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Diversity and Inclusion in the Arts: A Literature Snapshot

The facts and figures of diversity in the United States have recently become ubiquitous. Regardless of whether the Pew Research Center's estimation of 2055 or the Census Bureau's estimation of 2044 is correct, the United States is projected to become majority minority sometime within the next few decades (Horowitz). In addition to becoming more ethnically diverse, the American population is aging. The population of those over the age of 65 is growing more rapidly than younger populations (transgenerational.org). The demographic landscape of the United States is quickly becoming completely different from anything the nation has seen before. These changes are causing shifts and disruptions in public policy, economics, and everyday interactions. Calls for policies and actions that better reflect the nation's growing diversity have increased and become louder over the years as more people demand both inclusion and equity. Far from being new demands, the voices making them have simply become louder with the help of increased numbers and access to new outlets such as social media. These demands have permeated all parts of American life, including the arts. This article will provide an overview of recent conversations about diversity and inclusion in various aspects of the arts and arts management.

While many conversations focus solely on racial and ethnic diversity, this article takes a broader definition of term. Loden's (2010) discussion of varied dimensions of diversity provide a more robust list of the many ways in which difference can cause friction in both personal and professional life. This article focuses its efforts on investigating diversity in the arts as it pertains to the following primary dimensions: age, class, ethnicity/race, gender/gender expression, income/socioeconomic status, physical abilities and characteristics, and sexuality.

The purpose of this article is to provide readers with a foundational understanding of the many ways in which diversity has and is being identified, articulated, debated, and pursued in the arts. Far from being a comprehensive history, this article serves as a snapshot of diversity in the arts that is informed by past discussions and indicative of actions and conversation on the horizon. Through a review of books, articles, and reports the author first looks at recent historical conversations of diversity within the arts. These conversations introduce important concepts and provide the context for an investigation of current issues. The author concludes with a look at current and planned responses to the problems outlined in the literature.

Historical Issues of Diversity & Inclusion in the Arts

What is (Viable) Art?
One of the oldest conversations related to diversity and inclusion in the arts is the idea of what is considered "art" and viable artistic activity. In many cases this discussion has served as a proxy for a discussion about whose artistic practices are considered legitimate in the public arena. The answer to this question has broad implications for what types of art and which artists are eligible for public funding and critical acclaim, two markers for artistic and fiscal success (Levitt et al. 1991). In the past, what has been considered "in the canon" has been limited to mainly European males for a number of art forms including, but not limited to, dance, visual art, and theatre (Heidelberg & Cuyler 2014).

While many distill the Culture Wars of the 90's into a debate over public funding and artistic freedom between conservative Republicans, liberal artists, and the National Endowment for the Arts, Bolton (1992) provides a much more robust picture of the conversations happening at the time. Another aspect of the Culture Wars, which is alluded to in Bolton's work and echoed in personal accounts and anecdotes, were artists and arts administrators of color who, when called upon to support the embattled NEA, refused because of the long history of exclusion from equal funding and consideration from the organization. This exclusion was often justified with the idea of "artistic excellence." Artistic excellence is a granting criterion that is often used, rarely defined, and has often

come under attack for being a catch-all phrase that can be molded to include or exclude artistic practices on an as-needed basis (DeVereaux 2016). Far from being resolved during or after the Culture Wars, issues related to artistic excellence and exclusion can be seen in modern conversations regarding arts funding which will be discussed later in this article.

Arts Activity & Participation
Many community cultural practices have traditionally been excluded from serious consideration as arts activity. Here is another area where the definition of the word "art" can have significant impact (AMS Planning and Research 1995; Robinson 1993; Walker et al. 2000). In the past, limited definitions of art have made the picture of who participates in arts activity painted by reports that only tracked "traditional" "high art" activity artificially homogenous, or worse – implied that potential patrons of color and younger patrons didn't participate in arts activity at all. A noted shift in terminology, and the significance thereof, is highlighted in McCarthy and Jinnet's (2001) study of public participation in the arts. Now, with the inclusion of studies that note the wealth of cultural activity happening in churches, community spaces, and other non-traditional arts venues (Chapple & Jackson 2010) there is a more accurate picture of arts and cultural activity and participation that reflects the diversity that exists. This is not to say that there still are not deserts of cultural activity where residents do not have easy access to cultural events, but a more inclusive definition of arts activity has policy implications at the local, state, and national levels with regard to what initiatives are funded and the way public impact is defined and evaluated as outlined in both the *Measuring Cultural Engagement* report (2014) and Chapple & Jackson (2010)**.** This issue currently manifests itself in considerations of how predominantly White cultural institutions attract and engage with increasingly diverse audiences.

Artistic Products
Long-standing artistic products, more recent history provides a number of examples in theater and musical theater shows, which were once hailed, have been called into question for their practices of cultural appropriation and problematic portrayals of minorities. Cultural appropriation, the taking of cultural products, practices, and norms and utilizing them outside of their cultural context, has occurred throughout history, and has spanned all art forms (Young 2010). A complete body of literature exists on this cultural phenomenon, with Nicklas and Lindner (2012) offering a wide range of considerations from various artistic disciplines and perspectives. Recent work on the part of artists and arts managers focuses more on how to live with these works, such as *The King and I* and *Madame Butterfly*, in today's society. Many artists and arts managers now work diligently with art historians and area experts to determine educational programming to both identify some of the harmful practices of the past as well as to highlight show themes within these complicated pieces of work that directly relate to current issues of social justice and equity.

While these past issues in diversity and inclusion in the arts have not been fully resolved, there are resources, initiatives, and individuals in both the scholarly and practitioner realms that have been addressing and continue to address these issues. More inclusive definitions of artistic practices have made their way to the large institutions with national reach such as the National Endowment for the Arts, which has trickledown impact on state and local arts agencies, and Americans for the Arts, which influences many small and mid-sized arts organizations. Additionally, art historians, administrators, and researchers have continued questioning the meaning of past artistic works and practices in a more culturally sensitive and aware society. Ongoing conversations discuss ways to celebrate the "good" aspects of these works while acknowledging and addressing the "bad" and the "ugly."

Current Issues in Diversity & Inclusion

David Pankratz (1993) was one of the first authors to thoroughly explore issues of diversity and inclusion, then referred to as "multiculturalism," in traditional literature. Pankratz's look at various policy aspects of diversity looked at affirmative action, funding practices, evaluation methodologies, policymaking, and policy maintenance strategies – all areas that would become focal points within the decade to follow. It was this work, coupled with Garfias' (1990) discussion of the intersection of issues of diversity and the arts in America, that helped set the stage for a variety of reports and scholarly investigations into diversity and equity that would occur in a few years.

It is important to note that many diversity conversations which gained widespread attention in the early 2000s occurred as a result of arts organizations seeking to diversify their audiences, and by extension their fundraising bases. The demographic shifts mentioned at the beginning of this article caused significant shifts in audiences for a number of arts organizations, leaving many of them to question how they would continue to get "butts in seats" as their traditional base was continuing to dwindle. The idea of inclusion was not a focal point in those early years because many of the goals of audience development were about the benefits that diversity would accrue for arts organizations. This one-directional focus was championed by many who wanted surface-level change without the work of creating systemic change within their organizations. Later discussions identified the practice of audience engagement. This aforementioned shift in language (McCarthy & Jinnett 2001) not only highlighted the need for inclusive definitions of "the arts" and inclusive evaluation methods, it also noted the need for a multi-directional flow of knowledge and mutual respect (Jackson 2009; Grams & Farrell 2008). It was not until calls for diversity and inclusion throughout the arts ecosystem emerged that the need for diversity and inclusion in the areas discussed below began to be discussed in earnest.

Artistic & Managerial Staff
Perhaps the most pervasive issue in current conversations about diversity and inclusion in the arts is the fact that the staff (both artistic and managerial) of arts organizations often does not reflect the communities in which their organizations reside, nor the populations they serve or hope to serve (Schonfeld et al. 2015; Schonfeld 2016). This is a result of past practices of exclusion and the more recent practice of establishing arts organizations in pre-gentrified or gentrifying areas and serving patrons that reside outside of their immediate location, rather than area locals. For a further exploration of this phenomenon, much of the creative placemaking literature delves deeply into the ideas of culturally sensitive and responsive placemaking (Markusen & Gadwa 2010; Noonan 2013; Webb 2014) and the more recent reclamation ideal of placekeeping (Bedoya 2012). Artistic staff, including creators and the artists that bring these creations to life, have collectively begun to question a wide variety of issues that relate to diversity and inclusion. These issues include who has access to artistic practices and the avenues to pursue professional artistic work (National Endowment for the Arts 2011), what the development pipeline looks like for a diverse set of would-be artists, and investigations of the barriers to entry and advancement for artists (Strategic National Arts Alumni Project 2013).

Managerial staff in arts organizations have also begun to question a, arguably broader, range of diversity and inclusion considerations that include race, ethnicity, and gender, age and physical ability. The *Grantmakers In the Arts Reader* (Cuyler 2015) offers a thorough snapshot of the current makeup of the field with regard to race/ethnicity, gender, and age. As the long-standing leadership in the field of arts management continues to collectively age out of the workforce, conversations about the "leadership pipeline" and the need for age-diverse boards and arts organizations is also taking place (Ono 2016; Western State Arts Federation 2005). While some of these discussions consider the entire field, other investigations into field diversity – or lack thereof – focus on a particular discipline. The *Museum Staff Diversity Report* (Schonfeld et al. 2015) is one of the most comprehensive sources that

outline the current levels of diversity within the field, focusing on museums. Conversations about the need for gender diversity and equality at the upper-managerial levels of arts organizations is not new, but have seen a revival as the number of entry and mid-level female workers continue to far outweigh the number of women in leadership roles (Herron et al. 1998).

Arts Management Education
The increasing popularity of arts management degrees at both the undergraduate and graduate levels has opened up another avenue for a discussion of diversity and inclusion. Although the student population of all arts management programs has not been investigated in any systematic way, many in the Association of Arts Administration Educators (AAAE) anecdotally note that the majority of students in their programs are Non-Hispanic White females. Much of what is seen demographically in the field is reflected in the academic arm of the field. The majority of arts management educators at all levels, from adjunct to full professors, are Non-Hispanic White. The exact breakdown of the male to female ratio is unavailable as there has been no systematic census of arts management educators conducted in recent years. Efforts to diversify student populations have resulted in an increase in students of color and international students in some programs, but progress toward diversifying faculty that teach within these programs has been much slower. Ideally, a more diverse faculty base would help not only attract a more racially and ethnically diverse student population (Heidelberg 2016), but would also expose students to a different perspective that may serve them in their efforts to be effective change agents in the field with regard to diversity and inclusion upon graduation (Heidelberg and Cuyler 2014).

Arts Board and Arts Funders
Arts Boards and Funders are both decision-makers whose actions impact the entire field. The collective hiring practices of boards, who are often responsible for hiring executive-level personnel, impact who is seen at the helm of major institutions. Boards can, and often have, acted as gatekeepers for the highest levels of arts management. A lack of knowledge and skills based on diversity and equity in executive-level hiring practices have caused negative impact not only for racial and ethnic minorities, but for women as well (Herron et al. 1998; Cuyler 2013). Arts Funders have a large role in determining which organization's work continues and thrives not only through financial support but also by the stamp of approval that is offered by being a grant recipient (Mulcahy 1991). This "seal of approval" has traditionally helped organizations secure additional funding, attracting both new audiences and donors, although whether or not that is still true has been called into question (Borgonovi & O'Hare 2004).

There have been increasing calls for board diversification starting in the early 90s (Bowles 1992) and continuing today (Ostrower 2005) in both the researcher and practitioner realms. While much of the literature on this topic stems from the nonprofit field as whole, there are many conversations and workshops taking place at major conferences such as Americans for the Arts National Convention, most recently held in Boston in June, 2016, Association of Performing Arts Presenters annual gathering most recently held in January, 2016 in New York, and all of the National Arts Service Organizations gatherings. It is not surprising that the practitioner-based conversations have come to outpace the scholarly literature in this realm, as boards and funding institutions are looking to determine the best path to create a sustainable, diverse, and inclusive arts ecology as quickly as possible.

In many ways, arts funders have been pioneers in this area, publishing a number of reports that look at the ways in which funding can serve as a barrier to diversity and equity as well as ways that funders may help support diversity and equity through more thoughtful granting practices. One of the most prominent sources for the potential work of funders in this area is Sidford's (2011) *Fusing Arts, Culture and Social Change.* This source is an action-oriented treatment of the issues. For a thorough, scholarly investigation of the issues presented in Sidford's report (2011), note the comprehensive

literature review of cultural equity and inclusion commissioned by the Los Angeles Country Arts Commission (Maudlin & Kidd 2016). Unfortunately, there is not field-wide consensus on these matters. Some consider the long-term impact of structural inequity on culturally-specific arts organizations (Voss et al. 2016) and how to begin addressing the ramifications of decades of biased practices (Malton et al. 2014). On the other hand, there are others that look at the statistics about underfunding arts organizations of color and determine that the solution is a race-based organizational Darwinism that can be helped along by funders making tough decisions about the winners and losers among culturally-specifically organizations (DeVos Institute 2015). The DeVos Institute report was highly criticized for its underlying premise that culturally-specific arts organizations were inherently unviable funding recipients due solely to managerial incompetence and a lack of "excellence" in their respective disciplines. This assumption ignores the long-standing, clearly documented biases in both funding and public policy that have disproportionately impacted culturally-specific organizations. Many in the arts community noted this kind of thinking as problematic and indicative of the negative stigmas that many culturally-specific organizations have to overcome in order to be considered viable competitors for grants. However, the fact that this sentiment was written and published does let all within the arts ecosystem know that there is still much work to be done to work toward equity and inclusion.

Conclusion
This article provided an overview of three main areas that have historically presented barriers to diversity and inclusion in the field of arts management. What is considered (viable) art has traditionally had implications for which artists and artistic products are considered eligible for public funding. Definitions are also important when discussing arts activity and arts participation, where the way those terms are defined can significantly impact how arts activity is measured, evaluated, and funded. The ways in which artistic products have been produced and displayed have also been a problematic area in the past. Issues of representation and cultural appropriation have existed for a long time, with thoughtful consideration of these practices being a more recent phenomenon. All three of these issues, while rooted in past considerations and discussions, are also present in some of the current discussions of diversity and inclusion in the arts.

Issues of both representation and defining inclusivity into artistic practices and measurements are at play in the entire arts ecology from arts management education and staff, to arts boards and funders. This article highlights some of the most important elements of the conversations happening around these issues in more recent literature. These items are presented in the hope that having a clear understanding of where the conversation currently stands will facilitate moving the conversation forward.

While some mention of potential solutions exist, they stem largely from the practitioner realm and therefore, were not as present in the sources that were the primary focus of this article. It is hoped that more scholars will look at concrete actions steps to move toward a diverse arts ecology with inclusive practices – as there is a gap in the literature that speaks specifically to the nonprofit arts context. This is an area ripe for policy transfer and learning from other countries such as the UK (Parkinson & Buttrick 2014) and Australia (Mar & Ang 2015) where issues of diversity and equity, even through the lens of the arts, has been discussed and much more thoroughly documented and researched. Other fields of study may also prove useful in considering how arts management scholars can take the next step in moving from issue identification and documentation to solution generation. The considerations and benefits of embracing diversity are widely touted anecdotally within the field of arts management. However, this issue has been given scholarly treatment in the business literature (Roberson 2006). The field of nonprofit arts management has often adopted and adapted terminology, theories, and practices from the business community.

Intellectual incrementalism is a standard in fields of inquiry and practice. This process requires scholars to periodically check in with the literature to ask how historic conversations and helped shaped current conversations, and how current conversations can help shape action to address current issues and shape the questions that we will ask next about ourselves and our field. Ideally, this article will serve as the foundation for additional research into where conversations about diversity and inclusion go next and how various actors work to create diverse and inclusive arts organizations and arts ecologies.

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