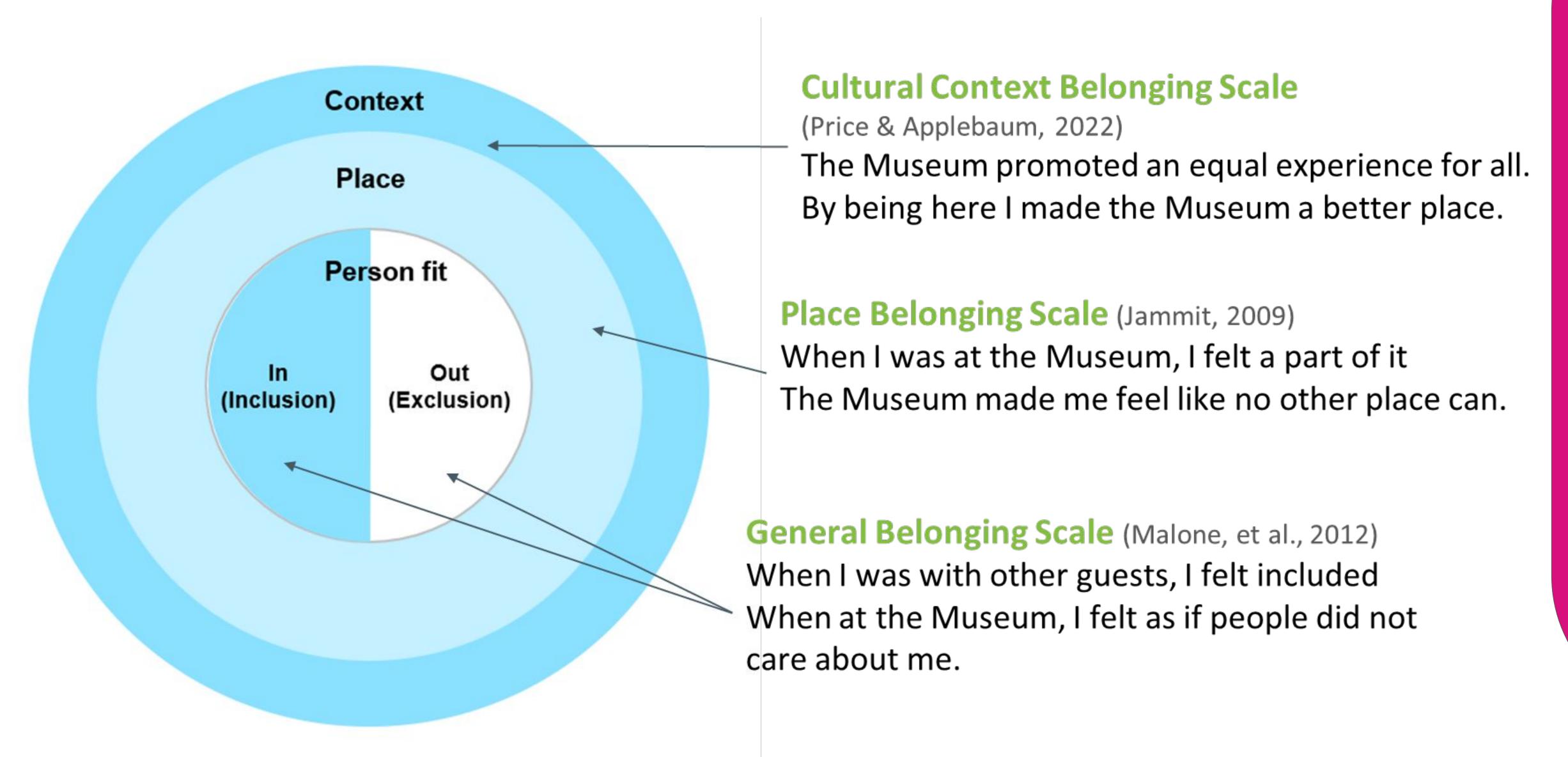
Belonging in Science and Natural History Centers: Current Findings, Implications, and New Directions

Lauren Applebaum, Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago & Sarah Lukowski, Science Museum of Minnesota

A CROSS-INSTITUTIONAL STUDY USING THE CULTURAL INSTITUTION BELONGING INSTRUMENT (CIBI)

Cultural Institution Belonging Instrument



Survey/Resources

- 3 Likert scales/tables (1-Strongly Disagree to 7-Strongly Agree)
- 4 open-ended questions, including: What does the word belonging mean to you?
- Demographics and background
- Free for all: Use the QR code to find tools to study belonging at your institution
- Collected data across 8 institutions
- About 150 surveys per site
- Administered at end of visit



















Participants

- \bullet N = 1202
- 1,780 survey responses with at least one item answered
- Average age = 36.
- 64% of guests identified as women, 34% as men, and 2% as nonbinary or other.
- ~11% of guests chose more than one race.
- ~19% identified as LGBTQIA, 74% did not, and 7% preferred not to say.

Racial and Ethnic Identity	Count
White	59%
Hispanic or Latinx	19%
Black or African American	9%
Asian	17%
American Indian or Alaska Native	3%
Middle Eastern or North African	2%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1%
Some other race or origin	3%

Key Findings

- Inclusion and Exclusion are not merely inverses of each other, but measure unique aspects of the visitor experience
- Scores on the Exclusion factor suggest that guests feel less excluded than they do feel included
- More interactions with staff are related to higher feelings of belonging
- More staff interactions were related to stronger feelings of inclusion, place belonging, community, and agency
- There is not one definition of what belonging means for all guests
- 43% inclusive and accepting; 13% ownership; 9% comfort or safety, 9% community



of Museum and Library Services that supports this work. IMLS# MG-249150-OMS-21.

HOW VISITORS DEFINE BELONGING IN SCIENCE/NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUMS



People feel belonging as a group and individuals, including:

Connection to Experience

- Social Connections
- Engagement



Left: Visitors feel like they belong when their group can engage together and have positive interactions with staff; Right: A group interacted with other visitors describing their sense of community in working on this exhibit component together as belonging

Connection to Self/Group

- Representation
- Identity
- Values
- Interest

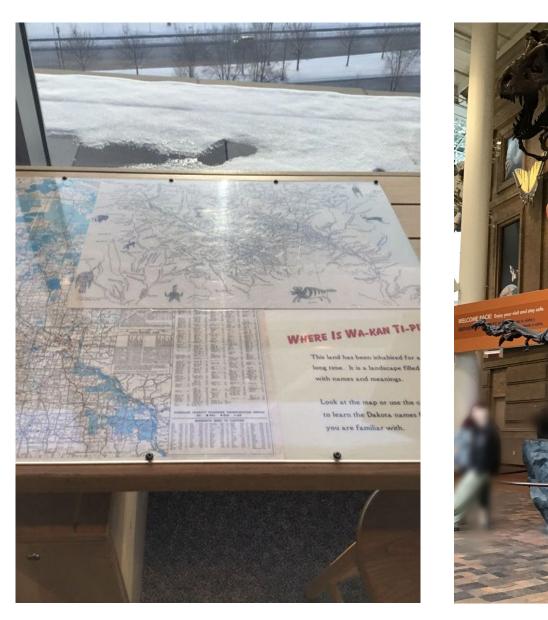


Left: A visitor tells their group members of the similarities to their house in Mexico, seeing their heritage represented; Right: Seeing your identity can be "bittersweet", here a visitor saw their identity and valued the connection but was also

disheartened by the outdated use of 'Apache'

Connection to Place

- Region
- Location
- Museum
- Earth



Left: When connections to a region are incomplete it can be a threat to belonging, here indigenous place names were not contextualized within the history of colonization in science; Right: The dinosaur in the lobby of the

museum gives a strong connection to place

during their visit at four science/natural history museums. They selected photographs to talk about that showed moments that mattered to their sense of belonging.

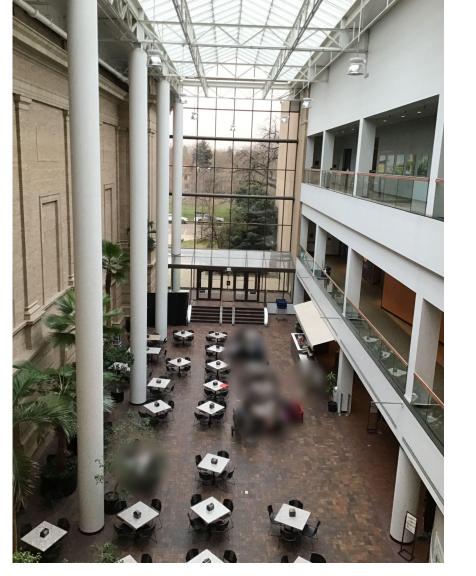
Ready to reflect through a lens of belonging? We developed a reflective guide with insights from the visitor

photos and definitions of belonging so more professionals can begin their journey towards transforming museum spaces so that a diversity of visitors feel that they rightfully belong.

Comfort in the Physical Space

- Comfort Messaging
- Physical Access Access for all ages
- Affordability
 Language Access
- Aesthetics





Left: When an exhibit component falls short, such as here where a parent described their child being unable to look into the top drawers of an exhibit, it can challenge their sense of belonging Right: Open sightlines, light and airy spaces, and good aesthetics foster a sense of belonging



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