Dames Paving Pathways to Directorships. A Study About Female Leaders in Art Museums in the United States

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Dames Paving Pathways to Directorships. A Study About Female Leaders in Art Museums in the United States

A Dissertation by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

January 2021

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January 2021
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation was written based on a notion about women in the art world. Fingers to keys. The information literally poured out of me like being on a mission to convey the truth. What was real and not imagined. Nothing rightly prepared me emotionally for the research that I discovered and the data that I collected from supremely heroic women. The results are not of my own, but the work of women that served as iconic figures, scholars, mentors, contributors, silent voices, cheerleaders, witnesses and angels in every way. Thank you, to all of them.

The divinely powerful women that agreed to guide me as my dissertation committee—Dr. Marilou Ryder (Chair), Dr. Jalin B. Johnson and Dr. Carol Riley.

The best accountability partner, Ella Nunley, who inspired me every week as we walked this journey together.

My three older sisters (Denise, Johneen, and Renee), and my amazingly gifted mother (Gaetana Manno). They paved the way to greatness for me to know the way.

Peers, staff, faculty and students that gave me hope to strive every day.

My cohort—Arthur, James, and Julie, and our cohort mentor, Dr. Tim McCarty.

Female friends. And friends that never let me forget that I am an artist.

BEAT PIECE

Listen to a heart beat.

1963 autumn

by Yoko Ono
ABSTRACT

Dames Paving Pathways to Directorships. A Study About Female Leaders in Art Museums in the United States.

by Mechele Manno

Purpose: The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine and describe the career pathways of female art museum directors in the United States.

Methodology: This phenomenological study described lived experiences of eight female art museum directors with over five years of directorship experience from museums with operating budgets over $10 million and in states that receive the highest private funding: CA, DC, IL, MA, NY, OH, PA, and TX. Data collection consisted of in-depth interviews using a scripted interview guide in research categories: a) motivation; b) career advancement; c) barriers; and d) support. Sixteen interview questions were semi-structured and open-ended to solicit shared experiences. Artifacts and virtual observations triangulated data and supported findings.

Findings: All major findings were evaluated by the theoretical framework and followed a phenomenological research methodology utilizing the four research categories. Thirteen findings effectively answered the research questions. Motivation research question one garnered three findings. Career Advancement research question two also garnered three findings. Barriers research question three was a two-part question with four findings. Support research question four drew two findings. Unexpected findings were intrinsically related to all four research categories contributing to a comprehensive examination.
Conclusions: Four conclusions were successfully derived from findings and synthesized with the literature. The four conclusions also followed the research question categories providing evidence of shared lived experiences: a) Female art museum directors are motivated by cultural work because they are genetically prepared to assume positions for public will; b) Female art museum directors advanced their careers as visionary leaders and brought change to societies through art and cultural work; c) Female art museum directors apply different strategies to overcome gender bias, but their main strength is self-reliance; and d) Female art museum directors do not expect support but are willing to support others.

Recommendations: Future research recommendations that will prominently position this topic within existing literature are: a) a case study methodology focused on generational differences among female art museum directors; b) quantitative survey data from boards and trustees; and c) qualitative in-depth interviews with art museum director hiring panels.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Historically and to present day, women have been central figures in the arts and cultural disciplines. Limited artifacts remain to demonstrate their virtuous accomplishments, which are largely uncredited. However, there are several documented contributions, for example, in 1405 vocal feminist, Christine de Pizan wrote, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, listing hundreds of achievements by extraordinary women from the mythological period to the 1400s (Morrison, 2016). Additionally, in the 1700s during the Age of Enlightenment, women participated in shaping European arts and letters academies. Acknowledgement of these women included their membership in Madrid’s Academy of Fine Arts both as artists and scholars, yet there is debate whether this was based on their artistic merit (Smith, 2006). According to a work published in 1902, *Las pintoras españolas*, José Parada y Santín argued women were admitted more for their “social positions, beauty and spread of artistic knowledge” not as artisans (Smith, 2006, p. 51). Regardless of artistic practice, women were considered prominent for their comprehension of arts and culture and the spread of this knowledge into society.

Meanwhile, in the United States, women were precluded from participation in American academies during the 1800s and were not part of unions such as The American Academy of Fine Arts in New York and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia (McCarthy, 1991). In fact, worldwide, women had been exploring decorative arts for some time, which allowed them to develop their own individualism. Commonalities were formed both for the domestic environment and recognizing object intricacies such as tapestries, china and furniture (McCarthy, 1991). Women dominated
this movement and explored their entrepreneurial spirit giving way to masterful architectural complexities as the Phoebe Hearst Music Room (Peterson & Hearst, 1987).

Between the 1900s and 1930s, it was widely known that women were deemed “custodians of culture” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 112). Female philanthropic activities were widespread, which included organizing art exhibitions, and commissioning new works of art by living artists (Whitelaw, 2012). Not only did women fund artists’ careers, they donated their time, money and extensive collections to art institutions, which paved the way for the formation of major art museums (Masten, 1993). Prestigious art institutions enjoyed today were started by women granting society access to major collections and fulfilling their promise as guardians of art and the “spread of artistic knowledge” (Downs, 1994; Smith, 2006, p. 51).

Pioneering women who entered the museum workforce persisted serving as assistants, educators and volunteers nationwide, and few rarely became museum directors with the exception of highly capable women of that time. The present-day female art museum employee is part of a workforce that outnumbers men in total jobs occupied. She is highly educated, possessing a graduate degree and/or doctorate degree, savvy and ready to take on leadership challenges (Weber, 1994). However, men presently continue to occupy more art museum leadership positions than women.

Generation after generation, female art museum employees gravitate to middle management education department positions, curatorial work, and collections, which is consistent with early museum jobs that women established (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994; Schonfeld & Sweeney, 2019). A recent study in 2015 by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation indicates that the museum profession pipeline leading to directorships
generally derive from the aforementioned departments occupied by women (Lott, 2015). However, evidence demonstrates that only 24% of women are directors of art museums with operating budgets over $15 million dollars (AAMD, 2018a). These are the very American art museums that women founded. What contributing factors explain the discrepancy of this gender gap and possible reasons why women’s career pathways to art museum directorships are so rare?

**Background**

Tracing women’s roles as contributors to the evolution of American art and culture in the museum setting, both past and present, brings to light that early pioneers worked without recognition for more than 200 years. Meanwhile, current female museum professionals continue to encounter gender disparity for leadership positions. The past will focus on their rise to prominence as art authorities (Masten, 1993; McCarthy, 1991; Taylor, 1994; Whitelaw, 2012). The present will chart museum staff demographics and possible reasons for gender dissonance in art museum leadership positions (Dawson, 2017; Glaser & Zenetou, 1994; Westermann, Schonfeld, & Sweeney, 2019).

**Women: Early Museum Culture**

It is believed that America’s first public museum was founded in 1779 in Charleston, South Carolina (Downs, 1994). By 1820, before the first art museum in the United States was founded, women were being vastly utilized, in no professional manner, to translate “scholarly texts” about artists, art history, architecture and literature (Downs, 1994, p. 92). According to Simon Morgan’s thesis, *Middle-Class Women, Civic Virtue in Leeds and the West Riding of Yorkshire, c.1830 - c.1860*, women were engaging in
notions of “public service” (Hill, 2016, p. 105). They were predominantly known as cultural guardians in their public life outside of the domestic sphere, and frequently visited museums, for convenience, during day-time operational hours (Mandel, 1994). The female museum goers of this time were also skilled fundraisers who put their efforts into charities for small organizations in cooperation with other women, which grew into coalitions of philanthropic activity (McCarthy, 1991).

Early female collectors of decorative arts became rather prominent in society making them more knowledgeable with a greater sense of purpose and cultural responsibility unattached to male-centric museums. Kathleen D. McCarthy writes in her novel, *Women’s Culture. American Philanthropy and Art 1830-1930*, “Unlike museums, the decorative arts movement catered to female constituencies and needs of linking household decorations to the creation of new career opportunities” (1991, p. 37-38). A women’s rights activist and avid collector, Phoebe Hearst, paired her voracious love for art and activism to support women and educate children through the arts (Clark, 2019).

Coinciding with the American Civil War during the 1860s, while men were away at war, women moved into formal means of employment in the arts (Clark, 2019; McCarthy, 1991). During this era, women were very wealthy. Their wealth can be attributed to their social status and many outlived their husbands because of the war, which gained them more assets with the passage of property laws. This afforded many of these women the opportunity to make valuable contributions to the creation and appreciation of the arts (Masten, 1993; McCarthy, 1991). Women would go on to establish their own organizations, which manifested into educational systems that provided financial scholarships for the betterment of the arts (Clark, 2019; McCarthy,
Women with less financial means were equally engaged in volunteerism to support educational programs, which was a key charter for publicly funded museums at the time of their inception in the 1870s.

The first art museums in the United States were formed in the early 1870s. Publicly funded art museums came into existence with the formation of the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art (1913) and Boston Museum of Fine Arts (1920), which gave way to public programming and what would later become feminized art education positions (Kletchka, 2010). By 1890, women’s roles as connoisseurs of art and principle owners over ever-growing art collections, placed them among the wealthiest patrons of museums, such as Louisine Havemeyer. Her bequest to the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art (The MET) strengthened and secured their holdings (McCarthy, 1991). However, when limits on receiving modern art collections came to be and policies were tied solely to aesthetics and creative capital, museums grew into hierarchal corporations run by boards of trustees mainly comprised of men (Boyd, 1999; McCarthy, 1991; Whitelaw, 2012). Aristocratic women of this time gathered to discuss forming modern art institutions focused on living artists, which would become the prestigious institutions—Museum of Modern Art and The Whitney Museum of American Art.

Women: Philanthropy, Donors and Volunteerism

In the early 1900s women were known to play an important role as art collectors and benefactors (McCarthy, 1991; Taylor, 1994). Their generosity was usually in the form of decorative objects and not financial like male donors of that time (McCarthy, 1991). Women were discouraged from taking on museum management roles and not utilized for their fundraising capabilities even though they had great success working
horizontally among their female constituencies (McCarthy, 1991). Beyond their charitable gifts, and prominent social status, women were not recognized as contributing to the livelihood of the museum. Anne Whitelaw’s article, *Women, Museums and the Problem of Biography* describes the situation,

Women have been central to the founding and maintenance of museums for the past 150 years, yet a biographical approach to telling the stories of these figures ultimately valorises those women who have occupied recognisable leadership positions (as directors and curators, for example) and ignores the anonymous labour of the predominantly female voluntary groups that have made the museums existence possible. (2012, p. 76)

Notable female figures responsible for procuring the livelihood of American art museums during the early 1900s include the formation of two major museums founded by women between 1929-1931 in New York City; the Museum of Modern Art frequently referred to as MoMA (2019) and The Whitney Museum of American Art (2019). The MoMA received its largest donated collection from Ms. Lillie P. Bliss valued at $1.14 million in 1931. Ms. Bliss was an independent woman who never married, and became one of the co-founders of the museum, along with Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and Mary Sullivan Quinn (Museum of Modern Art, 2019). Prior to her involvement with MoMA, Ms. Bliss was a benefactor of the 1913 Armory Show where she acquired many works for her collection, which was considered one of the most valued privately-owned Cézanne’s in the United States (2019).

The Whitney Museum’s history had a more gradual formation and an equally impressive impact on modern art, culture and social significance. Ms. Gertrude
Vanderbilt Whitney was a sculptor who had been organizing art shows of different artists in her studio while assembling a collection as early as 1914 (2019). She was an advocate of non-traditional artists who were shunned by the academies (2019). It wasn’t until her offer of over 500 works of art to The MET was declined, that she formed the Whitney Museum dedicated to American artists (2019).

Meanwhile in California, some of these earliest pioneering art connoisseurs emerged in prominent roles. There are noteworthy examples of women with widespread acclaim for artistic knowledge and social impact that gained leadership roles in the arts. The aforementioned Phoebe Hearst had been working behind the scenes to promote women through education and the arts by engaging in significant philanthropic undertakings. She funded an “international architecture competition” and scholarship program with the University of California, Berkeley. She would later become the first female Regent of UC Berkeley and actively served on the board between 1897-1919 (Clark, 2019; Hearst Castle, 2019).

In addition, Cornelia B. Sage Quinton began her museum career in 1904 with the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy working as an assistant in a secretarial role. In 1905, due to an untimely death of the director, Charles M. Kurtz, Ms. Quinton was appointed the first female director of a major art museum in the United States. By 1924, she became director of the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco and remained in this position until 1930 (2019; Taylor, 1994). Other than her progressive promotion of French arts across America, which gained her accolades from the French government, and celebrated for exhibitions she organized (2019), there is no research available that
describes her career path and rise to distinction through the museum structure or support she might have received making her the choice for director.

Women: Early Roles in American Art Museums

This historical overview of recognized female “custodians of culture” between the 1800s-1930s (McCarthy, 1991, p. p. 112), demonstrates the magnitude of women’s contributions to art and culture. Their momentous charities as collectors, patrons, donors and trustees are overshadowed with little information to clarify why men continue to occupy more art museum leadership positions than women do today. Some researchers speculate that after World War II, men reentered the workforce and began to replace women in the very jobs that women created (Clark, 2019). Linda Downs’ writes in her essay as part of the book, Gender Perspectives: Essays on Women in Museums, that some historians believe women’s professional careers in art museums began after World War II, which would only cover a 45-year history (1994). Although, this author disagrees with such a claim, there are no specific personnel materials available to quantify a reasonable account of women’s roles in museum work. Author, Anne Whitelaw describes, “While there have always been women artists and women working in museums, their place has often been erased from historical accounts, rendering their efforts largely invisible in the present” (2012, p. 77).

The notion that women’s roles in museums only began to take shape specifically between 1940s-1970s is false. There is resounding evidence to prove that women worked in positions assisting in the expansion of art museums in America as early as the 19th century (Taylor, 1994). Moreover, to isolate the years after World War II, would eliminate any account of the early 1900s when women played important roles in the
development of coding collections, art education departments, program activities and ability to interpret “products of culture,” which became instrumental to securing the public’s involvement in museums (Weber, 1994, p. 34).

Art historians and experts in women’s culture consider this time period to be the second generation of female museum workers (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994). Concurrently, during the 1950s-1960s, the Civil Rights movement and women’s liberation gained momentum and female art museum educators began to advocate for career recognition in what had become feminized jobs with little to no compensation (Clark, 2019; Glaser & Zenetou, 1994; Kletchka, 2010). This group of art museum educators centered their argument on equal pay and the development of support programs for working mothers (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994; Kletchka, 2010). As a result of these efforts, museum employment was solidified as a valid professional career path for women.

**Women: Art Museum Workforce**

In a recent study, conducted by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, *Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey 2018*, (2019), 79% of art museum jobs occupied by women are in art museum education departments. Research indicates that women are attracted to working in art museums (Dawson, 2017; Kletchka, 2010; Whitelaw, 2012). The same study conducted by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, *Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey 2018*, (2019) confirms that women dominate overall staff positions in museums by 62% versus men at 58%. The data demonstrates that women are well represented within the field of art museums; it concludes that, “While museums are staffed primarily by women, the most senior leadership position is still most likely to be held by men” (Westermann et al., 2019, p. 7).
Motivation. The art museum profession plays to women’s strengths because museum leaders stress, they value competencies such as interpersonal relationships and professionalism (Bomar, 2013). Jean Weber, author of the essay, *Changing Roles and Attitudes*, states, “Museums as institutions, like women as individuals, have suffered by being undervalued despite their contributions to society” (1994, p. 35). With over 150 years of women contributing to the formation and livelihood of art museums, to some degree of certainty, workplace longevity could be considered a contributing factor to gender disparity and compromised compensation because women are more likely to seek internal promotional opportunities than compete as external candidates when unfavorable percentages are difficult to overcome (Yee et al., 2018). Additionally, women who gain high positions in museums are goal-oriented and seek to make tremendous accomplishments sometimes with tremendous risk because the “museum workplace provides no safeguards for such endeavors” (Weber, 1994, p. 35).

Career Advancement. Even though women outnumber men in total jobs occupied in art museums, this is often because women advance to middle-management jobs contributing to “comparably lesser compensation” when hired from within an organization (Gan, Voss, Phillips, Phillips, & Wade, 2014, p. 3). Additionally in 2014-2015, there was an expansion of art museum education departments where women tend to gravitate, and which has been their cornerstone from the inception of American art museums (Schonfeld & Sweeney, 2019). Is it possible that the increase of art museum education positions solidifies women remaining in middle-management roles?

The Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) states, “women have made great strides towards equality in society” however gender disparity becomes obvious in
museums with operating budgets over $15 million and as operating budgets increase, women become significantly underrepresented (Gan et al., 2014). On average, only 24% of women become art museum directors in larger art museums with operating budgets between, $20-$30 million dollars (AAMD, 2018a) and earn approximately .71 cents to the dollar compared to men (Gan et al., 2014).

**Barriers.** Museums have been shaped by women and are inherently feminine, yet museums rarely acknowledge this fact (Clark, 2019). Research shows that once salaries were introduced and women were considered employees of museums instead of volunteers, issues emerged that are still present today (Whitelaw, 2012). Seminal author, Audrey M. Clark, writes in her dissertation, *Museum, Feminism, and Social Impact*, that women were pushed over once men returned from the war and were considered to be “simply acting as place holders for them” (Clark, 2019, p. 10). Conversely, there is ample data supporting that women hold more middle management art museum jobs and outnumber men, however little explains why women chose not to advance or cannot not advance to directorships.

There is plenty of speculation about contributing factors to potential barriers that limit women from becoming art museum leaders. Research shows that art museum boards hire directors reflective of their composition, male and white (Dawson, 2017). Another assumption is that once women become qualified, they will naturally assume leadership positions which is supported by statistics demonstrating women have earned more doctorate degrees than men since 2011 (Dawson, 2017). Yet, there is no change in museum leadership nor research to correlate this data and to explain the sidetracking that keeps women out of museum directorships.
**Support.** For the women who do achieve directorship roles, their communication styles are less authoritative and nonhierarchical with a focus on mutual planning, and a shared purpose, however they are not taken seriously (Lustgarten, 2008). Additionally, there is very little research that discusses why female art museum directors who have advanced to their roles choose to stay in their positions more than five years. There is a large gap in the research regarding women’s perception of advancement in modern art museums in the United States. Future opportunities are narrower for women because they have less political support within their own organizations to help them advance to leadership positions (Dawson, 2017).

Contradicting statistics reported in the article, *Latest Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey Shows Increases in African American Curators and Women in Leadership Roles*, demonstrates increases in the following areas: African American curators doubled, “from 2 percent in 2015 to 4 percent in 2018” and female C-level museum leadership positions grew “from 57 percent in 2015 to 62 percent in 2018” (AAMD, 2018b). However, there is still no indication of an increase in top-tier leadership positions for either women or people of color.

**Theoretical Framework**

Multiple disciplines were considered for this study, such as: gender studies; evolutionary psychology; and sex differences. Four specific theories serve as a foundation for this study.

**Social Role Theory.** The basis of this theory is the assumption that there is a connection between actions people choose and sex differences leading to normalized social behaviors among men and women (A. H. Eagly, 1987). To a greater extent, this
theory implies that social roles are influenced by stereotypes (Carli & Eagly, 2001).

Therefore, gender differences determine socially acceptable roles in labor borne out of male agentic behavior and female communal tendencies (A. Eagly & Wood, 2013; A. H. Eagly, 1987).

**Biosocial Theory.** Scholars, Wendy Wood and Alice H. Eagly, proposed applying this theory in an article published by, *Sex Roles*, a peer-reviewed scientific journal (2013). Their assumption is that humans have evolved and so has gender equality. Therefore, male and female behaviors are capable of meeting the “demands of society” rather than be limited by sex differences (A. Eagly & Wood, 2013, p. 553). This is evident in recent gender inspired movements such as #MeToo where women challenge masculine behaviors that construe acceptable human social interactions between men and women. Eagly and Wood, also, contend that human behavior is cognitively capable of social change and complex cultures can exist (2013).

**Role Congruity Theory.** The premise of this theory, similar to Social Role Theory, specifies prejudice against women in leadership roles. Prejudice is defined by women being perceived as less favorable than men and lacking in skill or attributes required to be successful as leaders (A. H. Eagly & Karau, 2002). Research demonstrates that fewer females hold top-tier positions and that barriers exclude women from elite leadership. Thus, gender dissonance is ever-present, which impacts prejudicial behaviors (Carli & Eagly, 2001; A. H. Eagly & Karau, 2002).

**Behavioral Mimicry Theory.** This theory suggests that women inspire other women through nonverbal means influencing their ability to successfully perform challenging tasks (Latu, Mast, Bombari, Lammers, & Hoyt, 2019). Furthermore,
research shows that when there is a visible example of women in leadership, other women are more likely to model her behavior than a male counterpart (Latu et al., 2019).

**Statement of the Research Problem**

Gender disparity is prevalent among many business sectors with data to support this claim. *Women in the Workplace 2018* is a comprehensive study aimed at improving gender diversity and perceptions of limits on women and advancement opportunities (Yee et al., 2018). This study finds that women generally believe their gender hinders professional advancement, but to them, race and sexuality are even more limiting (Yee et al., 2018). However, in the museum sector, women are considered skilled with certain abilities needed for the interpretation of artworks and art education, but are not perceived as potential museum directors (Whitelaw, 2012). Most of the women who founded American art museums in the 1900s were involved in selecting inaugural directors and did not consider themselves fit for the role (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994). There was, however, a scarce number of pioneering women who did become art museum directors in the 1900s, which occurred under unusual circumstances like Cornelia B. Sage, who took over after the director’s death in 1905. Modern women also faced art museum directorship scarcity and found their way, too, under abnormal circumstances. In 1976, Marica Tucker wrote, “I am now one of a minority of women directors. Instead, finding virtually no place for my being and my ideas within the existing museological framework, I chose to establish a museum” (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994, p. 51).

There is no meaningful research about why the terms “women” and “art museum directorship” exist so far apart and seldomly together. Throughout history, women’s contributions to the formation, functionality and activity of American art museums is a
dotted line rather than a bold thread. If the premise that women’s art museum careers began post-World War II were true, then they have made significant contributions to the scholarship of the art museum profession during their short tenure (Downs, 1994). However, there is a limited true account of what motivates women to work in the art museum field especially since it affords minimal acknowledgment or recognition. We know that at the formation of museums, women were instrumental to the vocation of art education. In fact, 79% of all female art museum employees are clustered in education departments nationwide (AAMD, 2018a). We also know that in 1990 during the national seminar, *Gender Perspectives: The Impact of Women on Museums*, at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC, it was reported that only “150 women were directors of art museums throughout the country, out of 1000 art museums nationwide” (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994). This is merely only 15%, which is far more bleak than 24% of female art museum directors in museums with operating budgets over $15 million (AAMD, 2018a).

It is clear that barriers exist for women to assume art museum directorships. Literature and survey data quantify this circumstance. The majority of breakthrough knowledge and cultural shifts occurred in art museum education and not art museum directorships. The literature, also, demonstrates that museums have essentially been shaped by women and for this reason are inherently feminine supported by a consistently dominant female workforce (Clark, 2019). Unfortunately, it appears museums are immune to this fact. Conversely, Roger Mandel, author of the introduction for *The Impact of Gender Perspectives: Museums as Educational Institutions*, writes,
There are and have been many women, particularly those in directorial positions, who are so qualified and gifted that there are no males who could have surpassed or equal them in capacity accomplishments and what they have given to the museum profession. (1994, p. 90)

More research is required to demonstrate an accurate account of women’s career pathways to art museum directorship positions. Areas where gaps in literature exist are in understanding their motivations to work in museums, and their motivation to remain in C-Level jobs. There is no depiction of a clear path or career advancement roadmap for this achievement. Additionally, there is limited first-hand experiences that describe women’s perceptions of career advancement opportunities to become art museum directors. Likewise, there is a break in knowledge that demonstrates any type of support they have received to reach this top-tier position. Lastly, there is no doctoral study that exists to comprehensively examine this cultural phenomenon about the absence of female American art museum directors. A qualitative study that charts women’s 200-years of contributions between 1800s to 2000s will cogently deliver a multi-generational view of female purveyors of modern day culture that has been neglected for far too long

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine and describe the career pathways of female art museum directors in the United States.

Research Questions

1. **Motivation**-What factors motivated female art museum directors to choose their career path?
2. Career Advancement- What factors contributed to the career advancement of women to become art museum directors?

3. Barriers- What barriers did women face in their journey to become art museum directors and how did they overcome them?

4. Support- What type of support did women have in their journey to become an art museum director?

Significance of the Problem

After careful review of sources concerning female art museum directors, the research laid a groundwork for this study. Types of research included: a) survey data; b) staffing data; c) doctoral dissertations and master theses; d) compilations of essays and peer-reviewed articles by experts in the field; and e) a preliminary, informal mini-study at a local art museum with 80 percent female employees. It was overwhelmingly clear, and confirmed by authors, that these sources only chipped away at describing the lack of female art museum directors (Bruch, 2011; Clark, 2019; Dawson, 2017). While some studied the gender gap problem directly, none made the case that the absence of women in top-tier leadership positions compared to the magnitude of their historical advocacy and influence on the field of museology equates to a complete contradiction.

Four research studies closely related to the topic support a scholarly position for this study in the literary field. Dana Carlisle Kletchka, author and researcher of, Nice Girls, Left-Wing Ladies, and Merry Bands: A New Generation of Art Museum Educators in The 1970s, explores the transformation of art museum education. She builds a historical context juxtaposed with oral histories from women working in education departments circa 1970 who maintained their employment in art museums (2010). Like
Kletchka, this study demonstrates the degree of women’s historical contributions to museums, but instead is compared to few directorships making the impact resoundingly grave.

Kristin Bruch’s graduate thesis, *An Analysis of Art Museum Directors, 1990-2010*, reports an incremental increase in female art museum directors overall, yet there is a noticeable decline in 2010. Furthermore, two recently authored theses in university Museum Studies departments, address feminism, social impact and gender disparity (Clark, 2019; Dawson, 2017). Clark writes, “These women, despite facing constant repression for their sex, have been able to make meaningful careers for themselves in a society where there seems to be few options for them” (2019). Conversely, Kathryn Loraine Dawson tackles the gender gap head on. Similar to this study, her thesis targets female CEO/directors in art museums with operating budgets greater than $10 million. However, many of the respondents have varied lengths of tenure in their roles. The findings uncover lack of internal support or mentorship. Additionally, Dawson demonstrates that gender imbalance correlates with funding and board executive hiring criteria (2017). Lastly, and most telling, until offered leadership roles, women had little interest in pursuing directorships (Dawson, 2017).

Research supports women belong in museum work and they are perfectly trained to do so no matter if they possess inherent qualities or terminal degrees (Dawson, 2017; Whitelaw, 2012). Somehow, women flood lower-level positions working in smaller art institutions and have left competitive behavior surrounding large-scale museums to men (Lustgarten, 2008). In a recent qualitative mini-study conducted at *di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art*, the following interview question asked, “Do you have advancement
aspirations in your chosen field?” Consistent across all respondents showed, they were not looking for advancement opportunities. The female respondent in the highest-ranking middle-management position expressed a desire to transition to a larger institution in the same job before considering a leadership role.

In order to comprehensively address gaps in research with a focus on motivation, career advancement, barriers and support, this study targets top-tier female art museum directors with more than five-year’s experience. Findings might suggest new policies for career pathways and aid women in avoiding stagnation in C-level positions. Moreover, the information gained from this study adds to the discourse of pioneering women during the 1800s-1900s. Results bring to light women’s unwavering achievements, which shaped modern art museums and cultural institutions where no other business sector has such a history.

Definitions

The following terms are used throughout this study, which define the research categories and positions integral to museum organizational structures.

**Research Categories**

**Barriers.** Women face internal and external workplace barriers. These pressures are comprised of expectations placed on them, which stem from societal expectations, stereotypes and gender discrimination (A. H. Eagly, 1987; Carli & Eagly, 2001).

**Career Advancement.** Upward mobility of women’s career pathways leading to directorships.

**Motivation.** Reasons women chose their career pathways and their desire to pursue directorship positions.
Support. Opposite of barriers, support women receive to successfully navigate the art museum workplace despite gender dissonance is a gap in the research. Therefore, support may be viewed as people, professional development opportunities, educational degree programs or leadership training.

Key Museum Position Titles

Art museum director. The top leadership position in a museum that is also referred to as an executive director. Directors must be able to navigate a complex set of responsibilities that require managerial skills, fiduciary intellect, and vision. Not only do they create connections between the public and the institution, they must do so as a fundraiser and with aesthetic instincts (Bruch, 2011). Therefore, the term “director” is synonymous with the “face of the museum” (Bruch, 2011, p. 5).

Benefactor. A person who makes a financial gift or bequests an endowment to maintain the operations of an organization or to support an individual. An example would be the extensive gift Miss Lillie P. Bliss made to the Museum of Modern Art in 1930, which included over 150 pieces of art and instructions for use of and/or selling of the individual pieces (2019).

Curator. A person that manages the museum collection and evaluates the works of art. They are responsible for acquiring artwork and/or offering pieces for public auction. Historically, these positions were predominantly held my men, however data shows more women are assuming these roles. Moreover, this role is considered a pipeline for women to ascend into director positions (Westermann et al., 2019).
**Docent.** A title used to describe a volunteer who guides museum tours that are educational in nature and provide substantive information about the works of art. Data supports that these jobs are typically held by women.

**Founder.** A person or persons, which would deem them co-founders, are entrepreneurial. They have a vision to do something or to create an entity that serves the public. Founders are not always employees of the organizations they envision. As is the case with founders of the Museum of Modern Art and The Whitney Museum of American Art, which were founded by women in the early 1900s. In neither case did these women work for the museums they founded.

**Key stakeholder.** In the museum context, key stakeholders are usually comprised of persons that have an interest in the outcome and direction of the museum, such as executive staff, boards and benefactors.

**Philanthropist.** A person who seeks to make a generous financial donation in support of an organization. Sometimes philanthropist and benefactor are used interchangeably.

**Pioneer.** A person who is part of early explorations into a new area of thought. Women between the 1860s-1900s that worked to spread the consumption of arts and culture world-wide were considered pioneers leading to the formation of art museums in the United States (Taylor, 1994).

**Trustee.** A person or a group of people that serve on a board. The group hires the director and has fiduciary responsibility of the organization. To date, fewer women serve on art museum boards than men, which some consider a key factor to why less women are hired as art museum director positions (Lustgarten, 2008).
General Art Vocabulary

**Modernism.** Generally characterized as a philosophical shift that occurred in Western society that broke from tradition during the 19th century and was considered a socially progressive era. As an art movement, modernism is most notably associated with the turn of the century art lasting until the 1970s. Artists rejected traditional techniques and gravitated toward abstraction, vibrant colors, bold lines and introduced new materials.

**Private Funding.** Operating under a governing body, privately funded museums have more autonomy in decision-making because they are less constrained by federal or state regulations associated with funding sources (Boyd, 1999). However, the role of the Executive Director weighs heavily on fundraising and strategic leadership, especially in larger institutions.

**Delimitations**

Creswell defines delimitations as factors that affect the scope of the study and determine data collected from a particular group (2014). This study was delimitated to female art museums directors in the United States meeting the following criteria: a) at least five years tenure in their positions; b) art museums that have an overall operating budget greater than $10 million; and c) museums in states that receive the highest private funding—NY, CA, TX, MA, DC, IL, PA and OH.

**Organization of the Study**

This study follows the standard procedure of the 6th Edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) Manual (*Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 2010). There are five chapters, with this being the first,
Chapter I. Chapter II of this study includes a review of literature related to female contributions to art museums in the United States and leadership characteristics of women. Chapter III outlines the research design, population, data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter IV describes the research conducted, findings and synthesis of interviews, artifacts and observations. Chapter V concludes the formal writing of this dissertation sharing conclusions and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter II provides an extensive review of literature, from historical to present day, about examining events and circumstances surrounding career pathways of female art museum directors. A literature review serves many purposes in academia and scholarly texts by creating a synthesis of literature about a particular subject that stands on its own as an original work (Pan, 2016). Moreover, literature reviews demonstrate the researcher’s understanding of the topic, which supports the purpose of the study (Pan, 2016). In preparation for this chapter, there were many directions the literature pointed, however the researcher focused primarily on early explorations of art collecting by women in their domicile that would later emerge into public cultural endeavors, leading to women being widely known as connoisseurs of art (Dawson, 2017; Masten, 1993; Whitelaw, 2012). Ultimately, their expertise landed them in the museum environment where they currently outnumber men as a workforce. In addition, this literature review frames the female gender journey from mere “legal chattels of their spouses” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 4) during the 19th century to feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, and onward to directorships of major art museums with operating budgets over $15 million.

This chapter is designed to explore literature outlining women’s contributions to the existence of modern art museums in America. Sections are organized chronologically beginning with women’s historical roles in arts and culture, their participation in the formation of American art museums, and early discussions about the art museum gender gap. Then, sections explore female directorships, women’s leadership styles and feminist theories. The researcher made a conscious choice to eliminate research about the discrimination female practitioners faced in a male-dominated art-world, which in itself
is a systemic issue prevalent then and now. However, it is common knowledge many trained female artists struggle for equity representation and as a result, move into museum work for financial stability, which is consistent with the formation and motivation of the decorative arts movement (Macleod, 2008). Therefore, texts used for citing women’s pathway to museums include seminal authors, Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women’s Culture. American Philanthropy and Art 1830-1930* (1991), and Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects. American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture 1800-1940* (2008). Content captured from these important books shed light on gender and culture, and how women bonded to create coalitions thwarted from public record. Then, followed by, *Gender Perspectives: Essays on Women in Museums* by Jane R. Glaser and Artemis A. Zenetou (1994), provides firsthand accounts of women working in museums during the 1940s-1980s. Lastly, current literature within the past five years include peer-reviewed articles and academic papers fitting to the research question categories of motivation, career advancement, barriers and support. Throughout this literature review, gender dissonance and feminist overtones support the theoretical foundation inherent to this study.

**Women’s Historical Involvement in Arts and Culture**

This section contains a review of literature citing early orientations of women and culture with subsections that include, *The Role of American Women in the Arts, American Female Cultural Advocates and Philanthropists, and Female Founders of American Art Museums*. Also, worth noting is that this topic is broadly researched and situates this study narrowly in a much larger debate that spans over 500 years. Therefore, women and their contributions to cultural identity dates back to the European Middle Ages.
Singe Morrison contends that gender approaches to literature must include medieval women because they “shape how women act and are treated today” (2016, p. 204). While Morrison’s view brings up a good point in that history dictates contemporary female behavior, this study contends historical limitations placed on females in the context of art and culture continues to permeate the modern-day American art museum.

Indications of a possible break from European deprivation and no control over property, American women gained access to their own money much sooner and became collectors to a much larger degree than British women (Macleod, 2008). However, this fact did not change their circumstance, in which women were prevented from public involvement and were beholden to *femme couverte* (McCarthy, 1991), which is legally known as common law doctrine where women were under protection and influence of their husbands.

A wider review of literature uncovered the true implication and manifestation of *femme couverte* in America during the 1800s. All women at that time, regardless of wealth, were encouraged to marry and by doing so, they adhered to societal pressures. They were denied public involvement, isolated in the home, and many discouraged from education (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991). American businessmen were less threatened by women under these conditions and shadowed the sentiment of influential Enlightenment writer, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “women were closer to nature, more governed by their emotions and biological imperative, and therefore more given to imitation than originality” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 15). As a result, women acquiesced to “self-sacrifice, rather than self-assertion” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 4) ultimately building coalitions among themselves. Not only does the literature establish a context of restrictions that pioneering women overcame, but it sends a resounding message of what
women continue to navigate in today’s workplace. Perhaps, as suggested by Morrison, female behavior is influenced by history (2016), especially pertaining to their career choices and belief systems they harbor. However, this study is concerned specifically with analyzing gender differences and behaviors in the American art museum workplace based on social role theories influenced by stereotypes (A. H. Eagly, 1987), which are borne from inequities women endure; likely connected to history.

Conversely, during the Antebellum Period, (Latin meaning for before the war), a time of considerable wealth and divisive economies between the north and the south, America began to establish their first art unions and art academies. Yet, women were precluded from participation at infamous places such as the American Academy of Fine Arts in New York and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia and there is no such record of their involvement (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991). One female ignored such limits and defied odds stacked up against women to partake in public and cultural sanctions. Eliza Bowen Jumel exhibited her art collection of more than two-hundred paintings and decorative objects she acquired while traveling to Paris with her husband. This exhibition, in 1817, was at none other than the American Academy of Fine Arts in New York where women were not allowed. Although this marked a “crucial juncture in American culture” (Macleod, 2008, p. 17), controversy was amass, which succeeded in shuttering women once again into their domicile until the American Civil War.

During the years leading up to the Civil War, women’s exclusion from public life and duty to the domestic environment was a precursor for the decorative arts movement (Banner, 1994; McCarthy, 1991). Wealthy women and less-privileged women alike
experienced confinement and isolation from public and political pursuits, blemishing them with a sense of inadequacy. Collectively, women began to explore functional art objects, indicative of decorative arts, as a means of individualism, creativity and a way to hone domesticity. According to design theorist active during 1840s-1850s, Andrew Jackson Downing considered the home a symbol of personal values and beliefs that one wants to be regarded by society (Peck, 2004). Although, middle-class women had financial means to collect ornate objects, thereby giving them some influence over male collecting habits that inadvertently affected culture to some extent (Macleod, 2008).

While their efforts were fragmented, women found freedom in collecting art. In doing so, they became skillful in aesthetics by way of mixing art objects, tapestries, paintings and ceramics to create lavish rooms in the domestic arena (Clark, 2019). Dianne Sachko Macleod dedicates a chapter in her book, Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects. American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture 1800-1940, demonstrating female collectors’ sophisticated taste and compares many collections that defined interior decorative arts (2008). However, these collections were rarely shown in public and not taken seriously. Meanwhile, author Kathleen D. McCarthy outright claims that “minor” arts or decorative arts were completely under female control and women did not seek to join the “rites and rituals of men” (1991, p. 37).

The Role of American Women in the Arts

In the 1860s, much had changed. Coinciding with the American Civil War, women moved into formal work and replaced men in public positions that were vacant (Macleod, 2008). These vacancies resulted from active servicemen and many were permanent due to casualties, especially in the northeast (Macleod, 2008). Women
worked in the public sector and were able to establish their own organizations, which manifested into educational systems and financial scholarships for the betterment of the arts (Clark, 2019; McCarthy, 1991). The decorative arts movement “stemmed by charitable and cultural concerns as well as gender-related imperatives” spread into towns and cities (McCarthy, 1991, p. 59). Art colleges were founded like the Philadelphia School of Design for Women (PSDW), which remains the only women’s art college in the United States under the name of Moore College of Art and Design (2020). Candance Wheeler, cultural heir to PSDW founder Sarah Worthington Peter, worked tirelessly to promote women’s cultural privileges and autonomy (McCarthy, 1991). Meanwhile, in the west, Phoebe Hearst developed a more free-form collecting practice and was known not only as an eccentric collector, but a behind the scenes activist during the suffrage movement (Clark, 2019). Like the secretive coalition’s women established during this time, any affiliation they may have had with male-run arts organizations were undocumented (Macleod, 2008; Whitelaw, 2012), until they became benefactors.

The era following the American Civil War, known as the Gilded Age (1870-1900), was a time of economic growth, especially in the northeast and the west. American cities took shape as cosmopolitan centers and artists flooded to urban centers taking advantage of newly formed art academies (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1985, 1991). Women, working-class and middle-class alike, became financially autonomous, however, middle-class women were disproportionately wealthy. Their wealth can be attributed to their social status and outliving their husbands, which was tied to the passage of property laws making it feasible for them to back charities for the creation and appreciation of the arts (Masten, 1993; McCarthy, 1991). According to McCarthy, it was
assumed that the decorative arts movement was “to protect middle-class women from direct association with their working-class peers” (1991, p. 49). Conversely, the purpose of the movement, propelled by the expansion of the Societies of Decorative Arts (SDA), was to empower women and broaden their career opportunities (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991). Several charters, backed by prominent women or “very grande dames” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 45) never lost sight of the charitable intent and were determined to empower women and swell cultural concerns (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991).

In the wake of this female-centric arts movement, a psychological shift occurred. Art collecting was no longer women’s only means for self-expression and public worth. Through formal and informal means, the women of the Gilded Age emerged as active public figures shaping cultural experiences, and many through philanthropic efforts (Dawson, 2017; McCarthy, 1991; Whitelaw, 2012). For instance, Phoebe Hearst was considered a “cultural relativist rather than an American chauvinist” (Peterson & Hearst, 1987, p. 281) and a major benefactor for education spanning kindergartens to universities. Notability, she was responsible for the formation of the Department of Anthropology degree program and museum at the University of California, Berkeley where she became the first female regent in 1897 (Peterson & Hearst, 1987). Likewise, women with less financial means engaged as volunteers in museum education practices, which was a key charter (Kletchka, 2010). Volunteerism, while invisible, continues to be a main resource for museums, and still, there is no means to quantify the hours dedicated. Anne Whitelaw contends in her book, Museums and Biographies, that biography traditionally isolates figures and is written in a linear fashion, and by doing so, it ignores “anonymous labour of predominantly female voluntary groups” (2012, p.76). Therefore,
while women were gaining ground publicly and respected in society, many were erased from history. Seminal author and art historian, Dianne Sachko Macleod writes,

I confess that I searched for women who viewed the practice of collecting as an entrée into the wider world of decision making and independence. I discovered them in the rosters of the arts organizations in museum donor files, in the archives of historical society’s in regional library’s, and in history as voluntary associations in the women’s suffrage movement. (2008, p. 3)

American Female Cultural Advocates and Philanthropists

Literature surrounding the impact women had on American culture and art institutions is astounding. For the purposes of this study, this section concentrates on formative years during the 19th century to demonstrate the social restrictions women overcame and continue to confront in museum culture. Linda Downs writes in her essay, A Recent History of Women Educators in Art Museums, “From the 1820s to the 1890s, the concept of women as guardians of culture was predominant in the United States” (1994, p. 92). Women were being utilized to translate scholarly texts in support of art history, architecture, and other iconography, which lead to their discovery of artists (Banner, 1994; Downs, 1994). However, this practice was pejorative and sheltered women from individual thought. Therefore, they would forever be considered imitators of male-works, on which Rousseau based his political philosophies (McCarthy, 1991). Yet, Macleod claims that women were influential “hidden helpers” for their husband’s art aesthetics and collecting choices, which wives considered an avenue toward personal choice and individual identity (2008, p. xi).
In spite of women’s hidden talents for influence and the art of collecting, some notable females gained public notoriety within the constitution of their marriages. A perfect example, and highly uncharacteristic for the early 1800s, the aforementioned, Eliza Bowen Jumel was quite active in selecting artworks during frequent travel to Paris. Macleod writes that Jumel was regarded as having an “elitist aesthetic” and considered precise in her business practices, whereas she was generally restricted and criticized for her gender (2008, p. 35). In fact, to her credit, Jumel defied male conventions and protected her husband’s fortune upon his death in 1832 (Macleod, 2008). Toward the end of the 19th century, Phoebe Hearst was in a unique position. Her husband, George Hearst, was a political figure. After their marriage, she was often left alone while California Senator, Mr. Hearst, traveled to Washington, D.C., thus establishing her somewhat of a public figure in San Francisco (Macleod, 2008). It is believed that her political influence developed from her marriage, however she was quite skillful in her own right. Macleod chronicles a meeting with Susan B. Anthony, which was sourced from *Iron Will: The Life and Letters of Jane Stanford* by Gunther Nagel,

> She was very free in her talk—told me of her many experiences since she became manager of her estates—which have done much toward making her see and feel the need of woman’s possessing political power—as well as financial freedom. (2008, p. 93)

Researchers claim Hearst was a supreme example of women who combined art collecting with activism, although, she adopted this approach much later than her forbearers (Clark, 2019; Macleod, 2008). She was, however, among a string of highly influential women in Northern California who were publicly recognized for their
philanthropic activity in the spirit of cultural charities. Thirty years prior to Hearst’s death, Mary Ann Deming Crocker, regarded for her generosity and “civic-alertness” was the first woman to have her obituary on the front page of the San Francisco Chronicle in 1889, and would inspire future generations of San Franciscan females (Macleod, 2008, p. 99). Interestingly, Mary Ann Deming Crocker, wife of railroad tycoon, Charles Crocker, was sister-in-law to Crocker Museum founder, Judge Edwin B. Crocker whom founded the museum in 1870 (2020; Macleod, 2008). There is no mention of the familial connection, possible influence or shared aesthetics found in the research regarding both Crocker brothers’ extensive art collections.

Meanwhile in the northeast, there was a plethora of philanthropic activity attached to art institutions, which would incite the founding and formation of modern art museums by women in the early 1900s. Leading up to this, relationships cemented between artists and collectors, especially American women and European painters. Middle-class women of the Gilded Age had much more expendable income making it possible for them to travel to Europe for long periods of time intent on consuming art (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991; Taylor, 1994). Author, April E. Masten writes, “McCarthy reduces nineteenth-century women's art patronage to a kind of art "aid" and implies that men's support of male artists was patronage and women's support of female artists was charity” (1993, p. 73). In contrast, the relationship of painter, Mary Cassatt and collector, Louisine Havemeyer proved to be harmonious and advantageous. Cassatt served as an advisor and influenced Havemeyer’s purchases, which included her first Edgar Degas (McCarthy, 1991). Women depended on strong ties to each other and relationships traversed many purposes; especially in support of the suffrage movement. Havemeyer

The first publicly funded art museums came into existence with the formation of the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Art (1913) and Boston Museum of Fine Arts (1920), which gave way to municipal programming and what would become feminized art education positions (Kletchka, 2010). Havemeyer was responsible for strengthening The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s holdings to which there is an entire wing named in her honor (McCarthy, 1991; Taylor, 1994). Although women were benevolent benefactors, these male-run art institutions were hierarchical and women had no place or influence on policy (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991). However, when limits on receiving modern art collections came to light (Whitelaw, 2012), aristocratic women of this time gathered to discuss founding art institutions focused on living artists. Ancillary activities, in contrast to male-controlled art museums, included organizing art exhibitions in patronage of living artists. Noteworthy events included, the Armory Show of 1913, which marked a significant shift toward modern art (Takac, 2019). Planning began in 1911 with an impressive array of works donated by female collectors (Museum of Modern Art, 2019; Takac, 2019). The exhibition swept three major art epicenters opening in New York City then traveled to Chicago and Boston forever changing the trajectory of art institutions that women quickly capitalized on in subsequent years.

**Female Founders of American Art Museums**

This segment exemplifies women’s transition from the domicile to their emergence as new women prepared for entering the “urban core” void of “self interest in
the public domain” (Macleod, 2008, p. 135). The researcher illuminates their influence over art and culture through their stories drawn from the synthesis of literature. Macleod describes, “Collectively, women’s engagement in modernism altered the face of American culture and announced that the female sex was a force to be contended with in the art world of the Progressive Era” (Macleod, 2008, p. 134). The Progressive Era (1890-1920) was a time of extreme change in America. Women’s suffrage was no longer all-consuming as it once was because women earned their legal right to vote in most states by 1920. Yet, there was widespread concern and gender politics were rampant. McCarthy outlines these concerns written by Earl Barns, published June 1912 in, The Feminizing of Culture, which states, “the whole higher culture is being feminized” and “the germ of feminization is firmly planted in the whole national intellectuality” (1994, p. 150). Despite public resistance to modern art, parental objections and marital protestations, profoundly advantageous women established their own art museums in the early 19th century.

**Key female figures**

Consistent with a qualitative study, the researcher demonstrates through lived experiences of key historical female figures that modernism and feminism are inextricably linked. These precursory stories serve as examples to the longevity of women in museum leadership even though these pioneers received minimal attention in official histories at the launch of their institutions (Whitelaw, 2012). Philosophically, their credo set precedents during the Progressive Era defying gender limits and created a new path in American culture. Much of their struggles remain relevant in art museums today and frames the context for this study.
Museum for the Arts of Decoration / Eleanor and Sara Hewitt. Museum for the Arts of Decoration, was founded in 1897 and housed on the top floor of The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art. Cooper Union was a college established by Eleanor and Sara Hewitt’s grandfather in 1859 based on open-enrollment and a tuition-free model (2020; Macleod, 2008). The Hewitt’s envisioned their museum as “a gendered modernist venture” and explained during a lecture given by Eleanor titled, *The Making of a Modern Museum*, that, “to be modern was to be a pioneer blazing the trail” (Macleod, 2008, pp. 139-140).

While modern art was consider pioneering, and embraced by both genders, as such, the Hewitt sisters applied modernist ethos to their museum canon. They believed in engagement and interaction, considering their museum a laboratory, unlike typical museum spaces, and sought to serve the community not connoisseurs, which broke from the male ideal of modernism (Macleod, 2008). The Hewitt interactive principle is a main objective of art museums today. Author, Maria Mortati, writes in the article, *Experiencing the Art Museum: Methods for Public Engagement*, that museums must consider, “crowd involvement through participatory design” for the purposes of interactive experiences and sustainability (2018). Therefore, the founders of the Museum for the Arts of Decoration foretold trends in 21st century art museums.

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum / Isabella Stewart Gardner. The museum and the person challenged norms on her own terms and made it a point to evade expectations of women with her social status (McCarthy, 1991). Known for her unique philanthropic approach, Gardner designed a museum “for the education and enjoyment of the public forever” (2020). According to McCarthy,
The Gardner museum was an aberration, albeit a magnificent one. Hemmed in by trusts, a disapproving spouse, and nay-saying trustees, only a woman with Gardner's extraordinary determination could've created an institution like Fenway Court at the turn-of-the-century. (1991, p. 176)

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum opened in Boston in 1901 and is considered a private collection open for public viewing (Museum, 2019). The collection is comprised of paintings, manuscripts, decorative objects, a garden, and a performance space dedicated to music (2020). Gardner’s collecting habits spawned when she inherited a large sum of money from her father upon his death, therefore no longer under the financial constraints and influence of her husband (McCarthy, 1991). However, it was a joint decision to construct the museum, but construction began after her husband’s death granting her absolute autonomy. Gardner would play a pivotal role in every aspect of the museum’s formation to the extent that she was the sole person involved in arranging the artworks; much like women’s decorative arts practices of the Gilded Age (Macleod, 2008). Yet, her resounding mission was for public consumption.

**Museum of Modern Art.** Three women connected in complex ways as collectors, benefactors, patrons of the arts and passionate about avant-garde modernism, formed what would become a major cultural institution of American museums. Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) was founded in 1929 on the premise of exhibiting and collecting art of the day (2020). As written in the inaugural brochure, “New York alone, among the great capitals of the world, lacks a public gallery where the works of the founders and masters of the modern schools can be seen” (2020), which suggests that their own collections were not in public view. These women fulfilled a need that they perceived as
unmet by men who ran hierarchal museums (Macleod, 2008). However, it was their vision to appoint a male president, whom they believed would be a collaborator while they worked behind the scenes, which was unlike other female founders of this time (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991; Museum of Modern Art, 2019). Another implausible decision was their desire to make MoMA a non-profit organization at the inception with a board of trustees stewarding the institution and funding sourced from different entities (McCarthy, 1991).

To more fully grasp their inclusive leadership decisions, the researcher conducted a comprehensive review of literature about each woman and their innovative museum structure.

**Abigail “Abby” Aldrich Rockefeller.** During the Progressive Era, Abby married into the richest family in America. Her husband, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., never warmed up to her modern art predilections. Research shows that her collection was sequestered to a single room in their home to which Abby converted into a personal avant-garde gallery as an outlet for her frustrations and to assert herself (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991). According to Abby’s granddaughter, Macleod writes, “wives were supposed to give up certain things, take on certain things and not want certain things” (2008, p. 152). Furthermore, Mr. Rockefeller mocked Abby’s vision for MoMA and called it “Abby’s Folly” (Macleod, 2008, p. 157).

Before joining forces with her MoMA co-founders, Abby was deeply involved in the Armory Show of 1913 where their paths also crossed (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991; Shircliff, 2014). Between 1913 and 1929, she was building her collection and supported commercial contemporary art galleries, which were predominantly female
owned and operated (McCarthy, 1991). According to a Rockefeller family biographer, Abby had “a passionate faith in the new and the untried” and spent much of her efforts supporting artists’ early in their careers (McCarthy, 1991, p. 200).

Based on the research, assumptions about Abby Rockefeller’s motivation for starting MoMA could be to continue her passion for the new. As for relinquishing complete control, it appears she had very little in her home life, and therefore found a way to function without it or effectively around it. However, it is believed, she did not want the Rockefeller name associated with this endeavor and she opposed publicity because of negative press about her father, Senator, Nelson Wilmarth Aldrich (McCarthy, 1991). The gap in research points to female leadership styles, which an entire section is dedicated and serves as a conceptual framework for this study.

**Lillie P. Bliss.** Like Rockefeller, Ms. Bliss did not have familial support for her modern art collection. She, too, was prevented from showing pieces except one at a time and the rest of the collection was consolidated in the basement of her parents’ home, where she lived (Macleod, 2008). Bliss had an “unflaggingly rebellious spirit and was a constant source of encouragement to the other founders of the museum” (Macleod, 2008, p. 158). Her public record for the avant-garde and prominent involvement in organizing the Armory Show of 1913 made her an obvious choice as the inaugural Vice-President for MoMA (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991).

Ms. Bliss had a talent for networking and patronized a variety of cultural endeavors such as serving on the Juilliard Foundation (McCarthy, 1991). Her modernist tastes spanned music and the arts where she was a critical benefactor for promoting aspiring artists and musicians (McCarthy, 1991). Her desire to support new endeavors
never waned. In 1931, Ms. Bliss passed and bequeathed the majority of her collection valued at $1.14 million to MoMA, which was considered one of the most valued privately-owned Cézanne’s in the United States (Museum of Modern Art, 2019). According to MoMA, her gift is “unparalleled” and “established the nucleus of the collection” (2019) making Ms. Bliss’ vision forever part of the museum experience.

Mary Quinn Sullivan. The epitome of qualities current art museum staff possess, Mrs. Sullivan was a trained artist and modest collector. She graduated from Pratt Institute in 1899 and taught art in Queens before joining the faculty at Cooper Union, where the Museum for the Arts of Decoration was fully under the direction of Sarah and Eleanor Hewitt (Macleod, 2008). This type of interconnectedness would be a thread in Sullivan’s career. She also overlapped with Rockefeller and Bliss working on the Armory Show of 1913 (Macleod, 2008).

Before joining forces with her co-founders, Sullivan published a textbook in 1914 titled, Planning and Furnishing the Home: Practical and Economical Suggestions for the Homemaker, which “stressed the importance of harmony, balance, unity, form, lighting, and integrity of materials—the same principles that were evident in modern paintings” (Macleod, 2008, p. 158). Her art education background would prove to be an invaluable influence on the tenets of MoMA. In addition, art museum education would later be considered “femininized work” where currently, 79% of women are presently employed in art museums in the United States (Kletchka, 2010; Westermann, Schonfeld, & Sweeney, 2019).

Whitney Museum of American Art / Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney. The Whitney Museum’s history gradually began making an impact on art, culture and social
significance, which grew out of the popular Whitney Studio Club; a space opened to artists in 1918 next door to Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney’s sculpture studio in Greenwich Village (Macleod, 2008). In 1928 the club outgrew itself and became Whitney Studio Galleries, a joint venture with Julianna Force who explained, “the new venture was an exhibition gallery for contemporary art, rather than an organization of artists, philanthropically inspired” (McCarthy, 1991). Three years before the Whitney Museum of American Art was founded, and Julianna Force was named the director, Mrs. Whitney organized solo shows making a point to feature female artists (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991).

Her passion for supporting women was fueled by a group of liberated females present in Greenwich Village who regularly contributed articles to the magazine, Arts, which Mrs. Whitney financed (Macleod, 2008). However, this periodical was not the only dominant press. Like her contemporaries, Mrs. Whitney was targeted for being an elite female. The same anti-feminist author, Earl Barnes, wrote in the Atlantic Monthly, “It is not through the generosity of men that liberal culture has come into the possession of women; they have carried it by storm and have compelled capitulation.” He bitterly continues, “… and of course either saddled with a hopelessly philistine husband or enriched by an inheritance from a conveniently dead one” (Macleod, 2008, p. 135). Of course, Mrs. Whitney remained was unnamed in the article, but unwilling to ever be silenced, she described her marriage as, “She belongs to him… with no place in life, but a lower one” (Macleod, 2008, p. 172). Not one to stay in the background, Mrs. Whitney prominently made it her goal to perfect her artistic talents independent of her marriage.
Her alliance with Julianna Force dominated the modern art scene in New York for over a decade bringing recognition to American art (McCarthy, 1991). Their efforts advanced careers of living artists, and grew an enormous collection so large that in 1929, Mrs. Whitney decided to donate 500 works of modern art to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (The MET), where her father, Cornelius Vanderbilt II, served on the Board of Trustees (Macleod, 2008). Cornelius Vanderbilt II was the older brother to William Kassim Vanderbilt, husband to suffragist, Alva Belmont Vanderbilt (2020). Nonetheless, The MET declined her donation because of their aversion to contemporary American art (McCarthy, 1991; 2019). This rejection gave birth to the Whitney Museum of American Art, which opened their doors two years later in 1931.

**Summarizing Social Impact**

The key figures, eight females and four institutions, commonly shared an innate desire to broaden public engagement in the arts. By personal sacrifice, the founders established cultural institutions for the betterment of society, negating male dominance and political pressures (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991). While it was not the researcher’s intent to explore the confines of marriage, it was in fact a structuring boundary of the time, and therefore, a vehicle to which feminine oppression was discovered. In contrast, many of these women possessed their own means to collect art through inheritance as vehemently described by Earl Barns (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991). However, as a result of their passionate quest, a significant transition occurred that would shift away from women’s charitable and often voluntary enterprises in areas deemed acceptable sectors, such as family, church, education and medical (Masten, 1993). Women would begin to dominate working in art museums, unfortunately
recognized as legitimate employees, however the foundation was laid and feminist movements would follow (Weber, 1994; Whitelaw, 2012).

**Women’s Historical Roles in American Art Museums**

For over a century, women steadily contributed to the formation, maintenance and support of art museums in the United States (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991; Whitelaw, 2012). While there is some speculation, as mentioned in Chapter I, that women’s profession in art museums began after World War II (Downs, 1994), this section demonstrates otherwise. The literature review emphasizes underlying gender disparity that transpired once women entered the workforce. Historically, this coincided with wartime when women emerged into the public sector as they claimed positions in the absence of men. The author briefly recounts women’s social, political, and cultural activity during wartime, citing seminal authors, Kathleen D. McCarthy and Dianne Sachko Macleod as well as introducing content from *Women and the Work of Benevolence* by Lori D. Ginzberg. Two important books, *Gender Perspectives: Essays on Women in Museums* by Jane R. Glaser and Artemis A. Zenetou and *Gender, Sexuality and Museums* by Amy K. Levin transition the literature toward gender issues in the museum context during the 20th century that are persistent today. Additionally, feminist theories, art museum demographics and studies addressing gender dissonance give credence to the purpose of this study.

**Wartime Work**

During all three wars—Civil War, World War I and World War II, women stepped into civic duty and assumed positions principally held by men (Clark, 2019). However, it was during these time periods that women asserted themselves and brought
cultural capital to a new level unfathomable by men (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991). Their expertise, matured from domesticity and personal creative explorations, transformed the museum environment. Years preceding and succeeding the wars, women incrementally found themselves steeped further into the cultural sphere, but upon male return, social and political challenges arose.

During the Civil War (1861-1865), cultural work manifested in different ways based on social status and wealth. Female art collectors took advantage of unsupervised finances and devised plans to display their collections in male-run academies, which were met with some reluctance. Macleod describes, “Early collectors were historically constrained and caught in the transition between the dictates of public sacrifice and private satisfaction, culture and comfort, and submissiveness and independence” (2008, p. 17). Therefore, women were neither confident nor certain about their place in society. Meanwhile, middle-class women were “forced into the business of benevolence” and had it not been for wartime, their work would have gone unnoticed, uncompensated and “taken for granted” (Ginzberg, 1990, p. 134). Clearly, women of all classes were active in public service either by virtue or sacrifice. Schwarzer writes in, *Women in the Temple: Gender and Leadership in Museums*, that “After the Civil War, women were pushed to the margins of the very organizations they had founded” (2010, pp. 17-18), bringing to light a need for new career opportunities. During the 1860s, American colleges were widely established and where women were admitted, the majority of students enrolled were female (McCarthy, 1991). Pointedly, women harnessed their desire for financial independence.
By the beginning of World War I (1914-1918), and before the United States joined alliances in Europe, women had already been part of the American museum system. McCarthy writes, “Despite women’s limited roles in the creation and management of museums, the myth of female cultural custodianship emerged full blown at the turn of the century” (1991, p. 149). The first art museums founded by women were already established, and in each instance, Sara and Eleanor Hewitt as well as Isabella Stewart Gardner self-assigned their roles as director of their museums (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991). However, other women were fully vested in art museum employment. Pachter’s theory presented in 1986 at Women’s Changing Roles in Museums Conference, states, “Once it became allowable for women to work in an intellectual arena, they naturally came to museums because, in American society, cultural work is traditionally women’s work” (1986, p. 87; Kletchka, 2010). Furthermore, women often worked as volunteers with little to no regard in educational positions and as docents that interfaced with the public unnoticed (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994; Kletchka, 2010; Whitelaw, 2012).

Women continued on in socially acceptable positions as invisible and overlooked benign workers, however once men returned from the war, they reentered the workforce and obtained jobs in the museum field. Audrey Clark writes, “Men seemed to have the attitude that women were simply acting as place holders for them, regardless of whether or not the women were the ones who created the jobs in the first place” (2019, p. 10). On the other hand, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney made sure to circumvent this from occurring when she founded her museum in 1931. Macleod writes, “Whitney created a gendered environment that was defined and controlled by women, inverting tradition by demoting men to the role of assists and appointing an indomitable female director,
Juliana Force” (2008, p. 172). Subsequently, throughout the 1930s women became an essential component to the museum field.

During World War II (1939-1945), a significant cultural shift occurred when millions of women joined the American workforce, and many leaped to the forefront of the museum field. Workplace behavioral shifts also occurred in that many women held college degrees with specializations in areas such as art history and anthropology (Clark, 2019; Taylor, 1994). Jean Weber writes, “These women established collections, education departments, and program activities that became fundamental to the distinctive character of American museums” (1994, p. 34). Even though women were contributing to the proliferation of museums nationwide, it remained uncommon for them to be considered for leadership positions, which continued to be allocated to men.

Also prevalent during this period were the social sciences where terminology such as “minority” and “prejudice” were coined to describe difference resulting in stereotyping (Gleason, 1981). Naturally women were aligned with this psychoanalytical perspective because they had long been conditioned to believe they were less-than men. Yet, due to their keen ability to navigate gender disparity, prominent anthropologists, Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict, were considered eminent scholars of their time. Phillip Gleason wrote about Benedict’s thoughts on human possibilities in, *Americans All: World War II and the Shaping of American Identity*, that, “Appreciating the diversity of cultures helped to liberate a person from the imperatives of his own culture and provided a perspective from which to assay its dominant traits” (1981, p. 488). Unfortunately, upon the ending of the war, women were expected to return to the home and live out their domestic
responsibilities (Clark, 2019; Macleod, 2008). However, in the museum context, women were embarking on professional careers.

**Acceptable Careers for Women in Museums**

Up to this point, the literature focused on women’s struggles for independence during the 19th century while acquiring personal art collections and exerting aesthetic choice to subvert male dominance in the home. At the turn of the century, the research described “new women” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 149) that emerged into public service; some of whom founded major art institutions in existence today. This historical overview established three conceptual foundations for this study: 1) women’s contribution to art and culture in the United States; 2) female entrepreneurship in American art museums; and 3) lack of female leadership in art museums in America. This section examines anthological books comprised of scholarly writing by contemporary museum professionals who can attest to gender discrimination present in the museum environment. The authors are men and women and their essays address museum culture between 1950s to 2000s (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994; Levin, 2010; Shapiro, 2015).

By the mid-century, women had long been working tirelessly from inside the museum structure developing outward facing programs. However, the jobs they took on became known as feminized work in areas of education and collection management; essentially, “those that tend to mimic work traditionally carried out by women in patriarchal societies” (Kletchka, 2010, p. 19). Although these jobs played to women’s strengths, the conditions were unfavorable and their accomplishments were undervalued (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994). Weber writes, “Women in museums, for example, began to make order out of chaos by taking what they had and improving or making the best of it”
Their progress and optimistic impact on the museum field demonstrates that women, in the first-half of the 20th century, overcame gender bias and pre-existing hierarchical obstacles, which made them a formidable workforce.

Furthermore, in the 1960s-1970s, the second iteration of the women’s movement sparked a national debate about equity gaps and equal compensation. Candice Brown writes,

I have often heard the suggestion that museum educators and docents are wealthy men’s do-good spouses who, having nothing else to do, volunteer or take low paying jobs in education. This erroneous impression demeans and demoralizes so many women who bring commitment and dedication to the field. (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994, p. xv)

This perspective, while not unique to the arts or this era, was a common misconception that has not entirely faded. However, strong women dedicated to the museum profession advocated for equality in positions that were historically underpaid and consequently received much attention from donors (Kletchka, 2010). It is also believed that this second generation of feminists capitalized on the achievement of women’s studies programs in higher education that gave way to realistic notions of discrimination and liberation (Banner, 1994).

Traction these female art museum professionals gained was based on identified need and statistical information about the increase of viewership in museums and the expansion of institutions (Kletchka, 2010). Public programs, feminism and the cultural impact of the Civil Rights movement conjured up a much-needed response from museum leadership. In 1971, the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), founded in
1916, which became a professional organization in 1969, held a conference at the Cleveland Art Museum titled, *Education in the Art Museum* (2020). A key breakthrough was “art museum directors recognized that they did not communicate their vision of education or community relations well” (Kletchka, 2010, p. 52). Another important outcome occurred that same year, AAMD released their first issue of *Professional Practices in Art Museums* (2020). The publication is updated each decade in alignment with the organization’s mission, “The Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) promotes the vital role of art museums throughout North America and advances the profession by cultivating leadership and communicating standards of excellence in museum practice” (2009).

Certainly, substantial improvements had been made, however few women held art museum director positions and the persistent pattern of men in leadership roles continued (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994). Therefore, a key piece of literature mentioned throughout this study, *Gender Perspectives: Essays on Women in Museums*, is the result of a national seminar titled, *Gender Perspectives: The Impact of Women on Museums*, organized by the Smithsonian Institution (1994). The central focus of the conference, held in 1990, argued that the women’s movement had not found its way into museums (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994). Paul N. Perrot contributed,

As directors, trustees, and managers, we are shortchanging ourselves and our institutions if we do not do something about this disparity, because the final measure of respect and equality is evident in the pay scale and the promotion rate. Something needs to be done to correct this obvious discrimination against women. (1994, p. 30)
In addition, data from AAMD at that time revealed, “There are one-hundred-fifty women directors out of a total of fourteen hundred art museums in the United States” (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994, p. xix). Today, the AAMD reports that there are 111 female art museum directors out of 277 total members in North America (2020). Further analysis about the gender gap consistent with the research problem is explored in detail citing sources.

**Gender Gap in American Art Museums**

A detailed analysis regarding gender disparity in American art museums was explored based on three key factors to define this phenomenon: a) gender composition by job type; b) museum size; and c) salaries. A number of studies published between 2010 and 2019 were reviewed. The objective of reviewing the data was to bring to light the current state of affairs in art museums where “a hierarchical power structure” exists (Hein, 2010, p. 55). Considering the historical overview, this fact is not new information, however the data quantifies the seemingly impenetrable discrimination women face in the museum environment of which they entered for social reformation (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994; Levin, 2010; Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991).

**Gender Composition by Job Type**

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation conducted a follow up study in 2018 comparing similar data captured in 2015. The results indicated little to no change in gender composition—women comprised 61% of museums staff to 39% of men (2019). However, a distinction regarding job type states that the data “frequently refers to ‘intellectual leadership’ positions in the museum, which include museum leadership, education, curatorial, and conservation” (2019, p. 6).
Based on the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation three-year comparison of intellectual leadership positions, it suggests that women are increasing in some areas and not in the education department, which shows no change (Table 2.1). Conversely, it was reported that there were no changes in percent of females to percent of males overall, therefore, this assumes that gender discrimination still exists.

**Museum size**

AAMD published a study in 2014 titled, *The Gender Gap in Art Museum Directorships*. Based on the data, it became intrinsically clear that a museum’s size was linked to gender discrimination. However, it is important to understand the number of museums in their study and the operating budgets to grasp the overall gender disparity. Data collected included responses from 211 art museums with operating budgets ranging from less than $1 million to greater than $100 million. Below is a chart grouping number of museums involved in their study summarized from the report (Table 1).
Based on the reported operating budgets, more than 78% of participating museums have an operating budget less than $15 million.

Also, according to the report, less than 50% of women held art museum directorships (Gan et al., 2014). As previously mentioned, presently there are 111 female art museum directors compared to 277 total AAMD members in North America (2020). While it remains true that there are less than 50% of female art museum directors, current data is realistically closer to 40%. However, the 2015 study uncovered the key issues: a) women held 48% of directorships in art museums with less than $15 million operating budgets; and b) women held 24% of directorships in art museums with more than $15 million operating budgets (Gan et al., 2014). Based on these findings, there are fewer opportunities for women to step into roles with greater compensation.

Salaries

Referring to the same AAMD 2014 study, it was uncovered that female art museum directors earn .79 cents to every dollar earned by male art museum directors (Gan et al., 2014). However, following the same line of logic in opportunities for women in museums with operating budgets over $15 million, the pay gap increased. Adding to the above Table 2.2, below is a comprehensive chart outlining the key findings (Table 2).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AAMD Art museum operating budgets (2014)</th>
<th># of museums</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; $100 million</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; $30 million - $100 million</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; $15 million - $30 million</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; $6 million - $15 million</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; $1 million - $6 million</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additionally, AAMD conducted a 2018 Salary Survey as part of an ongoing series in which there were 222 total respondents (AAMD, 2018b). The researcher summarizes art museum director’s earning potential according to museum operating budgets (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>operating $</th>
<th># of museums</th>
<th>% of females</th>
<th>$ male</th>
<th>$ female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; $100 million</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>$0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; $30 million - $100 million</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; $15 million - $30 million</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>&lt; $6 million - $15 million</td>
<td>51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; $1 million - $6 million</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>$1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>211</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data demonstrates that there is relative incremental earning potential in operating budgets, however there is a significant spike in salary after art museum operating budgets exceed $20 million. Furthermore, 21% of U.S. responding museums have operating budgets over $20 million. Hence, women are destined to earn less than men and have fewer opportunities are available to become art museum directors. While the data validates gender disparity and limited chances for women to be financially independent, the researcher dedicated a subsequent section exploring literature about
female directorships in the areas of: a) motivation; b) career advancement; c) barriers; and d) support.

**Female Directorships**

In accordance with the historical literature reviewed, it can be ascertained that women entered the museum field for social and political reasons simultaneously with women’s suffrage (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991). It can also be inferred that women chose art museums to explore financial independence as an extension of their affiliation with the decorative arts movement, which was designed to provide alternative career opportunities and a means to remain active in society (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991). Barriers to career advancement were compounded by the influx of post-war soldiers under the assumption that men were to reclaim employment and women were to return to the home (Clark, 2019). However, during the mid-twentieth century, feminism marginally subverted barriers by increasing awareness about gender bias, inequality and discrimination (Kletchka, 2010; Weber, 1994). By the 1990s, it was crystal clear that gender disparity reigned in the museum field even though women possessed leadership qualities impressionable on gaining community support and engagement (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994; Schwarzer, 2010). Lastly, any support women received in attaining leadership roles from the onset of museums to present day is unclear.

This section expands upon the research problem described in Chapter I in which gender inequities permeate leadership roles in American art museums, however women dominate the museum workforce. Data described in the previous section offers no explanations or plausible reasons for women being passed over. The researcher attempts to counter-balance this narrative by exploring literature to describe this phenomenon.
using four key categories for the study: a) motivation; b) career advancement; c) barriers; and d) support. The intent of grouping these categories is to offer a holistic perspective for the lack of female art museum directorships, and in doing so, it is probable some understanding of contributing factors leading women away from directorships will emerge.

**Motivation to Directorships**

While available literature might only be speculative or opinion, there are valuable sources that suggest women’s motivation for being drawn to the art museum field. However, the purpose of this study is to uncover factors that led them to become art museum directors in spite of scrutiny and gender discrimination. Author and educator, Marjorie Schwarzer writes,

> It could be said that the power of women in our field reverberates from the root of the very word museum: home to the Muses, nine ancient Greek sister goddesses of art and culture. Here in the United States, women have influenced museums less as goddesses and more as crusaders. (2010, p. 17)

Therefore, women are inherently motivated by and drawn to art and culture. Looking back to female pioneers that founded their own museums and those who donated significant art collections to secure the livelihood of early American art museums, suggests women have always taken a leadership position in this realm.

Even though women have been conditioned to enter most hierarchical structures under the assumption that men are in charge, there is a driving force that propels them into the museum field (Levin, 2010). Conversely, in a number of studies it was confirmed that women fare far better than men in leadership qualities. According to a
study conducted in 2006 by the Museums Administration of New York, women excelled in areas of communicating and implementing the institutional mission, vision and values (Schwarzer, 2010). In addition, the central tenets of museum work are to oblige the cultural ideals of the community they serve. Lori Fogarty, Executive Director and CEO of Oakland Museum of California states, “Museums can and should serve as sites of common ground, connecting people and nourishing their lives” (2019). Therefore, women intrinsically possess skills of collaboration, connectedness and shared purpose, making them ideal leaders for the role of director in today’s art museum setting (Lustgarten, 2008; Schwarzer, 2010).

A chief aspect of the museum environment, mission and practice can be summed up into one word—relationships. This is present in all levels of the museums system such as administration, exhibiting artists, viewers and community engagement. Historically, during the 19th century, rather than oppress women, arts and cultural endeavors liberated them and female coalitions were established (Banner, 1994; Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991). In the article, Women in the Temple: Gender and Leadership, Schwarzer references studies conducted by organizational psychologists that rank women high on valuing workplace interactions and their abilities to maintain social networks (2010). These skills are especially important for directors today when museums are being called upon to engage audiences and create meaningful “social contextual conditions” (Hein, 2010, p. 62) in order to survive and thrive.

Hence, the literature describes why women are fitting for the museum field and certainly suggests that they are prominently poised to be at the helm in executive positions. Yet, there is little research that describes the female art museum professional’s
motivation to pursue her directorship. Therefore, this study is significantly important to understand her motivation. In the book, *Eleven Museums Eleven Directors*, of three women interviewed, each indicated that their pathway to directorship evolved by the suggestion of someone other than themselves (Shapiro, 2015). This begs the question, “Could female art museum directorships be circumstantial?” It is more likely that women received encouragement, however until more research is conducted, conjecture is the only evidence available.

**Career Advancement Leading to Directorships**

Research indicates that when women began to flood the field of art museums, they sought to arm themselves with training. This occurred historically during the decorative arts movement and during the late 1980s when higher education experienced an influx of female students (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991; Schwarzer, 2010). According to recent data, Kristin Bruch writes, “The overall trend of hiring women directors increased from 1990 until 2005—28.28% in 1990 to 41.04% in 2005” (2011, p. 23). Unfortunately, a decline occurred in 2010, which is unfathomable because more women entered into doctorate programs than men in the 2000s (Dawson, 2017). It is clear women seek to earn credentials that ultimately place them in an echelon to meet minimum qualifications for executive leadership. However, women continue to comprise the majority of C-level museum management positions and/or they become directors in smaller museums with operating budgets under $6 million (Gan et al., 2014).

The museum field has embraced the notion of being feminized work (Kletchka, 2010; Schwarzer, 2010). Whether by design or personal choice, women seldomly advance to a director role and more poignantly, a directorship of a museum with an
operating budget over $15 million. Jean Weber suggests in her essay, *Changing Rules and Attitudes*,

If women are finally to make the leap from the museum field to the museum profession, they will need to do so by addressing these mundane but critical personnel issues. What is required are good job descriptions established and accepted salary levels, standards for comparable qualifications, and a strong code of ethics with safeguards and sanctions. (1994, p. 35).

Therefore, a systematic and strategic solution is being beckoned, but unmoved unless a behavioral mindset shift occurs. Schwarzer suggests, “Younger professionals see the gender gap differently from their mothers and grandmothers. Many feel that it may be time for museums to go beyond the old girls network” (2010, p. 23). Schwarzer’s suggestion, while relevant, gridlocks museum career advancement into a gender issue that is inescapable. Conversely, Hein proposes, “Museums face a dilemma; they must make a putative choice between presenting objective knowledge of truth certified by reliable, value-free standards, or the alarming contention that all viewpoints have equal standing” (2010, p. 56). Both present realistic perspectives in the museum environment yet offer limited information about their personal experiences.

Although, anthological books were studied for this literature review and provided first-hand knowledge from art museum directors about their experiences that shed light on navigating this complex phenomenon. Essential accounts from sitting female art museum directors demonstrate ongoing challenges and their stellar abilities to advance through unlikely circumstances. In applying for her second directorship, Kaywin Feldman explains that the board was not hurried to hire her and states, “Something I have
heard throughout my career is, ‘Does she have enough gravitas?’ Which is code for, ‘Is she male enough?’—I really resent that question” (Shapiro, 2015, p. 37). Ultimately, she was hired, however her experience begs more questions than provides answers. Why are women directors with previous experience and degrees to back it up, not an obvious choice? Similarly, when asked about female art museum directorships, Ann Philbin, Director of the Hammer Museum, states, “I think it comes down to the boards figuring out that women can be great leaders too—if not even better ones” (Shapiro, 2015, p. 99). With two affirming sentiments that directorship positions are contingent upon board approval, further analysis was conducted.

Literature on the subject of female art museum directors suggests that women lead differently that is value-based and in many ways they are not taken seriously (Lustgarten, 2008). Commonly, boards claim to seek business-minded directors and/or those who hold a business degree, yet data does not support this (Bruch, 2011). Therefore, a conundrum exists within the organizational structure and not necessarily with the candidates applying for career advancement opportunities. In addition, museums prescribe to the doctrine of coexisting in a space that manifests standards of universality and alternatives designed to shift thinking and alter direction (Hein, 2010). Then, wouldn’t it make sense for such possibilities to subsist in leadership? Dawson describes the phenomenon impeccably, “Side tracking ultimately keeps women out of the pipeline for leadership advancement while reinforcing stereotypes about women at work” (Dawson, 2017, p. 16). Despite the fact that women are more likely to embody institutional values and museum missions (Schwarzer, 2010), barriers solidly exist for women seeking career advancement.
Barriers to Directorships

The researcher approaches the topic of barriers from the perspective of institutional barriers. Any potential circumstances that are personal and/or theoretical hindrances will be covered in the next section under *Women’s Leadership Styles and Feminist Theories*. Therefore, after careful review of existing research, there are a number of institutional barriers that the literature addresses. Common themes that emerged include: a) gender discrimination; b) conditional opportunities; and c) cultural mindset. Each barrier is reviewed separately to grasp the complex and multilayered environment that contributes to lack of female directorships in American art museums.

**Gender discrimination.** From its formation in 1929, the founders of MoMA were keen to understand the limitations of having an inaugural female director. Their decision was strategic and political, meanwhile the founders were adamant to work behind the scenes (McCarthy, 1991). However, this decision conformed to societal pressures and spawned a systemic issue, which propagates gender discrimination in museums then and now. Heather Paul writes in her essay, *In Preparation for the Future*, “Testimony from museum professionals confirms that strong patriarchal echoes are still resonating through museum life, and true equity for women is still more dreams than reality” (1994, p. 115). Furthermore, because women have experienced challenges for several decades in the workplace, they have been undervalued in the sense that it is expected (Weber, 1994). Yet, when women seek to offset gender bias and bring equilibrium by inclusion of more women, they “encounter profound resistance” (Taylor, 1994, p. 52).
Based on data captured in two different studies, *An Analysis of Art Museum Directors, 1990-2010* (Bruch, 2011) and *The Gender Gap in Art Museum Directorships* (Gan et al., 2014), findings support that women face gender discrimination when being hired for art museums directorship roles. Bruch’s study includes the following criteria: a) degrees earned by directors; and b) art museums directors by gender year/year (2011). When comparing this data with the fact that more women entered doctoral programs in 2000s (Dawson, 2017), it demonstrates that more men were hired with less credentials. The researcher’s analysis is below (Table 4).

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Highest degree earned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>71.72%</td>
<td>28.28%</td>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>65.00%</td>
<td>35.00%</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>59.52%</td>
<td>40.48%</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>68.96%</td>
<td>41.04%</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>61.71%</td>
<td>38.29%</td>
<td>Masters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data based on Bruch’s study (2011)*

Bruch’s data does not segment percent of directorships by museum operating budget, which suggests the findings could establish more gender disparity with higher operating budgets.

Moreover, in a study conducted by the Association of Art Museum Directors (2014), executive search consultants were interviewed and agreed that the gender gap is narrowing, however they also stated, “talent is not the issue, and that there are candidates with strong qualifications across both genders” (p. 7). Contributing factors that were most telling include institutional barriers: a) generational differences influenced board decision making; and b) stereotyping about men and women (Gan et al., 2014). Hence,
as museums are slow to change, U.S. demographics are likely to propel gender equality when the majority of baby boomers retire and cultural diversity increases (Lott, 2015; Paul, 1994).

**Conditional opportunities.** Because women make up the majority of the museum workforce and occupy more directorships with operating budgets under $6 million (Gan et al., 2014), this establishes conditions and assumptions about their workload. Jean Weber explains, “The museum workplace provides no safeguards” and those who are “prepared to work diligently and creatively” are rewarded by the work itself, which leads to high burnout rates (1994, p. 35). In addition, museums with smaller operating budgets constitute smaller staff sizes putting more pressure on directors to deliver. In 1994, Weber identified these gender issues,

They are not begging for opportunities for individual achievement, but are expecting to find workplace conditions that are conducive to efficient and satisfying teamwork. It is becoming common for women to be as demanding as men are about the basic safety nets for performing on the job. Too often in the past men went elsewhere when faced with lack of professional stability in the field, and women gratefully took their places. (p. 35)

Therefore, not only do women in the museum field struggle to gain job equality, they must also continue to strive for satisfactory working conditions.

In 2010, as part of her study, *An Analysis of Art Museum Directors, 1990-2010*, Kristin Bruch writes, “The concept of equal, dual leadership in museums also has emerged to address the multiple expectations and requirements that art museum directors must navigate on a daily basis” (p. 6). Currently, this dual-managerial structure is
inconsistently implemented, but more realistic for larger art museums where adequate funding can be allocated to create efficiency-based staffing patterns. However, in smaller museums, female art museum directors continue to face higher expectations, which creates barriers to success. Unfortunately, the reality for women appears to be that the issues have morphed overtime, yet the fundamental barriers are the same: less pay and unfavorable work conditions.

**Cultural mindset.** Institutions that are deeply wedded in a corporate culture are more likely to have unrealistic promotional processes, which create barriers (Dawson, 2017). In addition, institutions with a long history of male leadership present limited opportunities for women. Since MoMA’s founding in 1929, there has not been a female director appointed, ever (2020). Furthermore, when institutions of this scale have no examples of top-tier female leadership, this creates an extremely difficult task for other women to consider themselves a fit for the job because studies show women rank highly in motivating others (Schwarzer, 2010).

As museums address the gender issue, there is also a key factor that butts up against reaching gender equality in leadership roles. This barrier has more to do with the museums themselves and less with the conditions of gender bias. Specialized museums are more likely to be looking for a certain type of director and remain less open to diverse leadership choices (Gan et al., 2014). Albeit limiting, museums with this mindset could be conditioned to hire from within. As a result, compensation is a factor because internal candidates have less negotiating power and typically earn less. Therefore, both internal and external candidates face barriers with art museums seeking specialized directors (Bruch, 2011).
Support to Pursuing Directorships

The largest gap in the research lies within the topic of support. However, Lori L. Lott, *President and CEO of American Alliance of Museums*, writes, “Our field has traditionally embraced a culture of mentorship that transfers generations of experience and wisdom to emerging leaders by involving them in some of the most vital projects and decisions at their institutions” (2015, p. 5). Unfortunately, the issue of women being clustered in certain departments like education and conservation “results in a narrower network” and women “have less political support within the organization to help them attain senior leadership positions” (Dawson, 2017, p. 17). Yet, first-hand accounts from sitting female directors suggests that informal support systems are in place. Thelma Golden, *Director and Chief Curator of the Studio Museum in Harlem*, explains,

There was state funding in New York City for entry-level positions in the arts. Marcia Tucker had one at the New Museum, and the Studio Museum had one. I remember Marcia, knowing I would interview with Mary, said, “You should go work at the Studio Museum.” Marcia actually saw my path before I did. (2015, p. 51)

When asked if she mentors others, Ann Philbin, *Director of the Hammer Museum* states,

Many people who have worked with me at the Hammer have gone on to big jobs and have thanked me for the things they have learned. They usually say something about the notion of embracing risk and going the creative route instead of the sure one. (2015, p. 99)
These two accounts demonstrate that female art museum directors mentor future female directors however, with such a small population of women in large-scale, top-tier art museums, their impact is somewhat compromised.

Kristin Bruch offers a different perspective by citing *Paul DiMaggio and the NEA’s 1988 Study: Manager of the Arts*, which concludes that art museums directors are least likely to be prepared for managerial tasks and least likely to value managerial training (2011). In addition, “on the job training was the main method of learning management tasks” (2011, p. 19). Hence, this substantiates that there is little to no system in place to support art museums directors. Lastly, in Bruch’s conclusions, she suggests the need for management training and offers two options designed specifically to “train curators to become managers” alluding to upward mobility (2011, p. 33).

The literature surrounding the four research question categories offers room for conducting this study, mainly in the areas of motivation, and support. Existing research does not fully describe the lived experiences of female art museums directors. Furthermore, research about career advancement and barriers was drawn from quantitative data and assumptions made by the researcher, which are not specific criteria to this study. Therefore, in-depth interviews with information-rich participants are required to answer the research questions using the theoretical framework.

**Women’s Leadership Styles and Feminist Theories**

The review of literature for this section summarizes women’s leadership styles in the art museum context and borrows information accumulated from psychological studies in organizational leadership. The areas of focus predominately surround desirable leadership qualities, however they are commonly undervalued, overlooked or in many
cases unassigned to women because of their sex (A. H. Eagly, 1987). This topic is well researched by Dr. Alice H. Eagly, professor and Ph.D. in social psychology. Therefore, a number of her writings reflective of feminist theories and leadership prejudice are noted. In addition, previously cited anthologies of first-hand knowledge from career museum professionals brings this section directly into the museum space. A number of peer-reviewed articles also contribute to existing research on the topic of museum leadership. In addition, national labor statistics provide an accurate account of women’s struggle for workplace equality.

**Leadership Styles and Gender**

From the inception of museums, women have historically been pushed out and presently experience being passed over, yet they continue to embrace the art museum career path (Clark, 2019; Weber, 1994; Whitelaw, 2012). Their contributions established many of the essential functions of museum departments and in essence they’ve also been molded by museums (Clark, 2019). Of late, museum leadership is focused on “their audiences and on the generation of revenue from beyond the realm of traditional sources” (Griffin, 2003, p. 4). Research describes these job responsibilities as dominant female (communal) and dominant male (strategic) leadership qualities (Bomar, 2013; A. H. Eagly, 1987; Lustgarten, 2008). Therefore, this section examines leadership with gender in mind. From a prejudicial perspective, four areas emerged that women frequently encounter: a) expectations; b) limitations; c) discrimination; and d) bias.

**Expectations.** Museum leaders are expected to approach their roles from an entrepreneurial methodology (Griffin, 2003) and at the same time, research indicates that U.S. museums seek professionals with strong communication skills with the ability to
engage their community (Bomar, 2013). Des Griffin’s article, *Leaders in Museums: Entrepreneurs or Role Models?* states, “Rather than being the architect of strategy, the leader is a developer of people” (2003, p. 8). Therefore, when women flex their leadership prowess to meet the demands of the job, their approach is rarely assumed credible (Lustgarten, 2008). Even though, studies demonstrate that feminist leadership is “consensual decision making” coupled with “nonhierarchical staff relations” (Dawson, 2017, p. 13). In Rita A. Lustgarten’s dissertation titled, *Women’s Wisdom in Leadership*, she writes, “What we have taken as the standards in the fields of leadership and organizations have all, for the most part, been based on men’s experiences with women’s experiences being excluded” (2008, p. 18). Essentially, this confirms that women enter into the hierarchical museum context poised to lead with qualities necessary to engage communities and grow people from within, yet so few women are placed in executive positions to truly make a significant impact.

According to the *Women in the Workplace 2018* report, “About 1 in 5 women say they are often an ‘Only,’ and this experience is about twice as likely for senior-level women” (Yee et al., 2018, p. 52). These statistics demonstrate that women are significantly underrepresented, and the benefits of their leadership are grossly underutilized. Furthermore, in most organizations that are based on patriarchal systems, feminine qualities are dismissed (Lustgarten, 2008), which in turn limit women even when they’ve reached top-tier leadership positions. Fortunately, women are aware of this fact and so are many companies. In the past five years, there has been some indicators of progress, but women are still being held to different standards than men. In the same report, *Women in the Workplace 2018*, should a women ask for a raise in her current job,
she is considered aggressive and is socially stigmatized (Yee et al., 2018). While this data is not specific to art museums, it paints a picture of the challenges women face to meet workplace expectations.

**Limitations.** Even though women overcame many social limits discussed in the historical sections of this literature review, their achievements slightly moved the needle toward their favor, however the real issues were not in their intellectual abilities, but their lack of opportunity (Smith, 2006). Somehow the same circumstances persist. There are more women in the workforce and more women earning doctorate degrees than men (Dawson, 2017) According to the *Gender Parity Index 2019 Report*, women comprise 51 percent of the total U.S. population (Terrell et al., 2019). In addition, no state has reached parity in local, state and national public service postions, but six states are within ten points of reaching 50 percent representation (Terrell et al., 2019). This data is used to demonstrate the social impact women have in America and serves as an example of substandard female representation. Unquestionably, there is a national gender issue that has yet to be addressed.

The focus on limitations for this study is to identify ongoing gender issues women face as they advance to senior-level postions. Hence, the decision to interview female art museum directors. When asked about great leadership qualities, Kaywin Feldman, *Duncan and Nivin MacMillan Director and President, Minneapolis Institute of Art*, states, “Putting your ego aside enough that you can really be a champion for your staff and team” (Shapiro, 2015, p. 39). Similarly, Lustgarten writes,

> Women have a tendency to foster a more collegial environment in their companies by employing traditional feminine qualities like nurturing. They
display empathy which engenders loyalty and respect, and play down their own egos to play up the accomplishments of the team. (2008, p. 15)

Conversely, Eagly’s theory explains that people have a tendency to apply stereotypic roles upon themselves, which stem from societal gender roles (1987). This plays out with women in two ways. Normally, they don’t take credit for accomplishments and share the win with the group. Or more negatively, women are forced “to adopt masculine management styles in male-dominated industries,” which is generally motivated by peer-stress (Lustgarten, 2008, p. 14) In either situation, what remains true is that women in leadership are consistently compelled to teeter between authentic leadership or attempt to convince peers, subordinates and boards that they are competent to hold their positions.

**Discrimination.** Women entered into the workforce defined by males and as a result, their expertise in art museums were excluded and undocumented (Lustgarten, 2008; Whitelaw, 2012). Women conformed to these pressures, but it wasn’t until national movements such as Women’s Suffrage, Women’s liberation of 1960s, and the Civil Rights movement made it possible for them to challenge traditional power structures (Kletchka, 2010; Weber, 1994). However, modes of discrimination persist. According to Kendall Taylor, the Museum of Fine Arts Boston constructed a special dining room, which excluded women; even those in leadership roles. In 1994, when the article, *Pioneering Efforts of Early Museum Women* was published, it was speculated that the dining room was still operating under this guise (Taylor, 1994, p. 26).

The *Women in the Workplace 2018* report surveyed over 68,000 employees on workplace experiences. Notably, they found that senior-level men say they don’t observe gender discrimination and only 12 percent claim that they do. Conversely, in the same
study, 43 percent of senior-level women say they have seen gender discrimination (Yee et al., 2018). Ruth Adams writes, “Women in senior roles in large all-male environments struggle to reform them in their own image and cannot avoid, it would seem, attracting a disproportionate amount of attention” (2010, p. 32). These conflicting findings suggest that men harbor different views about women in leadership. In recent years, more women advanced to key middle-management curatorial roles and leaders in art education departments (2019). However, men “dominate museums in critical areas of money and power” (Dawson, 2017, p. 3).

**Bias.** Lustgarten contends there are assumptions, based on patriarchal norms, that assertive and commanding behavior are required to be successful and that leaders must have the “ability to be unemotional and strategic” (Lustgarten, 2008, p. 18). While female art museum directors are considered “high achievers,” they face having to prove they’re capable of leading on all levels of museum administration (Weber, 1994, p. 34). Linda L. Carli and Alice H. Eagly, write in their article, *Gender, Hierarchy, and Leadership: An Introduction*,

> Prejudice can take subtle or blatant forms and can be held by employers, customers, voters, and even by the targets of prejudice themselves. Prejudice against women as leaders and potential leaders would interfere with women’s ability to gain authority and exercise influence. (2001, p. 631)

Therefore, the job for female executives is much more complex. Not only do women face gender-bias, but they are also confronted with internal and external factors that lead to power struggles (Carli & Eagly, 2001; Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006; Lustgarten, 2008). Research suggests that managers and senior leadership must counter
gender-bias behaviors so that employees feel empowered to address the issues (Yee et al., 2018).

Research shows that women are more prepared to lead with open-communication and evade using aggressive behavior to influence decision-making (Dawson, 2017; Lustgarten, 2008). In addition, data demonstrates that gender-bias in the workplace specifically discriminates against women (Bruch, 2011; Carli & Eagly, 2001; Gan et al., 2014). Yet, their leadership style is being called upon to eradicate this issue, which seems contradictory. Predominantly reviewed anthologies, *Gender Perspectives: Essays on Women in Museums* (1994), and *Gender, Sexuality and Museums* (2010) offer solutions on this contradiction. Authors of *Gender Perspectives* determine that raising awareness is an ongoing quest and they believe the museum field has a responsibility to women’s rights (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994). *Gender, Sexuality and Museums* authors believe equilibrium can be achieved with diverse representation and gender balance (Levin, 2010). However, both conclude gender disparity and gender bias are fundamentally connected to unclear job descriptions and expectations (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994; Levin, 2010). The researcher believes fundamental issues are rooted in sexism and strives to assemble a more current day investigation with sitting female art museum directors especially since there has been a downward trend in hiring women in top-tier leadership roles as of 2010.

**Theoretical Framework**

The following theories—social role theory, biosocial theory, role congruity theory, and behavioral mimicry, comprise the theoretical framework for this study. An alignment with the research categories—motivation, career advancement, barriers and
support, aid the study in answering the research questions. In general, literature related to sex and gender differences, feminism, and the topic of leadership authored by social psychologists and/or research studies are cited. This synthesis of literature establishes the basis for this study by bringing forward existing research and implies where future research is needed.

**Social role theory.** Social role theory establishes that gendering stereotypes influence social roles and choices people/groups make about their occupations, which fit within the boundaries of these beliefs. (A. H. Eagly, 1987; Koenig & Eagly, 2014). The expectation, then, is that men and women make decisions about themselves based on social learning. Hence, women might choose a trade because they believe they possess certain skills to perform the job. Eagly writes, “The gender roles and stereotypes held in a society at any one point in time are rooted, not primarily in the society’s cultural tradition, but more importantly in the society’s contemporaneous division of labor between the sexes” (1987, p. 21). Therefore, it makes sense that women would gravitate to museums and cultural work because the labor proficiencies are deemed sex appropriate. Thus, museum work is feminized (Kletchka, 2010).

Furthermore, to test the accuracy of social role theory, Eagly and Koenig, developed a study to understand “social role predictions” and “social groups and their specific roles” (2014, p. 372). Their preset was that substantial changes occurred in women’s roles, but gender stereotypes had not (2014), which would describe gender dissonance in art museum directorships. This claim also explains why women feel compelled to act a particular way in a leadership role that does not impinge upon perceived beliefs about what is appropriately male and appropriately female (Powell,
Therefore, social role theory serves to primarily address women’s motivations to pursue directorships and secondarily on their perceptions of career advancement opportunities.

**Biosocial theory.** As an extension of social role theory, Alice H. Eagly and Wendy Wood, claim that “culture and biology are intertwined” and encourage researchers to adopt their newly proposed research strategy (2013, p. 549). They also state, that “feminists have been wary of biological causes of psychological sex differences, given that these differences may be interpreted as built into human nature and therefore unalterable” (A. Eagly & Wood, 2013, p. 552). Hilde Hein, a professor in the Women’s Studies Research Center at Brandeis University, makes the argument that, “feminist theory does not pretend to universalism: reductive uniformity is not its goal” (2010, p. 54). Equally, these researchers approach the topic of feminist theory under the notion that feminism is not fixed, but dynamic.

The researcher presumes that with recently evolved social conditions such as the #MeToo movement, and Black Lives Matter, both prevalent in 2019-2020, new views of women and diverse leadership would emerge. However, quantitative labor statistics do not indicate a cultural shift is occurring for women in art museum directorships (AAMD, 2018a; Terrell et al., 2019; Westermann et al., 2019). Hein proposes, that in the museum context, “dualism of subject and object is a central feature” making museum practice a perfect environment to shift thinking (2010, p. p. 55). Thus, the researcher intends to apply this theory in a progressive attempt to add to the discourse of social change and gender equality.
**Role congruity theory.** Role congruity theory is based on prejudice against female leaders when women are considered “less favorable than men as potential occupants of leadership roles” and specifically prejudice about leadership behaviors considered “less favorably when it is enacted by a woman” (A. H. Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 573). This very prejudice could explain why MoMA’s female founders shied away from the directorship role and decided upon an inaugural male director. Yet, it is conceivable there were other factors that contributed to their decision. However, the goal of this study is to uncover barriers women faced in their ascent to their directorship role and presumably barriers faced in upward mobility. Furthermore, the museum context is an extremely interesting landscape to explore this theory. Museums are predominantly comprised of a female workforce with the exception of executive leadership in the largest of museums, then, who is prejudicial against these female directors?

Eagly and Carli further contend in their article, *Gender, Hierarchy, and Leadership: An Introduction*, that,

> When women are perceived to be as competent as men, they are often seen as violating prescriptive gender role norms that require women to be communal. As a result, people, especially males, often dislike highly competent women and reject their contributions. (2001, p. 633)

Based on this finding, the researcher asserts that this phenomenon requires more research specific to female art museum directorships with the application of this theory. Simply put, since women have historically been and continue to be instrumental to U.S. art museums in the capacity of founders, patrons, benefactors, employees, volunteers, and trustees, then systemic barriers must be examined and explained. Existing research on
this topic states barriers exist but does not go far enough to uncover the root causes, which this study intends to accomplish.

**Behavioral mimicry.** Of the least available research, behavioral mimicry contends that “visible female leader role models empower women in leadership tasks” (Latu, Mast, Bombari, Lammers, & Hoyt, 2019). The authors of *Empowering Mimicry: Female Leader Role Models Empower Women in Leadership Tasks Through Body Posture Mimicry* base their study on postures and nonverbal behaviors. They suggest that women will model powerful female role models’ behavior versus male dominant leadership qualities (2019). In an effort to grasp this implication and apply it to the art museum context, which is highly patriarchal, more research was conducted on nonverbal tendencies demonstrated by women that have ties to social roles. Alice H. Eagly interpreted a study conducted by psychologist, Hall (1984), about nonverbal behavior. She surmised that women are less restless, smile more often in public, and initiate touch, such as handshakes in a professional setting (1987). Therefore, with a predominant female workforce and a culture based on mentorship (Lott, 2015), in the art museum work environment, the researcher argues that this theory aligns with the research category “support,” and will assist in answering the research questions. In addition, in-depth personal interviews with female art museum directors provide a broad overview of female-to-female workplace relationships.

**Summary**

The literature review spans nearly 200-years, which demonstrates women as central figures in American art and culture. Sections, *Women’s Historical Involvement in Arts and Culture* and *Women’s Historical Roles in American Art Museums* offer
extensive untold stories about women who challenged social limitations to become leaders in their own right and founders of significant art institutions. *Gender Gap in American Art Museums, Female Directorships, and Women’s Leadership Styles and Feminist Theories* synthesizes research on the topic of women in leadership in the art museum context concluding that the advancements made by pioneers didn’t necessarily pave a pathway for women to take the helm but created a place for women to have gainful employment in entry-level and middle-management positions. The final section, *Theoretical Framework*, outlines the researcher’s applicability of feminist theories to conduct this study and to answer the research questions. Overall, the literature review identified major themes on this topic using a synthesis matrix (Appendix A) and isolated gaps in the research.

**Themes**

Structurally, the researcher announced themes in each section and did further analysis, however cumulative key findings, historically and present day, are: a) women’s involvement in art and culture serves as a vehicle to explore self-worth and social justice; b) within the museum context women are able to exercise their inherent leadership qualities that are fitting to make a positive impact on society; c) the fulfillment women gain from working in art museums has a limit, which is controlled by discrimination because of their sex. Therefore, women are equipped to drive, but are confined to passengers. Why? The enormity of women’s contributions to American art museums overshadows their leadership roles today.
**Gaps**

This topic is well researched in areas of barriers, which are documented as early as the 1800s and prevalent today in 2000s. Kathryn Loraine Dawson interviewed female directors specific to barriers seeking input on strategies to overcome them (2017).

*Playing The Game: Understanding the Gender Gap in Art Museum Directorships*, by Dawson is a good start. However, the study does not include motivation, career advancement and support, which are essential parts of the research questions that this study intends to explore. Additionally, official organizations annually report on art museum staff demographics (AAMD, 2018), which demonstrate women are kept out of top-tier directorship roles. However, there is no true account for why women stay in art museums when their upward trajectory is capped. Furthermore, the following theories—social role theory, biosocial theory, role congruity theory, and behavioral mimicry offer excellent data on women in leadership and gender discrimination, however not specific to the art museum context. Therefore the researcher contends to interview these few women who broke the glass ceiling to offer a complete view of their experiences.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter outlines the methodology used to ascertain experiences from female art museum directors related to motivation, career advancement, barriers and support as a way to understand the inequities that still exist decades later. Chapter III is comprised of specific sections necessary to complete this study. Beginning with the purpose statement and research questions, subsequent sections include research design, population, sampling frame and procedures to determine the sample. Instrumentation follows the preceding sections with a thorough explanation of how the research was collected and analyzed. Then, limitations and participant protections are described. The final section summarizes and synthesizes the methodology.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine and describe the career pathways of female art museum directors in the United States.

Research Questions

1. Motivation- What factors motivated female art museum directors to choose their career path?

2. Career Advancement- What factors contributed to the career advancement of women to become art museum directors?

3. Barriers- What barriers did women face in their journey to become art museum directors and how did they overcome them?

4. Support- What type of support did women have in their journey to become an art museum director?
Research Design

Creswell defines qualitative research as “exploring a problem and developing a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon” (2012, p. 16). General characteristics of a qualitative study include the natural setting where the phenomena exist, direct data collection from the source, and narrative descriptions from multiple sources of data (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The key qualitative components this study encompasses are a holistic explanation and a complex understanding of the problem that is based on participant perspectives (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Therefore, the researcher determined that a phenomenological study was the best methodology, which aims to gain a deeper understanding of shared lived experiences (Patton, 2015). When used as a framework, participants describe their experience through their senses and what they know to be true for them whether real or imagined (Patton, 2015).

Furthermore, Patton describes the philosophical origin of phenomenology as a unique experience for each person or a group of people (2015). Phenomenological studies transform lived experiences into narratives that describe the essence of the situation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Therefore, the researcher must “assume a commonality” exists (Patton, 2015, p. 117). The main objective of this study was to understand career experiences of female art museum directors who find themselves in the rare capacity of top-tier leadership positions. To accomplish this task, the researcher used a “method of bracketing” to search for commonalities, which is characteristic of a phenomenological study (Patton, 2015, p. 117). Bracketing suspends prejudgments

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researchers might have entering into data collection and focuses on how individuals experience their situation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Four categories, outlined in the research questions: a) motivation; b) career advancement; c) barriers; and d) support, sanctioned participants within the realm of these phenomena and provided the researcher opportunity to experience the phenomenon as directly as possible through in-depth interviews. The researcher selected these categories based on gaps in research identified in Chapter II. Some studies conclude that barriers exist, however none explain motivation, career advancement or support integral to capturing participant perspectives and the consciousness of their human experience (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Moreover, the phenomenological framework was the best methodology for this study because data drawn from extensive interviews requires the researcher to capture first-hand accounts and allows for “reflection and analysis” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 24). Then, the data analysis process becomes a composite of descriptions about the essence coupled with the researcher’s ability to bracket experiential information characteristic of a phenomenological study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015).

**Population**

Population is defined as, “The total group to which results can be generated” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 129). The population for this study was female art museum directors. According to the *Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD)* website, there are a total of 227 active members comprised of both men and women (2020). Membership eligibility is defined by “persons who serve as directors of art
museums in the United States, Canada and Mexico” (AAMD, 2020). AAMD defines directors as, “an officer who has ultimate responsibility for the works of art owned by or lent to the museum” (2020). Furthermore, eligibility is conditionally based on professional qualifications (AAMD, 2020). At the time of this study, AAMD reported 111 female art museum directors in the United States.

**Sampling Frame**

A sampling frame, also termed target population, alleviates time and cost constraints of large-scale studies and are drawn from overall populations based on “delimiting variables” such as demographic characteristics (McMillan and Schumacher, p.129). For this study, the delimitations set by the researcher included: a) female art museum directors in the United States; b) women who worked as museum directors for five years or more; c) museums in states that receive the highest private funding as per the AAMD report, *Art Museums by the Numbers 2018*; and d) organizations with annual operating budgets over $10 million dollars. Based on these delimitations, the target population totaled 22. In an effort to collect equitable national representation, the researcher grouped states meeting the criteria into regional areas: a) West - CA and TX; b) Mid-west - IL and OH; c) Mid-Atlantic - DC and PA; and d) East - NY and MA (Figure 2). In addition, the researcher reviewed the 2019 *Gender Parity Index*, and according to their study, none of the selected states are within ten points of parity (2019).
The sample is defined as, “a subgroup of the target population that the researcher plans to study for the purpose of making generalizations” (Creswell, 2012, p. 627). Therefore, the sample is the group from which data was collected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In general, qualitative studies have smaller samples than quantitative studies due to data collection methodologies (Patten, 2012). Additionally, Michael Quinn Patton writes, “For many audiences, random sampling, even if small samples, will substantially increase the credibility of the results” (2015, p. 286). Therefore, by means of the sampling frame intended to achieve equitable national representation, Figure 3 illustrates a maximum 50% capture rate to select between eight to eleven female art museum directors as the sample for this study.
Sample Selection

The sample selection process was initiated by working from the list of 22 female art museum directors meeting the sampling frame criteria. In this study, geography, access, and time determined a purposeful sampling strategy. Purposeful sampling is a qualitative sampling strategy in which the researcher intentionally selects information-rich participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). It is also a manageable process that is less costly and typically has a high participation rate (Creswell, 2012; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

The researcher contacted all 22 female art museum directors in writing. The transmittal letter included a brief overview to solicit their interest in participating in the study and requested a response within 2 weeks (Appendix F). The researcher set the goal of meeting a maximum of 50% positive response rate from each region to ultimately conduct eight to eleven interviews nationwide. Participants were selected by first response and agreement to be interviewed. After 50% representation was met, the
researcher closed each region to not skew the intended equitable representation of the phenomenon.

Upon agreement, prior to interviews, the researcher distributed Brandman University’s Participant Bill of Rights to those participants who confirmed their desire to contribute to the study (Appendix E). The researcher also followed the necessary steps according to Brandman University’s Institutional Review Board ensuring ethical principles and respect for individuals (2020). Informed consent was obtained. Then, interviews were scheduled during a mutually agreed upon time. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and location, interviews were scheduled via video conference and/or telephone based on participant preference.

**Instrumentation**

In order to capture vital evidence of shared experiences, in-depth interviews were conducted by following a scripted interview guide (Appendix B). Patton suggests that phenomenological studies are “not introspective, but retrospective” (Patton, 2015, p. 116). To accomplish a true account of commonalities that adequately reveal a human understanding of the phenomenon, a rigorous method of bracketing was applied. The bracketing methodology used involves open-ended questions in four specific categories: a) motivation; b) career advancement; c) barriers; and d) support. Questions were asked in sequential order before moving to the next subject area, thus, limiting any personal or theoretical knowledge by the interviewer (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, questions were developed for a conversational approach intended to illicit personal experiences of the participants.
In addition to bracketing, the researcher developed a matrix to align research questions with the theoretical frameworks defined in Chapter I (Table 5).

**Table 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Categories</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Social-Role Theory of Sex-Differences</th>
<th>Theoretical Framework(s)</th>
<th>Behavioral Mimicry Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>What factors motivated female art museum directors to choose their career path?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Advancement</td>
<td>What factors contributed to the career advancement of women to become art museum directors?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>What barriers did women face in their journey to become art museum directors and how did they overcome them?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>What type of support did women have in their journey to become an art museum director?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the matrix, each research question category has a minimum of two frameworks for analysis. This methodology considers a number of factors to understand the phenomena: a) stereotypes placed on women; b) evolutionary social conditions to overcome limitations; c) workplace expectations that women face; and d) behaviors women model to be successful.

The instrument, a scripted interview guide, is a valuable tool that serves as a checklist during interviews (Patton, 2015). The intended purpose and advantage of using an interview guide is that it prepares the researcher with carefully crafted questions to uncover important topics relevant to answering the research questions (Patton, 2015). The interview questions are semi-structured, open-ended questions worded in a sequence that is followed with each participant (Patton, 2015). In advance of interviews, the instrument was sent to a panel of experts for review. The panel was comprised of three Brandman University faculty who contributed feedback and suggestions to improve the legitimacy of the interview guide.
Interviews took place online via video conferencing and as a secondary option by phone. This decision was made based on the nationwide COVID-19 Shelter-in-Place regulations, and to overcome geographic distances. Standardizing this practice also allowed for recording interview sessions that could easily be transcribed. Following the interviews, transcriptions were sent to each interviewee for review to ensure accuracy and to confirm a true account of their experience was captured. An agreed upon deadline was discussed between the participant and the researcher with the caveat that no returned edits would be considered acceptable content as is.

**Researcher as the Instrument**

Another instrument to consider is the researcher, which can present some disadvantages. In a phenomenological study, no person can truly reflect on another’s lived experience opening up issues of interpretation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). Safeguards were implemented to limit personal bias when conducting this research, which included obtaining multiple perspectives, collecting other forms of data units to counter bias, and a qualitative alignment table. A qualitative alignment table ensures that each interview question was asked and answered, which leads to rich data that is focused on the research questions (Appendix G). Additionally, sustaining an observer perspective during the interview sessions was equally important to avoid intuitive assumptions (Mehra, B., 2002). Therefore, the researcher had no prior affiliation with the interviewees or their organizations, positioning the researcher as a neutral outsider to the museum context.
Validity and Reliability

Qualitative research is profoundly complex and requires much self-awareness from the researcher to extract usable and valid results. Validity and reliability are necessary components to ensure quality of the instrument and data being collected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). Both serve significant purposes in qualitative studies.

Validity

Validity of a qualitative study is defined as, “the degree of congruence between the explanations of the phenomena and the realities of the world” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 330). The validity of the instrument was measured by implementing two primary methods: a) the use of an expert panel; and b) field testing. An expert panel was used to review the interview guide for content validity and sound instrumentation construction. Three Brandman faculty provided feedback on the instrument (Appendix B). Their feedback and suggestions were used to refine the instrument and to ensure alignment with the research questions.

Field testing is an opportunity for preliminary data analysis to compare results and to establish rationale for refining questions that improve the instrument (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). For this study, the process included interviewing a female art museum director with over 40 years of experience in large and small-scale museums. An expert from the panel participated as an observer. The field test was conducted via video conferencing and lasted the same duration intended for all interviews. Following the interview, the participant was asked to provide feedback with five follow-up questions (Appendix C). In addition, the panel expert / observer and the
researcher discussed the interview. Opportunities to improve the overall process was the objective by way of seven guiding questions (Appendix D).

The researcher approached this study with the aim of establishing interpersonal validity as female-interviewer-to-female-interviewee by way of creating positive, nonjudgmental conditions that encourage a collaborative inquiry process (Kirkhart, 1995; Patton, 2015). At the close of the fieldwork portion, the researcher re-engaged with participants during the evaluation process to determine if further inquiry was needed to fulfill answering the research questions.

In addition, multimethod strategies were used to enhance the validity of this study; these included: a) triangulation of data during the collection and analysis processes; b) participant language verbatim; and c) participant review (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). Triangulation of sources to answer the research questions were a combination of interviews and artifacts. Observations were a rare option due to COVID-19 restrictions and the fact that many museums proposed closure through 2020. Literal verbatim statements made by the participants were obtained from Zoom transcriptions and applied in the data coding process. Participant review of the transcriptions took place post-interviews to check for accuracy and understanding of their lived experience.

Reliability

Reliability of a qualitative study is based on the consistency an instrument provides relevant results (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). A reliable study enhances the quality and trustworthiness of the data being collected. Because this study was purely a qualitative investigation, participant names were changed to numeric
titles and intercoder reliability was utilized demonstrating the instrument’s capacity to yield similar experiences. Intercoder reliability is an agreement in which two independent coders evaluate the same set of data and reach similar conclusions (Lombard, M., Snyder-Duch, J., & Campanella Bracken, C., 2004). The process also safeguards the likelihood that the findings will resonate with other readers and coders (Lombard et al., 2004). Therefore, this intersubjective collaborative method interlocks with the researcher’s intent to employ interpersonal validity.

Data Collection

For a phenomenological study, units of analysis include interviews, observations and review of documents. For the purposes of this study, in-depth interviews primarily garnered the data necessary to examine shared experiences in which participants describe how they perceive, remember, and/or judge a phenomenon (Patten, 2012; Patton, 2015).

As a preliminary step, before conducting in-depth interviews, a list of museums by state that receive the highest level of private funding was compiled from the report, Art Museums By The Numbers 2018, (AAMD, 2018). From this data set, regional examinations of museums in New York, California, Texas, Massachusetts, District of Columbia, Illinois, Pennsylvania and Ohio narrowed locations where female art museums directors were employed. This list was, then, compared to a 2017 report, The Ongoing Gender Gap in Art Museum Directorships, which isolated gender percentages by museum type (Sterling, 2019). A shorter list of female art museum directors formed, which was extrapolated from the AAMD membership list (2020) available on the website leading to the target population of 22 female art museum directors meeting criteria set by the researcher. Initial communication was made by email soliciting their participation.
through publicly available information on AAMD’s website and institutional websites (Appendix F).

**Interviews**

Qualitative studies rely predominantly on open-ended, face-to-face interviews that yield “direct quotations” from participants about their experiences (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 14). For this study, eight participants agreed to be interviewed via video conferencing instead of in-person interviews following COVID-19 guidelines. The online application, Zoom, made the data collection process seamless because interviews were recorded. The recordings were stored and not shared to protect the rights of the participants.

As a regulatory step, the researcher followed Brandman University’s Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) requirements. Upon approval, participants were informed of their Bill of Rights (Appendix E) as part of the informed consent process. Additionally, prior to the interviews being conducted, interview questions were emailed in advance to participants in an effort to provide them time for consideration and to generate rich information during each interview.

At the beginning of the interviews, the researcher reminded participants about the purpose of the study and that the interview would be recorded. At the start of each recorded interview, the consent clause was read and agreed upon, at which point the interview commenced. To maintain confidentiality, their names and institutional titles were not recorded nor used anywhere in the study. Lastly, participants were informed they could stop the interview at any time or may refuse to answer any of the interview questions.
Interview questions were asked in sequential order following the instrument and progressed through each research category: a) motivation; b) career advancement; c) barriers; and d) support. This study utilized semi-structured, open-ended questions with four interview questions specific to each category. Before advancing from category to category, all questions were asked maintaining the reliability of the instrument to produce similar results. In addition, consistent time allocated for interviews was 60-90 minutes in length. Before concluding each interview, participants were asked to share any information that they believed was not covered in the interview, providing the researcher with more content to code as direct quotes.

Following each interview, audio files, not video, were transcribed by a third-party service for efficiency. In addition, a numeric naming convention was used to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. Transcriptions were vetted with each participant to obtain sign-off on their responses to interview questions and to ensure accuracy. The researcher set a deadline to return edits in order for the study to progress in a timely manner and to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument.

Artifacts

A secondary unit of analysis included artifacts that served to triangulate the findings drawn from interviews. Artifacts are defined as documents, meeting minutes, reports or objects collected as data and research findings (Creswell, 2012; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Specific to this study, the artifacts included: a) staff demographics; b) organizational charts; and c) job descriptions, which were obtained from open source websites and/or requested from and provided by participants.
Observations

Observations are defined as detailed descriptions obtained from fieldwork that typically are captured in the environment of the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Due to COVID-19, many museums were closed, which limited this activity significantly. However, observations were conducted virtually, and pre-recorded materials were obtained from participating institutions. Because museum culture is traditionally based on mentorship that leads to the transference of wisdom (Glaser & Zenetou, 1994; Shapiro, 2015), it was important to explore this form of data collection. Therefore, professional development information and mentorship program observations were used to support findings where available.

Data Analysis

Qualitative inquiry occurs with real people, usually in their context, who reveal their beliefs to the researcher. As a matter of scientific integrity, it is imperative that their stories retain accuracy and in their own words (Patton, 2015). As a safeguard, to enhance validity of the study, the researcher also employed participant language verbatim in the coding process. Participant words and quotes from the interviews were used to develop themes mitigating personal interpretation and reducing bias. (Patton, 2015). NVivo, an electronic qualitative data analysis software, was used to complete the coding process. While coding and analysis are not synonymous (Basit, 2003), NVivo is especially critical during the segmentation of field data. The application outputs an electronic report that measures frequency counts and sources aiding researchers in the analysis.

Triangulation of artifacts and virtual observations gathered from participant art museums were also specific to the research categories motivation, career advancement,
barriers and support. These artifacts triangulated the findings and were entered into the coding process, which was a significant step to synthesizing the raw data and allocating meaning (Basit, 2003). Themes were aligned with research questions and followed the method of bracketing to suspend any preconceived notions on the part of the researcher. Findings were also entered into NVivo and output was a series of frequency tables presented in Chapter IV.

Additionally, the data analysis included the examination of a second researcher to measure intercoder reliability. Coder and researcher results were compared and emergent themes with the highest frequencies were determined to be the most valid. As a precaution, the most conscious approach to address qualitative research bias for this study was to acknowledge it throughout the process and to monitor subjectivity during the analysis (Mehra, B., 2002). In doing so, the data analysis process was iterative and comparative leading to a comprehensive scientific understanding of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015).

**Limitations**

Limitations are defined as restrictions outside of the researcher’s control (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). In the case of this study, there were many unknowns in the midst of the pandemic and COVID-19 restrictions. Specific limitations as a result of the ever-changing COVID-19 pandemic world included: a) time; b) access; and c) resources.

**Time**

In response to COVID-19 regulations and social distancing, many museums announced closures through 2020. The majority turned to online formats and many
retreated to contemplate alternative methods to re-engage with the public in 2021. Time, in the case of this study, would transpire as long waiting periods between interviews and awaiting museum re-openings.

**Access**

Also, in response to COVID-19, all interviews were conducted via video conferencing using Zoom. Therefore, a key characteristic of a phenomenological study, to observe the participant in their world, was compromised to some degree. While video conferencing is suitable, presence and non-verbal cues have a greater likelihood of being missed in a video-conferencing environment (Hauber, J., 2008).

**Resources**

At the time of the study, millions of Americans had been laid-off, furloughed, or were undergoing work-place reorganizations with salary reductions. As of May 2020, the United States unemployment rate, reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, was 13.3% (BLS, 2020). As a result of this turmoil, many museums reallocated their resources. The COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted personnel, finances and facilities putting a strain on energy to participate in a phenomenological study. Thus, the researcher developed creative options to engage with limited means on all sides.

**Summary**

Chapter III outlines the research methodologies developed for this phenomenological study. Qualitative units of analysis were narrowed to in-depth interviews following a structured interview guide, and artifacts to triangulate the data. Observations, while rare, were comprised of media files when available from participant organizations. Using a method of bracketing to formulate interview questions reduced
personal or past knowledge the researcher possessed. Intercoder reliability was integral during data analysis, which enhanced the reliability of the study. In addition, outlined in this chapter were specifics surrounding population, sampling methods, and limitations.
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION AND FINDINGS

Chapter IV details information captured from this phenomenological study. The presentation of information recaps the purpose statement, research questions and thoroughly explains data collection procedures. The researcher examines data organized by research question categories, research questions, and focuses on themes that emerged from in-depth interviews with female art museum directors in the United States. The data is summarized through narrative analyses, which is characteristic of qualitative methodologies (Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Furthermore, tables and figures support findings that answer the research questions (Roberts, 2010).

Overview

The goal was to comprehensively examine lived experiences of female art museum directors in the following categories: a) motivation; b) career advancement; c) barriers; and d) support. According to Chapter II, the literature demonstrates that barriers are a systemic issue and annual staff demographic data provided by the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) corroborates this claim. Interviews with eight sitting female art museums directors covers all four categories, revealing their journey to top-tier leadership positions defying gender dissonance in the art museum context.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine and describe the career pathways of female art museum directors in the United States.

Research Questions

1. **Motivation**-What factors motivated female art museum directors to choose their career path?
2. **Career Advancement**- What factors contributed to the career advancement of women to become art museum directors?

3. **Barriers**- What barriers did women face in their journey to become art museum directors and how did they overcome them?

4. **Support**- What type of support did women have in their journey to become an art museum director?

**Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures**

Consistent with a phenomenological framework, the primary method for data collection was in-depth interviews to obtain information from participants about their shared experiences (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). The researcher designed and followed a semi-structured interview guide with topics segmented by research categories to examine how participants perceived, remembered and/or judged the phenomenon (Patten, 2012; Patton, 2015).

Prior to conducting interviews, the researcher received formal approval from Brandman University’s Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) to ensure safeguarding the rights and welfare of the participants. In addition, participants received the following documents in advance: a) Brandman Participant Bill of Rights; b) Informed Consent; and c) video recording release form. Upon agreement, interview questions were emailed with ample time for participants to consider their responses and/or pose clarifying questions.

Interviews were scheduled during October 2020 through December 2020 when COVID-19 was surging nationwide. Due to this unprecedented pandemic, all interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom, a video conferencing platform. Eight interviews were scheduled for one-hour and averaged a total of 54-minutes in length. After each interview, the researcher transcribed the audio files using NVivo, a robust qualitative data
analysis software. Participant names were changed to numerical ciphers and institutional references were removed. Furthermore, to ensure accuracy, the researcher sent each transcription to the corresponding participant for review. After an agreed upon time, the transcriptions were considered final and then coded for emergent themes in NVivo.

**Triangulation of Artifacts and Observations**

According to Creswell, examining different data sources to triangulate information adds to the validity of the study (2014). Significant time was dedicated to collecting and coding artifacts and virtual observations. Artifacts were collected from open-source websites such as institutions similar in mission, scale and organizational structure. Articles from arts and cultural news outlets were skimmed for corroborating evidence fitting the four research categories. In light of COVID-19, all observations were conducted virtually. Relevant content captured on websites and social media platforms were either previously recorded or live on public platforms. A total of 15 artifacts and observations were grouped according to the research categories (Table 6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artifacts and Observations</th>
<th>Source (N = 15)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Category</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Advancement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They experienced</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How they overcame them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

98
Population

At the time of this study, there were 111 female art museum directors in the United States that are defined as, “an officer who has the ultimate responsibility for the works of art owned by or lent to the museum” (AAMD, 2020). Participants selected for the study were chosen from states where museums receive the highest private funding, which is consistent with the research problem that museums with higher operating budgets reveal the most prevalent gender disparity. According to the AAMD, in the study, *Art Museums by the Numbers* (2018), the states identified were NY, CA, TX, MA, DC, IL, PA and OH. Therefore, the population for this study was 57 female art museums directors.

Sample

To establish a sample for this study, the researcher applied the following sampling criteria in subsequent order to target a subgroup from the population: a) female art museum directors with at least five years of directorship experience; and b) private, non-profit art museums with operating budgets over $10 million. As a result, 22 female art museums directors were identified meeting the criteria in the selected populous states home to prestigious museums. Then, the sample list of participants was grouped by region: a) West—CA and TX; b) Midwest—IL and OH; c) Mid-Atlantic—DC and PA; and d) East—NY and MA.

Demographic Data

The researcher made every effort to capture equitable regional representation in the aforementioned states. Therefore, once 50% participation rate was regionally met, the area was closed, and recruitment continued in other regions until a minimum of eight
participants were interviewed nationwide. Throughout the study, confidentiality was paramount and potentially identifying information was omitted. *Sample Participant Demographics* (Table 7), lists regions, states per region, number of participants per region, and to maintain confidentiality, the last two columns average years of executive directorship experience and average museum operating budget to further protect the identity of the participants.

**Table 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>State</th>
<th># of participants interviewed per region</th>
<th># of years executive director exp. (mean)</th>
<th>museum $ operating budget (mean)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>OH</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>DC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>DC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>DC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While not all respondents agreed to be interviewed, it is noteworthy that the response rate of 64% was achieved, which indicates the importance of this study and possible contributions to the field. Of the 22 female art museums directors solicited for participation, 14 responded positively to the study. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, pressing work-related responsibilities prevented full participation of respondents. In
addition, due to COVID-19, two museum’s budgets fell below $10 million as a result of staff layoffs, reorganization and loss of revenue during closures to the public.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The four research questions were examined through qualitative methodologies. Using a scripted interview guide with 16-semi-structured interview questions, the researcher collected data from eight participants in areas of: a) motivation; b) career advancement; c) barriers and d) support. In addition, each interview question followed the theoretical framework logic of the following theories: a) social role theory; b) biosocial theory; c) role congruity theory; and d) behavioral mimicry. Over 7-hours of recorded interviews were transcribed and analyzed for emergent themes and coded according to corresponding research categories and research questions. Intercoder reliability was utilized to ensure reliability of the instrument.

Presentation of the data includes tables and figures followed by narrative examinations with unattributed quotes by participants in their own words, as appropriate, to examine this very personal account of the phenomenon. The researcher examined findings using matrix coding in NVivo based on references consistent with the research categories. Each research category was analyzed for emergent themes, which revealed a consistent correlation between high frequency counts and high percent of participants, however some notable findings with high percent of participants drew lower frequency counts. Therefore, the researcher applied the following steps to group findings by major and minor themes: a) major themes = top three themes with highest frequency counts; and b) minor themes = next level frequency counts with >50% of participants.
Intercoder Reliability

After thoroughly analyzing the data and to access reliability, the researcher asked a peer reviewer proficient with qualitative research to ensure accuracy of the coding and to safeguard against bias. A reliable qualitative study is based on consistency of the instrument (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). Therefore, the researcher tested reliability on 25% of interview data with the reviewer. Creswell and Poth suggest that an 80% agreement rate is required for “good qualitative reliability” (2015, p. 202). For this study, the reliability met the threshold with an 82% agreement rate.

Motivation and Research Question 1

The research question for research category Motivation was, “What factors motivated female art museum directors to choose their career path?” Four interview questions were asked of eight participants eliciting 10 themes (Table 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Category: Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Research Question 1: What factors motivated female art museum directors to choose their career path?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation Themes /Codes</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Sources (N = 8)</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived women were welcomed in the field</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed the museum environment and working with the public</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had some degree of previous success in the field</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curated small independent art exhibitions</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked in the museum environment</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to work with artists</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep interest in art history and objects</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interned or volunteered while in college</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sought financial independence</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More interested in institutions than making art</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred museum environment rather than academia</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trained as an artist</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Type I = Interview_
Motivation Major Themes

Motivation Major Theme 1

The top-tier theme, *Perceived women were welcomed in the field*, pulled the highest frequency count of 26 and was expressed by 100% of participants. The main thrust behind this theme stemmed from motivating factors and considers if examples of female directors inspired women to choose their career path. Many believed seeing other women working in art museums was a draw, however few acknowledged having direct contact with female art museums directors. In fact, many respondents reported that they observed women in leadership from afar. Two respondents state similar influences, “She was like a distant mentor in the sense of just knowing that she led an organization that I admired enormously” and “I knew who she was and that she had this job. It was never an interaction with her that impacted me. It was just knowing something was possible.”

Furthermore, respondents believe women are well suited for museum work and therefore belong in the field, as one respondent indicated, “The word curator means ‘take care of’ and that is what women are biologically wired to do.” In addition, a respondent discussed her perception early in her career, indicating, “It was very easy to see that women could make headway in the art museum if they were permitted to apply their skills.” While another respondent suggests women’s future in the field, as “If you can see people like you in certain positions, I think that in a way, it is an easier pathway.”

These accounts in which participants were drawn to museum work because they were inspired by distant role models is consistent with this study’s theoretical framework. Behavioral Mimicry Theory also synonymously called Empowering Mimicry suggests, “visible female role models in leadership may offer the opportunity for modeling
empowering behaviors in women faced with leadership challenges” specifically in “male-typical domains” (Latu, Mast, Bombari, Lammers, & Hoyt, 2019, p. 11).

**Motivation Major Theme 2**

The second prominent theme, also expressed by 100% of participants, *Enjoyed the museum environment and working with the public*, narrowly fell behind the top-tier theme by -3 with a total of 23 frequency count. Collectively, participants expressed following their intuition and desire to be in the art museum field, “I felt like it was an area that I was comfortable in and where I had a real deep interest and a passion” and “It wasn't so much of a career path or choice as it was knowing the world I wanted to be in and however that figured itself out.” Once, in the field, a respondent sums up her passion, “I loved being in a museum. I mean, the idea of going to work anywhere else” was not an option.

Respectively, respondents valued the relationship between art and the public envisioning their role as balancing this intersection. “The idea of how the arts integrate into everyday life was something that I was exposed to really young” and “I became interested in what museums were because I didn't see people like me in them.”

Moreover, two participants were motivated by the challenge of educating the public about art and meaning. One states, “I liked the challenge of working with objects and researching objects and explaining objects to the public.” While another explains how she connected with her passion for working in art museums as, “Art, just at a particular time when I was in college, seemed foreign to a lot of people. It became more of a challenge to help people understand and appreciate fine art.”
While Theme 2 findings demonstrate all participants were motivated by their passion, intuition and personal choice, researchers, Koenig and Eagly, suggest that occupational roles are tied to gender stereotypes and social role theory (2014). Their study asserts that “beliefs about groups’ typical occupational roles proved to be generally accurate when evaluated in relation to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics” (Koenig & Eagly, 2014, p. 371). Therefore, their theory proposes that women are socially conditioned to inherit their roles following a long lineage dating back to the early 1900s when women were regarded as “custodians of culture” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 112).

**Motivation Major Theme 3**

Further analysis of the data resulted in an aggregate theme associated with the first research question in which participants, *Had some degree of previous success in the field*. This takes into account women’s motivation to pursue a career path in art museums prior to working full-time in the field and/or seeking a directorship position. Two sub-themes emerged.

*Curated small independent art exhibitions* was expressed by 75% of the participants. Four of the participants had curated independent art exhibitions either in small non-profit organizations, cultural institutions and/or educational environments. Their practical experience and expertise in a variety of art genres led to their decision to pursue working in art museums. Two of the six participants that curated exhibitions did so in artist-run initiatives where they also took on administrative duties prior to becoming directors of art museums.

*Worked in the museum environment* was conveyed by 25% of the total interviewed that had previous success in the field. Although these participants did not
take the curatorial route, they had held positions in other capacities and various museum departments prior to exploring avenues toward directorships.

Consequently, 100% of participants explored opportunities to work in the creative field informally where opportunities presented outlets to support artists’ careers and the exposure of art in the public domain. These motivations are consistent with Eagly’s theory associated with the Female Gender Role, in which women embody a “helping behavior” and “communal qualities” where women’s contributions are “forms of personal service, and, more generally, to facilitate the progress of others toward their goals” (1987, p. 44).

**Motivation Minor Themes**

Based on the sifting criteria for minor themes, two emerged with greater than four participants, an agreement range of 63% - 75%, and a frequency count of 10 and 11. The minor themes are examined though narrative analysis.

**Motivation Minor Theme 1**

Participants shared personal accounts of Minor Theme 1 *Deep interest in art history and objects* and how this motivated them to explore their passion for art. For some, it began during childhood. One explained, “I grew up in a household that was all about research and papers and objects and artifacts.” Another recalled how she interpreted objects at an early age, stating, “There was also a permanence to objects that I really appreciated. The fact that objects were just waiting to tell the story of people at different times.”

Other participants conveyed connecting their love for art and art history with museums. One described what she felt when visiting museums as,
I went to see every museum I could see and was very, very interested in art history. I started in art museums because I loved the art. I started in museums because I love the physical things. I loved the experience of being literally in front of a work of art.

Another respondent described how museums functioned in her hometown and what she believed motivated her to work in contemporary art. She stated,

I really loved art and the study of art history. There weren't what I would describe as substantial historical collections. So it made some degree of sense to go into contemporary art. It was museums that were those main places where art was shown.

**Motivation Minor Theme 2**

Minor Theme 2 *Interned or volunteered while in college* was conveyed by the majority of participants, which for many, was their gateway into employment at art museums. One respondent, however, wasn’t considering interning as a career trajectory, indicating, “I decided to start volunteering and interning. Let's just say it was a curiosity because I didn't even really know there was a career in that, if you want to know. It wasn't that apparent at the time.”

Two respondents explained that they were grant funded, which allowed them to work in major museums. One stated, “I started as an arts council trainee in exhibitions” and the other as, “an NEA funded graduate level intern.” Meanwhile, another respondent was looking to support herself while in college. She described,

I was in graduate school at the time. I had finished my coursework and my examinations, and I was beginning work on a dissertation. But I had to work to
support myself, so I took on other projects that came up at the time such as working on two exhibitions.

Analysis and assessment of these minor themes corroborates information explored in Chapter II, in which the literature points to similar motivations surrounding the decorative arts movement. According to Macleod, women sought individual expression around ornate objects, colleges catered to teaching women creative skills, and as a result, women became financially independent (2008). Therefore, beginning in the 19th century, the notion of women as caretakers of collections and managers of art exhibitions paved pathways for career opportunities that is ever-present today.

**Career Motivation and Research Question 2**

The research question associated with Career Advancement specifies circumstances surrounding women as they sought directorships, “What factors contributed to the career advancement of women to become art museum directors?” Four interview questions were asked of all eight participants eliciting nine themes. Responses in this category were more evenly distributed among the participants (Table 9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Category: Career Advancement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Research Question 2:** What factors contributed to the career advancement of women to become art museum directors?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Advancement Themes / Codes</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Sources (N = 8)</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had vision to bring change to the institution and to the field</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessed ambition and leadership qualities</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received peer encouragement</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had supportive board chair and mentorship</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced at every rung and transitioned to directorship</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruited by headhunter for position</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended leadership training and professional development</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointed to improve institutional issues</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for job satisfaction and financial stability</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Type l = interview*
Career Advancement Major Themes

Career Advancement Major Theme 1

The top-tier theme with a frequency count of 29 and 88% of respondents identified that they, *Had vision to bring change to the institution and to the field* during their advancement to directorships. For some, vision and the notion of institutionality served as motivation to work in art museums, however many believe their ability to articulate their vision prepared them for their directorships and earned them the endorsement of the hiring panel. Participants described the following scenarios surrounding their directorship appointment, “They chose somebody with a vision rather than somebody who is going to continue the status quo” and “They wanted me to move the needle, but not the mission, and to put a contemporary visual and contextual spin on what they were already doing.”

Other respondents were clear that factors leading to their career advancement were their ability to bring change. One indicated, “There were other ways of doing things that I thought about that no one else particularly cared to think about” and “I started a campaign to get them to be more ambitious.” Another respondent expressed the importance of success as a thought-leader by indicating, “I knew I could make it better. It was impossible to fail” and “I was assured of a certain amount of success. When you are a new director, I think that does matter.”

Career Advancement Major Theme 2

Closely related to the Theme 1, Theme 2 emerged with a frequency count of 22 and 63% of respondents stating factors leading to their career advancement, which were that they *Possessed ambition and leadership qualities*. One respondent poignantly
described her experience and objective for career advancement as, “I looked around, and I saw, Who are the people who are actually running the museum? Well, most of them know how to raise money and that's actually really important. I chose to learn development by choosing a mentor.” While another respondent shared her ambition early in her career and advice she received from a supervisor as, “Even though I didn't have the right qualifications to necessarily get straight into it, she loved the approach that I would take and encouraged me to do it. So, I grew wings a lot quicker.”

Similarly, other respondents described their leadership qualities as assets to their career advancement and how it aided them in their transition from curator to director. “The transition from being a curator to director, you kind of have more latitude. That was what I was more interested in.” While another respondent described how she embraced her capacity for leading an institution as, “My personality fits a director's personality more than a curator's personality. I was interested in taking an institution and making it something that I thought institutions should be.”

Both preceding themes related to career advancement, Theme 1, Had vision to bring change to the institution and to the field, and Theme 2, Possessed ambition and leadership qualities have direct correlations to Biosocial Theory. Eagly and Woods contend that biosocial theory is evolutionary and that humans evolve “to the demands of the societies in which they live” (2013, p. 553). Furthermore, they conclude, “Our theory is feminist in its depiction of human behavior as situated within social contexts and its recognition of the human capacity for social change, including change toward gender equality” (A. Eagly & Wood, 2013, p. 554). Thus meaning, women’s evolution to directorships is rightly justified and natural.
Career Advancement Major Theme 3

Further analysis revealed the next top theme, Received peer encouragement, with 100% agreement from all respondents and a frequency count of 20. Examples of participant experiences exemplify a wide array of encouragement interviewees received in their journey to directorships. Two participants received direct suggestions to pursue new positions. One stated, “A male colleague said, ‘You need to do more. You need to go to another museum. The field needs you.’” Another described, “I can't remember exactly even how I found out about the job coming open, but on my behalf, she called the director who was searching and said to him, ‘Boy, do I have the person for you.’”

Other respondents described tactical peer encouragement that contributed to their success. One stated, “Nothing prepared me for working with city unions. Fortunately, the HR Director was quite familiar. Her guidance was really important to me at the time in maneuvering this job.” While another spoke holistically about getting into the field as, “There were these kinds of stopping points in order to get in. So, that's why it was important to find mentors who actually scored your skills differently and wanted to encourage you.” Conversely, she eloquently described types of peer of encouragement she received at different stages of her career, noting “In my experience, there's an incredible network. Like once you’re there, not as you're building up to it, that's a different story.”

Career Advancement Minor Themes

Three minor themes emerged with a participant agreement range of 63% - 75% and a frequency count between 14 through 20. The minor themes examined surround
women’s advancement to directorships in areas of getting there, how they got to their level and once they accepted the job.

**Career Advancement Minor Theme 1**

Minor Theme 1 *Had supportive board chair and mentorship* was expressed by five participants, however few unattributed quotes are examined to avoid potential overlap with emergent themes in the research category Support.

A respondent provided substantive information about her relationship with the board early in her tenure, which made her quite successful, recalling, “It was the first time I've ever experienced a museum where the board had greater ambition than the staff.” Two others discussed gender. One respondent expressed being supported by two different board chairs as, “These two chairmen just supported me completely. I actually know that the kind of support I got from them would not have been given to a man.” Another shared her experience with a female board chair, indicating, “She was completely open to having a woman and thought a woman would be a great thing. In fact, she was actually very, very open to having a woman and then we just clicked from the first interview.”

**Career Advancement Minor Theme 2**

Minor Theme 2 *Advanced at every rung and transitioned to directorship* emerged with six of eight participants, or 75%, that conveyed their experience of working their way through the museum structure to advance to directorships.

Three participants revealed their ability to develop leadership qualities before actually landing a directorship position. One explained, “Gradually, I worked up in an administrative capacity and that was preparation for taking on the directorship job itself.”
Another familiar with an institutional context stated, “I loved the place. I knew the board members; most of them. I knew the players. I was up against some tough competition, but I knew the system.” One talked about working her way up and how that built her confidence as,

Even before I had the option of the job, I was building a certain amount of confidence in myself to be able to assume a leadership position in a museum. Not that I would necessarily be a director, but, in terms of larger leadership in the institution and in the field.

Conversely, two respondents advanced within their organization due to unforeseen circumstances. One described, “Tragically, he died quite suddenly. Then, I became acting director.” Another respondent was appointed by her director and explained, “The director of the museum was promoted, and so she then appointed me as museum director. So in a strange way, I didn't go outside to express the transition, but it was quite a natural one.”

**Career Advancement Minor Theme 3**

Minor Theme 3, *Recruited by headhunter for position* provided insight as to how six of eight participants, or 75%, advanced in their careers to directorship positions. The interview data demonstrates that some participants were not seeking directorships prior to their appointment, which is consistent with literature explored in Chapter II. Research also suggests that “women are humanity’s great weavers of social fabric” (Schwarzer, 2010, p. 16) and “rather than competing for recognition, women would cater to constituencies and institutions of their own” (McCarthy, 1991, p. 4).
Therefore, the presentation of data is organized by those seeking directorships followed by those who were not actively seeking directorships. The respondent who articulated she made a strategic decision to advance her career to a directorship stated, “I had been acting director twice, and I just decided I wanted to be director. That's when I got in the search process and so forth and became a director.” There were, however, three respondents who expressed that they had not been seeking directorships and were recruited by search firms. Each of their stories described factors that contribute to few female art museums directors in large-scale museums.

One respondent described events surrounding her recruitment as, “I was headhunted for the job. Prior to my directorship, I wouldn't say I pursued it very long.” She also described the field’s perception of recruiters and stated,

One of the things that used to be said is, since headhunters are so important in hiring these positions, they're calling people all the time asking for names of folks. We heard ten years ago or so that one of the big problems is that the search firms weren't getting the names of women. There became somewhat of a conscious effort amongst certain people in the field to just make sure that they were starting to really think about who the women are out there that they should be promoting.

Another respondent expanded on the process of providing names of candidates to recruiters,

They called me just to have a kind of exploratory conversation. I really didn't give it a second thought. I thought they were looking more for my advice. The search
firm asked me about other names I could think of. They came back to me a few months later and then all of a sudden, they were interested in me.

Meanwhile, another respondent described her experience as, “I did not go in thinking or have ambitions to be a director. I think you are headhunted for it. It wasn't something I sought.” However, after her first directorship, she was acutely aware of gender inequities that exist in the recruitment process, and explained,

I will tell you that I firmly feel that I did an exceptional job. The exhibitions we put on for a budget under $5 million and a small curatorial staff were exceptional. If I was a man, I would've been headhunted out for all of these major museum jobs that were available. In a second, that would’ve happened, if I were a man.

Research shows that role congruity theory is based on prejudice against women and gender stereotypes associated with leadership characteristics that generally limit women’s advancement to leadership positions (A. H. Eagly & Karau, 2002). However, according to the article, *Are Leader Stereotypes Masculine? A Meta-Analysis of Three Research Paradigms*, “women are regarded as the nicer, kinder sex and thus have a cultural stereotype that is in general more positive than that of men” (Koenig, Mitchell, Eagly, & Ristikari, 2011, p. 617). Therefore, if recruiters were to seek equitable candidates during the recruitment process, it is probable more women will advance to art museum directorship positions. However, barriers still persist in the museum field.

**Barriers and Research Question 3**

Extensive literature surrounding barriers that limit female art museum directorships was explored in Chapter II. Historically, men considered women as “place holders” (Clark, 2019, p. 10) while they were away at war even though women’s
contributions to the formation and function of major art museums were insurmountable. Additionally, data provided that more female art museum directors earned doctoral degrees between 1990-2010 than men, yet men were hired with less credentials and comprised less of the museum workforce (Bruch, 2011). Moreover, there was ample speculation covered in the literature that boards contribute to barriers because they tend to hire what is most reflective of themselves (Dawson, 2017), which was affirmed during the interview process, however participants also felt boards aided in their success.

In order to fully explore barriers, the research question was written as a two-part question, What barriers did women face in their journey to become art museum directors and how did they overcome them? Data was collected from four interview questions and the findings are segmented by a) Barriers they experienced, and b) How they overcame barriers (Table x.x). For each subsection, eight themes emerged. Following the data table, unattributed quotes reveal personal accounts, which are further analyzed using the theoretical framework for this study, specifically Role Congruity Theory.

In light of the exhaustive approach to research question three and the in-depth analysis of barriers, the top three major themes are examined for both Barriers they experienced, and How they overcame barriers. The frequency range for these top-level themes are between 13 and 30. However, for minor themes, two in each category are explored for a total of four. Highest percent of participants, ranging from 63% - 75%, followed by frequency counts, between 10 and 13, determine sub-themes (Table 10).
Research Category: Barriers

Table 10

| Research Question 3: What barriers did women face in their journey to become art museum directors and how did they overcome them? |
|---|---|---|---|
| Barriers Themes / Codes | Type | Frequency | Sources (N = 8) | % of participants |
| **Barriers they experienced** | | | | |
| Gender stereotypes | I | 30 | 6 | 75% |
| Discrimination - gender, sexual identity, race and cultural identity | I | 26 | 7 | 88% |
| Skeptical boards | I | 21 | 6 | 75% |
| Sexism, ageism and misogyny | I | 13 | 6 | 75% |
| Ignored by trustees and subject of disparaging remarks | I | 12 | 5 | 63% |
| Self-limiting and lack of self confidence | I | 11 | 5 | 63% |
| Not having a Ph.D. | I | 7 | 2 | 25% |
| Family obligations | I | 3 | 2 | 25% |
| **Totals:** | | **123** | **39** | |
| **How they overcame barriers** | | | | |
| Self-reflective and high emotional intelligence | I | 15 | 6 | 75% |
| Dismissed barriers and focused on positives | I | 14 | 4 | 50% |
| Supportive board chairs and influential donors | I | 13 | 5 | 63% |
| Courage and self confidence | I | 11 | 6 | 75% |
| Assessed fit before accepting job | I | 10 | 5 | 63% |
| AAMD network and peer directors (female and male) | I | 9 | 6 | 75% |
| Mentorship | I | 9 | 5 | 63% |
| Had to prove herself | I | 8 | 4 | 50% |
| **Totals:** | | **89** | **41** | |

*Type I = interview*

Barriers They Experienced Major Themes

Barriers they experienced drew a total frequency count of 123 and the top three themes had 75% - 88% of participants with shared experiences.

**Barriers They Experienced Major Theme 1**

Participants conveyed that they experienced *Gender stereotypes* in a number of situations from internal and external constituencies such as: a) male and female colleagues; b) male and female trustees; and c) recruiters making the job “lonely at the top” and that “the tough thing is actually surviving.” The frequency of 30 was the highest of any theme in any research category.
Two respondents discussed the opinion of perceptions, which potentially inhibits women’s success. One respondent expressed the following,

The biggest things that we struggle with as women is how we present ourselves and then how we are perceived. If you present yourself as a nice, easygoing person, then people think that they can get away with everything. Then, if you present yourself as a tough kind of no nonsense, borderline aggressive, then it’s on the other side of it.

Similarly, a second respondent shared her personal experience with colleagues and subordinates,

I think we don't always seem as tough. Some of that is perception on the side of the perceiver. If we're too nice, I've heard, You're too nice. They think, Is this person going to be able to make the really hard decisions about layoffs or finances? Are they going to be a soft touch?

Furthermore, another respondent expressed how perceptions impacted her strategic decision making as, “I think there is often a barrier to asking for support because it looks like you don't know what you're doing."

These three unattributed quotes were articulated by participants from three different states chosen for this study who averaged a total of nine years of executive directorship experience. Their breadth of knowledge and shared experience asserts that gender stereotyping is pervasive in the art museum field. According to Eagly and Karau, “social perceivers hold a stereotype about a social group that is incongruent with the attributes that are thought to be required for success” (2002, p. 574). Therefore, the participants of this study were held to perceptions relative to communal qualities
associated with female behavior and agentic behavior characteristic of male leaders rather than their record of success and organizational impact on the museum field.

**Barriers They Experienced Major Theme 2**

The majority of participants, equal to 88%, experienced *Discrimination – gender, sexual identity, race and cultural identity*. Their accounts of this shared experience occurred predominately with trustees during the hiring process and/or early in their appointment. Examples of findings are from different regions, and each participant has over 20 years of art museum experience. One shared, “I was told by the recruiter for another institution that I really wanted. She said the board felt, ‘You didn't have gravitas.’” Similarly, the same issue arose for another respondent, who indicated, “I did not feel I was disadvantaged being a woman. Well, there were a couple of board members who just didn't think maybe I was quite up to it. It took a while. I eventually won them over, but their automatic immediate reaction was the gravitas issue.”

On a much larger scale, a respondent explained how communities partake peripherally in forms of discrimination, “Some of my donors aren't major donors because of me.” Moreover, there was common concern among respondents about sexual identity and that major museums might not hire members of the LGBTQ community. In the interest of maintaining confidentiality, protecting the welfare of the participants, and because this study focused on gender inequality, quotes related to sexual identity and cultural identity captured during interviews have been reserved for future recommendations in Chapter V.
**Barriers They Experienced Major Theme 3**

As many as six respondents or 75% expressed experiencing the third emergent theme, *Skeptical boards*. During in-depth interviews with participants, dialogue centered around personal experience, observations and speculative information about the future of the art museum field. Data on this theme was collected from all participating regions and had a frequency count of 21.

The main issue women expressed among boards was bias, which is consistent with Dawson’s findings in her study, *Playing The Game: Understanding The Gender Gap in Art Museum Directorships* (2017). Three participants shared information that they either experienced or observed. One states, “We talk about bias, right? Honestly, whoever is the decider on those panels, it's more often than not people making decisions about people who are most like them.” Likewise, another participant with extensive museum experience expressed, “They want to see themselves reflected. If they're really ambitious for their museum, they want to see themselves reflected in their director.” Another participant with museum experience that traversed two sample regions shared, “For a while, it seemed that the only people that were fit to be directors in board members’ eyes were men.”

Other respondents discussed board composition and how skepticism manifests, “Boards still like to see men at the helm there. They don't think women can handle it” and “Either a board can imagine a woman at the helm, or they can't.” Consequently, a respondent discussed her perception of female directors and their chances for longevity as, “I've seen it countless times, but women are very susceptible to the board makeup and
the way that women behave perhaps differently when there's a fight. If they don't have the board chair on their side, then they're gone."

Collectively the information shared by the respondents in Theme 3 were not circumstantial, but rather sustained “sex-segregated employment” (Garcia-Retamero & López-Zafra, 2006, p. 51) prevalent in the art museum field dating back to the 19th century. Garcia-Retamero and López-Zafra continue, “research has shown that masculine characteristics are important predictors of leadership and are ascribed to leaders in many contexts, regardless of the leader’s gender” (2006, p. 51). Therefore, the central phenomenon of this study is congruency (dominant female workforce) vs incongruency (lack of female leadership).

**Barriers They Experienced Minor Themes**

Based on the data, minor themes that emerged were *Sexism, ageism and misogyny* and *Ignored by trustees and subject of disparaging remarks*. Each theme averaged five and six respondents who provided rich data relative to their shared experience of barriers.

**Barriers They Experienced Minor Theme 1**

The defining difference between Major Theme 2 *Discrimination - gender, sexual identity, race and cultural identity* and Minor Theme 1 *Sexism, ageism and misogyny* is context. Participant stories demonstrate their first-hand experiences in which both the perpetrator and the victim are aware of the sexism, ageism and misogyny. The following unattributed quotes from four respondents validate findings,

“I knew they were never, ever; wouldn't even consider me as a director. So I was acting director and I did run the place for over a year.”
“I was treated as a young employee longer than I felt like a young employee, probably because I was a girl, partly.”

“I experienced misogyny on a level that was shocking to me because they were from a different world. They're not from the art world. They're not from the museum world.”

“I'd say misogyny, again. I mean, it's flippant, but not flippant. It's quite incredible. And this isn't even being nascent to it.”

**Barriers They Experienced Minor Theme 2**

Minor Theme 2 *Ignored by trustees and subject of disparaging remarks* details shared experiences of female art museum directors participating in this study. They collectively described being bypassed by trustees and in many cases ignored for their positions of power. One sums up the issue of women and power, “The hardest is the perception issue because it is not a natural public persona to be in a position of power for women.”

A respondent discussed her experience as, “Sometimes people speak disparagingly to me because they can because I'm a woman. For a man, I know they don't mean it. They don't even know they're doing it. It's just normal.” Similarly, another respondent was discredited for being female. She explained, “I actually had the experience where one of my trustees came up to me and said, ‘You know, I can never really realize that you're the director because you're a woman.’” Furthermore, a participant described being ignored by men in a board meeting, indicating,
The most evident barrier was the fact that men have such a hard time hearing what a woman says. They have such a hard time hearing it. There were out of say 40 people on the private board, there would be maybe 10 women, the rest were men. If one tried to introduce a new idea, for example, "Let's do contemporary art." They simply couldn't hear. They couldn't hear these words. It would not penetrate into their brains. So, they would not acknowledge a suggestion unless one of them said it. That was the only way.

**How They Overcame Barriers Major Themes**

How they overcame barriers drew a total frequency count of 89 and the top three themes had 50% - 75% of participants with shared experiences.

**How They Overcame Barriers Major Theme 1**

The second part of the research question uncovered strategies women used to circumvent barriers. Theme 1, *Self-reflective and high emotional intelligence*, emerged from 75% of respondents with a frequency of 15. Findings don’t necessarily correlate with the top-three barriers they faced but reflect their shared experience of sustained success despite the overall barriers. One respondent shared how she understands her success to overcome barriers as,

I know what success means. I take failure not as a failure, but as a learning experience. I’m very confident. I do work from experience, but also from my gut and how I feel. I think that women do that, and they trust that. It’s a certain kind of intuition. I have good emotional intelligence and I am actually trusted for my emotional intelligence. The board knows it, I know it and staff know it.
Another respondent explained her experience in the museum environment and moving beyond barriers noting,

I think that as soon as you walk in and try and emulate what has happened within the kind of white male, 19th century museum canon, you're going to fall flat on your face. Unless it's something that you intuit very easily. It's like you need to be able to develop different structures.

Furthermore, a participant discussed how the roles have changed and how she embraced expectations as,

With the evolution of museums into more social convenings, I suspect that's why women have been good at that kind of job, because it's all relationships. Then, how do you create relationships through social occasions and that's worked in a way because we're very good at it.

**How They Overcame Barriers Major Theme 2**

The second emergent theme in research category barriers was, *Dismissed barriers and focused on positives*. This theme was expressed by 50% of participants and had a frequency count of 14. Two examples of findings reflect strategies around gender stereotypes. One respondent discussed her approach to her job as,

You have to have patience. I learned patience around intense sexism. But again, my world was not full of that. I would venture to say I haven't felt that kind of sexism and misogyny very acutely in my career. I just haven't. Maybe it's because of the way I handled it or the way I dismissed it.

Another respondent discussed workplace dynamics, indicating,
I think the only way that I have found is just to simply work harder than everyone else. I have observed women in the workplace often work four times as hard as their male colleagues. The rule of thumb is that if you see a woman in a position of power or authority or in a leadership position, you know that woman has worked 10 times harder than just about everyone else around her because she's basically swimming upstream the whole time.

How They Overcame Barriers Major Theme 3

Theme 3 findings represent the other side of the coin regarding boards. Five of eight respondents or 63% expressed that they overcame barriers because of, Supportive board chairs and influential donors. Generally speaking of boards, a respondent shared what she learned from an influential peer in the professional organization AAMD,

He always said that for any museum director, “There's a third of your board who hates you. There's a third of the board who loves you, and there's a third of the board who's neutral.” So you have to be sure that at any gathering, the people who hate you do not dominate the other people in the group. So, you're constantly playing this game. Playing up to one group or another and trying to establish yourself with the neutral ones and the ones who love you so that they will form a bond.

Additionally, there were numerous stories of board chairs that defended directors when they proposed new operational imperatives that staff attempted to undermine. However, one respondent summed up her relationship with trustees that proved to be effective to overcome barriers,
My board chair supports me from some trustees—women and men. We are rising above it because it's just about values and respect. I feel very strongly that the values of the institution go beyond just the four walls. I just understand the mission and I know what we're supposed to do. I am a contemporary person, so I think that we have both grown. The board and I have grown.

**How They Overcame Barriers Minor Themes**

Minor themes that emerged in *How They Overcame Barriers* meeting the data sifting criteria were *Courage and self-confidence* and *Assessed fit before accepting job*. Participant range and frequency counts were evenly distributed among findings. However, the respondents believed strongly that minor themes circumvented different types of barriers they faced.

**How They Overcame Barriers Minor Theme 1**

Minor Theme 1 *Courage and self-confidence* drew a 75% participation rate and a frequency count of 11. Findings are presented from four different participants from four different regions.

In the face of gender stereotyping, one respondent stated she uses her gender to overcome barriers as, “I play with my femaleness. I am not afraid of it. I feel I am competent enough to do the job.” Another respondent corroborates this claim, however specific to navigating political pressures. She expressed, “I think you have to be a little more courageous and a little more brave than men do because you just have to plow through so much bullshit.”

Moreover, two other respondents discussed their approach to overcoming sexism and misogyny. One stated, “Overcoming those were probably the biggest barrier and I
had to take actual actions in order to overcome those barriers. One was to get better at speaking up for myself.” Another respondent contributed to the data in a concise way as, “I guess I would have to just say grit, really.”

How They Overcame Barriers Minor Theme 2

Minor Theme 2 Assessed fit before accepting job drew a 63% participant rate and a frequency count of 10. This theme emerged with collective input from participants that reflected their career advancement trajectory. Findings provide substantive information about how women view their capacity for leadership. One respondent explained, “I think women do tend to look at whether there's a cultural fit first.” Another respondent expressed her experience during the interview process as,

I was talking to them because they had done a very careful study that said, What are the skill sets we need in the next director? A lot of times people just say, We don't want to have a director we had before because we're tired of that person and we need somebody like completely opposite them. That happens all the time and that's not helpful. I was comfortable that they were looking for the skills that I was bringing, and they understood that there was a connection there.

In addition, two other respondents conveyed their own personal analysis when considering employment. One stated, “Women may be better at self-reflection and analyzing their own needs and skills. In the final analysis, when faced with what they would have to do as a director, they're not sure they want to go there.” Meanwhile, another respondent described considerations characteristic of men and women as,

So many women are asking themselves that question right now, Do I want to be a director? I do think for men it's more about, How do I get to the top? How do I
make more money? How do I have more power? And again, sweeping
generalizations. I know many men who are not like this. Whereas women are
more like, I love working with artists like this and I love going into a project and
spending three years on it. Directors are skimming along the surface. They have
20 million balls in the air at the same time. It's not the same skillset.

**Barriers Combined Analysis**

Findings were extensive for research question three, “What barriers did women
face in their journey to become art museum directors and how did they overcome them?”
Data demonstrates that respondents agree more with the barriers they experienced than
solutions to overcome barriers. Evidence captured from in-depth interviews shows a
correlation between highest frequency counts and highest participant rate in barriers they
experienced. Meanwhile, participant rates for how they overcame barriers are more
evenly distributed along frequency counts meaning there is currently not one solution, but
several are evolving. Therefore, according biosocial theory, Eagly and Wood conclude
that, “Although feminist perspectives are diverse, they have traditionally emphasized
nurture, given their goals of promoting gender equality and thus changing patriarchal
social structures” (2013, p. 549). In addition, the researcher triangulated data by
reviewing available board charters and bylaws. The following tenets demonstrate
responsibilities assigned to trustees in the art museum environment such as, “an
ambassador for, and public advocate in support of” and “legacy of inspirational
leadership.”
Support and Research Question 4

Data collected for research category Support was pulled from 4 interview questions. The first three open-ended questions were based on personal experience and the final one was aspirational, which contributes to recommendations in Chapter V. Ten themes emerged from the research question, “What type of support did women have in their journey to become an art museum director?” The top three themes had a participant agreement range of 50% - 100% and (Table 11).

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Category: Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 4: What type of support did women have in their journey to become an art museum director?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes / Codes</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Sources (N = 8)</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No internal support systems in place</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer to peer support</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional organizations provided leadership opportunities</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board chair and trustees</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive coach</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-motivated to take on additional tasks</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male director and supervisor at former institution</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipient of grant</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended conferences and created a network</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selected for leadership training</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Type i = interview*

Support Major Themes

Support Major Theme 1

Astonishingly, 100% of participants agreed that there were *No internal support systems in place*. Interviews revealed the following group of unattributed quotes from eight participants:

“There aren't so many people that will spend time giving you the confidence by saying I felt the same way you did, but here's how I did it.”
“There was nothing till I asked.”

“I would say that I was on a boat in the middle of the ocean with half an oar.”

“That first year that you're a museum director is when you need AAMD.”

“There wasn't really any infrastructure towards supporting in a way that maybe there is today.”

“No. There weren't many support organizations in place.”

“There wasn't anyone to call, really.”

“No. There weren’t any formal methods.”

**Support Major Theme 2**

The second highest theme, *Peer to peer support*, garnered an 88% participant rate and 14 references contributing to the frequency count. Respondents believed that their support system was both male and female. Examples of key findings from different respondents across regions included,

I have found that everybody in this field, male and female, I will say everybody, of course, it's not always everybody, but everybody is very supportive of one another and very willing to help. You just have to reach out and ask.

Similarly, another respondent stated, “For me, a support system was my female colleagues and by the way, my male colleagues, too.”

Other key findings addressed the general premise of collegial support. One respondent with art museum experience across participating regions stated, “At the next level, I think we are all supporting each other.” Meanwhile, another respondent revealed,
I think there is a strong support system, but it's also a generational thing. It's interesting, people kind of look out for each other. So there's a long, long lineage. You can call up one of them and you get the answers.

**Support Major Theme 3**

The third emergent theme, *Professional organizations provided leadership opportunities* took into consideration how external support systems bypassed lack of internal support as described in Theme 1. A total of 4 respondents or 50% offered insight into their journey of becoming an art museum director.

Most of the respondents attributed AAMD to being a professional support system for them however there were others as well. Two examples of findings examine ways female art museums directors gained notoriety in external support systems. One stated her experience as,

There came a time when I felt I was better known in the outside museum world than inside where I was still seen as a young girl employee. Outside, I didn't face the same constraints. Certainly, building a set of mentors and advocates and a network outside of the institution that propelled me forward was critical. I would say that was one of the most important things.

Meanwhile a second respondent explained her network as,

The network that I have, I mean, I have a huge network, not like thousands of people, but huge as in there are so many women around the world that I have spent time with because of traveling with art.

Despite not having internal support systems, the participants of this study provided ample data to demonstrate that they created pathways for success not only for
themselves, but among colleagues. Referring to Eagly’s theory on *Skills and Beliefs Acquired in Social Roles*, she concludes, “People often gain skills required to provide certain types of help to other people and then transfer those skills to new settings unrelated to the role in which the skills were originally learned” (1987, p. 51), which is certainly true of the findings in this section.

**Support Minor Theme**

Only one minor theme with a >50% participant rate emerged from the research category Support. Minor Theme 1 *Board chair and trustees* overlaps with *How they overcame barriers*, however the defining difference in this research category and understanding the phenomenon stems from not having support. Two clarifying examples were communicated across two different regions. One respondent said,

I came into my second board meeting and, I think, I just floored the board members by telling them how bad the museum was because they had no idea. My board chair, said, I decided right then that I wanted to help you, and he really has been phenomenal.

Another respondent described her experience as,

I would go to my board chair or others. I’d say, How do I do this? You know, it’s pretty lonely at the top. I didn't really have any other colleagues at other museums, but really mostly I know that they were there if I need them.

During the interviews, the researcher asked probing questions to fully understand their experience and to assess causal connections with lack of support. The findings were unexpected. Two respondents described similar lived experiences. One stated,
I think that women are not always kind to other women, which is a very unpopular thing to say. To be honest, there has not been a lot of women mentorship out there. It's weirdly enough from the man. A man is more likely to say, Oh, you're good, I'm going to kind of mentor you, not in any official capacity, but it's more like, I like what you do. Let's see if you can do more. That doesn't always come from women in leadership positions.

Similarly, another respondent expanded on female-to-female mentorship and contributing factors to the problem as,

In general, I don't think women are necessarily that great for other women. I think that's part of the problem. I think there are plenty of situations whereby a woman at the top is not necessarily going to be the most enthusiastic or kind of mentor to younger women as they’re coming up, particularly if they are bright. I found that it was actually a hindrance because it's like if you step out of line or step up too much or show too much initiative, then it's more threatening than anything else, to some people. A number of women will make sure that you remember what place you should be in.

**Analysis of Support Findings**

Research category Support findings demonstrate that there is a deficit of internal structures that support women in their journey to directorships, and significant female-to-female mentorship is lacking. According to behavioral mimicry, women are empowered by nonverbal mannerisms of other women and are more likely to emulate female leadership qualities vs men (Latu et al., 2019). Consistent with behavioral mimicry, same-gender role models viewed from afar was a major finding in research category
Motivation. Therefore, this study aligns with female nonverbal empowering mimicry as a basis of affiliation rather than direct contact or one-to-one support (Latu et al., 2019).

**Summary**

This chapter summarized data themes that emerged from in-depth interviews with eight female art museum directors in the United States. Four research categories were examined, and research questions were addressed in this phenomenological study. A comprehensive presentation of key findings segmented by motivation, career advancement, barriers and support were analyzed according to the theoretical framework of social role theory, biosocial theory, role congruity theory and behavioral mimicry. The full extent of findings was presented in tables and interview data of major and minor themes were explored.

**Major Themes**

Across all four research categories there were a total of 15 major themes. Major themes emerged based on highest frequency counts. Three major findings were presented in a) Research question 1, “What factors motivated female art museum directors to choose their career path?” b) Research question 2, “What factors contributed to the career advancement of women to become art museum directors?” And c) Research question 4, “What type of support did women have in their journey to become an art museum director?” Research question 3 was a two-part question and six major themes were presented to answer, “What barriers did women face in their journey to become art museum directors and how did they overcome them?” A summary of major findings demonstrates total average for frequency and percent of participants (Table 12). A full
summary is provided for further exploration and comparison with minor themes (Appendix H).

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Sources (N = 8)</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ 1: What factors motivated female art museum directors to choose their career path? Motivation: Average of Three Major Themes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 2: What factors contributed to the career advancement of women to become art museum directors? Career Advancement: Average of Three Major Themes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 3: What barriers did women face in their journey to become art museum directors and how did they overcome them? Barriers they experienced: Average of Three Major Themes</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ 4: What type of support did women have in their journey to become an art museum director? Support: Average of Three Major Themes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minor Themes

Across all four research categories there were a total of 10 minor themes. Minor themes were based one two criteria: a) a minimum of >50% participation rate; and b) next level frequency counts. The number of minor themes varies across all research questions. A significant finding was in Research question 3 How they overcame barriers. Data demonstrates a higher participation rate than major themes, which suggests that barriers are systemic in the museum culture. Participating regions conveyed that challenges persist, and different methodologies are being exercised in an effort to overcome barriers (Table 13). A full summary is provided for further exploration and comparison with major themes (Appendix H).
Chapter V provides further information on key findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for future research.

Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Sources (N = 8)</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 1: What factors motivated female art museum directors to</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation: Average of Two Minor Themes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 2: What factors contributed to the career advancement of women to become art museum directors?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Advancement: Average of Three Minor Themes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 3: What barriers did women face in their journey to become art museum directors and how did they overcome them?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers they experienced: Average of Two Minor Themes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How they overcame barriers: Average of Two Minor Themes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RQ 4: What type of support did women have in their journey to become an art museum director?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support: One Minor Theme</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minor Themes > 50% participation rate and highest frequency count
CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V is the final chapter of this phenomenological study. Prior chapters were presented as follows—Chapter I provided an overview of persistent gender disparity that exists in art museums. A background described that women comprise the dominant workforce, yet few become art museum directors in institutions with operating budgets over $15 million. Chapter II examined extensive literature surrounding the phenomenon dating back to the early 19th century through present day. Chapter III described the research design, methodology and population. Chapter IV presented data collected for the study based on the research questions. Therefore, Chapter V outlines major findings, unexpected findings, conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for future research. In addition, this chapter concludes with remarks from the researcher and reflections.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine and describe the career pathways of female art museum directors in the United States.

Research Questions

1. **Motivation**- What factors motivated female art museum directors to choose their career path?

2. **Career Advancement**- What factors contributed to the career advancement of women to become art museum directors?

3. **Barriers**- What barriers did women face in their journey to become art museum directors and how did they overcome them?
4. Support- What type of support did women have in their journey to become an art museum director?

**Research Methodology**

This study followed the characteristics of a phenomenological framework, which included in-depth interviews to gain a deeper understanding of shared lived experiences (Patton, 2015). The researcher also implemented “bracketing” to search for commonalities and to limit prejudgment (Patton, 2015, p. 117). To accomplish this, research questions were organized to sanction participants within four categories: a) motivation; b) career advancement; c) barriers; and d) support. Eight female art museum directors were interviewed using a scripted interview guide and asked the same 16 semi-structured interview questions (Appendix B). Interviews were conducted via Zoom during October 2020 through December 2020, in compliance with COVID-19 guidelines. Audio transcriptions were coded using a data analysis software, NVivo.

**Population**

Fifty-seven female art museum directors were identified in the following states NY, CA, TX, MA, DC, IL, PA and OH. According to the AAMD, in the study, *Art Museums by the Numbers* (2018), these states receive the highest form of private funding, which is consistent with the research problem that museums with higher operating budgets reveal the most prevalent gender disparity.

**Sample**

The following sampling criteria was applied to target a subgroup from the population: a) female art museum directors with at least five years of directorship experience; and b) private, non-profit art museums with operating budgets over $10
million. Twenty-two female art museums directors were identified meeting the criteria in the aforementioned states, which were grouped by region: a) West—CA and TX; b) Midwest—IL and OH; c) Mid-Atlantic—DC and PA; and d) East—NY and MA.

**Major Findings**

Major findings for this study answer the research questions grouped by the four research categories: a) motivation; b) career advancement; c) barriers; and d) support. These findings were drawn from major themes and minor themes, which were fully analyzed in Chapter IV. Major themes consisted of the top three highest frequency counts. Minor themes were sifted by >50% participation rate followed by subsequent frequency counts. As a result, a comprehensive study of 25 themes were examined providing insight into shared experiences of female art museums directors in the United States. For this chapter, identified themes with a participation rate of six to eight respondents are considered major findings. Therefore, summaries of 11 major findings are organized by research questions and synthesized with the literature and theoretical framework for this study covered in Chapter II.

**Research Question 1**

Three major findings answer Research Question 1, *What factors motivated female art museum directors to choose their career path?*

**Major Finding 1**

*Participants perceived women were welcomed in the field.*

There was agreement among all participants that they felt women were welcomed in the field. Many articulated that they observed other females from afar and because there were examples of women in leadership at various art museums, they believed that
seeing “people like you in certain positions, in a way, it is an easier pathway.” In addition, other responses closely correlated with women’s historical contributions as being “accepted” in museums and low wages “did not deter us,” which reiterates that despite their passion for cultural work, women were undervalued.

According to Linda Downs, “From the 1820s to the 1890s the concept of women as guardians of culture was predominant in the United States. Women were designated to contribute to their community’s cultural life” (1994, p. 92). Therefore, the legacy that the participants uphold dates back to the 19th century and remains a constant trend today. In 2019, the Andrew Mellon Foundation reported that women comprise 62% of overall staff positions in museums versus men at 58% (Westermann, Schonfeld, & Sweeney, 2019).

**Major Finding 2**

*Participants enjoyed the museum environment and working with the public.*

There was consensus among all eight participants that they were motivated to work in the field because they enjoyed the museum environment. Several comments consistently pointed to the notion of public service, and that they viewed “being part of the public good was motivating.” Moreover, respondents described women’s natural abilities to work in the museum context as having “a broader understanding of more things and a level of curiosity and compassion to figure out how to make things happen.”

The respondents’ personal accounts demonstrate that women were motivated by an inherent ability that predates the first American museum founded in 1779 in Charleston, South Carolina (Downs, 1994). According to the literature, in Europe, women infiltrated society and the cultural realm as early as the 1400s documented by Christine de Pizan in, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, which is where this study begins in
Chapter I. However, it wasn’t until the turn of the century when women’s roles in museums were at the center of American cultural guardianship (McCarthy, 1991). Therefore, 600-years later worldwide, and 200-years later in the United States, women continue to be collectively motivated by the same tenets.

**Major Finding 3**

*Participants expressed being motivated to work in art museums before considering it a career path.*

Evidence contributing to this finding was drawn from major and minor themes analyzed in Chapter IV. Therefore, Major Finding 3 has combined data points for a participation rate of 88%. Six of eight participants had curated small independent exhibitions while two had previous experience in museums. Respondents conveyed their motivation to explore curating as a passion to work with artists and/or objects. Interview data uncovered a clear distinction that their “interests in becoming a curator was more about the working artist than it was a career in a museum.” Furthermore, six of eight participants either interned or volunteered in museums while in high school and/or college.

There were other similar claims and supporting data collected during interviews that solidified noteworthy alignments with the literature and theoretical framework, which constitutes the validity of Major Finding 3. Notions of gendering stereotypes that influence social roles and intuitive choices that people and/or groups make about occupations (A. H. Eagly, 1987; Koenig & Eagly, 2014) is explored in Conclusion 1, affirming that women were naturally motivated to explore arts, culture and museum work because of their sex.
Research Question 2

Two major findings answer Research Question 2, What factors contributed to the career advancement of women to become art museum directors?

Major Finding 4

Participants expressed that their vision to bring change to the field and to institutions aided in their career advancement.

When posed with considering factors contributing to their career advancement, the majority of respondents emphatically believed that their vision was integral to them becoming directors. For some, their vision served as personal inspiration to pursuing a directorship role while others consider their ability to clearly articulate their vision was a deciding factor for the hiring panel. In either case, the participants in this study proved that they are visionary women like the many female pioneers that preceded them.

Despite experiencing gender inequities in the museum environment, participants reached beyond the fringes and made “innovation happen on the edges.” Their vision and the actions of pioneers ultimately paved pathways for women in leadership for future generations. The researcher correlates respondent experiences with notable figures in Conclusion 2 to demonstrate how women have altered the trajectory of art and culture generation after generation.

Major Finding 5

Participants expressed that peer encouragement and working their way through the museum structure contributed to their career advancement.

Respondents discussed receiving peer encouragement to explore a directorship role and some felt that their successful advancement through the museum structure aided
in their transition to directorship positions. The average number of years of directorship experience for all eight participants is 19 years (Table 7), making them part of a long lineage of women breaking the glass ceiling of a historically hierarchical structure. Their shared experience of creating a “network and camaraderie” is consistent with literature that women created coalitions to emerge into society (Macleod, 2008). However, many respondents expressed receiving peer-to-peer encouragement across genders.

According to the latest *Art Museum Staff Demographics* (2019), data demonstrates that women advanced 4% over three years from 2015 to 2018 in areas of collections, curatorial and leadership, with no change in the education department with a reported 79% of females for all years, which is the largest female demographic in the museum field. Based on this data, it is clear that the participants in this study defied seemingly unchartered pathways to advance their careers to directorships with the support of each other.

**Research Question 3**

Research Question 3 is a two-part question, *What barriers did women face in their journey to become art museum directors and how did they overcome them?* Therefore, findings are segmented by *Barriers they experienced* and *How they overcame barriers*. For each sub-section, two major findings were found.

**Major Finding 6**

*Participants expressed experiencing gender stereotypes, discrimination, sexism and misogyny.*

A 79% average of participants agreed that discrimination is prevalent in the museum environment and takes the form of gender stereotypes, discrimination of sexual
identity, gender, race and cultural identity. It was also affirmed that sexism, misogyny and ageism permeate all levels of the museum structure. This subject was widely discussed in the category of barriers and crossed over into other research categories proving it is a systemic issue. Participants conveyed their personal experiences, what they observed and tacit discrimination that exists, all of which did not deter them from leading their institutions. A list of the most common data collected during interviews sheds light on long-term exposure to this finding:

- Men, trustees and staff, reject women’s power and authority.
- Donors and trustees prefer a charismatic, attractive, young male director to “tout” at events.
- Large-scale institutions are not likely to hire gay or transgender directors.
- It is acceptable for a male director to be over 50, but not for women. He has “gravitas” and she is “not cute anymore.”
- Women are treated like “junior staff” more than men, even if they’ve been employed longer than their male colleagues and have more success.

Major Finding 7

*Participants explained that skeptical boards contribute to barriers.*

Six participants experienced or observed skeptical boards in their careers. Mostly, their experiences were attributed to the directorship hiring process, which is consistent with the literature. Participants confirmed that boards generally hire what is most reflective of themselves, male and white (Dawson, 2017). Participants speculate a leading factor contributing to skeptical boards is bias, which is also corroborated in the literature. According to Lustgarten, assumptions about leadership emphasizes that
“assertive or domineering behavior” is a determinant of success (2008, p. 18), which was established in the interviews that “women who choose that path are considered creating a toxic work environment because it’s not nurturing enough.” Moreover, role congruity theory has proven to be a cause of prejudice against women in leadership (Carli & Eagly, 2001). Therefore, data collected from participants is realistic and true confirming that “either a board can imagine a woman at the helm, or they can’t.”

**Major Finding 8**

*Participants expressed being self-reflective and possessing high emotional intelligence helped them overcome barriers.*

Despite ongoing sexism and misogyny prevalent in the museum field, the majority of participants stated that they did not allow contempt for their gender to prevent them from leading their organizations successfully. In fact, participants who have experienced bigotry understood that “disparaging remarks” about them were not reflective of their emotional intelligence, therefore they ignored such comments. They were also aware that many trustees are “not from the art world and not from the museum world” so they do not fully understand the impact of their ignorance about the role and responsibilities of directors, which is evolving. In addition, participants proved that “because men run these institutions on the boards, they are not at the same level emotionally or spiritually” as female directors.

**Major Finding 9**

*Participants explained having courage and self-confidence helped them overcome barriers.*
Collectively, respondents expressed that they “did not feel disadvantaged being women,” however when few “board members” expressed doubt, they “proved themselves” and “eventually won them over.” Courage and self-confidence aided them in overcoming barriers. In addition, participants realized that with so few women in top-tier directorship roles that they “may be a minority, but it is not good if it's all women, either.” According to biosocial theory, Eagly and Wood emphasize overriding “sex differences and similarities in the female–male division of labor” and suggest “that gender is socially constructed” (2013, p. 553), which is consistent with the participants’ experience and interview data.

**Research Question 4**

**Major Finding 10**

*Participants stated that there were no internal support systems in place.*

Consistently, all participants agreed that there were “no formal methods” or “infrastructure” available to support them to advance their career toward directorships. Many expressed learning on the job or following their intuition. When asked about types of support female art museum directors need or require to advancing their careers to directorships, the most common responses collected during interviews were:

- A network of “like-minded peers.”
- Encouragement, empowerment and emotional support.
- Acknowledgement, “because there's a different way of doing things.”
- Take risks and “be able to jump off cliffs.”
- Surround yourself with trusting relationships.
Major Finding 11

Participants expressed having peer-to-peer support once they became directors.

Previously shared in career advancement, participants expressed that they received peer encouragement to pursue a directorship position. In the category of support, the majority also agreed that once they became a director a network of peers was available. This network was predominately ascertained from the professional organization AAMD, which was a major source of data for this study. During interviews, respondents expressed differing perspectives about external professional networks, however data surrounding peer-to-peer support was consistently positive. They shared similar experiences about peers being “very supportive of one another and very willing to help. You just have to reach out and ask.”

Unexpected Findings

Unexpected Finding 1

Participants explained that recruiters have a central role in career advancement for directorships.

Six of eight participants were recruited for their positions and few were actually considering a directorship role. While this finding was not surprising, in fact, the data confirms assumptions found in the literature, which stressed mentorship (Shapiro, 2015), and women being promoted to directorships under unusual or surprising circumstances (Feldman, 2015; Taylor, 1994). The personal accounts of participants revealed that recruiters are constantly scouring the field to stockpile their candidacy lists. In many cases, some participants, while in mid-level or senior deputy director jobs, were asked to provide names instead of being considered or recruited themselves.
In an effort to circumvent women being sidelined or kept out of directorship positions because “search firms were not getting names of women,” a respondent stated that, “There became somewhat of a conscious effort amongst certain people in the field to just make sure that they were starting to really think about who the women are out there that they should be promoting.” Furthermore, another respondent suggested interviewing recruiters for future research. It was her speculation that, “They won't tell you the truth. They’ll say women don't want these jobs. That's what I've heard them say. It's very myopic.”

**Unexpected Finding 2**

*Participants explained that female-to-female mentorships are rare.*

Participants of a similar generation and career background with an average of 12 years of executive directorship experience, and across different regions, shared that female mentors are rare, and women are not necessarily the best for other women. A respondent explained, “A number of men will take advantage. A number of women will make sure that you remember what place you should be in. But, if you can find one or two that are good mentors, then it is incredible.” Another stated, “To be honest, there has not been a lot of women mentorship out there. It's weirdly enough from the man.” Realizing that this was “very unpopular to say,” their accounts are, however, consistent with behavioral mimicry. According to behavioral mimicry theory, a significant characteristic of the study is nonverbal empowerment (Latu, Mast, Bombari, Lammers, & Hoyt, 2019). The researchers contend that visibly successful female leaders empower other women’s advancement in leadership (Latu et al., 2019). Therefore, direct female-to-female mentorship is ineffective.
Conclusions

Based on the research methodology and findings, four conclusions are supported by literature.

Conclusion 1

*Female art museum directors are motivated by cultural work because they are genetically prepared to assume positions for the common good.*

Very little literature was available documenting factors that motivated women to work in art museums other than cultural work was acceptable because men considered it “frivolous” (Kletchka, 2010, p. 9). Museum work served as a vehicle for women to emerge into society outside of the domicile where they were traditionally confined (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991). In addition, any operational contributions pioneer women made to improve the formation and functionality of museums was undocumented (Whitelaw, 2012). Therefore, information established prior to this study did not include shared experiences that account for motivations to choose their career path, until now. The interview data provided tangible reasons for women to enter into the art museum field. The findings substantiate Conclusion 1 in the following areas of: a) women’s passion for cultural work; b) how the museum environment made them feel; and c) how they view their role in contributing to public service.

*Passion for cultural work.* Interview data overwhelmingly pointed to respondents being guided by their passion for art history, art making, interdisciplinarity, and creative exploration. Three participants were *trained artists*, four expressed a *desire to work with artists* and five described their *deep interest in art history and objects.*
Museum environment. The justification respondents gave for their enjoyment in the museum environment unanimously derived from being exposed to art. In many cases, museums were spaces where artists convened and therefore provided a chance to interact with creative people with whom they felt camaraderie.

Public service. For various reasons, respondents were motivated to working with the public, however they all expressed making a purposeful choice to serve others. Some wanted the challenge of persuading the public to think and see differently. Others wanted to change the museum structure to be more inclusive. Moreover, the Latin meaning of curate is to be “responsible for the care of” and museum is derived from the Greek word “muse” meaning “goddesses of the arts” (2020).

According to social role theory, even though there have been changes to women’s occupational roles, perceivers still place gender stereotypes on women in public service (Koenig & Eagly, 2014). While respondents expressed a desire to contribute to “public will,” many also viewed their gender as an asset to care for artists’ careers and to pave new pathways.

Conclusion 2

Female art museum directors advanced their careers as visionary leaders and brought change to societies through art and cultural work.

It can be concluded from the interview data and the literature that successful women who have gained influence in the art world and hold positions of authority in art museums successfully shift cultural norms and change perceptions. Evidence collected during interviews, albeit more than 100-years after the first female founded art museum was established, demonstrates that there are parallels between pioneers and
contemporaries. The researcher does not claim that history is repeating itself, rather, these similarities merely show the necessary and significant stances women have taken to elevate cultural consciousness through the means of art, artifacts and ideas.

Like Isabella Stewart Gardner regarded for challenging norms, philanthropic prowess and evading expectations placed on women (McCarthy, 1991), this respondent discussed her unique approach as, “I’m not an establishment person. So for me, when I took over, it was just a comfort with risk taking and redefining the establishment.” Both women, then and now, created museums as a place for everyone. Gardner designed a museum “for the education and enjoyment of the public forever” (2020). The same respondent shared her aspirations and stated,

I think one of the reasons I have a certain kind of success is that I don't fit in. I always think about what's good for artists in the end. What would give them power in the world? What would make them more important? What would make them listened to? That is always the place that I go.

Prior to founding The Whitney Museum of American Art, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney began making an impact on art and culture by opening the Whitney Studio Club in 1918, which was dedicated to innovative programming and exhibitions for working artists throughout New York City (2020, Macleod, 2008). In the same spirit, 100-years later, this respondent discussed her views,

I have a very strong interest in looking at what a contemporary museum can do rather than a museum of contemporary art. A contemporary museum in emerging art centers in the world. And, understanding the power of a contemporary
museum for its publics when you can actually build from the ground up with people from that place that have a vested interest.

Hence, both Vanderbilt Whitney and this respondent positioned their efforts on developing centers of social significance.

Along the same lines as Phoebe Hearst, who spent her lifetime to the education of women and the betterment of the arts (Clark, 2019; McCarthy, 1991), this respondent discussed her role in preparing the future generation of art museum leaders. She conveyed her vision as,

Trying to change the field from within rather than from without. If I'm looking at how we're going to change where museums sit a generation from now, somebody has to work on who's going to be running the museums. Who's going to be making the decisions? What is the next generation that's going to keep museums strong and healthy? Who are those people going to be and how will they be trained?

These multi-generational and regionally diverse examples in the United States proves that women are poised to assume leadership positions in art museums, however few are sought to do so in major institutions with significant operating budgets, especially art museums capable of impacting sustainable change in American culture. Therefore, women founded their own museums, which is consistent with biosocial theory and a way forward. According to biosocial theory, “humans evolve to regulate their biology and behavior” therefore “cumulative cultures” develop (A. Eagly & Wood, 2013, p. 553).
Conclusion 3

Female art museum directors apply different strategies to overcome gender bias, but their main strength is self-reliance.

Unlike other research questions, Research Question 3 is a two-part question. It asks respondents to describe barriers they experienced and how they overcame barriers. Also, unique to other research categories, participant response data was distributed across emergent themes especially in how they overcame barriers. Therefore, Conclusion 3 is predominately based on part-two of the research question. However, statistical data about gender bias was confirmed by respondents in barriers they experienced.

This phenomenological study was based on a multi-dimensional conundrum. For more than 200-years in the United States, women have contributed to art and culture as benefactors, collectors, scholars, volunteers and without formal acknowledgement. For more than 100-years women have worked professionally in art museums and remain the dominant workforce, however they continue to be undervalued and undercompensated. Today, there are only 24% of female art museums directors in institutions with operating budgets over $15 million (Westermann et al., 2019). Clearly, barriers exist.

Twenty-two female art museums directors were identified, and eight were interviewed. The participants have an average of 19 years of directorship experience and lead art museums with an average operating budget over $15 million (Table 7). The majority of them corroborated that the leading barriers they experienced are Gender stereotypes and Discrimination - gender, sexual identity, race and cultural identity. Yet, they admitted this was not solely perpetrated by men.
Evidence contributing to Conclusion 3 is based on *how they overcame barriers*. The respondents have shouldered these burdens on their own. Eight strategies emerged with an average of 50% to 75% participation agreement rate across all themes. Thus, no one way works to eradicate the prejudice. Five of the eight strategies were self-reliance and three included the help of others. Respondents tried various ways to overcome the barriers they experienced such as *ignoring it, rising above it, growing from it, addressing it, dismissing it*, and even *forgiving it*. After 200-years in art museums, women are still carrying the burden of oppression and discrimination (Clark, 2019; Dawson, 2017; Glaser & Zenetou, 1994; Levin, 2010).

**Conclusion 4**

*Female art museum directors do not expect support but are willing to support others.*

According to the literature, women were not supported to explore cultural endeavors, rather, they were allowed to within the constitution of marriage (Macleod, 2008). As a result, many developed hidden talents for collecting and secretly sponsoring living artists’ careers (McCarthy, 1991). In fact, modernist pioneers and MoMA co-founders, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and Lillie P. Bliss, faced public disdain from family (Macleod, 2008). Yet, these women established one of the most significant art museums in America (2020).

According to Jean Weber, she writes, “For the independent and remarkable pioneer woman of the early 20th century, the museum provided a suitable arena for the development of their talents and self-esteem” (1994, p. 34). Ironically, it can be concluded that when women turned to the Decorative Arts Movement for individual
expression, freedom of thought and to explore independence (Macleod, 2008; McCarthy, 1991), a precedent was set on self-reliance. Downs writes, “There was no institutional structure that would help women progress in the museum environment. From 1902-1945 only ten women attained full curatorial status at major U.S. art museums and nearly all of them were single or married without children” (1994, p. 93).

Still true today, all respondents claimed that there was no internal support system in place or infrastructure to assist in their journey to become an art museum director. This independence doctrine has universally manifested in the museum DNA. However, the very nature of women in the arts is to support others evidenced by the education programs women created to provide public access to rare collections, and more recently, museums have been transformed into places for convening and social justice.

**Implications for Action**

Based on a review of literature, findings and conclusions, areas that would benefit from further action were research categories, career advancement, barriers and support. The following implications for action attempt to override deficits in the art museum context that were found from this study.

**Action 1**

*Inspire new messaging*

Women belong “at the helm” of art museums. They’ve been leading in the area of art and culture for more than 200-years in the United States. The suggestions are designed to shift thinking and change the narrative on the topic of gender dissonance in the art museum context.
• A new vocabulary must be applied when addressing gender in the museum context because women comprise the majority of positions. Men are the minority.
• Develop structures that are horizontal and encourage women to lead from the middle and the sidelines.
• Pack boards with 60% women and 40% men to be reflective of the workforce and the internal art museum community.

Action 2

Promote gender equity

With the recent energy and focus on diversity, equity and inclusivity (DEI), the following suggestions attempt to overcome gender bias and stereotypes found in this study.

• Expand internal DEI gender equity services to boards and donors.
• Require AAMD to provide gender equity training for members affiliated with the organization.
• Provide counseling as a health benefit for persons within the art museum context that have been victimized by or perpetrators of gender bias.
• Create an internal training and support program for female employees and volunteers that focuses on furthering their careers in the art museum field.

Action 3

Create a support system

Based on findings and conclusions that there are no support systems in place to help women advance to directorship positions and that there is very little available once
they enter into their role, the researcher is intent on creating support systems for women at different junctures in their journey to directorships.

- Create a member-only virtual platform where women in art museum leadership have inroads to peer support worldwide.
- Establish a mentorship program to support women in their career advancement.
- Develop a password protected database of content consistent with behavioral mimicry theory to empower women in leadership.
- Promote global reach and sustainability methods among female art leaders.

**Action 4**

*Chronicle contributions*

Based on research in the literature review, women were erased from museum archives pre-1945 (Downs, 1994; Whitelaw, 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to set the record straight and uncover women’s contributions to American art and culture for all to discover. The following recommendations attempt to set up structures where accurate information is easily consumed.

- Partner with the National Museum of Women in the Arts to develop curricula on female visionaries who contributed to the formation and function of art museums.
- Pilot the curricula with art museums and auction houses to educate boards, donors, collectors, staff, docents and members about the history of women’s contributions.
- Scale curricula geared toward K-12 education for internal art museum education departments and external public schools.

- Organize an annual festival capable of augmenting traveling exhibitions, which includes ephemera of female art museum founders that expands chronologically to current day female art museum directors.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on existing research, findings and conclusions of this study, additional research could be conducted to expand the literature and position this subject more prominently in the field. In an effort to avoid duplication of museum studies’ master theses (Blatter, 2014; Dawson, 2017), the following narrow scope of recommendations is unique to this study.

**Recommendation 1**

*Case study methodology*

The phenomenological research design for this study provided insight into shared experiences that were not previously available. Based on the interview data, respondents conveyed that ageism was a barrier. In addition, they implied that shared experiences were generational. Therefore, a case study methodology can address gaps in research.

A case-study design is described as, “a bounded system over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of rich information in context” (Patton, 2015, p. 259). By applying a case study research design to female art museum directors, a comparison of generational experiences and strategies to overcome gender bias can be examined and explored.
**Recommendation 2**

*Quantitative survey data*

Many respondents shared experiences with trustees as barriers and support. Based on this conflicting information, it is possible a board’s decision to support or deny support to a female art museum director is situational, cultural, gender-based or more. Therefore, exploring the board’s perceptions of female art museum directors through anonymous surveys is both low cost and the quantitative data can be easily manipulated for professional or individual use to close the research gap.

**Recommendation 3**

*Qualitative study on art museum director hiring panels*

Based on participant responses, it was conveyed that peers do not hire art museum directors and that it is the responsibility of boards, who are “not of the art world” nor do they possess knowledge about what it entails. Therefore, it is recommended to it is speculative at this point if degrees or expertise are essential because more men with less credentials than women were hired in 2010 (Bruch, 2011).

**Concluding Remarks and Reflection**

The final section of this qualitative phenomenological study concludes with my personal remarks and reflections. More than earning a doctorate degree, my goal for this study was to explore an area near and dear to me. I am a trained artist with a terminal degree in studio art. I chose this topic because I wanted to understand what I had inherently observed as a practicing artist, that women were instrumental to the art world. Not as makers, but as shakers.
Briefly in my career, I curated exhibitions because I wanted to show my work. Then, like many of the women in the literature and in this study, I explored museum employment for financial stability. However, I turned to higher education because I felt that I could make a greater impact by creating a safe space for student artists to express themselves freely. I was fortunate enough to become a dean at single-sex art college. What a joy and privilege. We encouraged interdisciplinarity and I pushed bureaucratic boundaries in an effort to support emerging art practices and artists in a city ready to grapple with their ideas.

Coinciding with my advancement to leadership, the notion of gender bias became clear and role congruity theory was a reality that I observed. As an artist, I fathomed triggering an emotional response because that is what art was meant to do. Otherwise, it was static. Therefore, as I embarked on this study about female art museum directors, it took me down avenues and into corners that were unexpected, but I followed the research willingly.

The greatest moments and the most difficult demands of conducting this research were one in the same. Each time I discovered a female pioneer like Lillie P. Bliss, Louise Havemeyer or Eliza Bowen Jumel, I learned of their societal struggles and oppression. I didn’t expect to discover similarly painful stories during interviews. Much of that information was withheld to protect the participants. But it lives with me.

Before this study, I prioritized my identity as an artist first and foremost. That’s changed. The women I discovered through the literature changed my perceptions. The participants who so willingly gave of themselves, their candor, their trust and belief in this study taught me about myself. Now, I claim that I am a woman, a daughter, a sister.
who has sisters, and a female motivated to work in the art world because it is where I
belong.
REFERENCES


Women: https://www.representwomen.org/current-women-representation#us_overview


## APPENDIX A

### Synthesis Matrix
APPENDIX B

Qualitative Instrument Interview Guide

Interview Protocol – Interviewer’s Copy

Participant: ________________________________
Date: _____________________________________
Organization: ___________________________________

INTERVIEWER SAYS:
My name is Mechele Manno and I (a brief description of my professional background). I am a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the area of Organizational Leadership. Thank you for volunteering to be interviewed as part of my in-depth research of Female Art Museums Directors in the United States.

I will be conducting interviews with a number of female art museum directors, such as yourself, to hopefully capture the essence of shared experiences in the museum context from a female point of view. In addition, I would like to explore common experiences in four categories: a) motivation; b) career advancement; c) barriers; and d) support. The questions I will be asking are the same for each female director participating in the study. Each interview will take place via Zoom to guarantee, as much as possible, that my interviews will be conducted in the same manner.

INFORMED CONSENT (required for Dissertation Research)
Please let me remind you that your participation is completely voluntary and will greatly strengthen the study. If at any time you feel uncomfortable or would like to end the interview or not respond to a question, please let me know. Your information will be kept confidential, and your name will be changed to protect your identity. After I record and transcribe the interview data, I will send it to you via electronic mail so that you can check to make sure I have accurately captured your thoughts and ideas.

Did you receive the Informed Consent and Brandman Bill of Rights I sent you via email? Do you have any questions or need clarification about either document?

For your reference, I have provided a copy of the questions for the four categories defined in my research that I will ask for your reference; however, I may have follow-up questions if clarity is needed. The duration of this interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Do you have any questions about the interview process?
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL QUESTIONS

MOTIVATION
1. When did you begin your career in art museums? What inspired you to pursue your first position?
2. Reflecting on your decision to work in art museums, can you describe the key factors that motivated you to make this your chosen career path?
3. Can you describe your role models or mentors that motivated you to pursue your career path in art museums?
4. In your experience, because women are predominantly employed in art museums, can you describe how this serves to motivate other women to pursue this career path?

CAREER ADVANCEMENT
5. Can you describe factors that contributed to your decision to advance your career to become an art museum director?
6. Reflecting on your decision to become a director, can you describe the key factors that contributed to you getting the job?
7. Can you describe fellow art museum directors and sociopolitical factors that contributed to you pursuing your directorship?
8. In your experience, because there are so few female directors in large-scale museums, can you describe how this serves or hinders women in pursuing directorships?

BARRIERS
9. Can you describe challenges and problems you faced, both as an employee and as a woman, when you began to pursue your directorship position?
10. Reflecting on your decision to become an art museum director, can you describe the key factors that helped you overcome the barriers you faced?
11. Data demonstrates that an increasing number of women possess the credentials, skills and experience to advance to directorships. In your opinion, what are some factors that limit a woman’s chances of becoming an art museum director?
12. Looking back on your journey of becoming a director, can you describe key people who contributed to you overcoming barriers?

SUPPORT
13. When you began your career in art museums, can you describe support systems in place to help you advance your career within your organization?
14. What were the internal development opportunities and external professional associations that supported your journey to becoming a director?
15. Reflecting on your directorship, can you describe mentorship or sponsorship and other types of support you received that improved your opportunities for success?
16. In your opinion, what support do women require in becoming an art museum director?

CLOSING QUESTION
1. Are there any final comments you would like to make before we conclude?

POSSIBLE PROBING QUESTIONS
1. What is your opinion about that?
2. Can you expand upon that a bit more?
3. Do you have more to add?
4. Please describe an example of…
5. What would you like to see happen?

CLOSING STATEMENT
These are all the questions I have for you at this time. I would like to thank you again for your time today, your willingness to allow me to interview you for my dissertation, and your insight on this topic. As a token of my appreciation, at the conclusion of my study, I would be happy to provide you with a copy of my completed dissertation.
Lastly, as mentioned earlier, I will send you the transcription for your review via email. Reviewing the transcript for accuracy would be greatly appreciated, although I am aware that it will take more of your time, which I imagine to be a very busy schedule. Given this, I can provide an agreed upon window of time for your review of the transcript. Thereafter, may we have an understanding that after the time passes, I can use the original transcript as is?
APPENDIX C

Field-Test Interviewee Feedback Questions

1. How did you feel about the interview? Do you think you had ample opportunities to describe what you do as a leader when working with your team or staff?

2. Did you feel the amount of time for the interview was ok?

3. Were the questions by and large clear or were there places where you were uncertain what was being asked?

4. Can you recall any words or terms being asked about during the interview that were confusing?

5. And finally, did I appear comfortable during the interview?
APPENDIX D

Observer and Interviewer Feedback Reflection Questions

1. How long did the interview take? _____ Did the time seem to be appropriate?

2. How did you feel during the interview? Comfortable? Nervous?

3. Going into it, did you feel prepared to conduct the interview? Is there something you could have done to be better prepared?

4. What parts of the interview went smoothly and why do you think that was the case?

5. What parts of the interview seemed difficult and why do you think that was the case?

6. If you were to change any part of the interview, what would that part be and how would you change it?

7. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?
BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant’s Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.
APPENDIX F

Transmittal Email to Study Participants

Date

Dear (Name)

My name is Mechele Manno and I am an academic dean in the subject areas of arts and humanities. I am, also, a doctoral candidate with Brandman University in Organizational Leadership.

As part of my studies, I developed an interest in researching female art museums directors and am interested in understanding why there are so few in large scale museums. The purpose of my study is to examine and describe the career pathways of female art museum directors in the United States.

You’ve been identified as one of the few women privileged to hold the prestigious role of director in a museum with an operation budget over $10 million dollars. While data reports demonstrate the ongoing gender gap in museums, there currently is not a doctoral dissertation that investigates your experience. My goal is to interview women, such as yourself, to complete a comprehensive study in the areas of motivation, career advancement, barriers and support.

The study consists of online interviews using Zoom, which will take about 60 - 90 minutes. This is completely voluntary and your identity as a participant will remain confidential. Your contribution to this study could finally describe the reality of gender dissonance in museums and perhaps create support systems for women to overcome the many barriers that continue to exist.

Thank you in advance for your consideration to participate. Your involvement is essential to the success of this study. In the interest of time and the desire to conduct this very important study, please respond within 2 weeks.

If you have any clarifying questions, please contact me directly at xxx-xxx-xxxx or by email at xx@xxxxx.xxx.

Best regards,
Mechele Manno
Doctoral Candidate
Brandman University
# APPENDIX G

## Qualitative Alignment Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Category</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>IQ-1</th>
<th>IQ-2</th>
<th>IQ-3</th>
<th>IQ-4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>What factors motivated female art museum directors to choose their career path?</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Advancement</td>
<td>What factors contributed to the career advancement of women to become art museum directors?</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td>What barriers did women face in their journey to become art museum directors and how did they overcome them?</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>What type of support did women have in their journey to become an art museum director?</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Major and Minor Interview Themes Summary and Comparison

#### Research Question 1: What factors motivated female art museum directors to choose their career path?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation Major Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Sources (N = 8)</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived women were welcomed in the field</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed the museum environment and working with the public</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had some degree of previous success in the field</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Themes Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation Minor Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Sources (N = 8)</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deep interest in art history and objects</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested or volunteered while in college</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minor Themes Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>69%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Research Question 2: What factors contributed to the career advancement of women to become art museum directors?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Advancement Major Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Sources (N = 8)</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had vision to bring change to the institution and to the field</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessed ambition and leadership qualities</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received peer encouragement</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Themes Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td><strong>83%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Advancement Minor Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Sources (N = 8)</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Had supportive board chair and mentorship</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced at every rung and transitioned to directorship</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruited by headhunter for position</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minor Themes Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>71%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Research Question 3: What barriers did women face in their journey to become art museum directors and how did they overcome them?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers they experienced Major Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Sources (N = 8)</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender stereotypes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination - gender, sexual identity, race and cultural identity</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeptical boards</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Themes Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>75%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers they experienced Minor Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Sources (N = 8)</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual, ageism and misogyny</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignored by trustees and subject of disparaging remarks</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minor Themes Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>69%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How they overcame barriers Major Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Sources (N = 8)</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-reflective and high emotional intelligence</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcame barriers and focused on positives</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive board chairs and influential donors</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Themes Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>63%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How they overcame barriers Minor Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Sources (N = 8)</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courage and self-confidence</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisted fit before accepting job</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minor Themes Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>65%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Research Question 4: What type of support did women have in their journey to become an art museum director?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Major Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Sources (N = 8)</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No internal support systems in place</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer to peer support</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional organizations provided leadership opportunities</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Themes Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>79%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Minor Themes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Sources (N = 8)</th>
<th>% of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board chair and trustees</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX H