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RACE and Conservation Education: A Case Study

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Master's Project Proposal

Introduction

During the twentieth century in the US the civil rights movement made great strides in promoting social equity, yet in the 21st century disparities in racial and ethnic equity are still present in our society. From achievement in the education system (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007) to representation in the criminal system (Guerino, Harrison & Sabol, 2011), these disparities frequently garner national attention. The environmental stewardship and conservation movement is not immune from these trends, and in fact, struggles disproportionately with equitable representation and participation across ethnic and racial groups amongst their staff and leadership (Bonta & Jordan, 2007). For example, Dorceta Taylor (2008) found in a sample of 243 environmental organizations, including both mainstream organizations, environmental justice organizations and government agencies, 17.21% of the staff members were people of color. A total of 28.4% of organizations had no people of color on their staff. In addition to patterns of underrepresentation in mainstream organizations and agencies, research also shows that environmental degradation disproportionately impacts people of color and low income communities (Mohai, Pellow & Roberts, 2009).

In an attempt to illuminate these disparities scholars have collected and explored data surrounding everything from visits to National Parks (Floyd, 1999) and participation in recycling (Clarke, M., & Maantay, J., 2005) to diverse representation amongst ecology undergraduates (Armstrong, Berkowitz, Dyer, & Taylor, 2007) and landowner participation in conservation programs (Gan, Onianwa, Schelhas, Wheelock, & Dubois, 2005). Meanwhile, practitioners have been trying to

make sense of the data and hypotheses and apply it to the everyday work of their organizations. When making the case about why racial or ethnic inequities should be their problem, rationales are often presented as either a "business case" or "social justice" case. Bonta and Jordan (2007) appeal to the "business case" for diversifying the environmental movement by suggesting that the key to the movement's political support and survival in the future is to capitalize on an increasingly racially diverse American population. Alternatively, a social justice framework contends that there is a moral or ethical obligation to incorporate practices that promote diversity and equity between racial groups. An example would be the framework of the environmental justice movement, that operates with the mission that all people, regardless of color, have a right to a clean and healthy home and workplace (Lee, 1991).

Tomlinson and Schwabenland (2010) suggest that for the non-profit sector incorporating both rationales does not have to be a mutually exclusive choice. They argue that non-profit organizations need both cases because of "the centrality of ideas of social justice to... (their) self-understanding...but voluntary organizations are also increasingly engaged in public service provision, demanding that they demonstrate cost-effective and professional management" (Tomlinson & Schwabenland, 2010, p. 102). Non-profit organizations are often mission-focused and have a charge to be inclusive to all of society; For example, Weisinger (2005) studied diversity in the non-profit sector by focusing on the case of the Girl Scouts, because in part they explicitly have a mission to serve "every girl, everywhere". Non-profit leaders must make not only a "business case" for diversity and equity, but often have a specific charge to pursue a diversity mission implied by their core organizational mission.

Opportunity Statement

An opportunity to explore the intersection of a conservation mission and diversity mission[1] is

1 Diversity is a word so overused that its meaning is diluted and made ambiguous. While many diversity initiatives or missions in a variety of organizations seek to promote and value difference across a wide rage of attributes (class, gender, cultural background, etc) race is often considered one of the most salient and contentious categories of difference in American society, due to our history and associated layers of power and privilege. This study focuses on diversity of race and ethnicity because this is the specific focus of the visiting exhibit.

happening at the ECHO Lake Aquarium and Science Center in Burlington, Vermont. This stewardship-focused museum will host the exhibit *RACE: Are We So Different?* in the Fall of 2012. This traveling exhibit, produced by the Science Museum of Minnesota and the American Anthropological Association, examines race from a biological, historical and sociological perspective.

My research will explore ECHO's experience of hosting the *RACE* exhibit in a qualitative study utilizing case study and developmental evaluation methodology. In particular I am interested in discovering how the organization's staff understand and learn about the relevancy and connections between their mission based conservation education work and the objectives of the *RACE* exhibit. I am interested in how the organization and staff members take the new found lens of the RACE exhibit and apply it to their permanent collection.

ECHO staff, and the greater community, are investing a great amount of effort and resources in the preparation for this exhibit, and the potential rewards are many. However, the exhibit itself will only be in Burlington for a three month period. Ideally many lessons, relationships and new practices will extend well beyond the departure of the physical exhibit. To support this, my deliverables will include a report on my qualitative findings as well as a resource guide to environmental justice for the educators and facilitators at ECHO for their use this Fall and in the future.

Significance of Study

This exhibit provides a significant opportunity for ECHO as an organization as well as for its many partners and the greater community of Burlington. The conversation around race, equity and identity is alive and has been on-going in our community for some time. The exhibit will provide an excellent opportunity for some groups in the Burlington area to deepen their dialogue and also to reach out to new community members. While the methodology and deliverables will be designed with ECHO in mind as the core audience, the findings may triangulate with best practices in overcoming racial disparities at like-institutions. The lessons could be of interest to other conservation organizations

making the case for diversity and equity values.

Literature Review

Convening a discussion on race in a conservation museum is inherently interdisciplinary. Thus, the RACE exhibit at ECHO will generate opportunities for stakeholders to engage across disciplines, organizations and professions. I have drawn from resources in informal education and museum studies, multicultural education, environmental justice, parks and recreation studies, and organizational and diversity management.

First, ECHO Lake Aquarium and Science Center is defined amongst its peer institutions as a place of 'environmental free-choice learning' (Falk & Heimlich, 2009). Quantitative data suggests that racial and ethnic minorities are underrepresented amongst the visitors to these institutions (Falk & Heimlich, 2009). Overcoming this disparity by valuing diversity and equity makes for a strong "business case" or community relevancy motivation but it also has a logical place in the tenets of the conservation movement. I build this case for understanding how racial diversity and equity fit into the broader history of the conservation movement. Researchers and practitioners who wish to positively change disparities in racial representation should try to accurately define why the disparity exists. A number of hypotheses seek to explain this phenomenon. In particular the parks and recreation literature, and leisure studies more broadly has produced a great number of studies examining race and ethnicity in leisure (Floyd, 2008). While the theory and frameworks may help organizations situate themselves, this knowledge does not necessarily translate into the capacity to make change. The literature on multicultural organization development offers guidance on achievable action steps and goals. Finally, cases that examine experiences and outcomes of diversity initiatives for a range of organizational types and participants will be reviewed with suggestions for research design models.

Free-choice Environmental Learning

ECHO Lake Aquarium and Science Center shares characteristics with aquariums, nature centers, natural history museums and science centers. These institutions emphasize informal learning, recreation or entertainment, living animals and their ecosystems, and an environmental ethic. It also shares objectives and values with both the parks and recreation community and conservation advocacy organizations. Falk and Heimlich (2009) have categorized these organizations (excluding advocacy organizations) as places of *free-choice environmental learning*.

Places of free-choice environmental learning are generally popular with the public. In fiscal year 2012 ECHO hosted over 126,000 visitors (ECHO Lake Aquarium & Science Center, 2012) in a relatively small market; Chittenden County has approximately 150,000 residents (US Census Bureau, 2010). Simultaneously, evidence indicates that their popularity is not evenly distributed across all audience types and in particular, racial and ethnic minorities are underrepresented (Falk & Heimlich, 2009). The existing literature examining the identities of visitors to museums and other places of informal education tend to emphasize visitor motivations and psychographic profile as more valuable predictors of attendance than visitor's demographic data (Ellenbogen, 2006). Ostrower's (2005) findings note that motivations for visiting museums varied across ethnic groups, African-American and Hispanic participants were more likely to be interested in a cultural event if they could learn about or celebrate their heritage.

Environmental free-choice learning as an inclusive field is not particularly well-studied. Better studied are the overlapping industries that comprise these places: parks, aquariums and zoos or science centers. This makes sense because these institutions are organized into trade groups that have a sway over research and practice agendas, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums or the National Park

Service, for example. Studies that focus on museums tend to emphasize the more traditional art or history museum. Scholars and practitioners are concerned with the underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities yet the empirical evidence found so far is not particularly comprehensive. Many articles make their case by relying on dated literature that looks at only one group, such as African-Americans, to make statements about the status of museums throughout the US (Falk, 1993).

Maintaining Relevancy in the Conservation Movement

Any industry or field that is not representative of or welcoming to racial and ethnic minorities has fundamental flaws that will decrease its effectiveness into the 21st century. It is projected that within a few decades people of color will outnumber white Americans (Bonta & Jordan, 2007). Already in four states people of color are in the majority: Hawaii, New Mexico, California and Texas (Humes, Jones & Ramirez, 2011). Recent census reports indicate that the US grew 9.7% between 2000 and 2010 and that of those 27.3 million people most were non-white, multiracial or of Hispanic origin (Humes et al., 2011). In addition to immigration, younger generations are increasingly diverse in race and ethnicity. The latest census results indicate that the majority of infants are non-white (Frey, 2011). Any organization that wishes to retain public support, whether through federal funding, private donations or member participation, would do well to make the case that it is relevant for a broad cross-section of an increasingly diverse American public.

A case for diversity in the environmental movement also fits into the historical context of the movement and its foundational values. McConnell (1954) wrote that the Conservation movement of the early 20th century, led by Gifford Pinchot, was greatly influenced by Progressivism and populism. Diverging causes and values surrounding the conservation of natural resources were at that time held together by a common goal of equality for all; both equality across social groups and across

generations. Pinchot (1910, p.79) writes,

> The central thing for which Conservation stands is to make this country the best possible place to live in, both for us and for our descendants...it stands for an equal opportunity for every American citizen to get his fair share of benefit from these resources, both now and hereafter.

Of particular interest to the modern environmental movement that may be eager to broaden its base and find allies across society, McConnell (1954) noted that conservation was initially so broadly defined that it united causes which we now define as distinct and unrelated, such as labor rights and workplace conditions. However, writing in the 1950s he observed that progressivism was moving on to advocate primarily on economic and labor issues, and not on the conservation of natural resources. He essentially was acknowledging a rift between movements and causes that we are still attempting to overcome today.

It is important to remember the context of Pinchot's America. He may write of equality for all Americans but at the turn of the twentieth century many citizens remained disenfranchised, . He writes that every American “citizen” deserved equal opportunity, yet in his time many adult Americans were completely excluded from participating in the democratic process, let alone given equal opportunities in society. While the spirit of his message should motivate environmentalists today, the privilege that conservationists held at that time should be acknowledged and recognized as a legacy in today's movement.

The environmental justice movement in many ways reincorporates the seemingly disparate social and political movements of progressivism that McConnell believed were fractured in the 1950s.The environmental justice movement arose in the early 1980s to fight back against the disproportionate siting of environmental hazards, unsafe work conditions and the general poor

environmental health in the neighborhoods of people of color (Mohai, P., Pellow, D., & Roberts, J., 2009). Additionally, in a post-civil rights era, environmental justice highlights racial and ethnic inequities that correlate with the experience of environmental quality.

The evidence that the environmental justice movement presents is in itself a strong justification for diversifying the environmental movement. Despite overwhelming white leadership in the conservation movement, pollution, hazards and lack of access to natural resources is most likely to be experienced by people of color (Bullard, et al., 2007). In a meta-study of environmental inequity, Ringquist (2005) found a clear link between race and inequity, yet did not find a similar link between class and inequity. This data alone would suggest that there is a great opportunity, a moral imperative, to engage with communities of color around these inequities. Environmental mission-based organizations should be extremely motivated to recognize this inequity and examine how race, power and privilege have informed who benefits from their movement. By excluding certain communities and issues from the mainstream movement, the organizations have essentially constricted their problem definition and are not able to effectively confront some of our greatest environmental disasters.

Hypotheses of Engagement and Underrepresentation

Falk and Heimlich (2009) reported that though there is a correlation between race and visits to places of environmental free-choice learning, causality can not be established; “it is not true that being white and having a higher income and education level means you *will* utilize an environmental education setting” (p. 27). The authors looked beyond demographic data to understand what personal experiences and motivations shaped an individual's visit. One of the most important indicators that a person will be a visitor is that their parents took them to a similar place when they were children (Falk, 1993). Their explanation for decreased opportunities to attend museums and like institutions, is due to

external racism, poverty and living in remote areas (Falk & Heimlich, 2009, p. 27).

Understanding who is represented and who is not at environmental free-choice learning institutions requires an exploration of how people learn in these places; partly as a reminder that attendance and representation alone at these institutions is not sufficient, but as mission-based organizations, a quality learning experience is the desired outcome. Central to a learner's motivation is the learner's personal identity; "individuals make sense of their actions and roles by ascribing identity-related qualities or descriptions to themselves within a specific situation" (Falk & Heimlich, 2009, p. 33). Falk, Heimlich, and Bronnenkant (2008) defined identity as both situational and driven by larger societal forces. They used five visitor motivation identities (explorer, facilitator, experience-seeker, professional/hobbyist, and spiritual pilgrim) to research how visitors of aquariums and zoos make meaning of their visit and contribute to their learning about conservation. They did not explore if racial, ethnic or other social identities correlate with the motivational identities.

Difference in identity is sometimes just that, difference, but for some categories of identity there are layers of privilege and power associated with these differences. The creators and facilitators of museum spaces need to be aware that different learners' identities, motivations and experiences calls for "an accompanying discussion about the ideologies and discourses that structure these experiences" (Kivel, Johnson, & Scraton, 2009, p. 474). Limitations to racial and ethnic minorities participating in environmental free-choice learning cannot simply be understood as forces outside of the institution's control (economic factors, racism in society) but should be acknowledged as existing within the institutions themselves.

Leisure studies, a complementary field that overlaps with places of environmental free-choice learning, has been asking questions about the participation of racial and ethnic minorities since the

1970s. Kivel et al. (2009) cited Washburne's (1978) "marginality theory" that theorized underrepresentation of minorities is due to their likely low socio-economic status. They wrote that though this theory acknowledges some existence of discrimination it primarily focuses on the individual and not on structural or institutional oppressions. Studying experience of leisure in a social and ideological context will serve several purposes. Kivel at al. (2009) are concerned with the essentializing and othering of racialized "different" individuals in leisure studies; this work puts individual experience in context. It also asks institutions and researchers to examine their own ideologies and manifestations of oppression turning them into agents of responsibility and of change.

Floyd, Bocarro, and Thompson (2008) compiled a literature review of all articles related to race in ethnicity in major leisure studies journals through 2005. They found major themes and trends in methodology that would support Kivel et al's (2009) critique. Of the empirical studies, the most common themes were activity participation, outdoor recreation use and access, and race relations or interactions, including racism and discrimination issues. Environmental or social justice came up as a theme but was not one of the most common; this concerned the authors because social justice has been given much more attention in other complementary disciplines, and this has contributed to leisure studies being considered irrelevant by other disciplines. The research methods are overwhelmingly surveys, with few qualitative studies, and even fewer ethnographies (2%). This was cited as a problem because surveys or quantitative studies do not give voice or power to marginalized groups (Delpit, 1993).

Building Capacity to Address Underrepresentation

These hypotheses and critiques offer further questions for researchers but also have implications for practitioners in environmental free-choice learning. Organizations dedicated to addressing racial

and ethnic disparities described in the literature need more than good intentions to achieve their goals. They need strong leadership, resources, respectful and thoughtful engagement with the community, and a long term commitment (Newsome & Gentry, 2008). Social injustice permeates society at many different levels and requires an integrated response; one organization cannot do the work alone, nor can they be complacent and allow other larger organizations and networks to make change for them. It should be noted that racial injustice is not the only injustice that exists in our society. There continue to be different levels of power and privilege ascribed to different genders, classes, abilities, sexual orientations, or many other categories of difference. The status of these identities are not static nor monolithic and any given person will always be more than just one category of their identity. Though this project specifically is concerned with racial disparities, initiatives to combat inequities in society or a particular organization do not usually only focus on the value of racial or ethnic diversity. Because the intersectionality of difference is integral to any one person's identity and experience, it would be a disservice to exclusively focus on race. Thus in this section I discuss strategies for combating organizational racial inequities, that are in fact more broadly concerned with a range of inequities that their organizations may harbor.

Theories of multicultural organizational development (MCOD) describe a movement along a developmental continuum (Jackson, 2006). Organizations are unlikely to be at either extreme of this continuum; completely monocultural and completely multicultural do not correspond to bad and good organizations (Jackson, 2006). Phases include building personal awareness and knowledge, viewing organizational policies and procedures with new found filters, and building skills that ultimately transform the internal culture (Cross, 1996).

The first step for an organization is to increase knowledge and awareness, both in terms of

individual consciousness raising and eventually an assessment to determine where the organization stands in the continuum (Cross, 1996). Building awareness that emphasizes "systemic understanding" and "examine(s) the different ways sexism and racism operates in the organization" (Cross, 1996, p. 3). This is critical to avoid the essentializing of individual experiences that Kivel et al. (2008) found problematic in leisure studies research.

Multicultural organization development, or diversity management, makes two assumptions about organizations. The first is that culture exists in organizations; "many characteristics of culture rest in the obvious" (Morgan, 2006, p. 116). The second is that culture, and thus organizations, have the capacity to change. Culture is also nested, and though an internal culture exists at an organizational level, or even a departmental level, it cannot be separated from larger cultures, including systems of oppression.

Organization development practitioners have identified steps to assist organizations in moving along the continuum. At the start of the change process, benchmarking the organization is critical to creating action steps to move forward (Jackson, 2006). Jackson's (2006) MCOD model suggests three elements of assessment: survey data, interview data, and audit data. Survey data is collected from all individuals in the organization. Interviews are used to give depth to the survey data, and to clarify any inconclusive results of the survey. Interviews can be strategic in who and how it asks. For example, by focusing for example on the experience of women, people of color, or junior staffers; choices made will influence whose experiences are explicit in the data. Audit data comes from the organization's official personnel and finance data.

Strategic use of mixed methods is a valuable component of a stronger assessment that will demonstrate real commitment on behalf of the organization's leadership. As previously noted, focusing

only on quantitative data risks not allowing marginalized voices to truly be heard in the assessment (Delpit, 1993). Beth Applegate (2010) reflected on the assessment process from the perspective of a diversity manager consultant and makes a point to be aware of the accessibility of the methods. Any survey must take into account power and privilege dynamics throughout the organization and accessibility such as multilingual interpretation of the assessment tools and results.

Using the results of an effective and thorough assessment, an organization can understand its position in the development continuum and identify appropriate action steps. While the goal of this work is to effect change throughout the organization, an internal leadership team is needed. This team would include a select number of individuals representing diverse constituencies. They may complete the internal work if they have the capacity or they may be responsible for working closely with an outside consulting group. Drawing on primarily junior staff members or adjunct, disconnected new programs convey a message that these issues are not on the forefront of the organization's agenda. When diversity initiatives are not a priority reflected in the budget or in staff recruitment diversity appears to be a secondary concern (Schwartz, Weinberg, Hagenbuch, & Scott, 2011). Organizations must be willing to take their awareness of diversity and social justice and apply this filter throughout the organization both horizontally, vertically and both internally and externally.

Case Studies: Learning about race, power and privilege

Identifying specific case studies in the literature that are relevant and case studies that would provide a model for my project is a challenging task. Often times the presence of a researcher is inappropriate due to the sensitive nature of the process and results. Also diversity and equity work of any kind is highly context-specific. It simultaneously asks us to consider large, societal systems and our personal beliefs and experiences. Until the data is collected and analyzed, it will not be clear what

exactly the core lessons have been from the RACE exhibit experience at ECHO. As data emerges, other existing studies will likely be identified and have new relevancy.

For example, a study conducted with South African social work students began by exploring an education initiative to promote learning about different communities and identities (Swartz, et al, 2009). Students were engaged in an e-learning forum across different regions and universities (and were also stratified racially across these institutions) and asked to reflect on what they learned from each other. A student, unprompted, brought up the importance of remembering the history of apartheid. This was a contentious point for the group with some arguing that their history was better left alone so they could move forward to create a new national identity and democracy. The instructors and researchers did not plan for this topic to be explored but it resulted in rich data to examine and this shed light on unanticipated questions. Likewise, I do not imagine that I could anticipate all of the data that may arise as I begin an exploratory data collection process.

Curtis and Dreachslin (2008) found that scholarly inquiry (from 2000 through 2005) in diversity management has focused on documenting disparities between diverse groups, building theoretical frameworks, and suggesting changes in diversity management. However they identify a lack of research that evaluates the effectiveness of diversity interventions. Of the 38 studies they evaluated, many relied on survey methods to determine self-reported pre- and post- attitudes or beliefs. While it may be helpful for human resource professionals to use these tools to measure effectiveness of their initiatives, they will not translate well for my project. A short time frame makes it challenging to pinpoint measurable outcomes. In addition, I have no desire to create undue stress amongst staff members at ECHO by presenting my work as a criticism of others' learning. I plan to approach my work with the assumption that all learning, all data points and all experiences are valuable and will

provide insight into the research questions. I am interested in a collaborative approach, emphasizing constructive solutions as opposed to an summative and discrete evaluation of success or failure.

A study conducted by McAllister and Irvine (2002) did not seek to evaluate the impacts of a multicultural education professional development training but sought to explore the experiences of the educators and document what the participants found to be valuable. This study examined the reflections of 34 practicing teachers that took part in the course. Analyzing data contributed by the participants both before (their application to the program) and after the course completion (their personal and project work) the researchers found that developing empathy as a value was highly effective and they identified that this was achieved in every exercise the group completed.

A UK study (Tomlinson & Schwabenland, 2010) explores rationales for diversity and equity initiatives in non-profit organizations. The authors recognize that, in the literature, the business case versus the social justice case for diversity management are often presented as conflicts, yet this is not necessarily the case in the non-profit sector due to the founding values of the organizations. However, they note that the professionalization of the non-profit sector has put more pressure on the organizations to essentially act like businesses. Tomlinson & Schwabenland (2010) conducted open-ended interviews with staff members from a variety of non-profit organizations and found that the staff members personally could reconcile both motivations for diversity and equity if they saw a clear overlap between the people served and for example, the organization's affirmative action goals. This study could be a model in some ways for my own because it is open-ended and asks participants to discuss their own rationalizations and understandings of an oftentimes unclearly defined practice.

Another study of particular interest is Solomona's et al. (2005) which examined white students' responses to course content on white privilege. In a pre-service teacher's course, students were assigned

to read Peggy McIntosh's "Unpacking the White Privilege Knapsack" and write a short reflection on it. The student responses were analyzed and three themes emerged: ideological incongruency, negating white capital, and liberalist notions of individualism and meritocracy. This study is of interest because the participants in my study are predominantly white and will be exposed to frameworks of racial identity, and of power and privilege. They are as an organization taking on a new mission to engage specifically with culturally diverse audiences and partners focused on this content. A core question of this study is how might this inform their personal identity, learning, and values related to both their work as conservationists and as educators?

Research Methods and Design

Project Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this project is to document and understand the learning process of ECHO and its staff while they prepare for and host the RACE exhibit and to share those insights with the organization as it moves forward in its cultural competency initiative and strategic planning for the future. My core research questions are about the experience of hosting the exhibit. How do staff make meaning and learn about the relevancy and connections between the RACE/cultural competency goals and their everyday mission-based work? Do staff members gain a new lens for critically evaluating their regular exhibits and programming? As a predominantly white organization how does the RACE exhibit inform personal identity and the learning process? The deliverables will include a report on the qualitative findings with ECHO in mind as the primary audience.

In this section I describe the implications of the pilot study that I conducted in the Spring of 2012 to prepare for the larger study. I outline my methodology, data collection procedures and data analysis, a timeline, limitations of the study and a detail of the deliverables.

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Implications of Pilot Study

As an assignment for the course EDFS 347 Qualitative Research Methods, I conducted a pilot study to prepare for this larger project. The purpose of this study was to collect data that would help give context to ECHO (its mission, current operations) as well as to ask the participants about their questions, fears and concerns around the RACE exhibit to best shape my larger project in a way that will be useful to them. I conducted four 1 hour interviews with staff members from across the organization both horizontally and vertically. I also conducted five hours of observation both of planning meetings and of the core museum exhibits and experience. The themes of the semi-structured interviews included, ECHO's mission, context of traveling exhibits, cultural competency initiative, and the RACE exhibit.

In addition to hosting the RACE exhibit, ECHO has been a participant in the City of Burlington's We All Belong program. This program is partnered with Americorps and seeks to build capacity in local organizations to better serve our diversifying community. This work has directly served ECHO to prepare for the RACE exhibit, however it was not initially conceived to do so. On a personal note, a year and half ago I was hired to participate in this work at ECHO and thus began my on journey on this project.

During the pilot study, I specifically asked interviewees to describe the mission of ECHO and how it comes up in their daily work. All four interviewees described an interdisciplinary focus on place-based education in the Lake Champlain Basin. The theme of people being intertwined with their landscape was a strong part of the mission and was incorporated into their rationale for hosting the RACE exhibit. The mission in their work also came up in different ways for the interviewees because their job descriptions vary.

One woman articulated the mission being her "personal passion" and it being reflected in every choice she makes, thus reflecting the institution's commitment to stewardship, and commitment to teach the public by example. Findings from my pilot study provided two lessons to inform my study. First, it is imperative for the diversity change process to be linked to the core mission in a tangible and accessible way for all staff members. It drives their daily practice, so to link this work in this way it becomes relevant and a requirement. Second, that incorporation of stewardship values into the organization's mission and daily practice serve as a model for incorporating multicultural values throughout multiple layers of the organization. Replace stewardship with diversity and ECHO's mission driven work is analogous to some dimensions of Banks' (2006) model of multicultural education. Banks' model includes five dimensions of multicultural education. One of these dimensions, content integration, is demonstrated at ECHO by incorporating a lens of stewardship and the theme of Lake Champlain across the institution from the care of the animals, to the café offerings, to the choices made when hosting private events.

In addition to the mission, I was struck by how often themes of organizational image, identity and marketing were repeated. These themes would be expected from key leaders, the marketing team, or financial officers, but this theme was present in all interviews. The organization is very self-aware that how they view their institution may not be how the public views their organization. They recognize that the public is not homogenous and they are interested in both getting their message out to diverse audience members and meeting these different groups where they are. As I continue my study I will reflect on this awareness and will hopefully interview additional staff members including the Director of Marketing.

When I asked staff members to use a lens of diversity and equity to view the core floor

experience[2] I received very different answers. Some staff members brought up the content that is presented on the floor such as the Native Connections exhibit while others spoke about expectations for visitor interactions and behavior with the exhibits. This variation likely reflects differences in their institutional history and position, and personal values and background. It will be very interesting to discuss these questions with additional staff members and to learn if continued 'We All Belong' trainings and the RACE exhibit helps the organization to develop a shared and articulated vision around diversity and equity in their institution.

I heard from other interviewees their needs and concerns surrounding the RACE exhibit and explicit ideas for deliverables. Their needs and questions included:

developing complementary programming
articulation in how exhibit relates to mission
resource guide/crash course for educators/facilitators
reflection on this unique experience
outsider/visitor perspective on ECHO
input/visioning for developing the strategic plan in 2013
what worked/what didn't
how did individual perspectives change
have new modes of practice emerged
lingering artifacts including new relationships or programs
core questions presented in the literature that could be used to frame the programming
has the culture of the organization changed
new diversity and equity statement/vision
tools for performing an internal audit/help staff understand what non-majority visitors perceive
tools for continuing the work

While addressing all of these questions or producing deliverables to respond to all of these needs is beyond the scope for this project, several of the most relevant can be expressly addressed by my work. Also, highlighting these questions and concerns can guide future interviews and serve as a reminder as I analyze future data.

2 When I refer to the "core floor experience" I am referring to the permanent exhibits and daily programming related to E-C-H-O themes. The bulk of these exhibits were developed and installed when ECHO opened in 2003, though over the years exhibits have been added. This is in contrast to the traveling exhibit gallery that hosts rotating exhibits for 3-6 months that are typically less directly related to themes of stewardship or Lake Champlain.

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Methodology

The purpose of this study is to document and understand the learning process of ECHO and its staff while they prepare for and host the RACE exhibit and to share those insights with the organization as it moves forward in its cultural competency initiative and strategic planning for the future. To accomplish the project purpose, I will draw on case study methodology (Patton, 2002) using qualitative methods. This approach is appropriate because the project questions are about processes and experiences that are context-specific and personal for both the individuals and the organization; "qualitative data tell a story" (Patton, 2002, p. 47).The deliverables will include a report on the lessons learned by the organization as well as resources that will support this learning. For the most effective use and implementation of these resources, staff voices should be accurately heard and reflected in the study. Staff should feel real ownership of the resources that are developed.

Because this work will serve to inform future strategy and capture lessons learned, it is evaluative in nature. Evaluation is used so widely for disparate purposes that it can be misunderstood and put individuals, especially employees in the workplace, on the defense. Bartlett (1994) writes, "obsession with fitting everything into the categories of "success" and "failure" blinds us to the richer, more fruitful possibilities of...evaluation" (p. 169). He describes three general categories of evaluation, outcomes, process and institutional.

Outcomes evaluation is what is most commonly assumed to represent evaluation. It often implies that the program to be evaluated exists to remedy a problem, and a successful outcome would be eradication or reduction of that problem, yet Bartlett reminds us that "policy does not always, or even usually, begin with a problem...citizens, often have solutions in mind as they look for problems to which they may be applied" (p. 177). In my study, the exhibit and museum are situated in a larger

context that is problematic, as explored in the literature review, but in this specific case that problem has not been clearly researched and defined. It is an assumption that motivates the program and hosting of the RACE exhibit, but the exhibit is more an opportunity for the museum to achieve multiple goals, as opposed to a specific remedy to a defined problem. There is no use in me trying to evaluate how effectively the staff and institution serve racial and ethnic minorities because there is no case specific evidence that this is in fact a problem. Other outcomes that can be measured effectively include number of visitors and groups that attended, reception and buzz in the community and local media, and new partnerships forged and strengthened by this exhibit. These outcomes are not the focus of my project because the organization has the ability to easily and effectively assess these factors on their own.

An alternative form of evaluation focuses on the process that results in the outcomes. This goes beyond simplistic interpretations of outcomes and illuminates "the values of the processes used to define problems, set agendas, formulate alternatives, select actions, and govern implementation" (Bartlett, 1994, p. 176). This type of evaluation is more fitting to the research questions I have set forth. The anticipated outcome for this exhibit is that it may somehow impact the conservation message and narrative or pedagogy used or some other core component of the culture of the organization. The nature of these impacts is that they are longterm, difficult to pinpoint as clear, shared goals, and will be out of the scope of this project to measure. What this project will be able to analyze is the process that occurred to help move the organization towards some outcome. Qualitative data is most appropriate for learning about the story of this exhibit and uncovering values and context that drive choices, actions and the learning process of the staff.

This brings us to the last type of evaluation, institutional evaluation. Outcomes and process are never isolated from the institutions that house them; rules and policies, both spoken and unspoken,

influence the execution of any project (Bartlett, 1994). This is relevant to my study because this exhibit will both require individuals to learn and may impact them in a personal way, but it also may have repercussions at an institutional level. In addition to inquiring with participants how they are personally learning or changing I will ask them if there have been any institutional level changes in response to this exhibit, permanent or temporary. Recommendations for institutional change after the completion of the study may comprise part of the report.

My methodology also incorporates developmental evaluation, “evaluation processes and activities that support...organizational development” (Patton, 1994, p. 317). Unlike more traditional forms of formative or summative evaluation, this methodology asks the researcher to document incremental developments, provide continuous feedback, facilitate the process of development and create reports that include multiple voices and multiple perspectives that respond to multiple, evolving goals of the process (Patton, 1994). The identity of the researcher is not one of an outsider impartial evaluator, with an implied task of judging the participants, but as a participant in the organizational development process (Patton, 1994). This is appropriate because of my role formerly as a participant in the change process at the organization and my desire to learn alongside the staff-members as we engage in dialogue on and make meaning of the findings together.

One limitation to Patton's developmental evaluation methodology is that it typically is a long-term process, sometimes spanning years, while I only have 5 months to collect data. This is a specific case study and the findings are intended to be applicable only to the internal organization in question, however it may be possible to triangulate the data with existing models of 'best practices' for comparable organizations. For example, in Cunningham's (2009) case study of the diversity change process in a university athletic department, the author uses data collected in interviews and from

documents to understand where the organization is in the developmental framework. Thus, this is a specific case in time and generalizations are limited, themes may emerge that align with the literature.

Data Collection

Because this project seeks an in-depth understanding of an experience, purposeful sampling is appropriate (Patton, 2002). Rubin and Rubin (2005) describe an area of research as a theater with the interviewees situated at different vantage points; the researcher's goal is to strategically select diverse perspectives to tell the fullest and most credible story. My interview participants for the pilot study included staff members from two different departments, in senior staff and junior staff positions, individuals both working closely on the We All Belong/RACE initiative as well as an individual who is not, and those with long institutional history (10+ years) and shorter history (<1 year). My plan is to extend my sampling to include these same staff members again (4), as well as all of the full-time educators (5 adtl.). I also would like to interview the Director of Marketing (1) because a consistent theme I heard in the pilot study was a reflection on the museum's image and identity. Likewise I would like to interview the Director of Development (1) because his role is closely related to the promotion and image of the organization. If possible, I would also like to interview the staffers in Animal Care (3); their work is primarily behind the scenes animal husbandry and environmental exhibit maintenance working with teams of volunteers, but they also lead daily demos for the public. They are not closely involved with the work on the RACE exhibit and it would be useful to hear their semi-outsider perspective. I would like to interview the Director of Guest Services (1) and possibly some members of her team. This team is on the front line of the organization and they will be tasked with fielding questions from the public and possibly justifying the hosting of this exhibit. However this team is also comprised of many temporary and seasonal staffers. Speaking with the Director of Finance (1), that

also plays the role of human resources will be useful to give a perspective on institutional changes. Due to the nature of emergent design (Patton, 2002) it will be appropriate to interview individuals if spontaneous events or opportunities appear or at the suggestion of participants.

I would ideally like to interview people 3 times, once more before the exhibit arrives (September), once after events have begun (November) and once towards the close of the exhibit (January). This is because hosting the exhibit is in some ways a natural experiment (Patton, 2002). I recognize that this may not be possible with all participants. For follow up interviews, a focus group model may work well. Staffers are organized into working departments and some of these departments regularly have group discussions to process their work. This is in line with goals of developmental evaluation (Patton, 1994). I will triangulate my data by observing mainstream demos and programs, observing planning or training meetings, and observing special RACE related programming. I will also use documents produced by the museum such as goal or diversity statements, lesson plans, resource guides or press releases related to the exhibit.

I will use an interview guide (Patton, 2002) that I have developed based on my pilot study experience (see appendix) to conduct semi-structured interviews with participants. I will adapt the interview guide for different participants based on their varied positions in the organization (department, direct work with We All Belong, or direct work with RACE exhibit). With participant's permission I will use a voice recorder and transcribe verbatim the interviews. My follow-up interviews may be focus groups, and for these I will develop an additional interview guide that is brief and open-ended. If possible, I will take notes during meetings or trainings, however do the sensitive nature of some of these meetings, I may play a role of researcher-participant, experiencing the event and recording my reflections after the fact. In some cases observation of an exhibit or program will be the

data. There may be times when it is appropriate to document observations with photographs (such as of the permanent exhibit collection), however the RACE exhibit explicitly does not allow photographs.

Data Analysis

Data analysis methods will include coding of all data generated through interviews, observations and document review, development of major themes and member cross-checking. I will use manual methods as well as TAMSAnalyzer software for data management. Analysis of qualitative data sets out to "extract meaning and implications, to reveal patterns, or to stitch together descriptions of events into a coherent narrative" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 202). Specifically I will use content analysis as a means "for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18).

The analysis will be ongoing as data is collected, due to the voluminous nature of the data, time constraints in the winter and spring and the emergent nature of the study design. Developmental evaluation methodology calls for a review of the original goals and questions set forth by the researcher and participants (Patton, 2002). I will review the findings generated during this pilot study as I am analyzing the data. Questions, concerns and needs on the part of ECHO will likely change and evolve for the course of the exhibit run. It would be useful to check back in with interviewees on their original questions (Patton, 2002, p. 435).

Limitations of the study

This is a very specific case in a place and time and it should not be confused with studies that could be more generalizable to other cases. Also, many similar studies focus on visitors and this one does not, it focuses on staff. The end point of this type of work is always ambiguous. In a world of no limitations assessment would continue for years to come, because additional lessons and outcomes are

surely going to emerge in the future, however the goal is to the tell the story of this exhibit and its impact in the short term.

Timeline for completing the study

September-October
First round of interviews
November
Second round of interviews/focus groups
January
Final round of interviews/focus groups
March
Presentation of initial findings to ECHO
April
Analysis complete, ready to defend

Description of Deliverables

Potential final deliverables are described here based on interview data and participation in exhibit preparation meetings, however they are contingent upon feedback from ECHO leadership.

1. A report on qualitative findings that will explore the answers to the following questions:

- A description of and reflection on the exhibit experience
- Has a collective understanding of the intersection between ECHO's mission and the RACE exhibit been reached? If so, what is it? What knowledge, awareness or actions were necessary to help individuals reach this collective understanding?
- What are individual hopes and visions for the future? What artifacts (relationships, new practices, new language, etc) of this experience do individuals hope to keep on?
- How did principles and practices change, if they did at all?

This report will be developed in a format that can be used by ECHO in development of their strategic plan. It would also be ideal to present the final report to ECHO to provide an opportunity for questions and dialogue on the findings.

2. Hosting this exhibit requires the collaboration of partners across the community. ECHO is already working hard to build relationships and share resources and responsibilities with other organizations and individuals. I have been invited to participate in some of these planning meetings already, where I have been wearing three hats, one of former ECHO staff member, one as an independent student/researchers, and one as a representative of the Rubenstein School. Because ECHO is already in need and asking for others to help support the exhibit programming, there are obvious ways for me to support them while achieving the goals of my Master's project.

The Researcher

I am fortunate that I am very much an insider at ECHO. It is truly a privilege for a researcher and I do not think I would be able to complete the project without the relationships and trust I have built over the past year and half. That being said, being an insider is perhaps clouding some of my objectivity. Due to previous knowledge and experience I may be making assumptions about what I hear and observe. I may not be asking the "obvious questions". I bring a particular lens to the data that may cloud my vision to emerging themes. I have been an employee and may be an employee of this organization in the future, and while this allows me the insider status, it also could limit my ability to be an objective researcher. Making harsh critiques of an employer is a challenge. To maintain trust with the organization, I feel a strong need for reciprocity; giving back and producing useful work for them is critical to the success of this project. I also have personal relationships with several of the staff members and the nature of this work means people need to process in multiple different venues. Its very important for me to be highly conscious of what has been said in confidence and to respect the privacy of these individuals. It will be useful for me to identify impartial individuals with no personal connection to the project that can serve as a sounding board for some of my ideas.

September 14, 2012

Appendices

Statement of Informed Consent

Working Title: RACE and Conservation Organization: A Case Study

I am conducting a research project as part of my Master's degree requirements at the University of Vermont. My project focuses on ECHO Lake Aquarium and Science Center's experience of the exhibit *RACE: Are We So Different?* I am exploring how the goals and context of this exhibit are understood in relationship to the organization's conservation based mission.

In order to examine the topic, I am conducting individual interviews and observations. Individual interviews will take approximately 30 minutes to an hour. Observations also will generally not last longer than an hour. During the interviews and observations, I will take notes for later analysis. Some interviews will be audio-taped (with participant permission) to help in the note-taking process. After notes are transcribed from the recorded interviews, the files will be erased.

All information will be kept confidential and my project will not identify individuals. The study information is for educational purposes and will only be shared with advisor Dr. Clare Ginger. If you have any questions feel free to contact her at 802-656-2698 or Cginger@uvm.edu

If you choose to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time. You may also decline to participate. You will not be penalized for withdrawing or declining. If at any time during this study you have questions about your right as a research participant, you may contact Nancy Stalnaker, the Director of the Research Protections Office at the University of Vermont at 802-656-5040.

Sincerely,

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Interview Guide

Introduction: Informed Consent, Purpose of overall project, summary of pilot study

1. Warm-up: Position at ECHO, experience that led to this position

2. Mission of ECHO in your own words.
   Follow up: How is the mission present in your daily work?

3. Cultural Competency Initiative

Description of the current work from personal perspective
probe: how are you involved? How has it related to your everyday work?
Have you had any 'aha' learning moments?
Has it changed your perspective?
Has it changed your practice (or actions/behaviors)?
What element has been most useful for you?
Is there anything about the initiative that does not feel relevant?

4.RACE exhibit
probes: what do you know about preparation?
stated goals
How do describe the exhibit to the typical member?
What connections are you finding to relate the exhibit back to the mission ?
Concerns or needs
What lessons from this exhibit will you keep after it leaves?

5. Personal Identity
If it hasn't come up yet, ask interviewee how their personal identity and outlook has played a role in their experience of the exhibit/training.

6. Any questions for me
Anything else I should have asked?

Lay Summary

I am conducting a research project that looks at diversity issues in a conservation focused museum. There is a lot of attention being given to the need for outreach to underserved racial and ethnic groups in both the museum world and in the environmental world. My research questions look at the experience of the staff members that are trying to do this work effectively. How do they relate an effort to diversify to the environment and stewardship? Why is it important, or not, to them? What resources are most useful for their learning?

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