment of the Equality Act. This demand for an increased in substantial queer art within museums is not exclusive to the U.S., but can be seen internationally as well.

In recent years, there has been a change in the way queer art and artists have been represented, but that representation continues to be greatly lacking in terms of both quality and quantity. This change can be seen in the numerous articles advertising “must see” queer exhibitions and queer stories-but most those “must see” queer exhibits are on temporary display. Within U.S.-based museums, it appears that queer art and artists as permanent fixtures continue to be few and far between. When queer art is on exhibit, that tendency for it to be a special exhibition or a one-off occurrence is present, rather than queer art being permanently or frequently displayed because it has been fully incorporated within the museum. Another common trend for many of the queer-themed exhibits is to perpetuate normative ideas of how people should behave or live. These normative ideas often reveal themselves as an assumption that all queer-identified individuals aim to live their lives replicating a heterosexual relationship, or other heteronormative ideas. This lack of substantial representation and inclusion, where queer art and artists are not considered to be a part of the fabric of the museum, is an area that requires further research. The

¹ Art that wasn't necessarily originally intended to discuss queer themes but can be connected or associated through further examination.

results of this research will make museums better able to evaluate the queer associations within their collections, identify occasions where queer stories within their permanent exhibits have been silenced, and provide inclusive spaces for their queer audiences by reducing stigmas.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which queer art and artists are incorporated in U.S.-based museums. This examination will explore how, and how much queer art and artists are incorporated into museums, focusing specifically on identifying historical and current practices for queer representation and inclusion within U.S.-based museums. This will be done through researching both past and current common practices that contribute to the decision of having queer exhibitions, and examining these practices through both a museum theory and a queer theory lens.

Significance of Study

There are two primary benefits of this study. The first benefit is the potential to identify methods to overcome current barriers that keep queer art and artists from representation and inclusion within museums. Through an extensive review of common museum practices and the available literature, this research will examine a wide variety of areas of stereotyping and heteronormativity to discern what methods or practices are vital to incorporating queer art and artists in a more normalized manner.

The second benefit is that to date; few researchers have sought to identify historical and current practices for representation and inclusion of queer art and artists. This research aims to provide future researchers a resource that synthesizes a wide variety of information into a single document. It should be noted that, because of the lack of pre-existing research, it is difficult to define exactly what constitutes proper representation and

inclusion of queer art and artists in U.S.-based museums. These concepts are in a gray area and will require further rigorous research to provide an adequate definition.

Chapter 2: Research Design

Theoretical Framework

The first area that needs to be researched is the historical representation of queer art and artists in U.S.-based museums. Looking at historical representation (starting around 1967) will provide a broader understanding of the types of exhibitions that have been presented, how many LGBTQ-related (both directly and indirectly) exhibitions have taken place and what hindrances typically impede the decision to mount such exhibitions. During the late 1960s, the younger generation of LGBT Americans were beginning to fight for visibility, civil rights, and feminist liberation. A broad overview of the historical representation of queer exhibits will review exhibitions from outside of the U.S. because some of the most influential queer exhibitions began internationally. Many museums in Europe from the late 1990s to the early 2000s had major queer exhibitions, both in terms of size and public response. The first literature review will discuss a few of the important international queer exhibitions and how the exhibitions were received by the local community. Through reviewing existing scholarship, this research will use the historical representation of queer art and artists as the background for understanding current U.S.-based museum practices and to better understand today's discussions on the topic of queer art in museums. The historical representations of queer art and artists, examined through a museum theory lens, create the base of this research and will support the expansion into other areas, those previous exhibitions creating the foundation and narrative of how queer art and artists were displayed in museums.

The second focus of the research is exhibitions currently² being presented in U.S.-based museums. Within this focus there will be an overview of the size of the exhibits,

² Exhibitions held in U.S.-based museums between 2010-2017.

what the common types or themes found within queer-related exhibitions, and the most prominent locations where these exhibitions are taking place³. Researching the information within the second focus will result in an overview of the current landscape of queer art within U.S.-based museums. It will not cover every single queer exhibition but it will provide a general overview of what exhibitions are being offered to and for the LGBTQ community. This information will serve as the background, allowing this research to focus on two specific museums for the case study section. Research into current queer art will lay a portion of the foundation and provide a better understanding for myself as the researcher as to what is currently available to queer art and artists. This portion of the research will be very broad and will act as an overview, providing guidance and structure to the case studies being conducted.

The information gathered through researching the historical representation of queer art and artists connects strongly to present-day exhibitions. Past exhibitions have laid the groundwork for certain interpretations and expectations concerning queer art and have influenced current museum practice. Building off this groundwork, the second area of focus for this research will work to examine and challenge these expectations for queer art and artists. Simply knowing what different queer-themed exhibitions can be found within U.S.-based museums does not provide enough information about representation and inclusion. But through examining how queer-themed exhibitions connect to larger social concepts and their relationship to power and oppression, one can better understand the idea for an increase in substantial representation of queer art and artists within U.S.-based museums.

³ Both geographical locations and museum types.

This second area of focus will be examined and presented through the lens of Queer Theory⁴.

Design of the Study

Methodological paradigm

The methodological paradigm I am working in is deconstructionist. The deconstructionist paradigm works to identify typical binaries and hegemonic relationships and then reverse them. This allows the researcher to look at the area between the dominant viewpoint and the oppressed viewpoint. The deconstructionist paradigm was chosen because it aligns greatly with the focus of this research. Through an examination of the relationship between representation and inclusion of queer art and artists in U.S.-based museums, the heteronormative perspectives of how and when queer art should be presented within museums will be questioned and critiqued. This paradigm questions typical concepts of power and focuses on that which is oppressed. The information gathered through books, articles and online will be interpreted and then questioned based on the deconstructionist paradigm.

Research Questions

The main research question that developed through this capstone is: *what are the historical and/or current practices for queer representation and inclusion within U.S.-based museums?* To answer this question, I also developed sub-questions that allowed me to further explore my topic of research. These sub-questions included:

- How does the subject matter or theme of the exhibition affect queer representation?

⁴ Queer Theory challenges the common notions of homosexuality and heterosexuality within the mainstream. This theory brings an understanding of sexuality that challenges the concept of heteronormativity or the ideology of straight hegemony.

- What are some common factors that contribute to the decision to mount queer exhibits?
- What role does the definition of the word 'queer' contribute to representation and inclusion in museums?
- What are some possible best practices for queer representation and inclusion within U.S.-based museums?

Research Bias

I recognize that my personal interest in museums and my experience within the queer community may provide grounds for potential bias. My perspective may be seen as personal context but will not be used as evidence and will not influence my objective analysis or the subsequent findings. I am very interested in forms of expression and how they can lead to understanding, acceptance and support, but I also have to work to confront my own assumptions about topics of sexuality, sexual expression, artistic expression and communities.

Through the Queer Theory course, I could identify areas of my own personal bias and further examine them. The course allowed me to delve deep into the literature around queer theory, politics, and queering different aspects of life. Because of interactions within the class, I am biased towards the idea of scrutinizing stereotypes, social norms, and heteronormativity and determining where Queer Theory intersects these concepts and challenges them. My intent is to bring further light to these areas while also examining how museums can play a crucial role in dismantling issues of prejudice and assimilation.

Delimitations

For this research, I had to set parameters to determine which museums would be within the case study and what literature I would focus on. The museums focused on within the case study are limited to the United States. However, a great deal of the material that exists about equity and inclusion within museums comes from an international context as

well as a high art museum context⁵. So, to not overlook queer/queer-related exhibits or museums outside the US, the literature reviewed will include some international perspectives and exhibitions. I limited the number and geographical location of the museums within the case study to focus on two specific museums and presented the findings in a comparative format. There was no field research; all the information gathered about the museums was from each museum's website as well as any articles written about their contribution to the queer community⁶.

Limitations

This research is limited by the fact that all other the information gathered and analyzed is done through review of physical and online materials. This research cannot cover every possible aspect of this topic nor can it be a generalized set of information that only works within a specific context. Therefore, by following the parameters set in place to direct my methods to literature reviews and a case study, I am only able to provide information about queering museums and queer exhibitions through analyzing the documents acquired and not through interviews or on-site visits.

⁵ By "high art museums" I mean museums that specialize in classic and contemporary art, as well as not necessarily being accessible to those within lower economic classes.

⁶ Primarily focused on "contribution" in the form of exhibitions, whether they are special exhibits or a part of their main rotating exhibits.

Chapter 3: Literature Review #1: Museum Theory

Statement of Problem

Museums offer communities an invaluable amount of access to art and culture that covers a broad range of themes, art, and artists. They function as a resource to provide further knowledge and access to aspects of similar and different cultures' past, present and possible future. Depending upon the type of museum the content changes, pieces that are artful or beautiful are predominantly located within art museums or galleries, older artifacts that are from a specific place and time are found in history museums, and the list goes on. And while museums are vessels for sharing the lives of people and the artistic qualities of artists within the framework and practice of museums, there is a distinct lack of representation, accurate or otherwise, within the framework and practice of museums, of minorities. Throughout the history of museum practice, the male gaze has been the dominant way in which women are represented. In other words, the female form was usually depicted as scantily clad and very curvaceous. But when women had to take jobs due to the Second World War, there started to be a stronger push back for a change in how museums represent under-represented populations. Feminist theory provides the framework when discussing past and current museum practices regarding their views and depictions of sex and gender. This theory is often used because the roles and issues that surround gender and sex are greatly related to queer issues. And through all this discussion, it is easier to see and understand how and why the LGBTQ community continues to be neglected within the museum framework. There is no way to identify exactly how long queer artists have been around, but it stands to reason that they have been around just as long as heterosexual artists; queer artists and queer art continue to grow and so does the desire to have equal representation and inclusion within museums.

The fight for LGBTQ inclusion, in general, is not new and the discussion for queering museums has been examined many times over, but that does not lessen the power behind the goal. LGBTQ people are a part of a large community throughout the world, and in recent years, the LGBTQ community has been making headway when fighting for equal rights and inclusion. And one area of society that is slowly including the LGBTQ community into their practice is art and culture museums. For the purposes of this research, discussions of museums refer to U.S.-based museums unless specified otherwise. But no matter where museums are located queer related art and artists are predominantly underrepresented in comparison to that of heterosexual art and artists.

The discussion not only of queer representation but also of an increased presence of both queer artists and art about the queer community has been going on for decades. This ongoing discussion has not diminished; if anything, the demand for change and inclusion within museums has increased and intensified. Much of the argument for queering museums stems from the desire that queer people want to see their culture and their history reflected within a socially accepted institution just like heterosexuals. Those who identify along the queer spectrum are an integral part of society, and therefore, they should be represented within museums just like any other minority population. Having museums incorporate and acknowledge past queer artists would create a change in the narrative that runs through most history museums on a constant basis, with art museums having slightly adjusted their narrative at times. There have been a few major queer exhibits held within museums, both nationally and internationally, which hold a lot of significance in LGBTQ history and have provided a great deal of evidence for how people react towards queer-centered exhibits. Because the following examples of exhibitions are only a small handful of examples that have taken place, and that this research focuses more on qualitative quantitative results, there needs to be more research on this topic to

gain a broader understanding of the history of people striving to have museums equally represent the LGBTQ Community.

Much of the terminology that is used throughout this research paper is very specific to the context being discussed but is very broad in definition. In some respects, the words LGBTQ and queer can be used interchangeably because they hold such similar meanings, or have aspects that overlap greatly. I will be using them interchangeably as general terms but each word has its own set of meanings and connotations that change how others understand and feel about them. For example, the word 'queer' has its own set of meanings; it was once considered and used as a hateful slur but has since gone through a change and many have reclaimed it as a label to be worn with pride. Word choice is a very difficult topic for some because of its past derogatory meaning, but I will be using both terms because they have such similar meanings. I will not be picking only one term because deciding that there is one perfect umbrella term is not correct since LGBTQ leaves out those that do not identify with those five letters and queer is not for everyone. Queer and LGBTQ will be used about anyone that identifies as not being heterosexual and/or cisgender.

I will use "culture" and "LGBTQ Community" in very similar ways, with culture being an aspect or subset within the LGBTQ community. These are broad, all-encompassing terms used to describe a group or groups of people that have similar or shared values, beliefs, and a common identity. There are different opinions within groups of people who are connected via a shared identity, but for the purposes of this paper that will be how I use and define culture. It is important to acknowledge that not everyone that identifies as LGBTQ feels the same way about queering museums, and even those that have similar feelings can and do have differences within them. Also, the terms or acronyms chosen hold their own stigma and assumptions and there are issues surrounding the word choice.

Within the LGBTQ community, some people advocate for the labeling to not be a simple acronym because within the white heteronormative narrative, labels are given to segment or place populations into boxes. And because gender and sexuality are so fluid, having one specific, easy to use, all-encompassing term does not work for those who do not identify as heterosexual. It is important to acknowledge this viewpoint, because this examination of underrepresented populations having more inclusion within museums has a great deal to do with determining who is not being represented and what are the best possible practices for inclusion of this group of people. Words have power, and museums not including “LGBTQ” or “Queer” makes a statement about who is welcomed and who is an outsider.

Analysis

As discussed in Amy Levin’s (2012) *Unpacking Gender*, “queering museums” is not a simple process but it is one that needs to be incorporated within museums. To properly include LGBTQ representation throughout museums it is not enough to display objects that are related to individuals who identify as LGBTQ or that depict LGBTQ themes. There needs to be a change from the current and common modes of thought, narrative, and assumption when it comes to queer representation in art. The common thought that is prevalent throughout most of society about sex and gender is that there is gay and straight, male and female. In fact, there are those who do not fall in line with the gay-straight and/or male-female binary and thus do not adhere to the strict gender norms that are deeply rooted in most societal norms. The common narrative that continues to hold a strong precedence in museums is that the story is told to and about the white, heterosexual, able-bodied male. This narrative is a major problem for the museum world, both in terms of how underrepresented communities view museums and how this narrative adds further restrictions for underrepresented populations within the community to visit museums.

Because this current narrative is the dominant one, many past LGBTQ exhibitions have been designed with subthemes to show how different and even abnormal queer people are; this has in turn affected what the average museum goer expects or assumes a queer-themed exhibition will be about. The common assumption or expectation is a very important part of the discussion of creating better inclusion within museums for and of the LGBTQ community because merely replacing the dominant assumption with another is not a better option. It does not create inclusion and or foster strong relationships between communities. It only sets up another set of boundaries to dominate the LGBTQ community and continues the cycle. This depiction of LGBTQ people and LGBTQ art has been called “queer junk” by many researchers and authors because it is an inappropriate way to constantly portray queer people. As Paul Gabriel, former Exhibits Director of GLBT Historical Society argues “...one-dimensional programming contributes to the negative associations...the result...is either a hyper-sexualized queerness...or a desexualized queerness... (Bak, 2008, p.332). Many LGBTQ exhibits are “one-dimensional”, in that they are either hyper-sexualized exhibits about kinky and often taboo sex or de-sexualized exhibits where the presence of HIV/AIDS makes LGBTQ people the subject of pity (Bak, 2008). The narrative needs to deviate away from the overly simplistic view so that the assumptions do not continue to be reinforced. There is so much diversity and complexity to identifying as LGBTQ, as for others no matter what their identity, that museums cannot justify why the same type of LGBTQ-themed exhibits continue to be shown. If the issue that museums are facing when discussing queer inclusion is due to pushback from some members of the community, it is crucial to consider that increased awareness, exposure and understanding will help to lessen any tension around sensitive or difficult topics. It is also necessary to note that those used to a lifestyle with privilege would not be losing their privilege; rather the museum would be the catalyst for increasing the privilege of the minority. Challenges and push back on efforts to diversify will happen, but when museums

work to assuage fears through collaboration with the LGBTQ community, then they can work together to educate and create programming that is beneficial to all parties.

Levin's (2012) points out that to start queering museums there needs to be an incorporation that goes beyond special exhibitions; there needs to be inclusion throughout the whole museum, because queer history and culture have remained underrepresented in museums' permanent displays. Having labels acknowledging that the artist is queer or that the painting depicts same-sex lovers is a start at accurately representing LGBTQ presence that is already there but not identified. It is important to point out that while it would be beneficial to go through the database of museum collections to locate and then identify any LGBTQ artists and/or any queer art, it is not an easy process. Because identifying as a homosexual was not accepted socially or within museums, and in many places, it was illegal both to be a homosexual and for museums to promote homosexuality, many LGBTQ artists kept it a secret (Stuart Frost, 2014). But Levin's idea that rather than create a big one-off exhibition to support the LGBTQ community, this awareness and meaning behind the artwork should be a part of all areas within the museum. This includes the staff, programming, exhibit design, etc. As Levin (2012) states "we must also be aware of persistently... presenting [queer] populations as monolithic- as white, middle class, or adopting a shared set of sexual practices...queer theory transcends dualism and ...the gay-straight binary..." (p. 158). Nothing really changes if the support is a one-time thing. When museums incorporate queer art, culture and history into their common practice and develop queer-positive programming, then stigmas and barriers can start to diminish.

For decades, queer exhibitions have been presented in museums, more so in art museums than with history museums. These exhibitions defied the law: "homosexual acts", as described in the Sexual Offence Act, were made illegal in 1967 and the 1988 section 28 of the Legal Government Act was in place, which imposed many constraints on public

institutions from promoting homosexuality, and making it difficult for anything LGBTQ-related to be seen in museums. As Richard Sandell explains in *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference*, within the first five years of the twenty-first century museums have displayed a lot of “gay and lesbian material... but the vast majority of social history museums have little or nothing to include lesbians and gay men in their exhibitions” (Sandell, 2012, p. 186). With the Sexual Offence Act and the Legal Government Act, it was illegal for museums to display queer material, but as time progressed curators began to fear repercussions of losing funding or audience disapproval. Some exhibitions that received a lot of notice and response, both negative and positive, acted as portals not only to LGBTQ culture but to other important themes and issues as well. “It is only in the past decade that museums have begun to address the needs of all the culturally diverse communities in the widest possible sense whose needs have been traditionally marginalized by the dominant culture(s). Historically, the stories and cultural histories of LGBTQ communities have been largely ignored, forgotten or repressed, but today LGBTQ communities are now seen as an important part of the culturally diverse mix of...society” (McIntyre, 2007, pg.49). McIntyre’s quote truly captures the struggle and recent change that has taken place for LGBTQ inclusion in museums. Within the last two decades, there has been an increase in exhibitions that have addressed different queer subjects. Some of the exhibitions have had a tremendous impact on the topic of queer inclusion in museums, although queer exhibitions are very limited.

Many LGBTQ exhibitions have included more than just artwork. Glasgow’s Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA) began to develop programming in 2001 that would give the community an opportunity to engage with material that they could debate about the different human rights issues raised. Starting in 2003 and ending in 2009, GoMA developed and presented four different programs that dealt with issues of local perception

on refugees, violence against women, outreach and educational projects and LGBTQ rights issues. This fourth program, sh[OUT], provided visitors with a means to educate themselves about the struggles that many queer people face when fighting for rights. The exhibition offered a resource area with books, pamphlets and oral history material which gave visitors the chance to share their responses to the program. This program was very important for understanding some of the difficulties museums face with programming. GoMA had to not only prepare for any backlash from conservative community members, but they also had to put a lot of consideration into deciding which aspects of sexuality and gender to include in the section on transgendered people and the issues they face. However, there was an overwhelmingly positive response from visitors. Richard Sandell's examination of this program captures why sh[OUT] was so important, it" ...is significant to our understanding of the role and agency of museums in engendering support for human rights" (Museums and the human rights frame, p.205). After evaluating the exhibit, it was clear that the museum had made the right choice, and a smart one, to provide their community with something that challenged issues connected to human rights and allowed those issues to be explored and debated.

Like the sh[OUT] exhibit shows, temporary displays are often the site of social commentary or represent relevant and current thinking on issues. This is because permanent collections typically don't change for many years at a time. Using temporary exhibitions, museums can express themes related to race, class, treatment of gender, etc. A few contemporary exhibitions that have discussed the role of gender and how people view gender. The Wellcome Collection mounted two exhibitions titled *Medicine Now* and *Medicine Man*, which depicted individuals of ambiguous gender and the way their lives have been affected by sex reassignment surgery. The Saatchi gallery held exhibitions incorporating explicit works on homosexuality and the Whitechapel gallery's exhibits

included images of transgendered male-to-female individuals. All four of these temporary exhibitions provided a space to reflect and discuss gender roles and gender binaries, but they appeared to have lacked any substantial impact on LGBTQ inclusion within museums. These are only a few queer exhibitions that have taken place within the last few years; these attempts at inclusion or recognition have been very telling about the pressing need that museums have yet to fill for the LGBTQ Community.

One recent occurrence of queer-themed art within a museum took place in May 2016 at the University of Oregon's Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art. The museum featured an art exhibit entitled *Relationship* by Zackary Drucker and Rhys Ernst. It was a collection of personal photos from their relationship where they both went through transition. The exhibit does not show any overt nudity or sexuality; it plays with the idea of identity and is presented in a playful yet complex way. The exhibit, which was placed off of a pathway that leads to an entrance of the children's program room, lead to controversy for the JSMA and the LGBTQ community within Eugene and Portland. Because of some concerns that museum volunteers made about the exhibit presenting potentially "triggering" or "harmful" for the children that pass by, black curtains were installed at the entry points for the exhibit. Due to this action, there was a nearly immediate backlash and response from the LGBTQ community, the museum, the artists and other community members. The argument brought up in response to the curtains was that it appeared like more than a coincidence that the only transgendered exhibit was been hindered due to volunteer docents not feeling comfortable answering any possible questions that children or other visitors might have about it when there are other pieces within the museum that feature nudity from presumed heterosexual women. This one example shows that simply putting queer exhibits in museums is not enough, there needs to be further discussion and examination at how and where the exhibit is placed and the responses from the museum staff and volunteers.

Museums need to incorporate trainings for their staff and volunteers for exhibits about how to present information to visitors about difficult or unfamiliar topics. Trainings could help the museum anticipate potential responses to exhibits during the initial development instead of presenting possibly hurtful exhibits. Exhibitions and museums' potential response to controversy need to be evaluated to that the best possible outcome will occur. With proper preventive measures and queer-positive programming, any kind of backlash would be diminished greatly. In other words, instead of insulting the featured artists and a community, take the time to determine what issue needs to be addressed and what would be the best ways to address them. An option could be that the negative comments are a perfect opportunity to educate, break down barriers and further incorporate the LGBTQ community to speak on the issue. To have inclusion of the LGBTQ community within museums, there need to be conversations and dialogue among the local community, the museum and the LGBTQ community. This is because the museum is an institutional representation and reflection of the society it exists within, so merely changing museum practice without collaborating with the communities it represents could lead to a potential backlash, as demonstrated earlier.

The Regional Arts and Culture Council developed an initiative to promote access to arts and culture in 2014; part of the initiative consisted of a general guide to engaging diverse audiences. The elements within the guide are helpful tools or building blocks for a museum to consider, especially if the museum has had a great deal of issue incorporating diversity and inclusion within their practice. The different elements within the guide begins with creating a "foundation and internal support", "engaging communities", and "evaluating progress" (Regional Arts and Culture Council, 2014). Again, the guide created by the Regional Arts and Culture Council is a generalized building block; the elements should be adjusted to fit both the museum structure and the community's needs. Once the foundation

has been set, museums are better able to represent and include the underrepresented communities.

In 2015, the Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art in New York developed the exhibition, *Irreverent: A Celebration of Censorship*. The exhibition was a way to display art that has "...previously been censored from major museums... [And] deemed 'controversial,' 'obscene,' 'offensive,' or 'pornographic'" (Meier, 2015). The Leslie Lohman Museum used this exhibition for several reasons: to show the value of queer art, to share and preserve stories that could have been lost, and to focus on the concept of censorship. The process of "queering museums" can take be done in a variety of ways, but including the community and creating exhibitions that are challenging to social norms as well as inclusive is, arguably, a decent starting point for any museum.

A key piece to understanding the LGBTQ community's determination for inclusion is to understand the continued growing practice of diversity and equity within the arts and culture field as a whole. The role of an arts manager or arts administrator is to create spaces that demonstrate diversity through increased arts participation and engagement. As argued by Sandell, 2012:

The decisions and choices [museums] make have social and political effects and consequences that, whilst sometimes diffuse and difficult to trace, nevertheless impact individuals' lives and influence more broadly the relationships between mainstream and marginalized constituencies, (p. 212).

Diversity cannot be overlooked when discussing queer inclusion within museums; at the simplest level, there needs to be a better understanding and portrayal of how LGBTQ-identified art and artists are different than those identifying as heterosexuals. But when the argument for LGBTQ inclusion is made, it is not made with the assumption that the narrative will continue to purely benefit the male gaze or the white, heterosexual able-

bodied male, it is assumed that there will be as much representation of the differences that are within queer people as possible. "Diversity does not equal race" (Cuyler, Cultural Programming Presentation, May 12, 2016), is an important idea to keep in mind for museums while working to properly include a minority or underrepresented community. Diversity includes for all differences between people: ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, ability, sex, and gender just to name some of the biggest categories; all of which are found within the LGBTQ community. The continued lack of diversity is a liability for museums because it becomes difficult for museums, or any arts and cultural organization, to have community engagement and participation when the museum is not actually representing the community that it supports. It is also important to understand why the discussion about inclusion is presented through the lens of museum practice. Museums have a tremendous amount of power and privilege, but primarily for whom the system was originally designed. Minority populations are left searching to see themselves and their culture represented.

Arts and culture, in the broadest sense, is the perfect venue for showing support of different and diverse populations that make up the world. And the best way to demonstrate their support is through actively including any and all underrepresented populations. The reason that arts and culture are such a great vessel for equity and inclusion is because these areas are open to interpretation and can be influenced greatly by personal bias, history, and experiences. Arts and culture act as an access point for people to engage with contemporary, controversial and often times entertaining topics and discussions; museums are the mainstream institutions that house and provide arts and culture to their communities. That's why it is so important to have diversity and inclusion within museums; the greater the diversity and representation the easier it'll be for underrepresented communities to engage with art and engage with the larger community. As referenced in James Sanders' *Arts and Culture Periodic*, "museums are central to the ways our culture is

constructed... [They] serve as disciplinary structures, socially constructed means of defining and regulating difference" (Sanders, 2007, p.12). Those within the LGBTQ Community are greatly underrepresented within the mainstream and often only showcased for novelty or to sexualize; there is a distinct need within the LGBTQ Community to have more of society be representative of the fact that queer people make up a significant part of the population and to have their history known and understood by others.

Conclusion

The argument is that either museums need to change their practices or that society needs to change in their way of thinking. But both sides need to change. For museum practices to change the ways in which they include and present queer-themed and queer-related art, there needs to be a shift within the museum's framework and there needs to be a change in the ways in which society views and recognizes LGBTQ culture. Arts managers are in the perfect position to work towards this inclusion goal. The process should be detailed and will require a good amount of work on the part of the museum staff. A solid foundation needs to be created where museums decide to support the LGBTQ community; this would be done through identifying and then working to remove preexisting barriers. And most importantly, creating and sustaining relationships with the community. By working with the LGBTQ community, museums will be providing LGBTQ community members a platform to discuss what their needs, interest and roadblocks are. This provides the museum with the opportunity to create programming that will effectively reach this audience. Also, developing clear programming and/or exhibition objectives and steps to achieve those objectives is ideal, and would create a solid structure for how museums incorporate queer themed art. Additionally, there needs to be diversity among the museum staff and volunteers. Having a diverse set of art and artists throughout the museum is important but also making sure that the museum staff is representative of the communities

they serve is also needed. There are numerous studies on diversity, programming, and bias it has been seen that those who are a part of the minority respond more positively when they see or interact with staff who represent them. Within the Regional Arts and Culture Council's⁷ initiative, it states that "having a diverse staff and board definitely helps in connecting with communities... [And] while an individual cannot represent an entire community, [they] may have connections and insight that bring a new perspective and voice to the table" (Regional Arts and Culture Council, 2014, p. 10). Throughout this process, the staff need to evaluate how they are deciding on programs or exhibits and who they are collaborating with to determine if the process, program or exhibits are reaching the intended audience and effectively engaging them. Adding these processes to the ways in which museums incorporate queer art and culture will do a great deal for inclusion and accurate representation of the LGBTQ community.

The need for LGBTQ inclusion within museums is evident by the decade-long struggle on the part of the LGBTQ community and scholars generating awareness of the lack of recognition. The mindset of viewing and treating queer people as second class citizens has changed with the repeal of laws that deprived queer people of basic human and civil rights that are afforded to the heterosexual majority. Currently, there is a strong movement for museums and their staff to work on ways to increase audience participation and engagement within the arts, and much of that comes from acknowledging that there are very clear gaps in what types of identities museums will represent. There are many examples of past queer exhibitions, both subtly and explicitly referenced, that have been examined countless times over as to how the exhibition was received and what their strengths and weaknesses were and it all leads to the same conclusion, that museums need to work harder at LGBTQ inclusion.

⁷The RACC created a guide for institutions to better engage with diverse audiences.

Only a few queer exhibitions were referenced and discussed within this paper, but it should be noted that that barely even scratches the surface of queer exhibitions both past and present. Even with only a few specific exhibitions discussed one thing is very clear: there continues to be an unfulfilled need for the LGBTQ community that museums are slowly starting to acknowledge but have yet to fully address. Within some cities, nonprofits are attempting to create LGBTQ museums that exclusively focus on the history and culture of the LGBTQ community both past and present, but they are not long lasting nor are they gaining much recognition. The evidence for how museums of the past have tried to show their support for the LGBTQ community is there but the change has been slow and there has yet to be any permanent change taking place within museums. Even though the discussion about queering museums has been going on for the past few decades, and has increased in recent years, true inclusion hasn't been achieved. Only a few changes have been made to temporarily include the LGBTQ community, but LGBTQ people are viewed as a minority group that are tolerated rather than accepted, and this can be seen by how museums have yet to diversify from the mainstream narratives.

Chapter 4: Literature Review #2: Queer Theory

Introduction

This chapter explores the role of power and resistance within U.S.-based museums, through examining sociological research related to expression, identity, authority, and queer theory. It challenges the discourse around heteronormativity and homonormativity in a U.S.-based museum context, and broadly looks at research related to forms of self-expression and queer identity.

Analysis

Museums, as cultural institutions, are the physical embodiment of social and cultural concepts and ideals. They collect, organize, categorize, and conserve objects and artwork through the claimed practice of maintaining scholarly, scientific, rational, and objective stances. But traditionally, museums have consistently propagated heteronormativity. This propagation can be seen through the systematic erasure of queer voice, identities, and representation throughout museum exhibitions. And this becomes even more evident through the silent privilege that art museums, specifically, have given to white heterosexuals. This privilege has occurred within museums, not only within the U.S., for hundreds of years. And many scholars have taken a role to encourage museum staff to take a greater stance with the shifting social attitudes about sex and sexuality. Professor James Sanders has fought to “[challenge] museum scholars...and educators to (re)consider [the museum’s] inattentiveness to (homo)sexual objects... [and to reinvent] the museum as a responsible and responsive institution that preserves human rights through its representations” (Sanders, 2007, p. 1). But before this challenge and any subsequent change can happen, a deeper examination and understanding of the power, authority, and repression within U.S. museums must take place. Through examining

various structural issues, such as homophobia and transphobia, the hope is that a better understanding of how LGBTQ or queer identified people(s) relate and act with social inequalities will develop.

Throughout much of the research discussing queer repression and representation, it appears that there is a lack of discussion about what queer representation looks like, aside from some discussion on the dismantling of stereotypes. It is one thing to say that if there was an increased presence of queer art and artists within U.S. museums that the LGBTQ community would feel better represented within the mainstream institutions. And that an increase in better representation would lead to fewer boundaries which prevent queer identified individuals from visiting museums and connecting with the art and artists. But the key question is what that representation should look like; and even if there were an increase in queer-art and artists within U.S. museums, is that truly what queer identified individuals want? For some, the intended goal of queering museums could simply be to see aspects of their lives and sexuality included throughout the museum on a consistent basis. For others, the goal could be for the museum to eliminate the blatant assumption that art is inherently heterosexual⁸. But how do either of these goals work within the confines of queering or queer theory? Queer theory works to challenge heterosexual norms, not to erase them entirely, but to push back against the assumption that heterosexual norms are correct or even present within any given context. The main reason why heterosexual norms are not erased through queer theory is because without heterosexual norms it becomes difficult to pinpoint where the homosexual norms are. This means that even with inclusion and representation of queer art and artists within U.S. museums, heterosexuality cannot be eliminated entirely because without it there is nothing for queer theory, or queering, to be compared against. The process of queering museums

⁸ These types of assumptions can be found when art museums place unrelated male and female sculptures together to heterosexualise the displays.

is a form of resistance to the dominant culture (heteronormativity) and resistance as an action, or state of mind, implies that there is an imbalance of power and something to struggle against. Additionally, it is important to note that much of what the LGBTQ community celebrates is about individuality or uniqueness; this ties into the idea that not all norms (heterosexual or otherwise) are inherently bad. Many social norms are unchangeable and they help to redefine queer identity much the same way that norms in the general sense have helped to construct the society in which they reside. Not only are norms socially constructed and unchangeable, norms in and of themselves have power and regulations over a society. A society cannot have regulations without definable social norms, and norms cannot exist in a society without creating regulations or setting boundaries.

Before delving too far into the examination of power and forms of resistance, one of the goals of this literature review is to gain a clearer view of how the roles of heteronormativity and homonormativity influence representation. And to examine this relationship certain terminology must be used. So, the terminology used throughout this study is very specific to this topic, and understanding the terms is vital to understanding the meaning behind the research. The term “heteronormativity” within the confines of this literature review is being used to identify social practices, structures, performances, and definitions that are either explicitly or implicitly used as the “normal” way of viewing sexuality. And the term “homonormativity” is used in a similar manner but for those that identify anywhere along the homosexual spectrum. Along with this, the term “queer” is being used in a few different ways; firstly, it is used to reclaim a once violent and derogatory term. Secondly, queer is used as an umbrella term for those who identify their sexuality along a spectrum rather than not confined to a heterosexual-homosexual binary. Lastly, queer is being used as a way of thinking and doing things in a unique and

unexpected way. By extension from the term queer, queer theory challenges the idea of identity as a social construct and approaches the study of culture through critiquing and rejecting the traditional categories. Sociologist Lionel Cantú approaches his research on sexual migration in much the same way as this research is approached; by examining the literature through a queer lens that discusses how "...research and literature is framed by heteronormative assumptions that not only deny the existence of nonheterosexual subjects but also cloak the ways in which sexuality itself influences...processes" (Cantú, 2009, p.21). Heterosexuality is most frequently used as the primary lens throughout most scholarly research and is used to inform most social norms and assumptions. But by using a queer lens when engaging with the literature and exploring various forms and issues related to power and resistance, a more robust and informative stance can be taken to the examination of how U.S. museums are connected to heteronormative assumptions and queer representation.

Cantú's work in *The Sexuality of Migration* argues that sex and sexuality are forms of power and oppression which shape and enforce various structures and processes. The forms of power result in the oppressed groups fighting back through conscious and, at times, subversive forms of resistance. While the study of sex and sexuality is important, there are many other concepts that need to be addressed to better navigate through the literature and understand how those concepts connect to the issues prevalent within U.S. museums. The various additional concepts presented throughout this research, such as inclusion, representation, resistance, and sexual identity, all fall along a spectrum and can be viewed as being both positive and negative. One concept that is challenged in Regina Kunzel's *Criminal Intimacy* (2008) is inclusion; there should not be the assumption that inclusion, and by extension resistance, are automatically positive. Inclusion and resistance are conditions of a greater issue; an imbalance of power. The struggle that many queer-

identified individuals face is that the representation of queer-themed content within U.S. museums is very minimal, fleeting and can be a form of queerbaiting⁹. But it should be noted that this study is not asserting that the lack of representation to further the claim that all museums should be solely about or have queer-themed art and artists. Because, just as inclusion is not automatically a positive concept, heterosexual norms are not inherently negative. Norms have helped to construct the society in which these U.S. museums exist. Recreating the museum structure to include more queer art and artists under the concept of inclusion is not necessarily going to have a positive outcome in all museums or communities. Those opposed to the idea will argue against the change and without having a diverse and inclusive staff it becomes difficult for representation and inclusion to be sustained. One way to better understand how inclusion could be viewed as a negative concept is to not simply acknowledge that queer art is being included within a museum but to delve deeper into the meaning or possible ramifications that that artwork might bring up. For example, Authors Patrick Grzanka and Emily Mann explore the “It Gets Better” mass-mediated campaign, and present a critical discourse analysis of the project. The “It Gets Better” (IGB) Project started in 2010 as a video expressing the difficulties of being gay during adolescence and the fulfillment that the storytellers have experienced while being out and in a relationship. In one respect, this social project opened the discussion on issues of bullying and queer youth suicide. But an alternate view is that the video campaign uses innocuous and vague wording to mask the reiteration of heteronormativity and power. The video campaign reinforces the idea that “...queer youth [should] respond to heterosexist violence with...pain, depression, anxiety, and, indeed, suicide into inactive hope...” (Grzanka & Mann, 2014, p. 372). These narratives of survival and mental illness

⁹ This term is used to describe the attempt to entice queer people to watch, read, visit, etc. something with the understanding that there will be queer representation, when there is actually no intention of showing or continuing the representation.

are arguably shaping queer identities and reinforcing gender-based inequalities for youth that identify along the queer spectrum and not youth that identify as heterosexual. This argument does not claim that the campaign was not helpful to those who watched or that many could connect with this form of artistic expression; what is being argued is the intended or unintended message that came out of this project. It might be worth considering how a project like this could have been presented within the confines of a U.S. museum. Would the project reinforce the idea that homosexuality is abnormal? Or would a shift to more descriptive language alter the message from the survivor narrative to understanding how social and heterosexual norms have negatively impacted queer youth? The positionality of these IGB videos reinforces the idea of “sexually-related suicide” as being a social norm which has informed a new wave of queer/suicide awareness and prevention art pieces within the last decade. Some have argued that these videos and the subsequent awareness that has followed have been undeniably beneficial. But others, like authors Grzanka and Mann, have argued that the IGB videos have done more to reinforce heteronormative ideas than to challenge that discourse. And through this reinforcement, the videos have added to the power and privilege of heterosexuals under the guise of inclusion.

When examining the structure and function of museums through the lens of queer theory, the main point to consider is that queer theory, as a concept, problematizes sexuality and power. Because sexuality is a social construct, queer theory takes that understanding and denies any specific and singular definition for sexual identity. Instead, the issue within U.S. museums that needs to be addressed is that sexuality (as a social construct) has been used as a form of power and control. Sexuality has shaped the practices and regulations within U.S. museums in what Cantú describes as “dimensions of power” being conducted in “...profound yet invisible ways” (Cantú, 2009, p. 26). Because

heterosexuality is considered the normative sexuality within museums, heterosexuality has influenced social and power relations. Sexuality, and by extension identity are social constructs that are constantly being reshaped and redefined depending on any given context. These power relations can be seen through different forms of capital; or forms of power that a person can use to succeed in society. Shifting focus to areas outside of the U.S. museum context, the dimensions of power over sex and sexuality can be seen within such areas as migration. The power that those in the dominant groups exude over others affects the processes and modes of incorporation of migration. In Cantú's work on queer Mexican immigrants and migration, many of the men interviewed migrated to the U.S. to find a place that would offer opportunities and experiences that might not have been an option before. But to fit in or not face alienation, some of the men had to adjust how they identify, "...the men whom I interviewed...had a variety of sexual identities both prior to and after migration (Cantú, 2009, p.119). Homophobia and heteronormativity are constraining factors that can force people to either assimilate to the norm or face oppression and discrimination.

Many of the ideas brought up throughout this literature review can be narrowed down to a singular idea: that gendered categories have a strong impact on the society in which they reside. There are both positive and negative aspects to gendered categorization, as there are to the concept of inclusion or power. On the positive side, categorizing allows people to make sense of ideas, actions, norms, etc., and to identify similarities and differences throughout life. It is also negative, because categorization is the first step in othering, segmenting, and binding people to a predesigned set of qualities, all of which can lead to forms of oppression. But a third viewpoint to gendered categorization is that it offers the opportunity for researchers to identify where systems of power and regulations are occurring. Recognizing where categorization has occurred, and how the

categories given to things that are not inherently hetero and homosexual somehow fall under the category of homonormativity or heteronormativity, creates an opportunity to discuss discursive systems and forms of homophobia. As mentioned in the introduction of Cantú's *The Sexuality of Migration*, he analyses "...discursive systems that maintain a general sense of heterosexuality as a normative regime. [Cantú] linked heteronormativity to racialization and...the intersection of related hegemonic systems of oppression" (Cantú, 2009, p.13). Discursive systems, such as discursive distancing, focus on what types of capital an individual is using to get trajectory. The capital that an individual must use or present would be their whiteness, education, or masculinity, for example. The more capital one has to cash in, the easier it is to assert dominance and to be heard. And if the most influential capital to trade in is whiteness, education, and masculinity, it stands to reason that white heterosexual cis-men would benefit most of all. Whereas people of color or queer-identified individuals would have a more difficult time to make their position heard and gain any benefit. Instead, those not holding much in the way of capital have to fight to have their voices heard and fight systematic and social oppressors. It could be argued that since those lacking in power do not have enough capital to move away completely from oppression and homophobia, they must combine what capital they have with an entity that holds more power. This is where space and location become important; if a queer individual does not have the power to fight for representation or inclusion on their own, they must locate areas within their society that can provide support. U.S. museums have a great deal of power in providing a community with notions of sexuality, and information about systems of oppression and power over populations. Even though U.S. museums have privileged heterosexuals and continue to do so, many argue that they can be a space that provides people with alternative ideas and concepts about sexualities. James Sanders, Professor of Sexuality Studies at Ohio State University, considers that if U.S. museums were to shift their representation of art and artists from the hetero/homo binary

and instead use “cross-disciplinary explorations” and “queer theoretical frameworks”, the current heterosexual practices can be challenged by providing new forms of sexual representation to identity-based groups.

Historically, sexuality along with sexual practices have been regulated using repression as a form of power. “... [If] repression has indeed been the fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality... it stands to reason that [to free ourselves of repression] a whole new economy in the mechanisms of power will be required” (Foucault, 1978, p.5). Sexuality and sexual practices that have been deemed normal or not perverse, *i.e.* heterosexuality, do not fall under intense scrutiny or forms of repression. By distinguishing the differences among sex, sexualities, and perversions, methods of personal conduct are judged, controlled, or enforced through the power devices. Foucault explores the discourse of power by looking at how and why members of society are repressed and the ways in which power is the mechanism behind that repression. “All the longer, no doubt, as it is the nature of power-particularly the kind of power that operates in our society- to be repressive, and to be especially careful in repressing useless energies, the intensity of pleasures, and irregular modes of behavior” (Foucault, 1978, p.9). Homosexuality was viewed as abnormal, “irregular” and a peripheral sexuality that was controlled through forms of social power. However, over time there was a slight shift in how homosexuality was viewed socially; some elements of homosexuality have been given more leniency and are socially accepted whereas other elements have not. These elements can include sexual practices and sexual identities; also, the leniency is not a worldwide or universally excepted idea, but varies greatly in any given space. This shift towards tolerance was directed towards homosexuality, not queer individuals; the term homosexual accounts for individuals that are attracted to members of the same sex versus

the term queer accounting for individuals who fall along the spectrum of sexuality¹⁰. This distinction is important because, for many, queer is considered too far removed from heterosexuality. And as Sociologist Jasbir Puar argues, homosexuality, or rather the white homosexual, has been accepted by heterosexuals as a form of “benevolence” due to many homosexuals aiming towards normalcy through hetero ideals, *i.e.* marriage and monogamy. But those who are deemed too different or who do not strive for many of the heteronormative ideals are not granted the same level of tolerance socially¹¹. “[We] can indeed mark a specific historical shift: the project of whiteness is assisted and benefited by homosexual populations that participate in the same identitarian and economic hegemonies as those hetero subjects complicit with this ascendancy” (Puar, 2007, p.31). Puar discusses the “ascendancy of whiteness” as an element connected to norms and deployed through whiteness. Through this term, one can gain a better understanding of how there can be forms of homosexual (or queer) inclusion as well as a diminished demand for heteronormativity, while a lack of representation is still prevalent. Along similar lines as the ascendancy of whiteness, Puar also examines how multiculturalism is a form of regulation that either allows for people to achieve elements of economic success or to be subject to homophobia or viewed as a perverse other. “...multiculturalism as heteronormativization works to police sexual and gender relations and embodiments similar to its classist gatekeeping logic” (Puar, 2007, p. 27); through multiculturalism and the ascendancy of whiteness, those on the fringe of socially accepted norms have to struggle with proving their marketability or capital. Meaning that because queer individuals are deviating from the traditional heterosexual norm they often are faced with obstacles questioning their “market virility” or searching for their connection to heteronormativity. This

¹⁰ Queer can account for anyone identifying as LGBTQIA or individuals that are non-binary.

¹¹ Speaking about tolerance within the US, this level of tolerance continues to shift as a greater marketable demand (civil rights) becomes prevalent or viewed as more mainstream.

connection can be found in their whiteness, labor, and consumption of hetero norms; all of which are aspects that decrease the homosexual's sense of otherness. These forms of power and oppression force queer individuals to either assimilate, fight back through various forms of resistance, or a combination of the two.

A common form of repression that many queers face is othering; having personal aspects of oneself acknowledged and often judged as being different than heterosexuals. This form of repression (as well as a form of oppression) can be further explored through what Puar calls sexual exceptionalism. Exceptionalism focuses on the differences or distinctions from the socially accepted norms and as well as superiority, which can lead to moral superiority. Sexual exceptionalism also focuses on differences but for those that are not heterosexual. Exceptionalism uses the exceptional and the exception to turn negativity, such as violence, sexism or homophobia, into positivity and validation. Sexual exceptionalism does not negate or try to eliminate queers because to protect and maintain the status quo there must be an opposing force. This means that through sexual exceptionalism small actions that allow for the normative order to continue are possible and essential to maintaining forms of heteronormativity.

It could be argued that U.S. museums are proponents of sexual exceptionalism. Along with this, it is important to provide context to how sexual exceptionalism can be found in U.S. museums. Exceptionalism is a form of repression that any dominant group can hold. For example, the U.S. presents an impression that all actions, or depictions of repression and violence, are seen from a moral high ground. Museums within the United States are institutions that represent the interest of their communities; and while some exhibit content within specific museums will question or challenge the social norms, most U.S. museums work to present information without attempting to further social change or provide for people that differ from the white heterosexual.

The argument presented within this research, that having an increase in substantial representation for queer artists and queer-identified visitors within U.S.-based museums through the act of queering museums, does not provide adequate information to understand what some of the goals are for queering museums. When arguing for this *increase in substantial representation*, two additional areas are brought into question: what does the current landscape of existing queer-themed or queer-focused museum exhibits look like, and what types of queer-themed exhibits qualify as substantial? An exploration of queer-themed exhibitions and queer artists within U.S.-based museums can be found in chapter 3, the second literature review. But the exploration of the concept of substantial queer representation within U.S.-based museums will be broached within this current literature review.

Throughout much of the literature on queer history, the relationship between oppression and celebration tends to be the focus; this relationship can also be seen throughout most of the mainstream media outlets depicting such events as the various pride parades. The different depictions, ranging from celebrating the uniqueness of being queer or the fight for normalcy have, in turn, informed many of the notions about what queer identified individuals or the LGBTQ community want in any given scenario. Regardless of the number of queer-identified people who want to both participate in pride parades and embrace their uniqueness, or those who simply want to live their lives with the same rights and opportunities afforded to any heterosexual, it cannot be assumed that either of these forms of representation can account for everyone. This highlights the difficulty that many U.S. museums face when featuring a queer artist or queer-themed exhibit. The exhibits often end up catering to preconceived notions about what all queer-identified individuals want. But is there any real way to know what forms of representation are better than the other? Or how best to determine how many queer exhibitions are

considered substantial? These are questions that are not necessarily easy to answer or that can be found in the literature. Nonetheless, Puar's work on homonationalism and homonormativity offers some insight into how representation works in relation to sexual identity. Both homonationalism and homonormativity work under the idea that certain forms of homosexual inclusion are critical to maintaining and developing heterosexuality as the social norm. "For contemporary forms of U.S. nationalism and patriotism, the production of gay and queer bodies is crucial to the development of nationalism, insofar as these perverse bodies reiterate heterosexuality as the norm but also because certain domesticated homosexual bodies provide ammunition to reinforce nationalist projects" (Puar, 2007, p.39). Queerness, or "perverse bodies" are regulated and controlled to allow for the dominant group to continue in its current form, but this regulation provides small areas of resistance to occur. These forms of resistance simultaneously exemplify the separation of power and systems of oppression¹² already in place for queer identified individuals as well as showcasing and reinforcing the differences between hetero and homo norms.

Conclusion

Representation and inclusion are not inherently positive concepts and thus should be examined much the same way as power or oppression. When one group or identity is being favored, or benefited, more than likely another group or identity is being excluded. This can be true for queer representation and inclusion; the exclusion can be found in the framing of exhibition themes or terminology. Queer, under the context of identity, is not inherently sexual; so, museum staff working on program and exhibition development should not assume that every individual who identifies as queer is interested in or partakes in sexual practices. Some queer-identified people are asexual or simply uncomfortable with

¹² Using exhibits for civil rights movements or celebrating queerness.

their own bodies, so U.S. museums having queer content be continuously about sex would or could be exclusionary. Another takeaway from this literature review is that even though this research is focused on a U.S. museum context, any findings should not by default be generalizable. Ideas or concepts can be applied to other similar spaces but it should not be assumed that research on queering museums will be applicable to all U.S. museums. Location and context are vital to understanding the space; so, while research findings might not be entirely appropriate for each museum, there is a significant chance that, based on the in-depth research conducted, many of the terms or concepts can be portable enough to apply to a similar context. One last takeaway is that normativity, whether hetero or homo, is incredibly fragile and malleable. All forms of norms are entirely socially constructed and dependent on spatial context. That is why queerness is allowed and encouraged in some spaces, whereas in other spaces it is banned and subject to homophobia. Normativity is a very powerful mode of control within any given society and as such, those that benefit most from social norms fight to maintain the status quo and keep norms from changing too drastically.

At the start of this literature review, the primary focus was to explore how power and resistance are connected to queer identity specifically within U.S. based museums. And while different forms of power were discussed and resistance was touched upon to a lesser extent, one area that became apparent was that forms of normativity, both hetero and homo, are a vital piece to understanding the connection between how queer identity has been oppressed and forms of resistance. Another area that stood out was that much of the literature referenced throughout this review is focused on studying the sexuality of gay or queer cis-gendered men. Only a few authors even had a section of their research devoted to gay or queer women and even fewer had sections discussing transgendered individuals. Arguably a lot of the literature on queer studies can be viewed as informing

normative ideas; most often when queer men are being researched it is about sexuality and when queer women are being researched it is about gender. These distinctions can often be found in identifying what terminology is being used for queer identified men and queer identified women.

Many questions were raised throughout this literature review, and while not many of them could be answered, it is good to acknowledge the areas that require further research; as well as to identify the areas that might be unanswerable. The purpose of this literature review was to explore a variety of sociological research about queer theory, queer identity and to connect the ideas and overarching concepts to the function and purpose of U.S. museums. This literature review also provided an opportunity to explore the relationship between power, resistance, representation, and inclusion.

Chapter 5: Case Study

Introduction

To better understand why an increase in queer representation and inclusion within U.S. museums is needed, as previously stated, I conducted a comparative case study analyzing using two history museums: The Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience and the GLBT Historical Museum. This comparative case study focuses on the types of queer-themed exhibitions, the number of queer exhibitions, and impact within the local community. I collected information from various online sources, such as the museums' websites, news articles, and other publications. The information gathered was about three different aspects relevant to queer representation and inclusion: 1) Background of the museums, 2) Different types of queer-themed exhibitions, and 3) Impact on the community. The background of the museums consists of the reasons for the inception of the museum and what need the founders attempted to fill. The different types of queer-themed exhibitions consist of past, current, and future queer-themed or queer-related exhibitions within both museums. And finally, the impact on the community and other museums consists of exhibition reviews, community response to both the museum and their exhibitions, and what elements, if any, that other museums incorporated into their practice. Both museums distinguish themselves as providers of history and heritage. This shows that both museums, in different ways, want to offer connected communities an opportunity to learn and explore art and exhibitions that focus on untold stories.

In this chapter, I will discuss the two case studies that were examined for this research capstone. This discussion will include information about each museum, such as the size of the staff, number of exhibitions per year, and any educational programming that pertains to diversity and inclusivity. One focal point of this chapter will be on determining how the presence of the GLBT Historical Museum and the queer-related exhibitions within

the Wing Luke Museum have affected the community and other similar museums. A second focus of this chapter is primarily focused on analyzing how queer representation and inclusion have been incorporated into these two museums. The presentation of the information gathered in this chapter, which has been collected from analyzing websites and exhibition/program reviews, will be useful to determine how queer representation and inclusion can be done within museums.

First Case Study: The Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience

Background Information

The Wing Luke Museum, located in Seattle, Washington, first opened in May 1967 to commemorate the life of Assistant Attorney General Wing Luke. Today the museum houses four permanent displays about the museum's namesake, immigration, refugee experiences, and the history of the "Chinatown" District, now called the International District. The mission of the museum is "to connect everyone to the rich history, dynamic cultures and art of the Asian Pacific Americans through vivid storytelling and inspiring experiences" (The Wing Luke Museum, 2017). The museum has functioned as an important space where Asian Pacific Americans can look for engagement and a connection to the legacy left behind by Wing Luke. The Museum works to educate its visitors by producing thought-provoking exhibitions and educational programming that explores cultural heritage, identity, and engagement within the arts. At the time that this chapter is being written, the Wing Luke Museum has thirteen exhibitions available, three of which are community portraits, four are permanent displays, and the remaining six are yearlong special exhibitions. All the exhibitions share a few common themes: explore and understand the importance of cultural heritage, challenging societal norms, and self-identity. The museum also offers a variety of educational programming, such as an oral history program, two teen programs titled *Teensway* and *YouthCAN*, and a program

specifically for educators. According to the website, the museum has “more than 18,000 resources and materials” (The Wing Luke Museum, 2017). The collections contain photographs, artifacts, archives of oral histories, and a large library about Asian Pacific American communities. The collections and the library are accessible on location but interested visitors may also search through the online collections catalog via the museum’s website.

Website Analysis

Through my analysis of the Wing Luke Museum’s website, I found that the educational programs and research opportunities are not only vast, but they focus on the themes of understanding cultural heritage and exploring self-identity. The museum works to make the art and information accessible to all ages; this is done through providing reading lists for K-12, a two-week-long summer camp, the annual JamFest, and Story Theater throughout the year. Many of the programs offered allow the community to participate in creating art through community-based exhibitions, sharing stories as a part of the Oral History Program, and donating photographs and artifacts. Based on the information found on the Wing Luke Museum’s website, the exhibitions and programming all remain true to their mission while also encouraging the local community to become more involved with creating art and preserving their history.

Queer-Themed Exhibitions

The Wing Luke Museum features many year-long exhibitions, all of which are directly connected to heritage and cultural identity. And while many exhibits are offered throughout the year, the most recent queer-related exhibition that the Wing Luke Museum had was in 2014. In the exhibition, *A Lot Like You*, filmmaker Eliachi Kimaro shares her story of self-discovery and learning about her family’s heritage. Kimaro is a self-identified

queer, mixed-race, first-generation American woman of color who has struggled with connecting to her cultural heritage.

Although it was not a recent exhibition, *Across the Spectrum: Stories from Queer Asian Pacific America*, was featured in 2009 and received favorable reviews. The museum staff described the main goal of the exhibition: to “shed light on the experiences of individuals in the Queer Asian Pacific community and explore their lives through their voices and stories” (Whitely, 2009). Twelve stories were shared that touched on issues of sexuality, gender, race, and faith. This exhibit included multisensory interaction; visitors could view the signs and posters hanging on the walls, listen to the audio recordings played throughout and read the full transcripts. Visitors also had the chance to write down their thoughts and feelings about the exhibit or respond to guided questions written on the walls.

Impact on the Community

While the Wing Luke Museum does not have many exhibitions that are directly connected to queer experiences, it could be argued that many of the exhibits have a strong connection with queer elements or with experiencing life within the U.S. as someone who does not fit into the socially constructed idea of normalcy.

The Wing Luke Museum strives to connect and work with the community to create art and share stories. One way that the museum does that is through their Community Advisory Committee model. This model aims to incorporate community members in nearly all aspects of the exhibition process. The model is broken into six stages: *Initial Outreach*, *Exhibit Development*, *Research and Gathering*, *Exhibit Design*, *Exhibit Opening*, and *Follow-Up*. This general model has been utilized in various other museums; a former employee of the Wing Luke Museum has since brought that model to the Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI). As discussed in an article from Real Change News, MOHAI

has been working on their version of queering the museum, and the former Wing Luke employee has taken the Community Advisory Committee model and adapted it to fit MOHAI's needs. The model that the Wing Luke Museum developed is being sought after by other museums as a new method to create ties within their community and engage their community in a different way. The Wing Luke Museum's model used to be available online but has recently been taken down. A break-down of the model's process, from Nina Simon's book *The Participatory Museum*, can be found in appendix A.

Second Case Study: GLBT Historical Museum

Background

The GLBT Historical Museum is a part of the GLBT Historical Society, located in San Francisco, California. The GLBT Historical Museum was founded in 1985 and at that time there were not many museums that focused on GLBT public history. The museum worked to provide the public with information about GLBT history and create a space for GLBT-identified individuals to find representation. According to the museum's website, "the GLBT Historical Society collects, preserves and interprets the history of GLBT people and the communities that support them" (GLBT Historical Society, 2017).

Within the GLBT Historical Society, there are the museum and the archives; both work to make their resources known and accessible to the community. The museum's website offers access to many of the collections as well as research guides on topics, such as *Butch and Femme Identities, Bisexuality, and Radical Faeries*. The GLBT Historical Museum has three galleries; the Main Gallery features eight different multimedia exhibits. Both the Front Gallery and the Community Gallery feature exhibitions that focus on identity, subculture, and social concepts.

The museum was the first of its kind, as there weren't any other museums that were presenting multimedia exhibitions focusing on San Francisco's queer history. The museum came about during the height of the AIDS crisis and as such, is meant to act as a repository for queer ephemera, manuscripts, and oral histories. The museum has since grown in both size and aim; while the museum continues to focus on San Francisco's queer history, they have also worked towards highlighting the contributions that the city and the local community have given to make the museum a functioning piece.

Website Analysis

The GLBT Historical Museum's website is quite sparse when it comes to detailed information. It appears that its primary use is for basic information, such as location, business hours, and the exhibition schedule. The website does provide some additional information about each of the exhibitions as well as links to further explore the online exhibitions. Most of the information on the website provides a synopsis or an overview of the exhibits; more in-depth information must be sought out by the viewer. Because the GLBT Historical Museum is designed to reflect and represent the local community, the website's donations page is detailed and aims to grab viewers' attention by appealing to their need to give support and be recognized. Organizations that are active supporters of the GLBT Historical Museum are prominently featured and categorized by their level of support¹³. The website also includes a three-page pamphlet that further breaks down what each level of sponsorship will provide (refer to Appendix C).

Queer-Themed Exhibitions

The GLBT Historical Museum's three galleries display a diverse range of exhibitions; the permanent collection in the Main Gallery contains information about queer

¹³ Support level is determined by the amount of funds donated.

history, the Front Gallery features a special exhibit, and the Community Gallery is set to display exhibitions that explore different queer communities¹⁴.

The Main Gallery exhibit, *Queer Past Becomes Present*, allows visitors not only to learn about queer history but also to focus in on the lives and experiences of individuals within the San Francisco area. What is unique about the GLBT Historical Museum, is that it hones in on developing a better understanding of not only the queer community but of the queer culture that is present throughout all of San Francisco. This exhibition is separated into eight individual exhibits, each focusing in on a topic or area. The following are the different facets that the eight exhibitions cover:

- **History Is Now:** An intergenerational historical preservation project titled *Dragon Fruit*.
- **The Lesbians of the Ladder:** “the struggle for women across the country to come out in a virulently homophobic society” (GLBT Historical Society, 2017).
- **Constructing Jiro Onuma:** Personal collection of Japanese immigrant Jiro Onuma
- **Gayborhoods:** A look at the clubs, bars, restaurants, and other venues that no longer exist.
- **Queer Youth:** Activism of LGBTQ youth from the 1970s to present.
- **José Sarria:** The life of the first openly gay candidate for public office in the U.S.
- **Fighting for Our Lives:** The four pioneering Bay Area organizations responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic of the 20th century.
- **The Assassination of Harvey Milk:** Artifacts, photographs, and an audio excerpt from Harvey Milk to experience this event in queer history.

¹⁴ At the time this research is being written, the Community Gallery is featuring the work of cartoonist Fran Frisch that will be available through May 2017.

The Front Gallery exhibit, *Noche De Ambiente*, explores the word *ambiente* as a coded reference used by queer Latinos and queer Latinas to identify themselves and their culture. The exhibition examines how the word was used and reflected in Latino drag performances and AIDS activism throughout San Francisco.

The Community Gallery, featured an exhibit of the work of cartoonist Fran Frisch titled *Beartoonist of San Francisco: Sketching an Emerging Subculture*. This exhibition explores the community of bears. As defined on the museum's website bears are "a subculture that developed in the 1980s to celebrate older, larger, hairier, ruggedly masculine gay men who were largely excluded from standards of attractiveness in gay popular culture" (GLBT Historical Society, 2017). The exhibitions held within the Community Gallery place communities, specifically queer communities, in the spotlight since often these communities are hidden, unexplored, or underrepresented.

In addition to the on-site exhibitions, the GLBT Museum also has five online exhibits available via their website, and various events held throughout the year. Online exhibitions inform viewers about various political movements, artists, and struggles that all have a deep connection with the city of San Francisco. The events tend to be performances, such as staged readings, or living histories; other events are fundraisers or anniversary parties.

Impact on the Community

In 2014, historian Don Romesberg wrote a review of the GLBT Museum titled, *Presenting the Queer Past: A Case for the GLBT History Museum*. The review begins with a discussion of the importance of the museum's name and how choosing to identify the museum as unequivocally a part of the LGBTQ community has worked to solidify its place within traditional museums. "Mainstream museums increasingly mount GLBT-related shows and will always play a crucial role in winning converts, solidifying GLBT legitimacy, and creating threads for our belonging in the tapestry of history" (Romesberg, 2014,

p.131). Having a queer museum that is run primarily by self-identified queer individuals has allowed the museum to focus their exhibitions on topics not typically displayed in more mainstream museums. It is not uncommon for mainstream museum staff to mount exhibitions that either propagate societal norms or maintain stereotypes. This can be seen in the numerous exhibitions focusing on the issues surrounding AIDS, coming out, or sexual encounters. As mentioned in Romesberg's review, there can be "pressure toward grand progressive narratives that reproduce the repressive-hypothesis-to-pride trajectory, emphasis on famous gays, inclusivity that sustains heteronormative master narratives and upholds homo/hetero binaries of differences, consignment of queerness to temporary displays, and censorship of nonnormative or explicit lies, acts, and representations" (Romesberg, 2014, p. 132). The GLBT Museum attempts to provide new and different insights into queer history, both for members of the queer community and those outside of the community. The museum does this by connecting different communities through demonstrations of queer belonging. Romesberg explores how the GLBT Museum has used their exhibits as a strategic vessel to show representation of various communities as well as display their large archives appropriately. Romesberg's review was written in 2014 and at that time the GLBT Museum's archive contained approximately two hundred artifact, textile, and art collections; a few hundred manuscript collections; nearly three thousand T-shirts and five thousand posters; over five hundred oral histories and over two thousand hours of recorded media. The museum has worked to make their collections inclusive and accessible and to be viewed as legitimate along with other museums. Romesberg discusses the museum's legitimacy and responsibility to shed light on queer lives, both past, and present. In Romesberg's opinion, not only is the GLBT Museum an essential part of the LGBTQ community but they have worked steadily to stay true to their mission while simultaneously maintaining their role within "legitimate" museums. But they are not without their own set of challenges. "To continue to present the past meaningfully the museum and

archive will have to critically engage multiple publics by linking the history they convey to contemporary dilemmas facing diverse queer peoples locally, nationally, and across the globe” (Romesberg, 2014, p. 142). The GLBT Historical Museum is faced with challenges facing most mainstream museums; limited space and limited resources aiding in further expansion. But the museum is also faced with challenges a bit different than most mainstream museums; legitimacy and support to prove their relevance within the community. While these are challenges that the LGBT Historical Museum must deal with to varying degrees, it seems that there is enough of a need within the community to provide enough support to keep going.

Comparison

The information provided within this chapter should assist in creating a better understanding of the services provided by each of the museums, and how both museums connect to and with the queer community, for those unfamiliar with either museum. While this case study merely captures a snapshot or overview of each museum and their services, the goal is that the overviews and the following analysis will aid in developing a robust picture of the current museum practices that work towards representation and inclusion for queer art and artists.

After reviewing the information gathered from the two case studies, the most obvious comparison is that both museums actively work to incorporate their communities within their exhibitions. While the two museums have different methods for community involvement, it is clear through the analysis of their websites that a large amount of their time and resources go towards community engagement and participation. Along with community engagement and participation, it appears evident that both museums use their exhibitions to better represent the local community and the cities they reside in.

Website Analysis

The Wing Luke Museum and the GLBT Historical Museum both utilize their websites to provide a quick break-down of the organization, current exhibitions, and ways to get involved. But the Wing Luke Museum, having been around for nearly twenty years prior to the GLBT Historical Museum, could apply more of their resources (staff and funding) into both their website and to developing a well-thought out and detailed model to garner more support and involvement from the local community. The Wing Luke Museum's website has an almost overwhelming array of past and present exhibitions to learn about, as well as some quotes or testimonials from community members/partners that arguably add to making the museum's website appear more established or legitimate. Whereas, the GLBT Historical Museum, since they represent an often-invisible community, utilizes their website to show visitors how vast, unexplored, and complex the queer community is.

Queer-Themed Exhibitions

While both museums have held LGBTQ-related exhibitions, the GLBT Historical Museum holds more LGBTQ-related exhibits than the Wing Luke Museum by far. But each museum has a specific audience that they are directing their exhibitions towards and that they are attempting to reflect. So even though the Wing Luke Museum does not have a substantial amount of LGBTQ-related exhibitions, which does not necessarily reflect negatively, the museum focuses their efforts on equity, inclusion, and representation to a different degree. The Wing Luke focuses a lot on untold stories and understanding cultural heritage, which is often something that queer-identified individuals look for as well. Both museums work to engage with different audiences; but within those different audiences, there are a lot of similarities, which can be found through the various exhibition themes.

Impact on the Community

The most significant similarity that became apparent was that both museums dedicate a great deal of resources to community involvement. The GLBT Historical Museum and the Wing Luke Museum both appear to actively work to entice and engage the local community; this engagement can be in the form of volunteering, donations, or even contributing to the exhibitions/archives. After reading a great deal of exhibition and organization reviews, it seems evident that both museums are contributing an invaluable amount to their communities and shedding light on so many untold stories.

Conclusion

Overall, there are many similarities that can be found in the two museums. Both museums focus on involving the local community and representing or sharing stories about their community that are not found in most other mainstream museums. And while it could be argued that the Wing Luke Museum should incorporate more queer-themed exhibitions, but each of these museums are representing their community in their own unique ways.

The decision to focus this case study on these two specific museums came to about during the Queer Theory course taken in tandem with writing the second literature review. After building off of the first literature review, which focused on representation, the second literature review focused on developing an understanding of the complexities of sexuality, gender, and societal norms. These two museums were decided upon because they both target a very specific community as their audience, and they both have intriguing methods for doing so. This case study primarily connects to the second literature review, in that both museums address the fact that each community has its own set of complexities and that even within a group of people who identify the same way, there is a myriad of differences and needs. Both the Wing Luke Museum and the GLBT Historical Museum offer good examples of how other U.S.-based museums can provide exhibitions for the queer

community as well as incorporate their ideas into the exhibition development process.

What stands out the most with both museums' inclusion practices, is that their practices can be transferred and adjusted to fit any museum regardless if they are specifically a LGBTQ museum.

Chapter 6: Findings and Analysis

The information gathered for this research project provided an opportunity to identify and analyze the types of inclusion and representation that occurred in various U.S.-based museums. The two literature reviews discussed inclusion and representation through both a general and specific perspective. From the general perspective, representation and inclusion were discussed to examine the benefits and potential pitfalls that can occur when museums try to incorporate a specific community through special or one-off exhibits. And from the specific perspective, representation and inclusion were examined as forms of resistance to heteronormativity. Examining representation and inclusion from both perspectives created an opportunity to explore more than just the need for queer-themed exhibitions, to look for examples where representation and inclusion can help to dismantle forms of oppression and the continuation of unequal power relations.

This research project started with a literature review of the variety of queer art and artists within U.S.-based museums detailed through a museum theory perspective. Applying the museum theory perspective in the literature review created an opportunity to focus specifically on representation. To discuss the primary research question, *what are the historical and/or current practices for queer representation and inclusion within U.S. museums*, the literature review needed to provide both a broad overview of a few influential queer exhibitions and evidence of the rarity of queer-themed exhibits within U.S.-based museums. The first literature review provided the initial framework of this research as well as background information on the struggles that many queer-identified individuals faced around accurate and positive representation within museums. It was not until taking the queer theory course and writing the second literature review that the true focus of this research developed.

The second literature review continued off the framework that the first literature review provided, while delving further into the concept of representation, examining both positive and negative aspects that can become apparent. During the process of writing the second literature review, the museums that would be researched in the comparative case study were identified. The second literature review sought to understand how the idea of increasing the representation and inclusion of a marginalized group of people, not only queer-identified people, can lead or continue to propagate forms of oppression. These forms of oppression most often come in the form of stereotyping and enforcing heteronormativity. While developing this greater understanding of oppression, it became evident that those creating queer-themed exhibits must work to reduce these various forms of oppression. Once that became apparent, identifying which two specific museums to research for the comparative case study became clear. Both the Wing Luke Museum and the GLBT Museum focus on presenting art and history to their local communities through a collaborative practice. These two museums are good examples of how to produce and maintain substantial representation and inclusion of underrepresented or marginalized groups of people. Throughout the process of gathering information for the comparative case study and writing the second literature review, finding answers to the sub-questions posed within this research began to unfold. The sub-questions, found in the introductory chapter that the comparative case study and second literature review began to answer are as follows:

- How does the subject matter or theme of the exhibition affect queer representation?
- What are some common factors that contribute to the decision to mount queer exhibits?

- What role does the definition of the word 'queer' contribute to representation and inclusion in museums?
- What are some possible best practices for queer representation and inclusion within U.S.-based museums?

As discussed within the research, when U.S.-based museums produce queer exhibitions that perpetuate stereotypes and heteronormative views, they are contributing to existing power relations and creating forms of oppression. But when U.S.-based museums produce queer exhibitions that challenge social norms, focus on areas within the queer community that are not often discussed, and engage with the local community, the exhibitions aid in the dismantling of stigma and the need for substantial representation.

In regard to some possible best practices for queer representation and inclusion within U.S.-based museums, the two museums researched within the comparative case study chapter demonstrate what these possible practices can look like. Most notable is the Wing Luke Museum's Community Advisory Committee model. This model involves the local community from the beginning to the end of the exhibition process. The aim of the model is to create connections within the local community and present untold stories that might be lost otherwise. With this model, the Wing Luke Museum has developed a type of template for how similar museums can engage with their communities, foster learning, and create exhibitions that reflect the needs and desires of their community. While the GLBT Museum does not have a model for community engagement and participation, many of the museum's exhibitions aim to present stories about, and for, the different communities that encompass the LGBTQ community.

Implications for the Museum Field

Queer inclusion within U.S.-based museums is important for the LGBTQ community and for those that identify within any other community. As theorist David Halperin says in

How to Be Gay, “Unlike the members of minority groups defined by race or ethnicity or religion, gays cannot rely on their birth families to teach them about their history of their culture. They must discover their roots through contact with the larger society and the larger world” (Halperin, 2012, p. 7). Viewing themselves as a part of the museum rather than as a temporary feature will help the LGBTQ community to explore their history and culture and allow them to further it. Museums play an important part in community engagement and involvement in the arts; they also set the tone of the community. If a museum refuses to acknowledge queer people and only shows the societal norm, it becomes difficult for the queer community to fight for equality knowing that their community does not support them. It is not impossible for the queer community to make noise about the issues but without a socially acceptable institution backing them, but it is nearly impossible to make any headway with social change. That is why U.S.-based museums need to take the step towards LGBTQ representation and inclusion; this would give and show support to the LGBTQ community, by acknowledging the normalcy of homosexuality and debunking any myths or misconceptions that LGBTQ people are not an integral part of society.

More work needs to be done; inclusion of the LGBTQ community requires more than a special exhibit. It requires commitment to incorporating new art into museums’ permanent collections, acknowledging the presence of queer art already present in collections and creating more queer-positive programming. Such efforts will help reduce any stigmas within the community and provide a space for the LGBTQ community to connect with the art and culture of their past.

Suggestions for Further Research

One thing that was discovered during the second literature review, is that there is a lack of research pertaining to exhibitions where sex is not the primary focus. There are

many people who identify as asexual, or do not identify any particular way, who might not be interested in queer exhibitions that focus on sex or that assume that all queer-identified people are interested in sex. There are still many facets of the queer community that can and should be explored, such as more niche queer sexual and nonsexual identities. A few examples of niche queer identities are butch, femme, pansexual, bears, etc. Another avenue for research can be to compare how museums on the east coast and the west coast work to incorporate queer art and artists within their exhibitions. This can be a comparison of museums within major U.S. cities or even smaller, more rural regions. These are merely a few areas that can be explored through further research, which will help to incorporate more substantial queer art and artists within U.S.-based museums.

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Appendices

Appendix A

General Timeline

Spring 2016

- Develop research topic.
- Complete Museum Theory course.
- Begin information collection.
- Write literature review.

Fall 2016

- Refine research question.
- Complete full research proposal.

Winter 2017

- Complete Issues in Sociology of Gender course.
- Begin gathering information for the comparative case study.
- Compile list of resources for the second literature review.
- Complete second literature review.
- Begin writing the first draft of the final synthesis paper.

Spring 2017

- Complete comparative case study.
- Edit and complete the final draft of the final synthesis paper.

Appendix B

Excerpt from Nina Simon's *The Participatory Museum: Wing Luke Museum-Community Advisory Committee*

“The process begins with an open exhibition proposal model. Anyone can propose an exhibition, and proposals are reviewed yearly based on topic, significance, and relevance to the museum’s mission. Staff members and community advisors pick the projects to pursue and launch a two-to-three-year development process. The project team is composed of three groups:

1. A Core Advisory Committee of 12-15 community members with specific and diverse connections to the topic at hand, who lead the project development
2. Staff, who facilitate the process as technical advisors, project administrators, and community managers
3. More informally engaged community members, who participate as contributors and collaborators to the project

The exhibit development process is facilitated by staff but steered by the Core Advisory Committee (CAC). The content, timing, and decision-making process for each project changes based on the dynamics and needs of the particular community with whom each project is developed. The CAC is “the primary decision-making body within the Exhibit Team, and are charged with developing the main messages, themes, content and form of the exhibition and its related components.” A community member, not a museum staff member, leads the CAC.

Once the overall concept is defined, the CAC recruit’s other members of the community to contribute artifacts or stories, perform research, and provide outreach programming for the exhibition. Meanwhile, the staff provides support in design, research, and community facilitation. Staff members often manage interpersonal relationships alongside shifting project schedules.

Museum staff members lead design and fabrication, with CAC members offering input and curatorial direction over artifact selection, multi-media story creation, and general design to ensure it remains in line with exhibition goals. CAC members are invited to drop by at any point during fabrication and installation and are occasionally asked to help install particular artifacts or elements. There are special opening events for all participating community members, and participants are solicited both formally and informally for evaluation on the exhibitions. In addition, community members often develop and lead educational programs alongside volunteers and staff members during the run of each exhibition.

Because the co-creative process is the only way that exhibitions are developed at the Wing Luke Asian Museum, the audience experience is not differentiated from that of other types of exhibits or programs. The audience is considered in exhibition design insofar as the co-creation process is set up to deliver a product that is meaningful and relevant to a range of diverse communities. The museum performs summative evaluations of all

exhibitions, measuring audience numbers and impact as well as growth and impact of new community connections.

Because the Wing Luke's co-creative exhibition model is so tightly integrated with the overall goals and strategies of the institution, the staff also evaluates the extent to which the museum as a whole is a successful community place. The museum is very specific in stating its indicators of success:

- We observe significant community participation in museum programs.
- Community members return time and time again.
- People learn and are moved through their participation in museum programs.
- People see something of themselves in our exhibits and event.
- People become members of the museum.
- People contribute artifacts and stories to our exhibits.
- The community supports the museum's new capital campaign.
- Constituents are comfortable providing both positive and negative feedback.

The museum's internal hiring and training practices also reflect their overall focus on community engagement. The Wing Luke Asian Museum hires people for relationship-building skills as well as content expertise. They put a priority on staff continuity, diversity, and cultivation of young staff as future leaders. The staff is trained extensively in dialogue and community-response techniques to help them carry out the museum's mission. At the Wing Luke Asian Museum, co-creation and community partnership is a way of life, infiltrating all its efforts, from exhibition design to board recruitment to fundraising" (Simon, 2010, p.264).

*Complete text available online at participatorymuseum.org

Appendix C

GLBT Historical Museum- Sponsorship pamphlet



The only museum of its kind in the United States, the GLBT History Museum is both an internationally known tourist destination and a vibrant local cultural center. The museum features multiple exhibitions as well as many programs and events. Tens of thousands of people visit each year.

gay lesbian bisexual transgender
history museum

The museum was created by the GLBT Historical Society, a research center founded in 1985 that also operates one of the world's largest archives of queer history materials.



ANNUAL SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Presenting Sponsor: \$25,000

- Acknowledgement at the museum and in all museum promotions as the Presenting Sponsor.
- Most prominent sponsor acknowledgement on The GLBT History Museum sponsor wall.
- Opportunity to have museum staff distribute materials to all museum visitors.
- Most prominent sponsor acknowledgement on The GLBT History Museum website.
- Acknowledgment on signage behind the admissions desk.
- Most prominent sponsor acknowledgement in all museum promotions, including printed materials and advertisements.
- Corporate logo placement in acknowledgements if desired.
- A private reception at the museum, including a docent-led tour.
- Free museum admission for all company employees.
- Six VIP tickets to the GLBT Historical Society annual gala.

Platinum Sponsor: \$10,000 to \$24,999

- Choice of naming opportunity appropriate at this level: Gallery Sponsor, Free Admission Sponsor, Presenting Sponsor of the Month.
- Very prominent sponsor acknowledgement on The GLBT History Museum sponsor wall.
- Very prominent sponsor acknowledgement on The GLBT History Museum website.
- Very prominent sponsor acknowledgement in all promotions, including printed materials and advertisements.
- Free museum admission for all company employees.
- Four VIP tickets to the GLBT Historical Society annual gala.

Gold Sponsor: \$5,000 to \$9,999

- Choice of naming opportunity appropriate at this level, including Presenting Sponsor of the Month, Video Gallery Sponsor and Free Admission Sponsor.
- Prominent acknowledgement on The GLBT History Museum sponsor wall.
- Prominent sponsor acknowledgement on The GLBT History Museum website.
- Prominent sponsor acknowledgement in all promotions, including printed materials and advertisements.
- Free museum admission for all company employees.
- Two VIP tickets to the GLBT Historical Society annual gala.

Silver Sponsor: \$2,500 to \$4,999

- Choice of naming opportunity appropriate at this level, including Display Case Sponsor and Free Admission Sponsor.
- Featured acknowledgement on the GLBT History Museum's sponsor wall.
- Featured sponsor acknowledgement on the GLBT History Museum's website.
- Free museum admission for all company employees.
- Two VIP tickets to the GLBT Historical Society annual gala.

Bronze Sponsor: \$1,000 to \$2,499

- Choice of naming opportunity appropriate at this level, including Display Case Sponsor and Free Admission Sponsor.
- Featured acknowledgement on the GLBT History Museum sponsor wall.
- Featured sponsor acknowledgement on the GLBT History Museum's website.
- Free museum admission for all company employees.
- Two VIP tickets to the GLBT Historical Society annual gala.

YES! I WANT TO BE A SPONSOR
OF GLBT HISTORY
MUSEUM

SPONSORSHIP LEVEL

- Presenting \$25,000
- Platinum \$10,000 to \$24,999
- Gold \$5,000 to 9,999
- Silver \$2,500 to \$4,999
- Bronze \$1,000 to \$2,499

SPONSOR INFORMATION

Name

Company

Address

City State ZIP

Website

Email

Phone

PAYMENT INFORMATION

I am enclosing my check made out to The GLBT Historical Society

Please charge my credit card with the information stated below:

Card Type VISA MasterCard Discover American

Express Card Number

Expiration Date mm yy CVC/CVV Billing

ZIP Amount (\$US)

Queer Representation and Inclusion within U.S. Museums

Signature

I am making an online donation at glbthistory.org

Please mail or drop off payments to: **The GLBT Historical Society, 989 Market Street, Lower Level, San Francisco, CA 94103.** For more information, please contact Terry Beswick, Executive Director at 415.777.5455 or terry@glbthistory.org