Art Museum Educators and Curators:

An Examination of Art Interpretation Priorities and Teacher Identities

by

Rory O'Neill Schmitt

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Mary Erickson, Co-Chair
Richard Toon, Co-Chair
Bernard Young
Peter Held

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ABSTRACT

The general field of interest of this study was art education in the context of art museums in the United States. The vehicle of a mixed method, descriptive research design was used to investigate whether museum educator and curator participants had tendencies to use personal or communal approaches (Barrett, 2000) to teaching art interpretation to adult visitors. While the personal approach to art interpretation focused on individuals' responses to artworks, the communal approach emphasized the community of art scholars' shared understandings of artworks.

Understanding the communities of practice of the participants was integral to the discovery of meaning in the study's findings. Wenger (1998) introduced the theory of community of practice to explain how individuals, who are united in a particular context, shared similar perspectives, learned socially from each other, and gained a sense of identity through their routines and interactions. The study examined how museum educators' and curators' separate communities of practice influenced their members' teaching approaches through the development of distinct teacher personae. Teacher personae reflected the educational values and priorities of museum educators' and curators' communities of practice. And, teacher personae had tendencies to adopt personal or communal approaches to art interpretation.

Keywords: art education, art museum education, museum educator, curator, art interpretation, community of practice, teacher persona

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my loving husband,

Dr. Dasan Maxwell Schmitt,

And, to our daughter,

Olivia Rose.

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An Introduction

Over 2,000 art museums currently are in operation in the United States ("About the Official Museum Directory," n.d.; "Office of Museum Services," n.d.). According to Dobbs and Eisner (1987), education is an integral function of art museums. Falk and Dierking (1992) explain that many adult visitors go to museums for educational motivations. In addition, Henry (2010) notes that many adult visitors go to museums to find meanings in the artworks that they see. If education as a common mission of museums, as Hein (1998) describes, then there is a need to understand *who* participates in museums' educational aims.

Though the primary function of museum educators is education, curators often have educational responsibilities in their roles, as well. When working as an education assistant and a Windgate curatorial intern at the Arizona State University Art Museum, I witnessed firsthand that education is instrumental in both positions (See Figure 1, Arizona State University Art Museum exhibition, which I co-curated). My professional experiences led me to focus this study on an examination of the educational functions of museum educators *and* curators. In this study, I examine how museums, through their museum educator and curator representatives, teach adult visitors to find meaning in artworks on display. I investigate the ways in which museum educators' and curators' separate communities of practice influence their art interpretation teaching approaches and teacher personae.

Figure 1. Words of Art exhibition (2011) at the Arizona State University Art Museum. Photo by Rory Schmitt.

The Problem

Background of the Problem

What is art interpretation? For centuries, art educators, aestheticians, art historians, and philosophers of art continue to define art interpretation in various ways. Art educator, Feinstein (1983), writes, "To interpret anything is to explain its meaning" (p. 30). And, philosopher, Rose (2001), explains, “Interpreting images is just that, interpretation, not the discovery of their ‘truth’” (p. 2).

Henry (2010) describes art interpretation as an active intellectual process that stimulates critical thinking. In addition, Barrett (2000, 2002) explains that it often involves talking and writing about an experience to build meaning (Barrett, 2000, 2002). Barrett (2000) writes:

> By carefully telling or writing what we see and feel and think and do when looking at a work of art, we build an understanding by articulating in language what otherwise might remain only incipient, muddled, fragmented, and

> disconnected to our lives. When writing or telling about what we see, and what we experience in the presence of an artwork, we build meaning, we do not merely report it (p. 7).

Individuals piece together meanings to create understandings of artworks.

How do people teach art interpretation? Art educator scholars discuss their diverse methods for interpreting art (Anderson, 1986; Barrett, 2000; Duncum, 2013; Erickson & Clover, 2003; Feinstein, 1989; Geheagin, 1998; Gude, 2004; Villeneuve & Erickson, 2008). Within art museum settings, various approaches to teaching art interpretation include: using inquiry (Reese, 2007; Villeneuve & Love, 2007), experiential values and hermeneutic theory (Burnham and Kai-Kee; 2007), constructivism (Neil, 2010a), interactive experiences (Neil, 2010b), visitors' reflections (Housen, 2007), and negotiation (Hubard, 2007).

Understanding the educational functions of museum educators and curators. Professional practices and job descriptions define professional museum roles (Toohey & Wolins, 1993). According to the American Alliance of Museums (2012), museum educators have the following responsibilities: "Supervision of *overall educational function* of the museum; responsible for general program development; some museum administrative duties; considerable *public contact*; supervision of several educational professionals" (p. 51, italics added). Museum educators are chiefly involved in educating museum visitors through direct contact with the public.

Museum educators coordinate educational programming, such as working with teacher programs and schools (Burchenal & Lasser, 2007; Liu, 2007), adults (Lachapelle, 2007), disabled populations (McGinnis, 2007), and families (Geerty, 2005; Folk, 2007).

Museum educators' teaching practices consist of meaning-making practices through discussions (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2005, 2007), dialogue (Reese, 2007), and conversations (Mayer, 2007; Leinhardt, Crowley, & Knutson, 2002). Barrett (2000) also explains that when individuals share their interpretations of artworks, they create opportunities for others to learn from each other.

The American Alliance of Museums (2012) explains that curators have the following responsibilities: "Curatorial responsibility for important *collections*; limited general administrative duties; primary responsibility for *exhibitions, publications,* and public and *donor contacts* related to collection; may supervise one or two curatorial staff; in smaller museums may implement program directly" (p. 42, italics added).

Curators' educational purposes include teaching museum visitors about art through creating exhibitions and writing didactic text panels and other museum publications. Authors, such as McDonald (2014) and Newsom (1977), discuss educational aspects of curators. As early as the 1970s, Newsom (1977) states that curators are like professors, who are scholars and teachers. Curators share art historical knowledge with the public through leading some public programs. More recently, McDonald (2014) notes that there is the notion of the *curator-educator* role; curators continue to be tied to the educational goals of museums.

According to Toohey and Wolins (1993), both positions of museum educators and curators are involved in interpretation of art objects. They explain that while curators often decide *what* is communicated in an exhibit, museum educators frequently decide *how* it is communicated.

Exploring communities of practice in museums. According to Wenger (1998), the theory of community of practice consists of the idea that individuals, who are united in a particular context, share similar perspectives, learn socially from each other, and gain a sense of identity through their routines and interactions. Artemeva (2006) explains that within a community of practice, meaning occurs through social participation. Members have a history of shared engagement, and they develop local routines. Wenger (1998) explains that members negotiate with each other actions and meanings of artifacts (Wenger, 1998, p. 83).

There is research on communities of practice within museums (Barnett, 2012; Buffington, 2008; Burdon, 2006; Kelly, 2004; Kelly & Gordon, 2002; Krmpotich & Peers, 2011; MacLeod, 2001; Moussouri, 2012; Sandell, 2002; Stroud, 2005). Authors explore how museum educators (Buffington, 2008; Burdon, 2006; Stroud, 2005) and curators (Golding & Modest, 2013; McDonald, 2014) belong to communities of practice.

In their qualitative studies, Burdon (2006) and Buffington (2008) explain that they found art museum educators participating in a community of practice in online contexts. Like Burdon (2006), Buffington (2008), as well as Stroud (2005), I seek to discover information about contemporary museum educators' community of practice. In addition, McDonald (2014) describes how, within her *own* community of practice of curators, she attempts to critically understand her work, compared to the work of other curators, artists, and museum scholars. Like McDonald (2014), I am interested in uncovering the identities of curators within their community of practice.

Problem Statement

Two main problems related to this study include conflicting views surrounding art interpretation pedagogy and gaps in knowledge.

Art interpretation pedagogy. As there are diverse approaches to interpreting art, there are also conflicting approaches in the field of teaching art interpretation. For example, while some writers find acknowledging artists' intentions to be important when interpreting the meanings of artworks (Belluigi, 2011; Brown, 2010; Carroll, 1997; Grube, 2012; Richmond, 2009), other authors de-emphasize artist intentions (Barrett, 2000; Hudson, 2008). In addition, some art educators incorporate the modernist analysis of elements and principles of design (Davis, 2010; Wagner, 2012; Wolcott, 1994) into interpretative processes. However, others argue that formal elements and principles of design are no longer relevant in twenty-first century art education (Duncum, 2013; Gude; 2004).

Some scholars (Barrett, 2000; Grierson, 2010, and Margolis, 1995) embrace multiple interpretations as valuable. Barrett (2000) states:

> Differing interpretations of the same work of art can stand alongside each other and attract our attention to different features of the work. One interpretation shows us this aspect of the work of art, while another shows us that aspect. If we only had the one interpretation, we would miss the insight that the other interpretation provides (p. 12).

Though conflicting views in art interpretation lead to some confusion, it is important to note that contrasting art interpretations can be informative. Davies (1995) acknowledges that diverse interpretations show different things, and present different ideas about the same artwork.

Gaps in knowledge. There is substantial research on museum educators (Buffington, 2008; Burczyk, 2008; Burdon, 2006; Reid, 2012; Stafne, 2012) and museum educator teaching practices (Buffington, 2008; Burczyk, 2008; Burdon, 2006; Kothe, 2012; Rice & Yenawine, 2002). There is more research on museum educators' teaching practices than on curators.' There is a lack of research that *compares* the ways in which art museum educators and curators teach art interpretation to adult visitors.

There is a need for research that addresses museum educators' and curators' perceptions of curators having educational functions. This is important because curators, as well as museum educators, contribute to the educational goals of the museum. Curators are involved in educating the public through exhibition creation and lectures. Acknowledging that an additional department, the curatorial department, possesses a key role in education can provide support to the museum education department, who is often chiefly seen as the teachers of the museum. The responsibility of education can unite the professions in a common goal. Museums achieve their educational missions through the efforts of diverse staff members, programs, and exhibitions.

While research studies focus on communities of practice within museums (Barnett, 2012; Buffington, 2008; Burdon, 2006; Kelly, 2004; Kelly & Gordon, 2002; Krmpotich & Peers, 2011; MacLeod, 2001; Moussouri, 2012; Sandell, 2002; Stroud, 2005), no studies compare museum educators' and curators' communities of practice. In addition, no quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods studies exist that specifically investigate curators' community of practice.

Significance of the Study

Discovering answers to gaps in knowledge contributes to the advancement of knowledge in art education through identifying contemporary teaching practices. This study illuminates education in museums by identifying museum educator and curator participants' teaching *priorities.* As teaching art interpretation is complex, this study clarifies teaching practices by identifying the specific priorities, such as design elements or artist biography, which participants use. In addition, by providing descriptive information about the study's participants, the study contributes to knowledge about who currently teaches art. Visual art educators in contemporary contexts come in varied forms, with different missions, educational goals, and teaching priorities.

Though museums have the associations of temples (Guglielmo, 2012) and shrines (Marstine, 2006), they have the potential to be educational leaders. Chatterjee (2010) points out that museums hold a wealth of original fine artworks to promote object-based learning. These institutions are comprised of highly educated and experienced museum educators and curators who support education. Art museums have the collections, the staff, and the motivation to promote learning.

Audience

This study is directed towards art education and museum studies communities. Findings contribute to the advancement of scholarship in these fields, as both disciplines examine education in art museum contexts. The audience also includes museum educators and curators, who use many methods for teaching art interpretation. Quotes from qualitative interviews provide practitioners with opportunities to make connections between participants' actual words and readers' own ideas. They can reflect upon how

they connect with, as well as learn from, other members of their communities of practice. Findings can support practitioners in their explorations of art interpretation pedagogical practices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed methods study is to identify whether museum educators and curators have any *distinctly different* priorities when they teach art interpretation to adult visitors. The study focuses on identifying the educational values of museum educators' and curators' communities of practice.

Primary Research Questions

Four primary research questions serve as the basis for the data collection:

1. How do museum educators and curators teach art interpretation? Do they have more tendencies to use personal or communal approaches to art interpretation?
2. What are museum educators' and curators' communities of practice? How do their communities of practice affect the ways in which museum educators and curators teach art interpretation?
3. How do museum educators' and curators' communities of practice influence their teacher personae? What approaches to teaching art interpretation do their teacher personae tend to adopt?
4. Do museum educators and curators perceive curators as teachers? If so, how?

Organizational Framework

Personal and Communal Approaches to Teaching Art Interpretation

Art interpretation is complex; however, principles can support learners in understanding artworks. Barrett (2000) states, "Principles, rather than methods, challenge us to comprehend complex material and to resist oversimplifying it when we teach" (p. 4). He presents the personal and communal approaches as guides to teaching art interpretation.

It's personal. The personal approach to teaching art interpretation focuses on the *individua*l viewer. Instructors encourage learners to make personal connections to artworks and personal art interpretations are meaningful for viewers. Barrett (2000) writes, "An individual and personal interpretation is one that has *meaning to me and for my life*" (p. 8, italics added). Other authors, such as Burnham and Kai-Kee (2007), Henry (2010), and Schiff (1996), discuss the centrality of the individual viewer in art interpretation. Like Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011), I am interested in understanding how participants actively discover artworks' meanings with visitors.

It's communal. The communal approach focuses on the *shared* and commonly accepted understandings about artworks within the community of practice of art scholars. Barrett (2000) writes: "A communal and shared interpretation is an understanding or explanation of a work of art that is held by *a group of individuals with shared interests"* (p. 8, italics added). The scholarly art community influences communal understandings of artworks. The community of art scholars includes art historians, art critics, art educators, philosophers of art, as well as other art specialists. Additional authors discuss the use of shared understandings in the community of art when creating interpretations of visual

artworks (Carroll, 1997; De Smedt & De Cruz, 2011; Grube, 2012; Richmond, 2009; Shiff, 2012). Like Wolcott (1994), I am interested in learning how participants prioritize knowledge of art when teaching art interpretation.

A continuum. Art interpretation is a process that exists on a continuum. Barrett (2000) explains**,** "We can think of acts of interpreting as having two poles, one personal and individual, and the other communal and shared" (p. 8). Using more viewer-focused priorities places one on the "personal" side of the pole, while using more art scholarship places one on the "communal" side of the pole. Like Barrett (2000, 2002) and Richmond (2009), I acknowledge that participants might incorporate personal experiences, as well as knowledge of art, when interpreting artworks. Richmond (2009) explains, "Viewers must approach a work openly, distinguishing meaningful parts by means of visual concepts or schemas learned from their *own* studio work, *and* from art history" (p. 97, italics added).

Connection to this study. Using the theory of personal and communal approaches supports the examination of teaching approaches in a clear, straightforward way. I examine participants' tendencies to use the personal approach, which concentrates on the *individual* viewer, through investigating whether they incorporated visitors' backgrounds, personalities, and connections to the artworks.[1] I identify participants' use of the communal approach, which emphasizes *community understandings,* through examining whether participants prioritized art history, art criticism, context, design elements, and technical processes.

[1] Refer to chapter four, methodology, for a further explanation of the sub-categories examined in the survey.

Barrett's art interpretation theory permits some flexibility, rather than rigidity, in the data analysis. Data analysis is not an "All or nothing" approach. Rather, analysis includes how participant groups might use *both* approaches, but might have a greater tendency to use one approach in particular.

Community of Practice

Participating in mutual engagements (Wenger, 1998, p. 73) can provide members of a community of practice opportunities to learn *explicit* and *implicit* values (Wenger, 1998, p. 47). Hein (1998) explains that for teachers, values influence their pedagogies. In addition, Hooper-Greenhill (2004) acknowledges that when individuals exist in communities, they frequently interpret things similarly. This study examines how communities affect interpretation and teaching practices.

Connection to this study. Using Wenger's theory of community of practice supports the examination of participants' two separate communities. I investigate museum educators' and curators' communities of practice. I identify their routine interactions, relationships, and values, as these components shape the ways in which museum educators and curators teach art interpretation.

Teacher Persona

Goffman (1959) examines human behavior and role performance in social situations. He uses the metaphor of theatrical performance to explain how individuals, in daily life, respond to others in situations, as actors onstage[2] (Goffman, 1959). Personae are created within social interactions. People play certain roles for audiences as part of a

[2] Persona is a mask that an actor would wear in classical theatre to express roles (Draper, 1987; *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology*, n.d.).

team; their real selves, or backstage roles, are different from their personae ("Irving Goffman," n.d.).

Educational scholars, such as Cook (2009), Davis (2012), and Stark (1991), explain that teachers use teacher personae to respond and adapt to the environment in which they are teaching. According to Lang (2007), they often create personae to energize their students to learn, support student achievement and build a positive classroom environment. Craig (1994) explains that teachers use personae because they are in helping professions. Like Goffman, Davis (2011) notes that one's teacher persona is different from who one is outside of the classroom.

Authors discuss teacher persona in classroom contexts (Braun, 2011; Burke, 2009; Cook, 2009; Davis, 2013; Leitch, 2010; Stark, 1991), university contexts (Lang, 2007), and online contexts (Augerinon & Andersson, 2007; Baran, 2011). However, no other studies examine teacher persona in art museum contexts. Davis's (2011) and Parini's (1997) studies inform this study because the authors identify influences upon teacher persona (Davis, 2011) and self-awareness of teachers (Parini, 1997).

Connection to this study. Exploring the concept of teacher persona supports this study's examination of the pedagogical values that unite museum educators, and the educational priorities that unite curators within their separate communities of practice.

Connections within the Organizational Framework

Using these three theories as an organizational framework permits the examination of the *What* and the *Who*. Research focuses on understanding *what* participants do (teach art interpretation), as well as *who* they are (members of a

community of practice who possess teacher personae). A relationship exists between participating in the practice of teaching art interpretation and belonging to a community. *Doing* art interpretation pedagogy and *being* a museum professional are two notions that exist simultaneously. Refer to Figure 2 for the visual organizer of the organizational framework.

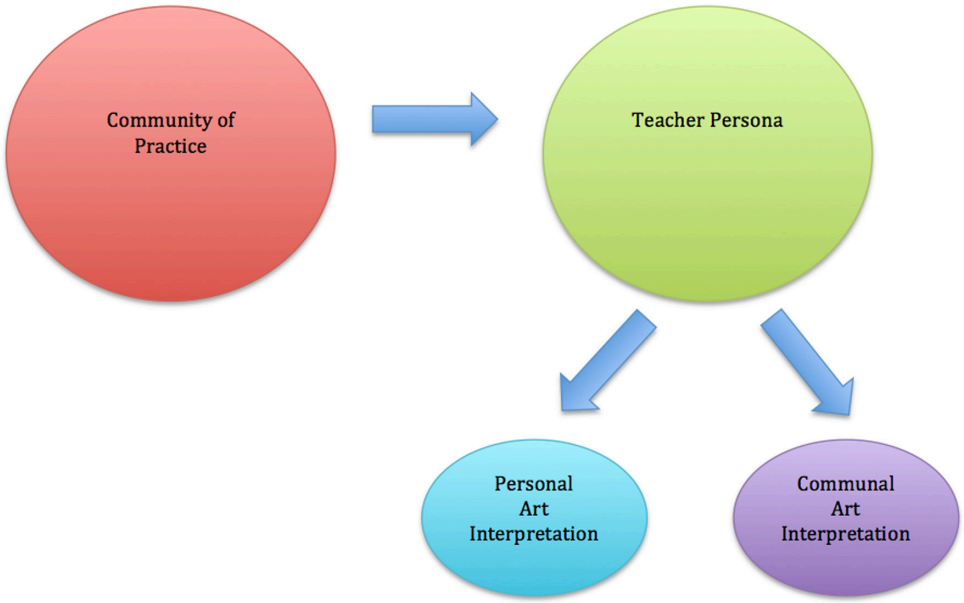

Figure 2. Visual Organizer. This figure illustrates the study's focus. Teacher persona connects the theories of community of practice and personal and communal approaches to teaching art interpretation.

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations, and Scope

Assumptions

Assumptions include: participants answer the survey and interview questions honestly; they respond to the best of their abilities; their responses are based on their

individual experiences. Another assumption is that museum educators and curators have educational goals in their professions. According to Vallance (2004), education is a well-recognized responsibility of museum educators. However, education is not a commonly identified primary responsibility of curators. The main inquiry is not whether both professions teach visitors, but *how* they teach visitors differently.

Limitations

This investigation is limited to quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The data is based upon the self-reports of the respondents, who agreed to participate. They identified their approaches to teaching art interpretation. One limitation is the lack of curator participation. Though recruitment included contacting an equal number of curators and museum educators (approximately 300 in each group), curators (n=30) chose to participate at a less frequent rate than museum educators (n=88).

As the researcher, I am the singular source of information about the observed activities and behaviors of the participants. I was not an onsite employee at these museums; therefore, I had limited access to museum workers' daily occurrences and insider knowledge. I did not observe participants teaching, using an observational method of prolonged engagement (Glesne, 2011). Rather, I describe the teaching approaches that participants report.

Though I strive to avoid bias, my own experiences and preferences influence my understanding. For example, I may teach art interpretation in ways other than those of the participants. My educational experiences also influence my identity as a researcher. The knowledge that I gained through earning a bachelor's degree in art history and a master's

degree in art therapy influence my approaches to art interpretation. In addition, my professional and personal experiences as a visual artist deepen my understanding of technical processes involved in creating and interpreting art.

My professional experiences influence how I teach learners and support individuals in finding meanings in artworks. Experiences in museum education as a worker and intern (Arizona State University Art Museum, San Diego Chinese Historical Society and Museum, the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Heard Museum) and curatorial worker and intern (Arizona State University Art Museum, International Center of Photography, and Visual Arts Gallery) give me insight into operations associated with these positions.

Delimitations

Delimitations include: recruiting participants from art museums and recruiting participants who reside only in the United States of America. Limiting museum types and locations supports a means of participant comparison. Participants share similar professions and educational responsibilities.

Scope

The scope of the study is the participants who complete the survey, as well as the individuals who participate in interviews. Findings are not generalizable to *all* museum educators and curators, nor *all* art museums. The findings are based on the reports of the 118 participants. Art museums have different missions, priorities, budgets, staff, audiences, exhibitions, collections, and education programs. Findings support the field of art education and can be useful to museum educator and curator practitioners.

Summary

This chapter includes an introduction to the focus and scope of the study. In the next two chapters, I review literature pertaining to personal and communal approaches to teaching art interpretation (chapter two) and communities of practice (chapter three). Subsequent chapters consist of a description of the methodology of the study (chapter four), and quantitative and qualitative findings (chapter five). Lastly, chapter six is comprised of the conclusions, discussion, and implications.

Chapter Two: Personal and Communal Approaches to Art Interpretation

What is a Personal Approach to Teaching Art Interpretation?

Centrality of Individual's Personal Response

The focus of a personal art interpretation approach is the individual. In this approach, "personal" signifies *individual* humanness (Latin Dictionary, 2014, para. 1) and uniqueness. Multiple authors focus on the individual when discovering meanings in art (Burnham & Kai-Kee; 2007; Hein, 1995, 1998; Henry, 2010; Hickman, 1994).

Barrett (2002) explains the role of individual viewer's response during the art interpretation process. He states:

> Unless we interpret works of art, the fascinating and insightful intellectual and emotional worlds that artists make visible for us will be invisible to us. … To interpret is to respond in thoughts and feelings and actions to what we see and experience, and to make sense of our responses by putting them into words. When we look at a work of art, we think and feel … .(p. 291).

Interpretation can involve putting one's personal response to an artwork into words. Barrett (2000) writes: "To interpret an artwork is to respond to it" (Barrett, 2000, p. 6).

A personal approach to art interpretation involves viewers identifying the feelings that are evoked when encountering visual art. Barrett (2000) states: "Feelings are guides to interpretations" (p. 6). He gives an example of a docent, who was a widow; she relates her feeling of loneliness to Magritte's paintings. In addition, museum educators, Burnham and Kai-Kee (2007), recognize museum visitors can encounter unpredictable feelings, such as sadness, when they view art.

Thoughts and feelings occur during interpretation processes. Barrett (1994b) states:

> A person's ability to respond to a work of art is emotional as well as intellectual, from the gut and heart as well as from the head. The dichotomous distinction

> between thought and feelings is false; on the contrary, thought and feeling are irrevocably intertwined (p. 73).

In addition, art educator, Parsons (1987a), stresses the power of viewers' thoughts and feelings when encountering artworks. He explains that the way people think about paintings influences their *responses* to them (e.g. feelings). He also notes that people's feelings influence how they *think* of paintings.

Connecting the Artwork to Life Experiences

A personal art interpretation approach involves making connections between the individual viewer and the artwork. Barrett (2000) states, "To interpret is to make meaningful connections between what we see and experience in a work of art to what else we have seen and experienced" (p. 7). Previous experiences in life can influence how individuals interpret visual artworks. People read texts in light of other texts that they have read (Rorty, 1992). Barrett (2000) explains:

> Seeing what happens means examining what connections we can make between a painting, a dance, or a poem and relevant experiences of books we have read, pictures we have seen, music we have heard, emotions we have felt in situations we have lived or heard about from others (p. 7).

Artworks can spark memories, which can lead an individual to connect the artwork to meaningful life experiences. Within the context of art museums, Henry (2010) describes individuals having rewarding experiences with artwork when they make personal connections and develop their understandings of artworks.

Personal art interpretation can also involve the interpreters folding in their own autobiographical information to their interpretation of the artwork's meaning. Barrett (2000) writes: "Many recent art historians are shifting from archival or biographical

methods to more emphatically subjectivized, autobiographical ones. They are reflecting upon what the experience of an artist's work means to them, the authors" (p. 10). Schiff (1996) also explains that individuals use autobiographical methods when interpreting artwork.

Personal art interpretations are personally valuable and meaningful for viewers. Rorty (1992) notes that the act of art interpretation leads to benefits. He explains that people interpret artwork to improve their lives. Interpretations can lead to the re-organization of one's life priorities.

De-emphasis on Knowledge of Art

The personal art interpretation approach does not require an in-depth knowledge of art. Within the context of museums, some scholars, such as Henry (2010), note that visitors do not need to have extensive knowledge of art to find meaning in artworks. If people assume that knowledge of art was necessary, visiting the museum would be taxing, rather than pleasurable. Prior knowledge of the artwork is not necessary to respond emotionally or intellectually to an artwork.

Example of a Personal Art Interpretation

An example of a personal art interpretation of artwork by Robert Arneson is:

> In *Flat Face* (1981), Arneson presents a humorous self-portrait of a man with unkempt balding hair and a tightened smile. Like Arneson, I like making self-portraits that depict myself as a jolly person. Art should be enjoyable. As an art student, I enjoy making artworks that inspire happiness.

This example contains features of personal art interpretations, including:

- *The viewer's personally meaningful connections to the artwork:* The individual connects the artwork to his or her life. In this example, the author compares her artwork to Arneson's portraits.
- *The viewer's personal response:* The author shares her thoughts and feelings, such as the feeling of happiness.

Personal Art Interpretation and this Study

This study examines participants' focus on visitors as individuals who make personal connections to artworks. The study investigates participants' prioritization of visitors' relationships to the artwork, visitors' personalities, and visitors' feelings.

What is a Communal Approach to Teaching Art Interpretation?

Centrality of Shared Meanings of the Community

This study recognizes that a community is comprised of individuals who share common characteristics and interests (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*, 2014). The communal art interpretation approach focuses on the collective understandings of art, which are held by the community of art scholars.

Art historians, art educators, art critics, philosophers of art, as well as other art specialists comprise the community of art scholars. Barrett (2000) explains, "Professional critics and historians can provide us with multiple insights into single works of art" (p. 12). When interpreting artworks by Kokoschoka and Magritte, Barrett identifies members of the scholarly art community. He writes, "Art historians, critics, and philosophers have provided us with interpretative insights into those works" (Barrett, 2000, p. 11). Parsons (1987b) describes art interpretation as a communal endeavor, wherein art scholars'

understandings build upon each other.

Terry Barrett,[3] who is an art educator and art critic, explains that art critics are a part of the community of art scholars (Barrett, 2000), who possess extensive art knowledge (Barrett, 1994a). He writes:

> Critics come to a work of art with a history and a worldview and these do, should, and must affect how they see a work of art. … Critics usually have the benefit of knowledge of several artworks by an artist when they interpret any one of that artist's artworks. … Critics state over and over again who influence a particular artist and about whose art the artist may be commenting (Barrett, 1994a, p. 10-12).

Art critics contribute to communal understandings of historical and contemporary artworks. Critics write essays in exhibition catalogues and therefore contribute to the community of scholars' understandings of artworks. Art critics shape communal and public opinions of art (*Bloomsbury Guide to Art,* 1996). McPhee-Browne (2012) and Kuspit (2014) note that the canon of art reflects the judgment of art critics. Kuspit (2014) explains that some art critics served as advocates for avant-garde and controversial artists.

Critics inform curators about artworks. Curators refer to art criticism literature, in such scholarly publications as *Art Forum*, *Art in America, Aesthetica,* and *ARTNews*, as many contemporary artworks that are displayed in art museums are not yet included in art history literature.

[3] Barrett is an art critic; he writes and edits art criticism publications (Barrett, 1994a). He explains that he gains knowledge of art interpretation through his professional experiences. Barrett (1994a) writes: "I am able to build and test interpretive theory in practice by serving, for many years now, as an Art Critic-in-Education, in which capacity I engage children and adults in schools and community centers in talk about art" (p. 5). In addition, for his art criticism book, *Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary,* he states his purpose is to "guide people in interpretive endeavors" (Barrett, 1994a, p. 5).

Art Criticism

Barrett (2008) describes art criticism as "informed discourse about art to increase understanding and appreciation of art" (p. 6). In addition, art critic and philosopher, Kuspit (2014), defines art criticism as:

> The analysis and evaluation of works of art. More subtly, art criticism is often tied to theory; it is interpretive, involving the effort to understand a particular work of art from a theoretical perspective and to establish its significance in the history of art (para. 1).

McPhee-Browne (2012) explains that art criticism involved putting the visual artwork into words, "to translate form, line and colour into the alien syntax of literature" (p. 20). Art criticism involves the description, judgment, and *interpretation* of an artwork (Barrett, 1994a).

Art critics explain an artwork's significance. Danto (2013) explains art criticism contributes to an understanding of artists' intended meanings of artworks. He describes his role as an art critic: "That is to say, my role as a critic was to *say what the work was about,* what it meant; and then *how it was worth it* to explain this to my readers" (p. 155-156, italics added). McPhee-Browne (2012) explains that art criticism must "show, in other words, not only why a work of art embodies a specific history, but why it also, and necessarily, *transcends* this history" (p. 22, italics added).

Scholars identify art criticism as related to art interpretation (Anderson, 1986; Barrett, 2000; Danto, 2013). Efland emphasizes art criticism in art interpretation processes (Anderson, 1986). Barrett (1991, 1994a, 1994b) explains that *interpretation* is the key component of art criticism. He states:

> Interpretation is also the most important aspect of criticism because a responsible interpretation necessarily includes description, and because a thorough interpretation of a work of art, which results in an understanding of that art, renders judgment much easier and perhaps superfluous. Judgment of a work of art without interpretation, however, is both irresponsive and irresponsible (Barrett, 1994a, p. 8).

Critics create logical arguments about the meanings of artworks based upon "what they see in the artwork, what they know about the artist's other work, and their knowledge of the times in which the work was made and to which it might refer" (Barrett, 1994a, p. 8).

Art Publications Share Communal Understandings

Communal understandings of artworks and artists can be found in art textbooks, encyclopedias, and other scholarly publications. Barrett (2000) writes, "Communal understandings are passed onto us as common knowledge in history of art textbooks and in standard introductory lectures" (p. 8).

Emphasis on Knowledge of Art

Some scholars, such as Barrett (2000), Efland (1992), Hooper-Greenhill and Moussouri (2001a), and Wolcott (1994), note that art interpretations can be strengthened by an individual's prior knowledge of art. Efland (1992) recognizes that having an art education supports art interpretation practices. In addition, Wolcott (1994) stresses art historical and contextual knowledge. She states: "The observer *is required* to come to a work of art with knowledge about its cultural, historical, and philosophical contexts" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 17, italics added).

When studying visitors' interpretative strategies at Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Hooper-Greenhill and Moussouri (2001a) describe that they discovered: "Level of education did seem to influence the sophistication of the language and concepts visitors

were able to use. … Many visitors did not seem to have the strategies they needed to interpret modern art …" (p. 27-29). They identify that knowledge of art supports interpretation processes in art museum contexts.

Art educator and art historian scholars, such as Carroll (1997) and Wagner (2012) emphasize that understanding the artist's biography can support interpretations of the artwork. Gude (2009) recognizes that art was created by a maker, and therefore, it represents the maker's lived experience. Examining an artist's culture, including the artist's beliefs, values, history, and heritage, can enable learners to uncover an understanding of the artist's message. De Smedt and De Cruz (2011) explain that interpreters contemplate artists' consistent use of particular symbols and these connections to their life experiences.

Examining the Context of the Artwork

A communal approach to art interpretation integrates contextual information, such as the time period, location, and culture in which an artwork was made. Scholars, such as Grube (2012), MacGregor (1994), Richmond (2009), and Shiff (2012), stress analysis of historical and cultural context in art interpretation processes. Richmond (2009) acknowledges contextual information as one step in a larger process of art interpretation. And, Shiff (2012) encourages the incorporation of contextual evidence to create an explanation that did not solely reflect the interpreter.

Art Lessons Focus on the Communal Approach

Art lessons often focus on teaching interpretations of artworks that are reflective of a community of scholars (Barrett, 2000; Wolcott, 1994). Barrett (2000) identifies that visual art educators often aim at:

> …Having our students understand art as the community of scholars understands it. This is certainly the *modus operandi* of art history classes, the thrust of many discipline-based lessons in art education, and what is usually specified in standards and measured in tests (p. 10).

Tests in formal art classroom environments frequently concentrate on communal interpretations of art,[4] which can include an examination of design elements and technical processes. This study examines these two priorities as indicative of participants' use of a communal approach to art interpretation.

Design elements. Design elements are part of the formalist theory of art, which identifies formal properties, including line, color, and shape, are important in defining and judging art (Eaton, 1988). Additional considerations include: movement, directionality, tone, balance, and proportion (Davis, 2010). Art scholars, such as Wagner (2012), emphasize design elements in art interpretation.

Technical processes. Art educators and art scholars incorporate an understanding of technical processes during interpretation efforts (De Smedt & De Cruz, 2011; Wagner,

[4]Wolcott (1994) explains that in classrooms, art teachers often use modernist concepts as design elements. Art educators may also use postmodern concepts, such as questioning and critiquing social inequities (Barrett, 1997). Some scholars, such as Gude (2004), argue that modernist principles, such as design elements, are no longer helpful in the twenty-first century. Gude (2004) presents postmodern principles for understanding art, including appropriation, juxtaposition, recontextualization, layering, interaction of text and image, hybridity, gazing, and representin'.

2012; Wilson, 2012; Wolcott, 1994). Art interpretation can occur through examining the tools, materials, and processes that were involved in creating the artwork.

Attaining art-making skills can aid interpretation, as well. According to DiBlasio (1992), philosopher of education, Broudy, believes that making art "deepens one's ability to approach and appreciate works of art" (p. 23). In some contemporary art museums, Pringle (2009) explains that artists educate the public about art-making techniques to demystify artistic technical processes and find meaning.

Example of Communal Art Interpretation

An example of communal art interpretation of artwork by Robert Arneson is:

> Arneson, Robert. (1930-1992). American ceramicist and member the Funk Art movement, a group of irreverent Pop artists from California whose artworks were shocking, humorous, and amusing. Arneson created the sculpture, *Flat Face* (1981), as a non-functional, comical self-portrait.

Communal interpretations are often synthesized from volumes of scholarly interpretations of artists' artworks. This example contains features of communal art interpretations, including:

- *Facts about the artist's life*: In this example, the author describes Arneson's American culture, and birth/death years.
- *Contextual and historical information:* The author shares Arneson's connection to the Funk Art movement and his use of self-portraits.

Communal Art Interpretation and this Study

This study examines participants' focus on communal understandings of artworks, as determined by art scholarship. The study investigates participants' prioritization of art history, contextual information, art criticism, design elements, and technical processes.

Valuing Personal and Communal Approaches

Some scholars, such as Efland (1992) and Wolcott (1994), recognize that knowledge of art is a pre-requisite for interpretation. This understanding privileges the communal approach over the personal approach. However, this study does not propose that communal interpretations are more valuable than personal interpretations of art. Personal and communal approaches are valued differently within art museums and by professionals. As teaching art history is a principal mission of many art museums (Deepwell, 2006; Hooper-Greenhill, 2004), these museums would grant the communal approach a higher status.

Chapter Summary

This chapter includes an explanation of personal and communal approaches to art interpretation and a review of relevant art interpretation literature. The next chapter contains an explanation of the theory of community of practice, and a description of how museum educators and curators operate in distinct communities of practice.

Chapter Three: Communities of Practice

Community of Practice

Routines, Relationships, and Making Meanings

A community of practice consists of members who have well-defined roles, regulations, tasks (Wenger, 1997), and like-minded ways of doing things (Wenger, 1996). When members work together in joint enterprises (Wenger, 1998, p. 73) and mutual engagements (Wenger, 1998, p. 73), they form relationships and learn from one another. Wenger (1998) explains:

> They work together, they see each other very day, they talk with each other all the time, exchange information and opinions, and very directly influence each other's understanding as a matter of routine (p. 75).

During routine interactions, members explicitly and tacitly (Wenger, 1997, p. 38; Wenger, 1998, p. 47) express their community of practice's *values*. According to Wenger (1998), members develop, negotiate, and share their meanings of the world (p. 48) to support their cooperative work (p. 123). When members interact, they build alliances and gain a sense of belonging.

Wenger (1998) also explains that meaning is created "in the dynamic relation of living in the world" (p. 54). Members communicate shared meanings of artifacts and actions (Wenger, 2000, p. 232). Members "know what others know" (Wenger, 1998, p. 126) and they have a "shared discourse, reflecting a certain perspective of the world" (Wenger, 1998, p. 126). Members of a community of practice possess shared perspectives. Wenger (1998) states: "It does not mean all members of a community look

at the world in the same way. Nonetheless, an identity in this sense manifests as a tendency to come up with certain *interpretations* … " (p. 153, italics added).

Connection to this Study

Examining museum educators' and curators' communities of practice assists in understanding how participants approach teaching art interpretation. If a person's community of practice affects how members interpret artworks, and museum educators and curators belong to communities of practice, then their communities of practice influence how they find meaning in artworks. This study examines routines, relationships, and values that inform their communities of practice.

Museum Educators' Community of Practice

Routines

As job responsibilities form the routines that comprise a community of practice, a review of a museum educator job position describes this profession's practices. A recent job announcement at the Tacoma Art Museum includes the following job responsibilities:

> Create and provide high-quality learning programs for all visitors, museum volunteers, school children and teens, and teachers. … Responsible for public programs development for adult and family audiences (Tacoma Art Museum, 2014, para. 5-6).

Museum educators are chiefly involved in educational practices that engage directly with museum visitors.

Routines include: coordinating educational programs with families (Geerty, 2005; Folk, 2007), schools and teacher programs (Burchenal & Lasser, 2007; Liu, 2007), adults (Lachapelle, 2007), and individuals with disabilities (McGinnis, 2007). According to

Munley and Roberts (2006), museum educators often provide supportive educational resources to meet the community's needs. Some museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, also provide teacher workshops, which are custom-designed to support teachers' specific curricular needs ("K-12 Educator Programs," n.d.). The Met also publishes an online curriculum guide, *Art of the Islamic World: A Resource for Educators* ("Curriculum Resources," n.d.).

Some educational programs involve museum educators coordinating hands-on gallery activities and art-making programs. For example, the Arizona State University Art Museum has a First Saturdays for Families event, in which visitors create artworks related to current exhibitions. When I worked as an education assistant, I supported children and their caregivers creating artworks. Visitors carved their own designs into stamps, in response to the 2010 exhibit, *Lasting Impressions: Japanese Prints from the ASU Art Museum* (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Exhibition Artwork from *Lasting Impressions: Japanese Prints from the ASU Art Museum* (2010). This image features *Yoshu Chikanobu's woodblock print, Bamboo Joints: Chronicle of the Dan-no-ura Helmets, Koto* (1898). Retrieved from: http://herbergerinstitute.asu.edu/events/archived_viewevent.php?eid=495

Relationships

Museum educators gain relationships with other members of their community of practice through mutual engagements, such as educational programs, as well as daily informal interactions with their colleagues. They meet together to envision, plan, and implement educational programs and activities within their institutions, as well. Creating educational programs, and planning how to achieve learning goals, involve key decisions that communicate museum educators' pedagogical priorities and values.

Museum educators can gain connections with other museum educators through participating in activities that are external to their museum institutions. They give and receive support from each other through membership in national and regional associations. For example, the National Art Education Association (NAEA) Museum Division provides opportunities for social learning and support. Members can participate in annual NAEA conference[5] and preconference museum education sessions, which concentrate on museum teaching practices and research.

Buffington (2008) and Burdon (2006) explain that within their community of practice, art museum educator participants learned from each other and receive support in online contexts. In NAEA's Peer-to-Peer (P2P) Initiative Team, museum educators learn from each other via online webinars, videos, and forums (Grohe, 2014). One museum educator participant recently said, "These [online forums] are a great way for continuing professional development and staying connected in the field, especially as the sole educator at my museum" (Grohe, 2014, p. 10). Museum educators also participate in

[5] During 2012, I recruited museum educator participants when I attended the art museum education division presentations at the NAEA Conference in Fort Worth, Texas.

online list serves, such as Museum-Ed. In fact, Buffington (2008) identifies the Museum-Ed list served as a community of practice for art museum educators.

In addition to other museum educators, museum visitors often participate in museum educators' community of practice. Compared to curators, museum educators work more directly with the diverse public. They translate exhibition content to promote understanding to a range of audiences with varied educational backgrounds (McDonald, 2014). Museum educators at the Frick Museum at J. Paul Getty Museum, Burnham and Kai-Kee (2007), stress the importance of dialoguing with museum visitors. They use the theory of hermeneutics in their guided interpretation gallery teaching model to support the unfolding of multiple meanings.

Values

The value of routines, such as creating educational resources and leading educational programs, imply is that *education* is at the forefront of museum educators' goals. Through creating educational resources, museum educators show that they value supplemental learning materials. In addition, by engaging directly with visitors, museum educators serve as a connection between the museum and the public. When they ask visitors to share their thoughts about meanings of artworks during group discussions, museum educators show that they value visitors' diverse voices. Museum educators support learners directly in creating and discovering meanings.

Through leading hands-on activities with visitors, museum educators recognize that individuals can develop an understanding of the objects in the collection. According to Caulton (1996), hands-on interactive activities are often client-centered, appeal to a

vast array of interests, and stimulate learning in a physically attractive space. In addition, Hein (1998) stated activities must be minds on, not just hands on; learners must be mentally engaged during activities. By supporting the notion of physically *doing* something to learn, museum educators recognize that seeing is not the only means of engaging meaning-making endeavors. While Pollock (2007) discusses the notion that looking at artwork transmits knowledge, museum educators suggest additional resources and activities are informative to learning processes.

Curators' Community of Practice

Routines

A recent job posting for a curator position at the Whitney Museum of American Art described the following responsibilities: "Proposing large- and small-scale *exhibitions* and managing all phases of these projects, writing *scholarly* publications and texts, assisting with the development and *growth of the collection*, including acquisitions across media" (Job Postings, 2014, para. 3, italics added). Curators are chiefly involved in exhibition creation, scholarly publications, and collection acquisitions.

When creating exhibitions, curators develop informative narratives (Vogel, 2010). Curators participate in the "production of art interpretation" in art museums (Whitehead, 2012, p. xii-xiii). The gallery text panels that they write support visitors in interpreting the meanings of artworks (McDonald, 2014).

Curators teach visitors during group tours, gallery lectures, and through exhibitions. Curators also participate in some educational programs centered upon their exhibitions. For example, the Arizona State University Art Museum has gallery talks

related to the current exhibitions. When I worked as the Windgate curatorial intern, I presented a lecture to university students and members of the public that focused on the Cuban artists of the 2011 exhibit, *Collecting Contemporary Art: The FUNd at ASU Art Museum* (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Exhibition poster from *Collecting Contemporary Art: The FUNd at ASU Art Museum* (2011). Retrieved from: http://herbergerinstitute.asu.edu/events/archived_viewevent.php?eid=786

An additional routine of curators involves research. They research artworks that belong to the museum's collection, as well as additional loaned artworks that are on display in exhibitions. They produce scholarship on their findings, which can be found in such publications as *Art Forum* and *Curator.*

The responsibility of selecting artworks to purchase for museum collections is also common within curators' community of practice. As connoisseurs, curators identify the fineness of objects and assist collection practices (McCracken, 2003). Ventzislavov (2014) noted that curators' act of selecting artwork is a fine art.

Relationships

Curators can connect with other members of their community of practice through creating art exhibitions, contributing to curatorial publications, and participating in dialogues with other curators on a day-to-day basis. In-person and online interactions invite opportunities to build relationships. For example, curators from the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, the Hammer Museum, and the Brooklyn Museum, Butler, Jones, and Reilly (2003) share their discussion of a return to feminist art through email correspondence. Jones's (2003) presentation of curators' dialogue serves as an example of how curators in different parts of the world communicate and theorize together, and thus support curators' community of practice. A community is not necessarily defined by having one shared geographic location (Steedman, 2012).

Museum donors and contemporary artists often participate in curators' community of practice. Curators more frequently associated with museum donors and collectors in the procurement of artworks for the museum's collection. In museums that procure contemporary artworks, curators also commonly interact with emerging artists. Compared to museum educators, curators work more directly with donors and artists. Their in-person, direct contact with the general public is limited, as curators' main goals are to research, manage, and present artworks through exhibitions.

Curators are involved in some public interaction. They have a role in public discourse and community engagement. Bennett (1998) notes: "…[T]he curator is now called on to orchestrate a polyphonic dialogue between the different voices and values emerging from the multiple constituencies" (p. 203-204). Curators engage people to share their diverse perspectives.

Values

Curators' daily operations of research and exhibition development imply the value that *art scholarship* is at the forefront. Curators value knowledge about art. Many curators believe that knowledge is represented through exhibits, and visitors gain specific and intended information by viewing exhibitions (Hein, 1998). Hooper-Greenhill (2004) explains that through creating exhibitions, curators "lay out knowledge for the visitor such that it may be absorbed" (p. 560). Curators transmit knowledge through exhibitions.

When curators research artworks, they discover new knowledge. Through writing catalogues raisonnés, scholarly articles, and books, curators show their value of publishing (and knowledge distribution) within their community of practice. Their publications contribute to the advancement of knowledge about particular artists, artworks, and art movements.

An additional value of curators is the primacy of vision (Rose, 2001), as it is the visual artworks that are on display in museums. Rose (2001) explains that museums show principles of order to the public and regulate ways of seeing. When creating art exhibitions, curators make careful choices in how to arrange the artworks and the gallery spaces; these decisions express their priorities and values.

Lastly, curators oversee the management and cultivation of museum collections. Museum donors also contribute artwork (as well as their values) to the collections. The act of purchasing and collecting artworks implies the value that curators and donors view museums as having a responsibility to protect certain artworks for perpetuity.

Museum Educators' and Curators' Similarities

This study aims to identify differences between museum educators' and curators' communities of practice. However, it is important to note that these two professions share some common values, including: museums, education, and visual art.

Museum educators and curators are dedicated to the institutions for which they work and contribute to the educational missions of their museums. These professionals recognize museums have a role in educating the public about art through exhibitions and educational programs. They also acknowledge the value of art and the recognition that art has meaning. They believe that visitors can learn about art and have meaningful experiences when encountering artworks in museums.

Chapter Summary

A community of practice is comprised of members who participate in joint enterprises, have mutual engagements, form relationships, and share values. This chapter includes an explanation of the routines, relationships, and values that comprise museum educators' and curators' communities of practice. The next chapter contains a description of the study's methodology.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Research Goals

The study design presented here has two goals:

- **Goal #1:** To include the perspectives of a group of museum educators and curators to show current trends in the practice of teaching art interpretation in art museums across the United States;
- **Goal #2:** To gain an understanding of that group through first-person accounts of art interpretation teaching practices.

Mixed Methods Research Design

A mixed methods research design enables me to gather perspectives of several museum educators and curators from art museums across the United States through the distribution of a quantitative survey (Goal #1). The mixed methods approach also supports efforts to gain participants' perspectives through qualitative interviews with museum educators and curators (Goal #2). This study is, thus, based on participants' self-perceptions and reported values, as indicated by survey and interview data. According to McManus (1996), using mixed methods can enable researchers to gain an understanding of a particular group of people. Using mixed methods supports this study's goal to understand the museum educator and curator participants.

Informative Studies

Other mixed methods studies inform this empirical work. For example, like Stafne's study (2012), this study uses a project design that includes surveys and interviews of museum professionals. Stafne (2012) examines art museum educators' experiences through completing qualitative interviews with ten participants, and

collecting surveys from 123 participants. He examined how theory shaped museum educators' interactions with learners.

Hooper-Greenhill and Moussouri's (2001a, 2001b) studies of art interpretation in museums inform this study, as well. Through a mixed methods study, Hooper-Greenhill and Moussouri (2001a) found that visitors' interpretive strategies included: asking questions, reading explicit texts in galleries, telling a story of the scene of the work, and identifying artworks' underlying messages. In addition, through a qualitative study, Hooper-Greenhill and Moussouri's (2001b) determined that visitors' knowledge of art can influence interpretive practices.

Additional qualitative studies, which have examined art museum professionals using interviews as a method, inform this study (Dobbs & Eisner, 1987; Reid, 2012). For example, through interviews, Reid (2012) states that she identified museum educator participants' personal and professional identities. Her qualitative data is primarily based on "character studies" (p. 95) of four participants. She also includes her own perspective as a museum educator. Similarly, my work as a museum educator and curatorial assistant enables me to gain a better understanding of my participants.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was completed in 2012, wherein I completed interviews and collected surveys from two curators and one museum educator at Arizona State University Art Museum. The pilot study supported the development of the interview protocol and the survey instrument: I revised the instruments to improve their clarity and efficiency. Following the pilot study, I submitted an exempt research application to the Institution Review Board (IRB) to begin collecting data for this study (Appendix A).

Quantitative Methods in This Study

This study uses quantitative methods suggested by Muijs (2004), including: investigating phenomena (i.e. art interpretation pedagogy), collecting numerical data (i.e. participant responses through quantitative surveys), and using mathematically-based methods to analyze the data (i.e. statistical tests in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software).

This study supports reliability, by using the same instrument across sites. Golafshani (2003) explains that reliability in quantitative research is defined by the "replicability or repeatability of results or observations" (p. 598). Researchers create instruments and administer them in a standardized manner.

Survey instrument. The Art Museum Education quantitative survey (Appendix B) contains thirty-one questions, which address a broad array of issues. The study focuses on eleven questions that concentrate on personal and communal art interpretation approaches: Four questions pertain to personal approaches, and seven questions pertain to communal approaches. In addition, one question focuses on curators' identities as teachers.

Approach to data analysis. Survey questions are on a five-point Likert scale: Respondents can select: Strongly Agree (5 points), Agree (4 points), Disagree (3 points), Strongly Disagree (2 points), or Don't Know (1 point). As the study examines agreement or disagreement with survey statements, analysis focuses on statements that participants rate as strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. Don't Know and blank responses are omitted from statistical analysis procedures.

The study aims to find statistically significant differences between the two groups (e.g. museum educators or curators). A significant difference means that researchers reject the null hypothesis, which is "the hypothesis that an observed difference (as between the means of two samples) is due to *chance alone* and not due to a systematic cause" ("Null Hypothesis," n.d.). The study uses a confidence level of 0.05 ($\alpha < 0.05$); statistical significance is defined as having a 95% chance of being true. Identifying a survey question as being statistically significant means that there is a 95% chance that the results are due to something particular about the participant group, rather than due to chance alone.

Data analysis consists of using the Mann-Whitney test in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS). The Mann-Whitney test is the equivalent of an independent samples *t*-test ("Mann-Whitney Test," n.d.), which determines whether the mean scores of two groups are statistically different from each other ("The *t*-Test," n.d.). The Mann-Whitney test is appropriate for this study's analysis procedures because it is a non-parametric independent samples test. Researchers use non-parametric independent samples tests when they do not know whether the sample is normal, or what true distribution of the population is ("Non-Parametric Tests," n.d.). As the population distribution of museum educators and curators is unknown, the study uses the Mann-Whitney test because it does not assume normal distribution.

Using Schwartz-Shea and Yanow's (2012) approach to front-loading relevant codes to the survey questions supports systematic analysis of the data. "Front-loading" involves assigning each survey question a particular category and code prior to distribution of the survey. This study follows Saldaña's (2013) method of creating codes

that are "essence-capturing and essential elements of the research story" (p. 8). Saldaña (2013) explains that researchers group similar "families" (p. 8) into categories. Each question is identified as having the category of the personal or communal approach. In addition, each question has a code to identify the specific sub-issues of the personal or communal approach that the question is addressing.

Survey questions #7, 19, 21, and 22 belong to the category of personal approaches to teaching art interpretation (Refer to Table 1). Sub-categories include: Connections to Visitors' Lives (Q7), Visitors' Personalities (Q19), Visitors' Feelings (Q21), and Visitors' Relationship to the Artwork (Q22).

Table 1

Personal Art Interpretation Survey Questions and Codes.

Question#	**Question**	**Code**
Q7	Making connections to visitors' personal lives can elicit understanding of artworks.	Connections to Visitors' Lives
Q19	When the interpretation of the artwork is based the viewer's personality, it is less effective.	Visitors' Personalities
Q21	Viewers can consider their feelings when interpreting the artwork.	Visitors' Feelings
Q22	When interpreting art, people look at the relationship between the art and themselves.	Visitors' Relationship to Artwork

Question #7 is a personal approach to art interpretation because it focuses on the value of integrating an individual viewer's *personal* life into the art interpretation process. Barrett (2000) states, "To interpret is to make meaningful *connections* between what we see and experience in a work of art to what else we have seen and experienced" (p. 7, italics added). Rorty (1992) also acknowledges that individuals make connections

between what they see and what they have seen and experienced in the past. Viewers discover how the artwork connects to their own lives.

Question #22 involves noting the *relationship* between the individual viewer and the artwork. By connecting artwork to their life experiences, individuals can create understandings that add value to their own lives, and re-frame life priorities (Rorty, 1992).

Question #19 is: "When the interpretation of the artwork is based the viewer's personality, it is *less* effective." As this question is phrased negatively (as indicated by "less effectively"), I reversed the scores when analyzing this question.[6] The question has the personal approach category because visitor personality is supportive of the art interpretation process. The personal approach to art interpretation incorporates identities, personalities, and autobiographies (Schiff, 1996). This approach recognizes that incorporating *who* the viewer is into the interpretation process is valuable.

Question #21 is a personal approach to teaching art interpretation because it focuses on viewers' feelings. Barrett (2000) emphasizes, "*Feelings* are guides to interpretations" (p. 6, italics added). Burnham and Kai-Kee (2007) also note that people find meaning in visual art by incorporating their personal feelings.

Survey questions #10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 belong to the category of communal approaches (Refer to Table 2). Sub-categories include: Design Elements (Q10), Color Choice (Q11), Technical Processes (Q13), Art History (Q14), Art Criticism (Q15), Context (Q16), and Artist Biography (Q17).

[6] The next chapter includes an explanation of the findings pertaining to Question #19.

Table 2

Communal Art Interpretation Survey Questions and Codes.

Question #	Question	Code
Q10	When interpreting artwork, it is important to examine the design elements.	Design Elements
Q11	Analyzing color choice can support the interpretation of the artwork.	Color Choice
Q13	Examining technical processes can help one understand the artwork's meaning.	Technical Processes
Q14	Knowledge of art history can increase one's ability to interpret artwork.	Art History
Q15	Knowledge of art criticism can increase one's ability to interpret artwork.	Art Criticism
Q16	Identifying the historical context can support a deeper understanding of the artwork.	Context
Q17	It is important to study the artist's life in order to interpret the meaning of the artwork.	Artist Biography

Questions #10 and 11 pertain to the communal approach because some art scholars and art educators use design elements in art interpretation processes (Davis, 2010; Wagner, 2012; Wolcott, 1994).

Question #13 is the communal approach because many teachers and art scholars examine tools, materials, and processes when they interpret artwork (De Smedt & De Cruz, 2011; DiBlasio, 1992; Pringle, 2009; Wagner, 2012; Wilson, 2012; Wolcott, 1994).

Questions #14 and #15 reflect the communal approach because they are based on knowledge of art history and art criticism, respectively. Barrett (2000) includes art historians and art critics within the community of art scholars. Efland (1992), along with Wolcott (1994), note that knowledge of art supported art interpretation practices.

Question #17 is a communal approach because art scholars have identified that understanding artist biographies is a major component studying and interpreting art (Carroll, 1997; Wagner, 2012). Barrett (2000) explains a communal art interpretation is often synthesized from encyclopedic accounts of artists about their lives.

Question #16 is the communal approach to art interpretation because it is based on integrating historical knowledge related to the artworks to discover meanings. Art scholars stress analysis of historical context in art interpretation processes (Burton, 2008; Grube, 2012; Richmond, 2009; Shiff, 2012).

This study includes one research question that inquires whether or not museum educators and curators recognize curators as "teachers." Therefore, the survey includes Question #30 relating to this issue, "Curators are teachers."

Qualitative Methods in This Study

Eisner (1991) explains that qualitative research methods can enable the discovery of qualities that characterize experiences. In addition, Stokrocki (1997) notes that interviews support the research objective of gaining insights into the nature of teaching in museum contexts. This study uses qualitative methods to examine the experience of teaching art interpretation. Qualitative interviews with museum educators and curators enable the gathering of participant explanations of the complex issue of teaching art interpretation in museum contexts. Museum educator and curator interviewees share their experiences in their own words. Participants' examples explain their rationales for using particular pedagogical priorities.

Consistency in the inquiry process supports dependability (Allen, Gutwill, Perry, Garibay, Ellenbogen, Heimlich, Reich, & Klein, 2007). Golafshani (2003) explains

dependability in qualitative research involves "credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness" (p. 600). This study supports dependability because interviewees respond to the same set of semi-structured questions (Appendix C).

Interview protocol. The interviews focus on discovering the knowledge and experiences of a small sample of informants. Semi-structured interviews with five museum educators and three curators at the Museum of Modern Art, Guggenheim Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Phoenix Art Museum, and Heard Museum permit the examination of multiple layers of the participants' responses, regarding the phenomenon of teaching art interpretation.

The pre-determined interview questions are based on the primary research questions: The questions pertain to personal and communal approaches to teaching art interpretation, and curators' identities as teachers. Rather than explore how participants might interpret artwork for themselves, this study focuses on how museum educator and curator participants *teach* visitors to interpret artwork. Participants are encouraged to share an example of how they might teach art interpretation to adult visitors, using an artwork from their museum's permanent collection. Participants also are invited to share their perceptions of curators as teachers.

Interviews have durations ranging from 60 to 80 minutes, often onsite at the museums. Before the interviews begin, participants are asked to give their consent[7] to audio record the conversations to be used for future transcription. Transcription supports the organization, preservation, and analysis of the qualitative data.

[7] To protect the confidentiality of all participants, I use pseudonyms.

Approach to data analysis. This study uses Schwartz-Shea and Yanow's (2012) suggestion of front-loading categories and codes for the semi-structured interview questions. While front-loading codes to the interview questions supports analysis by drawing focus to the major issues under examination, identifying emergent codes in the qualitative data analysis process supports the identification of nuanced differences among participants. Open-ended questions enable participants to have opportunities to explain their unique teaching methods.

Data analysis involves content analysis, which consists of interpreting data in the interview transcripts (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Saldaña, 2013; Stokrocki, 1997). Saldaña (2013) suggests that coding is a craft: Analysis methods begin with coding derived from the survey coding; additional codes emerge during the process of coding the interview transcripts.

Coding processes, such as color-coding, involve a systematic process of identifying participants' art interpretation teaching practices and determining patterns (Saldaña, 2013). Color-coding includes the process of identifying codes within transcripts, assigning the codes an individual color, and determining the frequency with which participants referred to specific ideas. During this coding process, main issues are identified and new codes emerge from the data.

The study uses qualitative research software, Dedoose, to code the interviews, organize the data, and make cross-comparisons among participants. Dedoose supports the identification of important participant quotes, which later serve as examples to support and interpret the survey findings.

The study also involves the performance of member checking. Member checking is the process in which researchers share findings with participants to determine whether they are describing them correctly. This action permits participants to review the transcribed and analyzed interviews and then communicate their feedback, leading to clearer explanations of interviewees' perspectives.

Participants

Survey Participants

Recruitment involved a mass distribution of the survey to museum educators and curators at art museums in the United States. I first selected the museum educators and curators, and then individuals self-selected whether to respond to the survey. One hundred and eighteen respondents completed the Art Museum Education survey. I invited an approximately equal number of curators and museum educators to participate (300 individuals in each group); however, nearly three times more museum educators (n=88) than curators (n=30) completed the survey.

Participants identified working at 74 different art museums in the United States. Participants from 35 states and 54 cities participated in the survey. (Refer to Figure 5 for a map, which includes all of the participating art museums). Participants from 11 higher education art museums also participated.[8] Nine participants declined to share the name of

[8] The higher educational art museums included: the Arizona State University Art Museum, Yale Center for British Art, Savannah College of Art and Design Museum of Art, University of Iowa Museum of Art, Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, Johnson County Community College, Nasher Museum of Art, Duke University, The Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art, College of Charleston, Meadows Museum at Southern Methodist University, and The Henry Art Gallery of the University of Washington.

the museum institution for which they worked. For additional information, including tables and charts describing participant information, refer to Appendix D.

Figure 5. Map of Museum Participants. This Google map illustrates the location and names of the museums, from which museum educator and curator survey participants came.

Interview Participants

Interviewee participants included museum educators and curators at art museums in New York City, NY: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Guggenheim Museum, and in Phoenix, AZ: the Heard Museum and the Phoenix Art Museum.

I selected the museum participants due to my access to the institutions, and participants' availability. To obtain diversity, I also made efforts to recruit multicultural participants. A Navajo museum educator from the Heard Museum participated in this study.

Prior to their interviews, all interviewees completed the Art Museum Education survey. Viewing their surveys prior to in-person meetings enabled me to gain information about their approaches to teaching art interpretation.

Participant Recruitment

Participant recruitment for surveys began with outreach to professionals at art museums in major U.S. metropolitan areas. First, I contacted museum workers at museums in the ten most populated American cities (El Nasser & Overberg, June 2012): New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Antonio, San Diego, Dallas, and San Jose.

Then, I broadened my recruitment scope to include additional urban centers, such as: Jacksonville, Indianapolis, Austin, San Francisco, Columbus, Charlotte, Detroit, Memphis, Boston, Seattle, Denver, Atlanta, Baltimore, and Washington, DC. To obtain a diverse sample, I aimed at procuring participants from all fifty states.

Individual email recruitment. I searched museum websites for museum educators' and curators' contact information.[9] I then communicated with approximately 200 individuals through individual emails, where I described the research study, shared the IRB-approved recruitment script (Appendix E), and sent the survey. The survey response rate using this method was approximately 30% (n=55).

Qualtrics system recruitment. I also recruited survey participants using the web-based Qualtrics system, where I invited approximately 400 additional museum educators and curators. The response rate using Qualtrics was approximately 15% (n=63). Using

[9] Frequently, the curator contact information was not easily accessible. Therefore, I contacted the museum information or visitor services and requested curatorial department contact information.

Qualtrics enabled me to email many individuals at once, which increased time efficiency. The system also stored individual surveys on the website in a single location. Lastly, Qualtrics generated electronic reports, including the average amount of time spent completing the survey, which was 4.25 minutes. Qualtrics also reported that 84% of participants completed all of the survey questions.

Participant Demographics

Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS), I analyzed demographics and assigned each participant an identification number. I calculated the numbers and percentages within each demographic variable. I used the Chi-square statistics test[10] to determine statistical significant differences between museum educators and curators.

Age. Most participants were aged between 26-45 years old. The largest number of participants were: 26-30 years old (n=27, 22.9%), 31-35 years old (n=23, 19.5%), and 41-45 years old (n=18, 15.3%).

Museum educators were, on average, younger than curators; their most common age range was 26-30 years old (n=25, 28.4%). Many curators reported they were in their 40s'.[11] Curators most frequently reported age range was: 41-45 years old (n=6, 20%). The

[10]The Chi-Square Test for independence is used to examine the relationship between two categorical variables. This test compares the frequencies or proportions of cases in each category (Pallant, 2007). The Chi-square statistic shows any discrepancies between expected results and actual results. For example, if someone tosses a coin 100 times, it is expected that it will land on heads 50 times ("Chi-Square Statistic," n.d.).

[11] A finding from this study was that the median age for curator participants was similar to curators participants in American Alliance of Museums' 2012 National Comparative Museum Salary Study. The median age for curators in the AAM sample was 49. Meanwhile, this study's sample of museum educators *differed* from the AAM sample, whose median age for educators was 43, which was older than this study's sample.

proportion of professionals, who were below forty years old, was statistically significant: Curator participants were more likely than museum educator participants to be over the age of 40. Refer to Table 3 below for a comparison of the groups' ages.

Table 3

Ages, As Reported by Museum Educator and Curator Survey Participants

This table illustrates the age distribution of participants, according to the 20-40 years age range and the 41+ years age range.

	Tot. (N)	20-40 years old (n)	% of Museum Educators are 20-40 years old	% of Curators are 20-40 years old	% of all participants are 20-40 years old	41+ years old (n)	% of Museum Educators are 41+ years old	% of Curators are 41+ years old	% of all Participants are 41+ years old
Museum Educators	88	57	64.8%	-	49.1%	31	35.2%	-	26.7%
Curators	28*	8	-	28.6%	6.9%	20	-	71.4%	17.2%
Museum Educators & Curators	116	65	-	-	56%	51	-	-	44%

*Note: Two curator participants declined to state their age ranges. Therefore, N=116.

Gender. More females (n=96, 81.4%) than males (n=22, 18.6%) participated in the survey. Within both of the museum educator (n=75, 85.2%) and curator (n=21, 70%) groups, a greater proportion of participants were female. Although both groups were comprised of more females than males, there was not a statistically significant difference between the two groups for gender.

Ethnicity/Race. Within both groups, the biggest number of museum educators (n=71, 80.7%) and curators (n=26, 86.7%) identified as White. No statistically significant difference between museum educators and curators existed for ethnicity/race.

Education level. Within both groups, the largest number of museum educators (n=56, 63.6%) and curators (n=20, 66.7%) reported earning master's degrees. Educational degree was statistically significant: Curator respondents were more likely than museum educator respondents to possess higher educational degrees. Refer to Table 4 for participants' highest education levels.

Table 4

Highest Education Level Achieved, As Reported by Museum Educator and Curator Survey Participants

This table illustrates the percentage of participants who earned bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees.

Highest Educ. Level	Mus. Educators (n)	% Mus. Educators	Curators (n)	% Curators	Mus. Ed. & Curators (n)	% Mus. Ed. & Curators
Bachelor's Degree	24	27.3%	3	10.0%	27	22.9%
Master's Degree	56	63.6%	20	66.7%	76	64.4%
Doctorate	8	9.1%	7	23.3%	15	12.7%
Total	88		30		118	

Academic discipline. Art history was the most frequently reported academic discipline for both educators (n=27, 30.7%) and curators (n=19, 63.3%). Though this discipline was the most frequently reported by both groups (Refer to Table 5), a statistically significant difference existed between museum educators and curators in this study: Curators were more likely than museum educators to have a background in art history.

Table 5

Academic Disciplines of Museum Educator and Curator Survey Participants

Education Discipline	Museum Educators	% Museum Educators	Curators	% Curators	Museum Educators & Curators	% Museum Educators & Curators
Art education	13	14.8%	0	0%	13	11.0%
Art history	27	30.7%	19	63.3%	46	39.0%
Education	3	3.4%	0	0%	3	2.5%
History	1	1.1%	0	0%	1	0.8%
Museum studies	6	6.8%	3	10.0%	9	7.6%
Public admin.	4	4.5%	1	3.3%	5	4.2%
Studio art	11	12.5%	4	13.3%	15	12.7%
Other	10	11.4%	2	6.7%	12	10.2%
Unknown	13	14.8%	1	3.3%	14	11.9%
Total (n)	88		30		118	

A frequently selected discipline for educators (n=11, 12.5%) and curators (n=4, 13.3%) was studio art. The frequency of art history and studio art academic disciplines indicated that museum educators and curators came from backgrounds that concentrate on knowledge of art. However, while art history and studio art accounted for approximately 76% of the academic disciplines of curators, these two disciplines accounted for only 43% of museum educators' academic backgrounds. Museum educator participants came from more varied educational backgrounds than curator participants, including museum studies, public administration, history, art education, and education.

Many museum educators reported art education (n=13, 14.8%) and education (n=3, 3.4%) as their academic disciplines, but no curators identified art education or education as their academic backgrounds. Having earned education-related academic

degrees is understandable for museum educators, as education is the primarily responsibility of the their profession. Curators' professional requirements focus on research of the collection and exhibition development; a smaller percentage of their overall job commitments include educational goals. Therefore, it is reasonable that they would come from academic disciplines that concentrated on the study of art.

Participant Demographics Summary

This study is limited to a selected sample of museum educators and curators, which may not be representative of the general museum population. Though the survey sample is small and the results are not generalizable, findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge of art museums. Analysis of participant demographics led to a discovery of statistically significant differences between the museum educator and curator groups, including: age, highest level of educational degree, and art history discipline.

Chapter Summary

This chapter contains an explanation of the methodology for this mixed methods study in art education, as well as a description of participants' demographic information. The next chapter provides a presentation of the study's findings.

Chapter Five: The Findings

This chapter contains the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study, which are focused on respondents' personal and communal approaches to teaching art interpretation, as well as their perceptions of curators as teachers. Statistically significant findings are followed by qualitative examples from interviews, which serve to illuminate participants' teaching approaches. The chapter provides an explanation of the groups' different pedagogical priorities, which are based on their community of practice's adoption of distinct teacher persona.

Statistically Significant Findings with Qualitative Examples

Mann-Whitney Test

Analysis of survey data showed that museum educator and curator participants did not generally have diverging responses to all survey questions. Results of the Mann-Whitney test led to the discovery of some statistically significant differences between the two groups. Of the eleven art interpretation questions, only *three* questions yielded statistically significant findings: One question (Q7) focused on personal approaches, and two questions (Q14, Q16) focused on communal approaches. In addition, the single survey question that examined curators as teachers (Q30) had statistically significant findings. Group membership affected participants' responses for these four survey questions (Refer to Table 6 and Appendix F).

Table 6

Statistically Significant Survey Findings

Question #	Question	Category	Code
Q7	Making connections to visitors' personal lives can elicit understanding of artworks.	Personal	Visitors' Connections
Q14	Knowledge of art history can increase one's ability to interpret artwork.	Communal	Art History
Q16	Identifying the historical context can support a deeper understanding of the artwork.	Communal	Context
Q30	Curators are teachers.	Curators Are Teachers	Curators Are Teachers

Personal Approaches to Teaching Art Interpretation: Visitors' Connections (Q7)

Many museum educator participants reported that they connect artworks to visitors' lives when they teach art interpretation in art museum settings (Q7). Several museum educators strongly prioritized bridging artworks individually to visitors through making personal connections to their lives.

Survey findings. As Q7 (Visitors' Connections) yielded a statistically significant finding, a comparison of mean scores was conducted in order to determine the degree to which respondents expressed agreement with Q7. Museum educator participants expressed *stronger* agreement than curator participants. On a continuum from strongly disagree (2 points) to strongly agree (5 points), the museum educator group had a mean score of 4.59, while the curator group had a lower mean score of 4.28 (Refer to Table 7 and Appendix F). Museum educators were, thus, more likely to agree with making connections to visitors' lives when teaching art interpretation.

Table 7

A Comparison of Mean Scores of Museum Educator and Curator Participants for Q7

Question #	Code	Museum Educators' Mean Score	Museum Educators (n)	Curators' Mean Score	Curators (n)
Q7	Visitors' Connections	**4.59**	88	4.28	29

Note: Mean scores are rounded to two decimal places.
Bold indicates the higher mean score for that survey question.
Possible range of scores is 2.0 (Strongly Disagree) to 5.0 (Strongly Agree).

Qualitative examples. Guggenheim Museum educator, Ellie, shared an example of using the personal approach when she discussed Rene Dijkstra's photography (Figure 6) with visitors. The artwork's concept of motherhood directly related to the daily lives of many of the visitors on Ellie's Stroller tours, as Dijkstra photographed mothers with newborn babies. Ellie said:

> There was a photography show of an artist named Rineke Dijkstra. Do you know her? She's from the Netherlands. She took these photographs of women right after they gave birth. Gigantic photographs, like, basically life-size. One of them was like an hour after the woman gave birth, totally nude with her baby. The next one was, you know a day after, and the next one was a week after, something like that. They're all naked.
>
> I had the moms stand in front of it [the photograph] and tell me what they thought about it, and it was … a very emotional and very powerful thing, especially if you've just had a baby. … They were making their own personal connections to it, you know.

Connecting artwork to viewers' experiences reflected the personal approach to teaching art interpretation.

Figure 6. Artwork by Rineke Dijkstra. This figure illustrates the photograph, *Tecla, Amsterdam,* Netherlands, that Dijkstra created in 1994. Tate Museum. Retrieved from: http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/dijkstra-tecla-amsterdam-netherlands-may-16-1994-p78098.

Metropolitan Museum of Art educator, Jennifer, also used a personal approach that focused on visitors' connections. She stated:

> One of our gallery teaching goals for the department as a whole is really making connections to contemporary life and to visitors' *personal* [emphasis added] lives. So, that is something we all share, and that can take many different forms.
>
> It might be, you're looking at a relief of Ashurnasirpal II, the Assyrian ruler, and then thinking about contemporary politics. How do leaders convey ideas with power, or authority today. … You could share an example that makes a contemporary parallel to help people build a bridge to something that might seem less familiar, but you can also invite people to share their own connections. Ideally, I think we'd like to see both.

Jennifer linked the artwork to visitors when she asked them to compare the topic of Assyrian rule (Figure 7) to contemporary politics.

Figure 7. Relief of Ashurnasirpal II. This figure illustrates an Assyrian artwork on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The interviewee provided the image.

Museum educator at the Phoenix Art Museum, Connie, stated: "A personal connection [to the artwork] is very important." She shared an example of how visitors connected to De Kooning's *Woman in the Pool* (1968) (Figure 8). She said:

> Somebody said, "Well, it makes me think of … jumping in the backyard pool."
>
> Then another one said, "Well, I didn't grow up in a place where there's a pool. I lived near the ocean. So, for me, it's got a slightly different meaning."

Connie responded to visitors' associations to artwork, which stemmed from their life experiences.

Figure 8. Artwork by Willem De Kooning. This figure illustrates the oil painting, *Woman in the Pool*, which de Kooning created in 1968. It is a part of the collection of the Phoenix Art Museum. Image retrieved from: http://egallery.phxart.org/view/objects/asitem/4518/154/title-asc;jsessionid=1365899C57715457E8579225804517AE?t:state:flow=e0575348-981a-474e-a465-bba0efc5bca2

Communal Approaches to Teaching Art Interpretation: Art History (Q14) and Context (Q16)

Many curator participants strongly prioritized knowledge of art history (Q14) and contextual information (Q16) surrounding artworks.

Survey findings. While many respondents from both groups agreed with Questions #14 and 16, a review of mean scores indicated that curators expressed *stronger* agreement than museum educators with these two questions. For Q14 (Art History), the curator group had a mean score of 4.71, and the educator group had a mean score of 4.24 (Refer to Table 8 and Appendix F). For Q16 (Context), the curator group had a mean score of 4.79, and the museum educator group had a mean score of 4.24. Curator

respondents were, thus, more likely to agree with incorporating art history and contextual information in art interpretation teaching practices.

Table 8

A Comparison of Mean Scores of Museum Educator and Curator Participants for Q14 and Q16

Question #	Code	Museum Educators' Mean Score	Museum Educators (n)	Curators' Mean Score	Curators (n)
Q14	Art History	4.24	87	**4.71**	28
Q16	Context	4.34	88	**4.79**	28

Note: Mean scores are rounded to two decimal places.
Bold indicates the higher mean score for that survey question.
Possible range of scores is 2.0 (Strongly Disagree) to 5.0 (Strongly Agree).

Qualitative examples. Phoenix Art Museum curator, Miranda, shared her perspective that knowledge of art history could elucidate the artwork's meanings. When interpreting a wood sculpture by Ben Jackel (Figure 9), she discussed other artists in art history who were his contemporaries. Miranda said:

> If you look at kind of when L.A. artists took off in the 1960s, a lot of them were using a lot of materials that were coming out of the military industrial complex to go fast, or popular culture- hot rod, surfboard technology.

She related Jackel's artwork to similar artworks, which were created during the same time period. Art history supported her communal approach to interpreting this artwork.

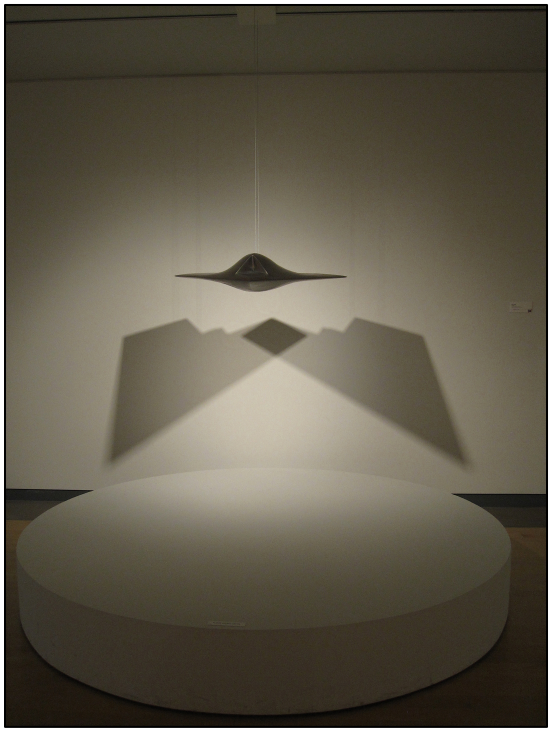

Figure 9. Artwork by Ben Jackel. Photograph by Rory Schmitt.

Miranda also explained how she integrated contextual information when teaching art interpretation. She said:

> If we think about the madness that was around … the whole Star Wars program under Reagan … when the military started to think [of] stealth-bombers and those kinds of things. I think's totally appropriate to then have a show that … references the pop culture that they themselves were using to … make this material more accessible.

When interpreting Jackel's artwork, Miranda referenced the U.S. government, including military operations and President Reagan. In addition, she described popular culture of the time, during which *Star Wars* movies were extremely well liked. Weaving together contextual facts supported this curator's process of teaching art interpretation.

Curators Are Teachers (Q30)

The final survey question for which there was a statistically significant difference between the groups was Q30: "Curators are teachers." Many curator participants held a *strong* recognition of other curators having teaching functions (The survey question was "Curators are teachers," rather than "I am a teacher"). The museum educator group lacked a shared perspective of curators serving as teachers, as participants from the educator group expressed agreement and disagreement with Q30. Museum educators were most familiar with the educational responsibilities of their own jobs, and some museum educators were not aware of how curators were involved in teaching visitors.

Survey findings. Compared to museum educators in this study, curators were statistically more likely to *strongly agree* with Q30. The curator group had a mean score of 4.46, and the museum educator group had a mean score of 3.86 (Refer to Table 9 and Appendix F).

Table 9

A Comparison of Mean Scores of Museum Educator and Curator Participants for Q30

Question #	Code	Museum Educators' Mean Score	Museum Educators (n)	Curators' Mean Score	Curators (n)
Q30	Curators are Teachers	3.86	76	**4.46**	24

Note: Mean scores are rounded to two decimal places.
Bold indicates the higher mean score for that survey question.
Possible range of scores is 2.0 (Strongly Disagree) to 5.0 (Strongly Agree).

Qualitative examples. Curator interviewees shared their perceptions of the teacher identities of *other* curators, as well as their *own* teacher identities. Phoenix Art Museum curator, Miranda, discussed curators' teacher roles. She said:

> I think it [teaching] is part of the job. It depends on what the institution needs. … Part of the reality is that we do different things. We look after a permanent collection. We acquire. We do research in the permanent collection. We create exhibitions, and we do an enormous amount of donor cultivation.

Miranda explained that curators have educational goals; teaching is *one* of their many responsibilities.

Miranda also described her *own* teaching functions at the museum, including regularly leading lectures for docents and other staff members. She said:

> I work with the docents, so I train docents. I give them a couple of lectures a year. I talk to the docents themselves about the reinstallation, about new works, and also about exhibitions. So, I train the docents.
>
> I train the security staff because they also need a background. When we installed the Dan Graham [outdoor sculpture], I also talked to the cafeteria staff, so those are kind of the internal training.

When museum visitors were frequently asking cafeteria workers about a contemporary sculpture by Dan Graham (Figure 10), which was located next to the café in the courtyard, she decided to lead lecture for these staff members about the artwork. Miranda's statement reflected the idea that some curators recognized themselves as teachers when they instruct diverse museum staff members and volunteers about artworks.

Figure 10. Artwork by Dan Graham. This figure illustrates *Curves for E.S.* that Graham created in 2005. It is on display at the Phoenix Art Museum. Photography by Rory Schmitt, 2013.

Curator from the Museum of Modern Art, Olivia, also described her teaching role. She said:

> I certainly help organize exhibitions and write wall labels. In that way, I'm indirectly interacting with adult visitors. But my actual real-time interaction with adult visitors is actually probably limited to tours that I would give of an exhibition that I had helped to organize, kind of on an ad hoc basis. …
>
> Sometimes, we'll do a tour for the people who will give more tours. Sometimes, we give like a tour to our security guards so that they're aware. Sometimes, we'll do tours for school groups or kind of special collectors' groups, that kind of a thing.

Olivia identified that she teaches visitors indirectly through exhibitions and directly through tours and staff trainings.

Museum educator, Connie, explained her perspective on the difference between museum educators' and curators' connections to teaching in the museum. She said:

> I think our roles are different and complementary. How I think about it … I look at it as the curator has the content knowledge, the object-based knowledge. They are the experts about the objects. They're the advocates for the objects.
>
> Educators are experts in audiences. We're the advocates for the audiences, and how information is best received, most likely to be received, how to best facilitate a connection with that object. … We tend to be a bit heavier on the empathy [compared to curators] because we are working with the people, and seeing how different groups respond. That's where our expertise lies.

Like Grove (2009), Connie explained that curators were object experts, while museum educators were audience experts. She explained that though curators have knowledge of art and possess specialties as experts in the field, they do not necessarily connect that knowledge to visitors. As a museum educator, Connie explained it was *her* responsibility to link art objects with visitors for learning to occur.

Similarities Between the Museum Educator and Curator Participants

This study reports findings from the 12 questions (of the 31-question survey) that pertain to personal and communal approaches and curator teacher identity. Only *four* questions yielded statistically significant differences between the two groups. Of the remaining eight questions pertaining to art interpretation, the differences between the two groups were likely due to chance (Refer to Table 10). Group membership did not affect the ways in which museum educators and curators responded to the *majority* of the survey questions. Thus, many participants held some common priorities in how they teach art interpretation.

A Comparison of Mean Scores

Table 10

A Comparison of Mean Scores Addressing Personal and Communal Approaches

Q#	Question	Category	Code	Museum Educators' Mean Score	Museum Educators (n)	Curators' Mean Score	Curators (n)
Q19	When the interpretation of the artwork is based the viewer's personality, it is less effective.	Personal	Visitors' Personality	3.06	78	3.35	23
Q21	Viewers can consider their feelings when interpreting the artwork.	Personal	Visitors' Feelings	4.46	84	4.31	29
Q22	When interpreting art, people look at the relationship between the art and themselves.	Personal	Visitors' Reltnship. to Artwork	4.37	84	4.08	26
Q10	When interpreting artwork, it is important to examine the design elements.	Communal	Design Elements	3.98	84	4.10	29
Q11	Analyzing color choice can support the interpretation of the artwork.	Communal	Color Choice	4.16	85	4.11	28
Q13	Examining technical processes can help one understand the artwork's meaning.	Communal	Technical Processes	4.25	85	4.11	28

Q#	Question	Category	Code	Museum Educators' Mean Score	Museum Educators (n)	Curators' Mean Score	Curators (n)
Q15	Knowledge of art criticism can increase one's ability to interpret artwork	Communal	Art Criticism	3.98	86	3.96	28
Q17	It is important to study the artist's life in order to interpret the meaning of the artwork.	Communal	Artist Biography	3.37	84	3.81	27

Note: Mean scores are rounded to two decimal places.
Possible range of scores is 2.0 (Strongly Disagree) to 5.0 (Strongly Agree).

Examples of Similar Perspectives of Museum Educators and Curators

Very similar mean scores for the two groups showed that these two communities of practice shared some priorities. For Q15 (Art Criticism), museum educators had a mean score of 3.98 and curators had a mean score of 3.96. In addition, for Q11 (Color Choice), museum educators had a mean score of 4.16 and curators had a mean score of 4.11.

Both groups responded similarly to Q19 (Visitors' Personality) and Q17 (Artist Biography) (See Table 11). Museum educators and curators had a frequent occurrence of disagree and strongly disagree responses to these questions.

Table 11

Commonalities between Museum Educators and Curators in the Rate of Disagreement with Survey Questions

Question #	Code	Group	Disagree (n)	Strongly Disagree (n)	Rate of Disagreement with Survey Question
Q19	Visitor Personality	Museum Educators	47	15	79.49%
		Curators	14	1	65.22%
Q17	Artist Biography	Museum Educators	45	5	59.52%
		Curators	18	1	70.37%

Visitor's personality (Q19). Several museum educator and curator participants expressed that incorporating the viewer's personality could support art interpretations. This finding reflected the notion that both communities of practice recognized the value of visitors' unique differences.

Approximately 79.49% of museum educator participants indicated disagreement with Q19[12]. They disagreed (n=47) and strongly disagreed (n=15) with the survey question: "When the interpretation of the artwork is based the viewer's personality, it is *less* effective." Approximately 65.22% of curator participants indicated disagreement with this question. Curator participants disagreed (n=14) and strongly disagreed (n=1) with Q19.

Artist biography (Q17). For several curator and museum educator respondents, artist biography was not a major priority in art interpretation. This finding reflected the

[12] Question #19 had a frequent response rate of "Don't Know" (Appendix G). More clearly wording could have led to fewer "Don't Know" responses.

notion that both communities of practice de-emphasized the pedagogical necessity of exploring an artist's biography as a pathway to interpreting his or her artwork.

Approximately 59.52% of museum educators indicated disagreement with Q17; museum educators frequently disagreed (n=45) and strongly disagreed (n=5). Approximately 70.37% of curator participants disagreed with Q17; curators disagreed (n=18) and strongly disagreed (n=1).

Art Interpretation Findings Were Nuanced

Findings about teaching art interpretation were nuanced. The findings did *not* show that museum educator participants only used personal approaches, while curator participants only used communal approaches. Teaching art interpretation in art museums was complex: The study found subtle distinctions between museum educators' and curators' approaches to art interpretation pedagogy. Examining museum educators' and curators' teacher personae supported an understanding of some differences in their teaching approaches.

Findings About Teacher Persona

Cook (2009) defines a teacher persona as a role that a person embodies to adapt to learning environments. Garrison (2009) describes personae: "nurturing caregiver, guardian of morality, champion of the global economy, self-sacrificing do-gooder, cultural worker, intellectual, tyrant … ." (, p. 67). Parini (1997) explains that many teachers think about their self-presentation. As Davis (2011) points out, dress, gesture, and performance comprise a teacher persona.

Teacher persona connected the study's organizational framework of community of practice and personal/communal approaches. The relationship is indicated below:

- **Membership in a Community of Practice (COP):** Museum educators and curators belonged to separate communities of practice.
- **Personal/Communal Approaches in COP:** Each community of practice possessed pedagogical priorities, which had some tendencies to use a personal or a communal approach to teaching art interpretation.
- **Adoption of Teacher Persona:** As members of the communities of practice, museum educators and curators carried out their community's values through adopting its teacher persona. Both groups have teacher personae because both groups have pedagogical priorities. The teacher personae are different for each community of practice.

The statistically significant findings, as well as the qualitative supportive evidence, served as data for understanding museum educators' and curators' teacher personae. Interactions with real-life museum educators and curators provided information with which to further explore teacher personae.

Museum Educators' Teacher Personae

Finding. This study found that museum educators' teacher persona was that of a "people person." Museum educators were easily accessible to contact and communicate with. Their teacher persona was a helpful teacher, who frequently provided educational support to everyday visitors.

Quantitative evidence. Statistically significant findings supported the notion that museum educators' teacher persona would have more tendencies than curators to use a personal approach to teaching art interpretation. Survey analysis revealed that museum educator participants embraced visitors' personal connections to artworks when interpreting art (Q7). Therefore, a strong emphasis of their teacher persona was making connections to visitors' lives.

Qualitative evidence. Prior to interviews, a review of museum websites showed museum education webpages provided direct contact information for museum educators. Museum educators aimed at making exhibitions accessible; therefore, their teacher persona was often easily accessible by the public.[13] Compared to curators (n=30), more museum educators completed the surveys (n=88). In addition, compared to curators (n=3), more museum educators were available for interviews (n=5).

During interviews, museum educators fostered an air of casualness. They selected meeting places that were not formal, including an outdoor meeting space next to a community mural (Heard Museum), and a conference room with bouncy balls and a chalkboard, which read: "It's about lifelong learners" (MoMA). By having informal meeting spaces, museum educators presented a teacher persona that was easy to speak to.

Museum educators' teacher persona was also apparent in their presentations. Many interviewees appeared casually dressed, wearing slacks and flat shoes. Daily interactions with the public involved activities that have them standing on their feet,

[13]Some museum educators were very eager to support this research. For example, one museum educator invited me to visit her museum and stay in her home in Bentonville, Arkansas.

influencing the choices that affect self-presentation. Comfortable and professional garb enabled museum educators to use a teacher persona that indicated flexibility and adaptability to learning environments.

Curators' Teacher Persona

Finding. This study found that curators' teacher persona was that of an art scholar. As intellectuals, curators possessed expert knowledge.

Quantitative evidence. Statistically significant findings supported the notion that curators' teacher persona would have more tendencies than museum educators to use a communal approach, which focused on understandings of artwork held by the community of art scholars. Survey analysis revealed that curator participants emphasized knowledge of art history (Q14) and contextual information (Q16) related to artworks.

Qualitative evidence. Prior to interviews, a review of museum websites showed curators' direct contact information was often absent. This lack of information showed that the general public would have difficulty gaining communicating with curators. Gaining curatorial participation for this study was challenging.

Curators' focus on exhibitions and research supported their development of a teacher persona that was an art scholar, who has limited visitor interactions. Some curators shared the perspective that they taught through their exhibitions. Therefore, their teacher persona did not require them to practice conversationalist skills with a diverse public.

During interviews, curators appeared professional and formal. They selected interview locations in their private offices overlooking a courtyard (Heard Museum), and downtown Phoenix (Phoenix Art Museum). By having formal meeting spaces, curators presented a teacher persona that was professional and focused. One curator requested that we complete the interview over the phone (MoMA). Completing an interview in this manner prohibited me from being able to observe the interviewee's gestures, presentation, or location.

Curators were smartly dressed: one wore a hounds-tooth printed pantsuit; another wore a stylish black dress; both wore heels. Their self-presentations showed sophistication. As curators often had the responsibility of donor cultivation, they were appropriately dressed to meet with museum collectors, donors, and board members.

Chapter Summary

This chapter contains a presentation of the quantitative and qualitative findings. Though museum educators and curators shared agreement on many survey questions, the statistically significant findings showed some differences between the two groups. The next chapter is comprised of conclusions, a discussion, and implications for practice and future research.

Chapter Six: Conclusions, Discussion, and Implications

Conclusions

This study showed that teaching art interpretation in art museum contexts relied on pedagogical priorities that museum educator and curator participants recognized. This study provided answers to the following research questions:

1. How do museum educators and curators teach art interpretation? Do they have more tendencies to use personal or communal approaches to teaching art interpretation?

When teaching art interpretation, museum educators reported that they often made *personal connections* with visitors. They acknowledged that prior life knowledge and experiences were valuable in meaning-making efforts. The statistically significant findings showed that educator participants tended to use the personal approach of connecting artwork to visitors' lives (Q7).

When teaching art interpretation, curators reported that they frequently shared *communal understandings* of art with visitors. The statistically significant findings showed that curator participants tended to use the communal approach of integrating of art historical (Q14) and contextual information (Q16) into art interpretation pedagogical processes.

This study also found that both groups responded *similarly* to eight of the eleven art interpretation questions (Q10, Q11, Q13, Q15, Q17, Q19, Q21, Q22). Analysis determined that there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups in how they responded to those eight questions; differences in museum educators' and curators' mean scores were probably due to chance alone. Participants shared some values in prioritizing design elements, color choice, technical processes, artist biography,

art criticism, visitors' personalities, visitors' relationships, and visitors' feelings. Though they have different responsibilities and roles in museums, museum educator and curator participants shared some similar traits.

2. What are museum educators' and curators' communities of practice? How do their communities of practice affect the ways in which museum educators and curators teach art interpretation?

This study identified relationships, values, and routines that informed museum educators' and curators' communities of practice. Museum educators' community of practice was comprised of museum educators from the same institution, as well as different institutions. Visitors also often participated in their community of practice. The values of *education* and *visitor-centeredness* within their community of practice influenced museum educator participants to use a personal approach to teaching art interpretation.

Curators' community of practice was comprised of curators from the same institution, as well as different institutions. Within their community of practice, curators had limited in-person contact with the general public. The value of *scholarship* and *research* within curators' community of practice influenced curator participants to use a communal approach.

3. How do museum educators' and curators' communities of practice influence their teacher personae? What approaches to teaching art interpretation do their teacher personae tend to adopt?

This study found that museum educators and curators enact certain roles with museum audiences when they teach visitors. Their communities of practice influenced them to adopt *distinct* teacher personae. Identification of teacher personae illustrated the study's statistically significant findings of key differences between museum educators' and curators' teaching approaches.

As educators often had frequent interactions with the public, they used a teacher persona that was individually accessible to learners. Museum educators' teacher persona was that of a "people person," who used some personal approaches to art interpretation. Curators' limited interactions with the public influenced them to inhabit a teacher persona that was less accessible to visitors. If curators perceived their teaching as occurring through exhibitions, then they, arguably, felt less need to become closely acquainted with the general public. Curators' teacher persona consisted of an art scholar, who used some communal art interpretation approaches.

4. Do museum educators and curators perceive *curators* as teachers? If so, how?

While several curators strongly identified themselves as teachers, many museum educators did not strongly identify curators were teachers. Professionals were most cognizant of their *own* job responsibilities. As curators were more familiar with the educational responsibilities of other curators, they were, arguably, more likely to acknowledge that other curators possess teaching functions[14]. As museum educators' main responsibility involved education, they were more likely to view themselves as teachers more than they recognized curators as having such a role. They were likely to

[14] Survey Question #30 was "Curators are teachers," rather than "I am a teacher."

consider curators, who were in a separate department, as having responsibilities that did not center on teaching.

Discussion

Considerations of Museum Educators

Learner-centered. As Ellis (2004) explains, when instructors use the learner-centered theory, they focus on the needs of the learner, student, or child. In addition, Doyle (2011) notes that learner-centered approaches to teaching involved teachers as facilitators, rather than in the traditional role of lecturers. Several museum educator participants identified teaching approaches that included being facilitators who focused on learners. For example, Phoenix Art Museum educator, Connie, encouraged active participation of adult visitors. She motivated them to discuss artwork and ask questions. She stated:

> We [museum educators] are the facilitators. We are not just there to convey information. We are there to facilitate the discussion and to help them [visitors] draw out questions that then allow you to weave in the information that you have.
>
> That's really the mechanism. It should be a give and take with your audience, so that as you look more, they end up developing questions.
>
> Hopefully, you have some information that might answer that question and prompt others. There's a sort of ebb and flow in the conversation that usually gets to a deeper understanding. Often times, people will come to appreciate something that they may not have appreciated before.

Connie described her teaching style as comprised of evolving conversations with visitors.

This study supports literature on museum educators' learner-centered approaches. For example, Burchenal and Lasser (2007) note that learner-centered approaches within museum education have been developing over the past thirty years. Allen and Crowley

(2014) also explain that many museum educators use learner-centered teaching approaches and expect students to apply prior knowledge and make real world connections.

Museum educator participants recognized that active learners were a contributing force to the learning environment. This study's finding is consistent with Willumson's (2007) explanation that museum educators are student-centered and visitor-centered; they participate in dialogues with visitors to embrace the intelligence of museum visitors. This finding is also consistent with Burnham and Kai-Kee's (2011) discussion of their museum educator practice of participating in interactive dialogues with visitors. They explain that dialogues are based on viewers' perceptions and thoughts, thus encouraging discovery. Museum educators and visitors serve as co-explorers in art interpretation processes. Burnham and Kai-Kee (2007) explain that through dialogue with visitors, multiple meanings unfold.

De-emphasis of prior art knowledge. Several museum educator participants identified visitors' personal experiences, rather than their formal education, as relevant to the art interpretation process. Metropolitan Museum of Art educator, Jennifer, acknowledged a personal teaching approach, when she stated, "I think we really try and value and invite a range of perspectives and interpretations." When instructing adult visitors, she invited them to share their feelings.

Museum educators' personal approach to teaching art interpretation acknowledged that visitors do not need to have an extensive art education to find meaning in artworks. Educator participants frequently expressed the opinion that if visitors make personal connections to artworks then they can engage in rewarding and

valuable experiences. This study supports Neil's (2010b) findings; he explains that meanings unfold during museum educators' interactive experiences with visitors, which acknowledge the value of visitors' life experiences.

Frequent interactions with visitors. The study suggests that frequent interaction with visitors, who have a variety of levels of art knowledge, is an impetus for many museum educator participants to use a personal approach to teaching art interpretation. Many museum educators described individuals as actively creating their own meanings based on their prior knowledge and histories. They frequently held the opinion that visitors interpret their own experiences. Like Hooper-Greenhill (2004), many educators characterized meaning as not static but changing based on situations.

Considerations of Curators

Knowledge-centered. Ellis (2004) suggests that in a knowledge-centered approach to teaching: "A great deal of emphasis can and should be placed upon performance, inquiry, and discovery, but always with the notion of building up knowledge" (p. 105). A knowledge-centered approach concentrates on academic content as the main educational priority (Ellis, 2004).

Several curator participants identified integrating knowledge of art and context in their interpretation efforts. For example, Phoenix Art Museum curator, Miranda, related Jackel's sculpture to artwork made by California artists from the 1960s. Many curator participants tended to focus on disseminating knowledge about artworks, rather than focusing on the learners' personal connections to artworks.

Prior art knowledge. Art educators, such as Efland (1992), emphasize prior art knowledge as relevant to art interpretation processes. Additional scholars, such as Burton (2008) and Richmond (2009) stress context in the process of understanding art. Several curator participants held the belief that prior art knowledge and context support understandings of artworks.

Infrequent interactions with visitors. Many curator participants held a viewpoint that education did not require an in-person teacher for learning to occur; for them, exhibitions served as teachers. In exhibitions, some curators used "big ideas" to convey the exhibit's major messages; they created sections within exhibitions thematically to scaffold ideas. Curators also often organized exhibits chronologically to educate the public about distinct themes and techniques at various stages in an artist's career.

Hein (1998) explains that as knowledge is represented through exhibits, visitors are considered learners who gain specific and intended information. This study suggests that curators' conception of teaching expanded the traditional notion of what teaching *is* (i.e. occurs through inquiry, dialogue, and activity) and what teachers *do* (i.e. form relationships with learners).

Additional Considerations of Museum Educators and Curators

Macrocosmic and microcosmic viewpoints. Museum educators' and curators' teacher personae reflected microcosmic and macrocosmic viewpoints. Museum educator respondents recognized the positive impact of *individual* viewers' personally connecting with the artwork (as identified through visitor connections finding). Curators considered the *larger* picture of how the artwork was woven into history (as identified through art

history and context survey findings). While museum educators used a microcosmic view of how the specific artwork related particularly to the individual viewer, curators took a macrocosmic view of how the artwork related to other artworks of its time in the larger history of art. Rather than contrasting perspectives leading to friction and challenges within educational practices, the study acknowledges that these different approaches are supportive.

Relationships with learners. This study suggests that using personal and communal approaches can affect museum educators' and curators' relationships with learners. Closeness to learners, as well as separation from learners are some potential outcomes of using personal and communal approaches. While museum educators' persona enables them to join with learners on an equal footing, curators' persona separates them from learners.

Museum educators' focus on personal meanings *joins* them with visitors. A personal connection to an image or idea can be experienced by anyone of varying educational backgrounds. Many museum educators validate visitors' lives, intelligences, and experiences. Curators' dedication to sharing communal art understandings can *separate* them from visitors, as it assumes that visitors needed a specific tool (i.e. scholarly knowledge of art) to find meaning in artworks.

Constellations of Communities of Practice

Qualitative evidence supports the understanding that museum educators and curators in different locations can form their own communities. Though separated by geographic locations and institutions, members share similarities with one another in their

separate communities of practice. This study supports Steedman's (2012) statement that *community* does not require all members to exist in close proximity to one another.

The two groups' similar responses to the majority of the art interpretation survey questions supports an understanding that museum educators' and curators' communities of practice are constellations (Wenger, 1998, p. 127) of the larger community of practice of museums. Constellations of communities of practice exist, as communities of practice can belong to the same institution, and share historical roots, related enterprises, and artifacts (Wenger, 1998, p. 127). Museum educators' and curators' communities of practice are constellations, as members belong to similar institutions, share responsibilities, and engage with visual artworks. In addition, the two professions are united by their common values, including: the educational mission of their museums, visual artworks, knowledge of art, art display practices, and the collection of fine art objects.

Implications

Implications for Practice

Transparency in museum education. I advocate for art museums to increase the clarity of their teaching practices by sharing with visitors *what* they teach, *why* they teach, and *how* they teach. If museum educators and curators share similar values and teaching practices, then greater transparency can show how museums' educational efforts are united. Museums that focus on fulfilling their educational missions and the creating new knowledge, must be transparent in stating their goals.

Marstine (2006) explains that "new museology" encourages museums to be more transparent in their decision-making processes (p. 5), as transparency enables museums to

create positive experiences for visitors. Falk and Dierking (1992) also explain that when visitors feel valued, they support the museum through word-of-mouth promotion and repeat attendance.

Improved communication. I also advocate for museum educators and curators to communicate their pedagogical priorities to each other. Toohey and Wolins (1993) explain that communication can lead to a decrease in "notorious" turf battles between museum educators and curators (p. 4). Turf battles occur in museums when staff members from different departments lack shared goals and values, and when they lose sight of each others' expertise. Museum educators' and curators' turf battles often occur because both professions claim interpretation as a job responsibility. Rather than battling, museum educators and curators must strive to better understand each other's specialties and teaching practices. I stress that within museums, the museum educator-curator relationship is extremely important. Therefore, museum educators and curators should make additional efforts to understand each others' teaching approaches.

Grove (2009) encourages curators to recognize that educators are audience experts, and educators to acknowledge that curators are content experts. I also encourage curators to make efforts to understand how museum educators think on their feet, diagnose learning groups, and seamlessly respond to learners. In addition, I stress that educators should recognize that curators' possess extensive background knowledge, which enables them to develop art exhibitions and write texts about artworks.

Like Willumson, I encourage museum educators and curators to participate in reflective practices that unite their distinct communities of practice. Willumsum (2007)

writes: “Museum educators must have time to think of themselves as curators, and curators must have time to think of themselves as educators” (p. 93).

Benefits of teamwork. Scholars, including Cazjkowski and Hill (2008), Johnson (2009), Pollock (2007), Roberts (1997), and Willumson (2007), encourage museum educators curators to work together in collaborative teams. I also advocate for museum educators curators to work together in all phases of exhibitions to improve overall visitor education. I propose that if museum educators contribute to the team at the start of the exhibition and throughout the planning processes, then they would support curators in translating content to promote visitor understanding and enjoyment. Participation in exhibition development could provide opportunities for educators to gain a clearer understanding of curators’ educational goals for the exhibition, as well as contribute to creating achievable learning objectives.

Sheppard (2007) notes that collaboration in museums can be challenging and requires time, resources, and communication. I suggest that challenges can be minimized by museum educators and curators articulating their teaching roles, and pedagogical priorities. According to MacLeod (2001), there is tension between scholarship and visitor-centered programming. However, I propose that museum educators and curators can participate in successful joint enterprises as a part of a united team. Art exhibitions and art interpretation education could benefit from collaboration between museum educators and curators.

Implications for Further Study

Museum educator-curator collaborations. Museum educators and curators often work together when planning educational materials for an exhibition, or

coordinating a museum event. A follow-up study could examine how frequently, and in what manner, museum educators and curators collaborate. In addition, a study could pair a museum educator and a curator and examine their collaborations in their education and curatorial functions. The study would set out to explore how museum educator-curator collaborations can benefit visitors.

Gallery teaching observations. A future study could investigate how museum educators and curators from the same museum teach in the museum galleries. Researchers could identify personal and communal approaches to teaching art interpretation that museum educators and curators use. Researchers could also compare how museum educators and curators from the same institution teach similarly or differently in exhibition spaces.

Summary

When teaching university studio art students, Klebesadel (2006) explains that museums affect the way that artworks are interpreted. This study supports Klebesadel's (2006) description of museums as influencing interpretations. Museum professionals, such as educators and curators, serve as gatekeepers who influenced the interpretations of artworks. This study discovered differences in how museum educator and curator participants reported that teach adult visitors art interpretation. The study also found that although these two groups did have certain crucial differences, they agreed on many priorities in art interpretation. Therefore, the study's proposed implications for practice, including transparency, communication, and collaboration, were achievable goals.

This study's findings were not generalizable to all museum educators and curators. However, the findings contributed to the advancement of knowledge in art education through discussing contemporary teaching practices and perceptions of visual art educator identity.

Closing Remarks

Each day, curators and museum educators teach thousands of museum visitors how to find meanings in artworks. These two professions are connected through supporting the educational missions of their museums. The study's findings revealed pedagogical priorities of *both* professions.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Institutional Review Board Approval from Arizona State University

To:	Mary Erickson ART
From:	Mark Roosa, Chair Soc Beh IRB
Date:	12/28/2012
Committee Action:	**Exemption Granted**
IRB Action Date:	12/28/2012
IRB Protocol #:	1212008648
Study Title:	Art Museum Education: Understanding the Perspectives of Museum Educators and Curators

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX B

ART MUSEUM EDUCATION SURVEY

Art Museum Education Survey

Informed Consent: The purpose of the dissertation research study is to examine how art museums teach adult visitors to interpret visual artwork. If you decide to participate, then you will join a study involving qualitative research of museum educators and curators. You may choose to skip questions, if you choose. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. The results of this research study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but the researchers will not identify you. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you say yes now, you are free to say no later, and withdraw from the study at any time.
Your selection of the box below indicates that you consent to participate in the above study.

○ Agree to Participate ○ Decline Participation

Art Interpretation Survey for Museum Professionals

Please take a few moments to complete the items below. Based on your experience, please check your level of agreement (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know) with each of the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Artworks can have many interpretations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Art interpretations are strong when they are well-supported arguments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Viewing original artwork provides viewers materials to make judgments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Visitors explore their environments when finding meaning in artworks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Exhibition layout affects how visitors may interpret artwork in the museum	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Learning in the art museum involves active personal participation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Making connections to visitors' personal lives can elicit understanding of artworks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Interpreting artwork is a fluid process	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Using Visual Thinking Strategies is an effective way of art interpretation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When interpreting artwork, it is important to examine the design elements	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Analyzing color choice can support the interpretation of the artwork	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Subject matter is involved in interpreting the meaning of the artwork	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Examining technical processes can help one understanding the artwork's meaning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Knowledge of art history can increase one's ability to interpret artwork	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Knowledge of art criticism can increase one's ability to interpret artwork	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Identifying the historical context can support a deeper understanding of the artwork	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is important to study the artist's life in order to interpret the meaning of the artwork	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Knowing the artist's intentions is not relevant to the interpretation of the artwork	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When the interpretation of the artwork is based the viewer's personality, it is less effective.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social categories can affect how a person understands artwork	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Viewers can consider their feelings when interpreting the artwork	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When interpreting art, people look at the relationship between the art and themselves	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When analyzing artwork, one must consider cultural significance and social practices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The museum is not the authority in teaching top-down interpretations of artwork	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Museum educators and curators collaborate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Collaboration between museum educators and curators can be challenging	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Museum educators and curators have shared goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Museum educators are teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Museum educators have educational goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Curators are teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Curators have educational goals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please continue to the next page. →

For statistical purposes, please answer the following questions:

Profession: ○ Curator ○ Museum Educator

Gender: ○ Male ○ Female

Age: ○ 20-25 ○ 26-30 ○ 31-35 ○ 36-40 ○ 41-45
○ 46-50 ○ 51-55 ○ 56-60 ○ 61-65 ○ 66-70
○ 71-75 ○ 76-80 ○ 81+

Race/Ethnicity: ○ White ○ African-American ○ Hispanic
○ Asian ○ Native American ○ Other: _____

Highest Level of Education: ○ High School Diploma ○ Bachelor's Degree ○ Master's Degree ○ Doctorate

For additional information about this survey, please contact Rory O'Neill Schmitt, Arizona State University, (917) 748-7281, Rosary.Schmitt@asu.edu, or Dr. Mary Erickson at Mary.Erickson@asu.edu.

Thank you for your participation.

R.O.S. Art Education Research

TEACHING IN ART MUSEUMS TODAY:
HOW MUSEUM EDUCATORS AND CURATORS TEACH ART INTERPRETATION

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Guiding Topics for Interviews

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I am a PhD candidate in art education at Arizona State University, and I am writing my dissertation on art museum education. I am studying the ways in which museum educators teach adults how to interpret artwork.

Guiding Topics for Personal Approaches to Teaching Art Interpretation

I am interested in learning about the art interpretation approaches that museum educators and curators use when they teach adult visitors. I am examining how participants use personal approaches to finding meaning in artworks. A personal approach to teaching art interpretation involves a focus on viewers' emotional responses to the artworks. Viewers make individual connections between their lives and the artworks.

1. Topic: *Visitors' Connections*
   Do you think that visitors look at the relationship between the artwork and themselves when they interpret art? Do you make connections to adult visitors' personal lives to elicit understanding of artworks? If so, how?

2. Topic: *Visitors' Feelings*
   Do you think that viewers reflect upon their feelings when interpreting artwork? Please explain.

3. Topic: *Visitors' Personalities*
   Do you think that when an interpretation of an artwork is based on the viewer's personality it is less effective? If so, why?

Guiding Topics for Communal Approaches to Teaching Art Interpretation

I am interested in learning about the art interpretation approaches that museum educators use when they teach adult visitors. I am examining how participants use communal approaches to finding meaning in artworks. A communal approach to teaching art interpretation involves a focus on interpreting the artwork as the community of art scholars does, based on their shared interests and common understandings of artworks.

1. Topic: *Design Elements*
   When interpreting artwork with adults, do you examine the design elements? Color choice? Please explain.

2. Topic: *Technical Processes*
   Do you examine the artistic technical processes (tools, materials, processes) when interpreting artwork with visitors? If so, why?

3. Topic: *Art History*
   Do you feel that knowledge of art history can increase visitors' ability to interpret artwork? Why or why not?

4. Topic: *Artist Biography*
   When interpreting artwork with adults, do you share information about the artist's life? Please explain.

5. Topic: *Context*
   When interpreting artwork with adults, do you pay attention to the historical context? If so, how?

Teaching Art Interpretation Example

1. Topic: *Example*
   Can you please share a recent example of an experience of teaching adult visitors about a specific artwork in the museum? Could you please share with me how you taught art interpretation?

Guiding Topics for Curatorial Teacher Identity

I am interested in learning about museum educators' and curators' perceptions of curators as "teachers." This study examined that teaching art interpretation was one of the practices of museum educators and curators.

1. Topic: *Curators Are Teachers*
   Do you think that curators are teachers? Why or why not? If so, please explain how you feel curators are teachers- in the exhibition design, lectures, planning stages, decision-making processes, or in some other way? Do you think that curators have educational goals? If so, what do you think curators' educational goals are?

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT AND DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Participant Recruitment Information

Table 1

Most Populated U.S.A. Cities, According to U.S. Census Bureau's 2011 Population Reports (El Nasser & Overberg, June 2012)

Location	Population
	n
New York City, NY	8,244,910
Los Angeles, CA	3,819,702
Chicago, IL	2,707,120
Houston, TX	2,145,146
Philadelphia, PA	1,536,471
Phoenix, AZ	1,469,471
San Antonio, TX	1,359,758
San Diego, CA	1,326,179
Dallas, TX	1,223,229
San Jose, CA	967,487
Jacksonville, FL	827,908
Indianapolis, IA	827,609
Austin, TX	820,611
San Francisco, CA	812,826
Columbus, OH	797,434
Fort Worth, TX	758,738
Charlotte, NC	751,087
Detroit, MI	706,585
El Paso, TX	665,568
Memphis, TN	652,050
Boston, MA	625,087
Seattle, WA	620,778
Denver, CO	619,968
Baltimore, MD	619,493
Washington, DC	617,996

Table 2

Survey Recruitment Response Rates

Recruitment Method	Participants Contacted n	Participants Secured n
Individual Email	184	55 (29.89%)
Qualtrics System	408	63 (15.44%)

Table 3

Frequency of Museum Educator and Curator Participants

Participant Type	Frequency n
Museum educator	88 (74.6%)
Curator	30 (25.4%)

Table 4

Survey Participants' Museums, Organized by Location

Location	Museum	# of Museums n= 74
Alabama		2
Mobile	Mobile Museum of Art	
Montgomery	Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts	
Alaska		0
Arizona		4
Phoenix	The Heard Museum	
	The Phoenix Art Museum	
Tempe	The Arizona State Univ. Art Museum	
Scottsdale	The Scottsdale Mus. of Contemp. Art	
Arkansas		1
Bentonville	Crystal Bridges Mus. of American Art	
California		6
Los Angeles	The Los Angeles County Mus. of Art	
	The J. Paul Getty Museum	
San Diego	Mingei International Museum	
San Francisco	Cartoon Art Museum	
	The Fine Art Museums of San Francisco	
	The de Young Museum	
Colorado		0
Connecticut		1
New Haven	Yale Center for British Art	
Delaware		1
Wilmington	Delaware Art Museum	
Florida		0
Georgia		2
Atlanta	High Museum of Art	
Savannah	Savannah College of Art & Design Mus.	
Hawaii		0
Idaho		0

Location	Museum	# of Museums n= 74
Illinois		1
Chicago	National Museum of Mexican Art	
Indiana		0
Iowa		2
Davenport	Figge Art Museum	
Iowa City	University of Iowa Mus. of Art	
Kansas		2
Lawrence	Spencer Mus. Of Art, Univ. of KS	
Overland Park	Nerman Mus. Of Contemp. Art, Johnson County Community College	
Kentucky		2
Louisville	Kentucky Museum of Art & Craft	
	The Speed Art Museum	
Louisiana		3
New Orleans	The Ogden Museum of Southern Art	
	The New Orleans Museum of Art	
	Contemporary Arts Center, NOLA	
Maine		1
Portland	Portland Museum of Art	
Maryland		1
Baltimore	The Walters Art Museum	
Massachusetts		1
Salem	Peabody Essex Museum	
Michigan		1
Detroit	The Detroit Institute of Arts Museum	
Minnesota		2
Minneapolis	Minneapolis Institute of Arts	
	The Walker Art Center	
Mississippi		0
Missouri		1
Kansas City	The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art	
Montana		1
Missoula	Missoula Art Museum	
Nebraska		0

Location	Museum	# of Museums n= 74
Nevada		0
New Hampshire		0
New Jersey		0
New Mexico		1
Santa Fe	New Mexico Museum of Art	
New York		7
Brooklyn	Brooklyn Museum	
Buffalo	Albright-Knox Art Gallery	
New York City	The Guggenheim Museum	
	The Metropolitan Museum of Art	
	The Museum of Modern Art	
	The Whitney Museum of American Art	
Queens	Queens Museum of Art	
North Carolina		1
Durham	Nasher Museum of Art, Duke Univ.	
North Dakota		1
Grand Forks	North Dakota Museum of Art	
Ohio		2
Cleveland	Cleveland Museum of Art	
Columbus	Columbus Museum of Art	
Oklahoma		1
Oklahoma City	Oklahoma City Museum of Art	
Oregon		0
Pennsylvania		3
Philadelphia	The Barnes Foundation	
	Philadelphia Museum of Art	
Pittsburgh	The Mattress Factory Art Museum	
Rhode Island		1
Providence	Rhode Island School of Design Mus.	
South Carolina		1
Charleston	Halsey Inst. Of Contemp. Art, College of Charleston	
South Dakota		0
Tennessee		2
Memphis	The Dixon Gallery and Gardens	

Location	Museum	# of Museums n= 74
	Memphis Brooks Museum of Art	
Texas		8
Dallas	Dallas Museum of Art	
	Meadows Mus. at So. Methodist Univ.	
Fort Worth	Amon Carter Museum of Amer. Art	
	Modern Art Mus. Fort Worth	
Houston	Houston Center for Photography	
	The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston	
	The McNay	
San Antonio	San Antonio Museum of Art	
Utah		2
Salt Lake City	Utah Mus. of Contemporary Art	
	Utah Museum of Fine Arts	
Vermont		1
Shelburne	Shelburne Museum	
Virginia		1
Richmond	Virginia Museum of Fine Arts	
Washington		4
Bellevue	Bellevue Arts Museum	
Seattle	The Frye Art Museum	
	The Henry Art Gallery, Univ. of WA	
Tacoma	Tacoma Art Museum	
Washington, DC		1
	The Phillips Collection	
West Virginia		0
Wisconsin		1
Milwaukee	Milwaukee Art Museum	
Wyoming		0

Participant Demographic Findings

Age- A greater proportion of the museum educator was younger than the curator group. In this study, I found that age was statistically significant (alpha= 0.05, confidence interval= 95%): Curators are more likely than museum educators to be over the age of 40.

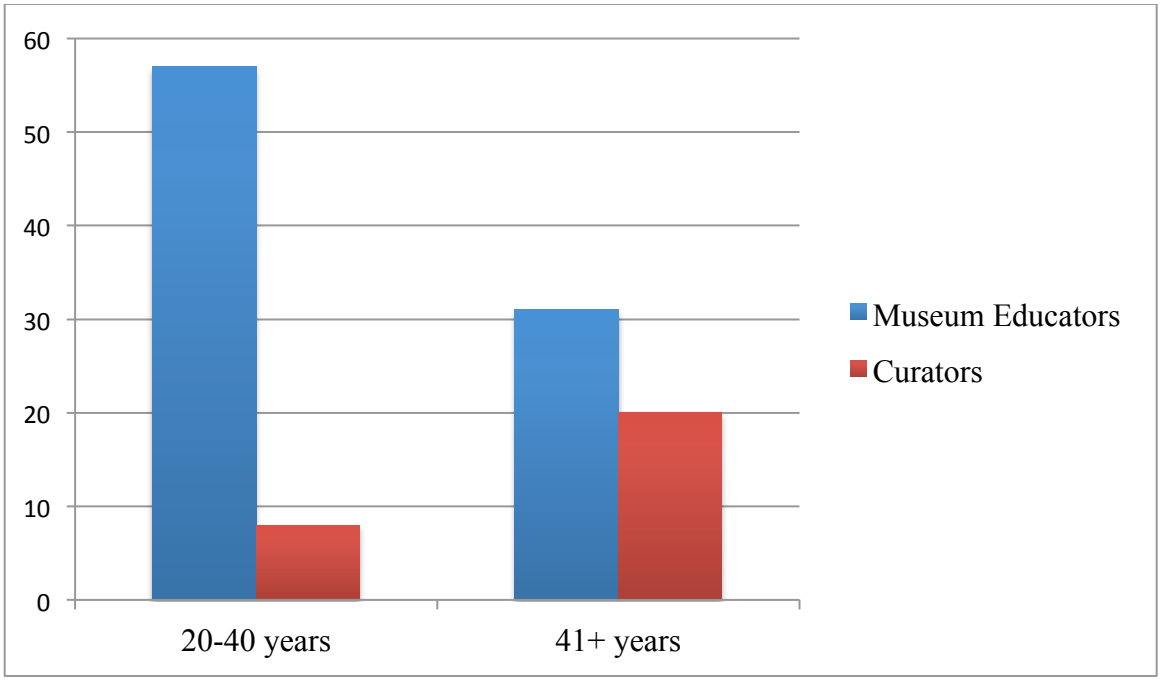

Figure 1. Age Demographics Bar Chart. This bar chart illustrates the amount of museum educators and curators who were in the age ranges of 20-40 years old, and 41+ years old. A greater proportion of museum educators were in the younger age bracket of 20-40 years old. Meanwhile, a greater proportion of curators were in the 41+ age group.

Table 5

Age Distribution Among Museum Educators and Curators

This table illustrates the amount of participants who were in each age range, as determined on the survey. Note that the largest group of museum educators was in the 26-30 age range, while the largest group of curators was in the 41-45 age range.

Age Range	Museum Educator (n=88)	Curator (n=30)	Museum Educ. & Curator (N=118)
20-25	1 (1.1%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.8%)
26-30	25 (28.4%)	2 (6.7%)	27 (22.9%)
31-35	19 (21.6%)	4 (13.3%)	23 (19.5%)
36-40	12 (13.6%)	2 (6.7%)	14 (11.9%)
41-45	12 (13.6%)	6 (20.0%)	18 (15.3%)
46-50	5 (5.7%)	5 (16.7%)	10 (8.5%)
51-55	6 (6.8%)	4 (13.3%)	10 (8.5%)
56-60	3 (3.4%)	3 (10.0%)	6 (5.1%)
61-65	5 (5.7%)	1 (3.3%)	6 (5.1%)
66-70	0 (0%)	1 (3.3%)	1 (0.8%)
Unknown	0 (0%)	2 (6.7%)	2 (1.7%)

Table 6

Participants' Age Demographics

This table illustrates the age distribution of participants, according to the 20-40 years age range and the 41+ years age range. The table illustrates a significant difference between museum educators and curators ($X^{2=}$.001), with educators more likely than curators to be 40 years of age or younger**.**

	Tot. (N)	20-40 years old (n)	% of Museum Educators are 20-40 years old	% of Curators are 20-40 years old	% of all participants are 20-40 years old	41+ years old (n)	% of Museum Educators are 41+ years old	% of Curators are 41+ years old	% of all Participants are 41+ years old
Museum Educators	88	57	64.8%	-	49.1%	31	35.2%	-	26.7%
Curators	28*	8	-	28.6%	6.9%	20	-	71.4%	17.2%
Museum Educators & Curators	116	65	-	-	56%	51	-	-	44%

*Note: Two curator participants declined to state their age ranges. Therefore, N=116.

Table 7

Chi-Squares Statistical Test of Age

This table shows a significant difference between museum educators and curators, with educators more likely than curators to be 40 years of age or younger**.**

Value	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.300	1	.001		
Continuity Correction	9.878	1	.002		
Likelihood Ratio	11.417	1	.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				.001	.001
Linear-by Linear Association	11.202	1	.001		
N of Valid Case	116				

Note: Zero cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.31. Computed only for a 2x2 table.

Gender- A greater proportion of museum educator and curator groups were female. In this study, I found that gender was not statistically significant.

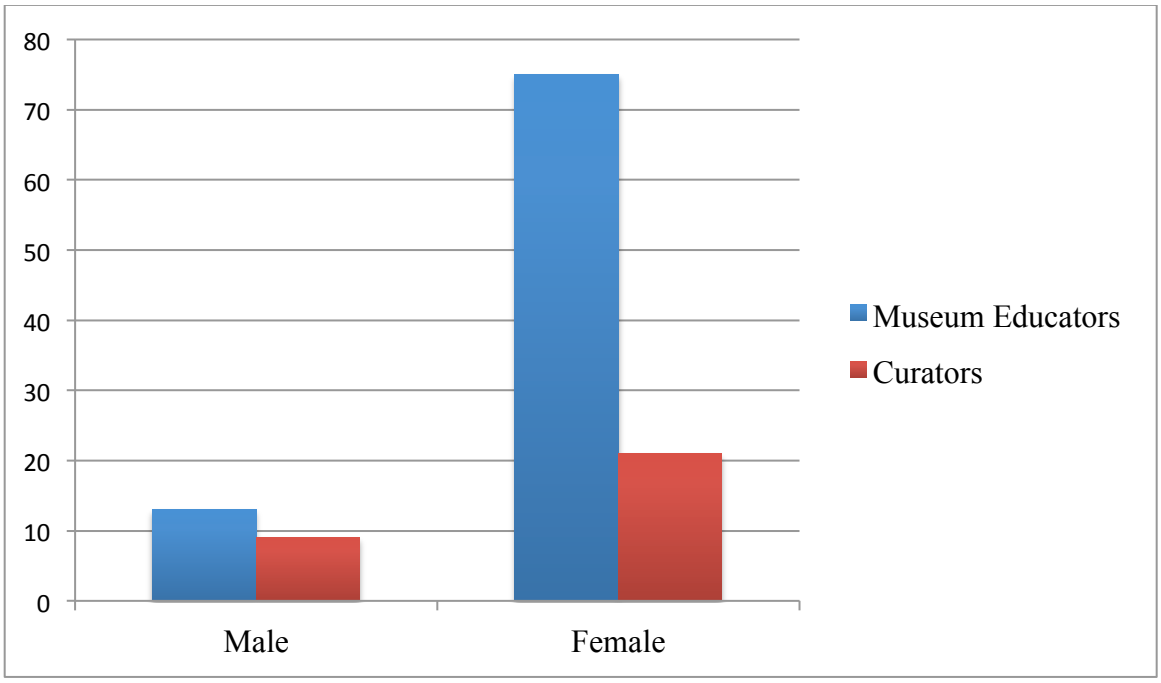

Figure 2. Gender Demographics Bar Chart. This bar chart illustrates the amount of museum educators and curators who were men and women. A greater proportion of males worked as curators, compared to museum educators in this sample. Females dominated both professions.

Table 8

Gender Distribution Among Museum Educator and Curator Participants

Gender	Museum Educators (n= 88)	% Museum Educators	Curators (n= 30)	% Curators	Museum Educators & Curators	% Museum Educators & Curators
Female	75	85.2%	21	70%	96	81.4%
Male	13	14.8%	9	30%	22	18.6%

Table 9

Participants' Gender Demographics as Determined by Chi-Square Test

	Total (N=)	Male (n=)	% of Museum Educators Are Male	% of Curators Are Male	% Male of all Particts.	Female (n=)	% of Museum Educators Are Female (n=)	% of Curators Are Female	% Female of All Particts.
Museum Educators	88	13	14.8%	-	-	75	85.2%	-	-
Curators	30	9	-	30%		21	-	70%	-
Museum Educators & Curators	118	22	-	-	18.6%	96	-	-	81.4%

Note: The Asymp. Sig (2-sided) has a value larger than .05. N refers to the number of participants in the total sample. n refers to the number of participants in a subset of the sample, e.g. the male and female groups.

Table 10

Chi-Square Statistical Test of Gender

The table shows the outcome of the Chi-Squares test in SPSS. The proportion of professionals who are museum educators or curators is not statistically significant by gender.

Value	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.420	1	.064		
Continuity Correction	2.490	1	.115		
Likelihood Ratio	3.170	1	.075		
Fisher's Exact Test				.100	.061
Linear-by Linear Association	3.391	1	.066		
N of Valid Case	118				

Note: 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.59.

Ethnicity/Race- Within both groups, the highest number of museum educators and curators identified as White; however, a greater proportion of museum educators identified as other ethnicities. In this study, I found that ethnicity/race was not statistically significant.

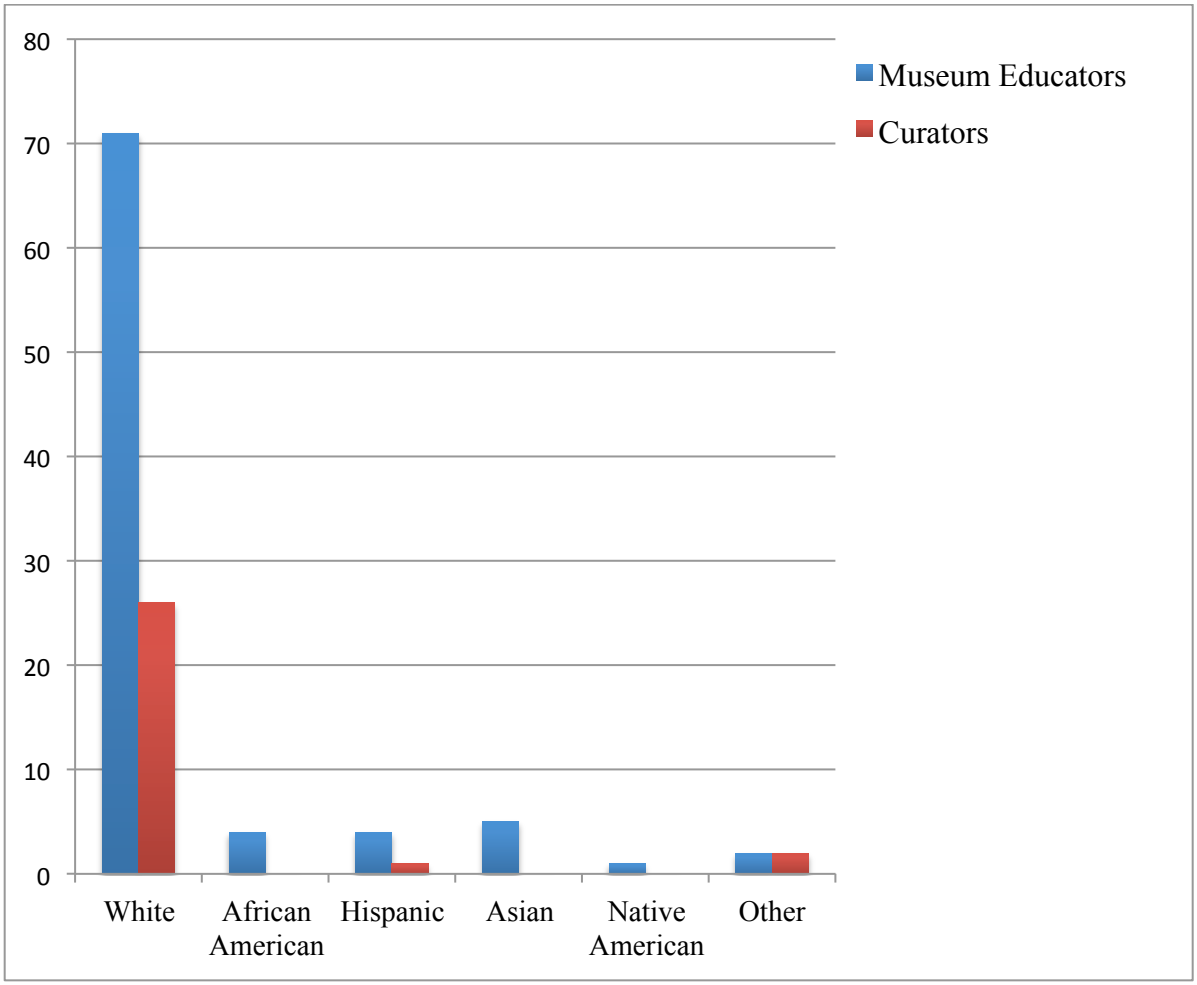

Figure 3. Race/Ethnicity Demographics Bar Chart. This bar chart illustrates the amount of museum educators and curators in various race/ethnicity categories. A greater proportion of museum educators came from diverse races/ethnicities, compared to curators who mainly identified as White.

Table 11

Ethnicity/Race Distribution Among Museum Educator and Curator Survey Participants

This table shows that White was the ethnicity/race most frequently selected by museum educator and curator participants.

Ethnicity/Race	Museum Educators	% Museum Educators	Curators	% Curators	Museum Educators & Curators	% Museum Educators & Curators
White	71	80.7%	26	86.7%	97	82.2%
African American	4	4.5%	0	0%	4	3.4%
Hispanic	4	4.5%	1	3.3%	5	4.2%
Asian	5	5.7%	0	0%	5	4.2%
Native American	1	1.1%	0	0%	1	0.8%
Other	2	2.3%	2	6.%	4	3.4%
Unknown	1	1.1%	1	3.3%	2	1.7%
Total	88		30		118	

Highest Educational Degree- The Master's degree was the most commonly selected highest educational degree by both groups. In this study, I found that highest educational degree was statistically significant: Curators were more likely than educators to have earned higher educational degrees.

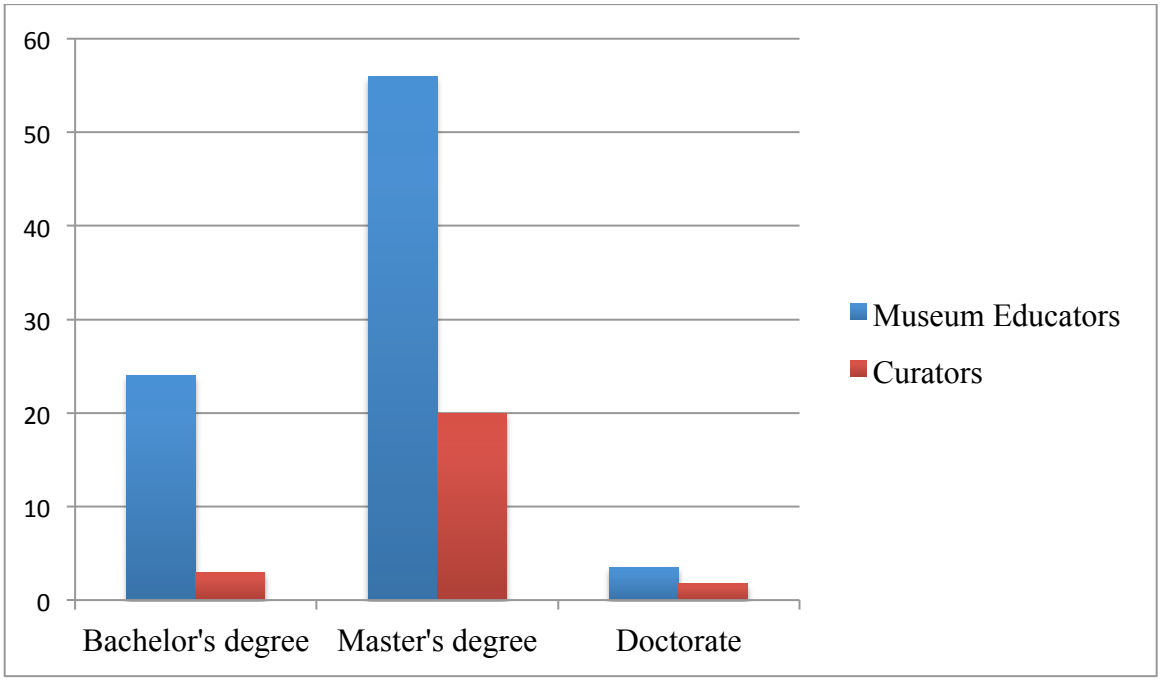

Figure 4. Educational Degree Bar Chart. This figure illustrates the amount of survey participants who had bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. The most frequently reported category for both groups was master's degree.

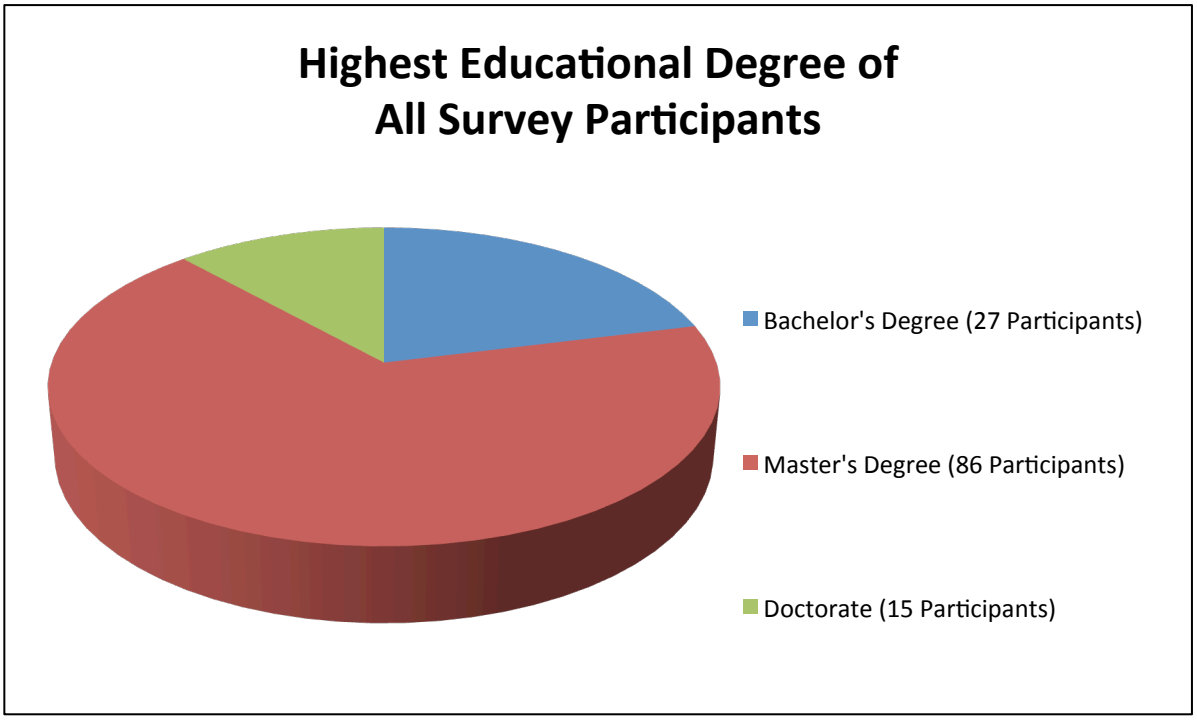

Figure 5. Highest Educational Degree of Survey Participants. This figure illustrates the amount of survey participants who had bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees.

Table 12

Chi-Squares Statistical Test of Highest Educational Degree

This table shows a significant difference between museum educators and curators, with curators more likely than museum educators to possess higher educational degrees**.**

Value	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.519	2	.038
Likelihood Ratio	6.631	2	.036
Fisher's Exact Test			
Linear-by Linear Association	6.375	1	.012
N of Valid Cases	118		

Academic Discipline- The art history academic discipline was the most frequently selected discipline by both groups (See Figure 6). In this study, I found that academic discipline was statistically significant: Curators were more likely than educators to have educational backgrounds in art history (See Table 6 and 7).

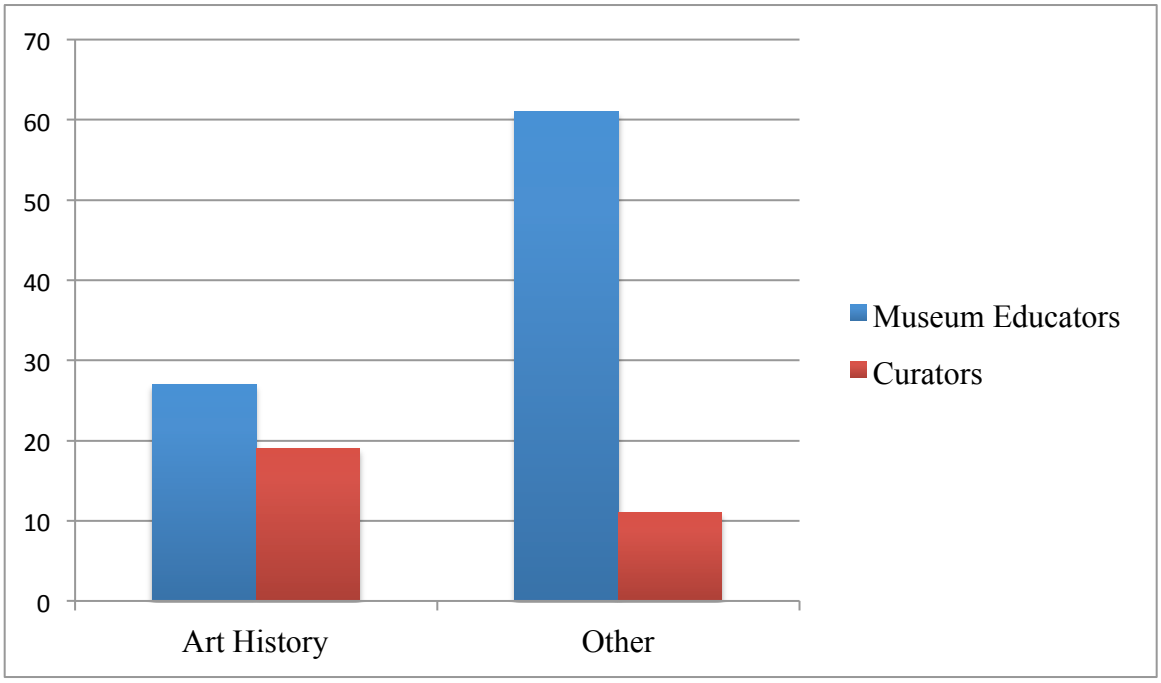

Figure 6. Educational Discipline Bar Chart. This bar chart illustrates the amount of museum educators and curators, who had backgrounds in art history and other disciplines.

Table 13

Art History Educational Discipline, as Reported by Participants

This table illustrates that the art history degree is statistically significant. Curators are more likely than museum educators to have a background in art history.

	Total (N)	Art History (n)	% of Museum Educators have Art History degree	% of Curators have Art History degree	% of all participts have Art History degree	Other educ. disc.* (n)	% of Museum Educators have Other educ. dis.	% of Curators have Other educ. dis.	% of all Participts have Other educ. dis.
Museum Educators	88	27	30%	-	22.9%	61	69.3%	-	51.7%
Curators	30	19	-	63.3%	16.1%	11	-	36.7%	9.3%
Museum Educators & Curators	118	46	-	-	40%	72	-	-	60%

*Note: Other educ. disc.= Other educational disciplines include: art education, studio art, history, education, museum studies, public administration, and unknown.

Table 14

Chi-Squares Statistical Test of Art History Educational Discipline

This table shows the art history degree is statistically significant. Museum educators are less likely than curators to have a background in art history**.**

Value	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.387	1	.007		
Continuity Correction	6.239	1	.012		
Likelihood Ratio	7.411	1	.006		
Fisher's Exact Test				.008	.006
Linear-by Linear Association	7.316	1	.007		
N of Valid Cases	104				

Note: Zero cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.83. Computed only for a 2x2 table.

APPENDIX E

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Art Museum Education:

Understanding the Perspectives of Museum Educators and Curators

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Mary Erickson in the Department of Art Education in the School of Art at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to examine how art museums teach adult visitors to interpret visual artwork. Several studies have been conducted looking into the subject of learning in art museums (Hooper-Greenhill & Moussouri, 2001; Stokrocki, 1996; Adams, Falk, & Dierking, 2003; Black & Hein, 2003; Haanstra, 2003; Leong, 2003; Erickson & Hales, 2012). However, few have explored studies focused primarily on the teaching methods of art museum educators and curators

I am recruiting individuals to interview and complete a brief questionnaire, which will take approximately 40 minutes. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. You must be 18 or older to participate in the study.

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential. Your responses will be anonymous. I would like to audiotape this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be taped; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. The tapes will be kept for eight months in a locked office on the Tempe Campus of Arizona State University and will later be destroyed.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at (917) 748- 7281. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Rory O'Neill Schmitt
Rosary.Schmitt@asu.edu
PhD Candidate: Art Education
Arizona State University

APPENDIX F

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Hypothesis Test Summary of Mann-Whitney Test

This table illustrates the survey questions that had statistically significant findings. The results of the Mann-Whitney test showed that there were statistically significant differences between museum educators and curators in how they teach art interpretation for the questions pertaining to Context, Art History, Visitors' Connections, and Curators are Teachers.

Sub-Foci	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
Visitors' Connections (Q7)	The median scores of Making connections to visitors' personal lives can elicit understanding of artworks are the same across the categories of Museum Educator/ Curator.	Independent-Samples Median Test	.	Unable to compute.
	The distribution of Making connections to visitors' personal lives can elicit understanding of artworks scores is the same across the categories of Museum Educator/ Curator.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney Test	0.01	Reject the null hypothesis.
Art History (Q14)	The median scores of Art History are the same across the categories of Museum Educator/ Curator.	Independent-Samples Median Test	0.00	Reject the null hypothesis.
	The distribution of Art History scores is the same across the categories of Museum Educator/ Curator.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney Test	0.04	Reject the null hypothesis.
Context (Q16)	The median scores of Context are the same across the categories of Museum Educator/ Curator.	Independent-Samples Median Test	0.00	Reject the null hypothesis.
	The distribution of Context scores is the same across the categories of Museum Educator/ Curator.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney Test	0.00	Reject the null hypothesis.
Curators are Teachers (Q30)	The median scores of Museum Educators are the same across the categories of Museum Educator/Curator.	Independent-Samples Median Test	0.08	Retain the null hypothesis.
	The distribution of Museum Educators scores is the same across the categories of Museum Educator/Curator.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney Test	0.00	Reject the null hypothesis.

Note: Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is 0.05.

Distribution of Scores

Visitors' Connections (Q7)

Reviewing the distribution of scores explains how museum educators' and curators' mean scores differed for Q7. An examination of the distribution of scores (Table 1) led to the finding that the most frequent response for museum educators was *Strongly Agree* (n=53, 60.2%), while the most frequent response for curator respondents was *Agree* (n=18, 62.07%).

Table 1

Distribution of Scores for Survey Question #7.

Group	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly Agree n (%)
Museum Educators	0	1 (1.1%)	34 (38.6%)	**53 (60.2%)**
Curators	0	2 (6.90%)	**18 (62.07%)**	9 (31.03%)

Notes: Mean scores are rounded to two decimal places.
Bold indicates the higher mean score for that survey question.
Possible range of scores was 2.0 (Strongly Disagree) to 5.0 (Strongly Agree).

Art History (Q14) and Context (Q16)

Distribution of scores. For Q14, curators' most frequent survey response was *Strongly Agree* (n=20, 71.43%), while museum educators' most frequent response was *Agree* (n=53, 60.92%) (Refer to Table 2). In addition, for Q16, the curator group's most frequent response was *Strongly Agree* (n=54, 78.57%), while the educator group's most frequent response was *Agree* (n=22, 61.36%).

Table 2

Distribution of Scores for Survey Questions #14 and 16.

Question #	Code	Group	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly Agree n (%)
Q14	Art History	Museum Educators	1 (1.15%)	5 (5.75%)	**53 (60.92%)**	28 (32.18%)
		Curators	0	1 (3.57%)	7 (25.0%)	**20 (71.43%)**
Q16	Context	Museum Educators	0	2 (2.27%)	**54 (61.36%)**	32 (36.36%)
		Curators	0	0	6 (21.43%)	**22 (78.57%)**

Notes: Mean scores are rounded to two decimal places.
Bold indicates the higher mean score for that survey question.
Possible range of scores was 2.0 (Strongly Disagree) to 5.0 (Strongly Agree).

Curators Are Teachers (Q30)

Distribution of scores. The most frequent survey response for the curator group was a tie: *Strongly Agree* (n=11, 45.83%) and *Agree* (n=11, 45.83%). The most frequent response for the museum educator group was *Agree* (n=41, 53.95%); their second most frequent response was *Disagree* (n=21, 27.63%). While curator participants mostly expressed agreement with the statement that curators are teachers, educator participants had divided responses (Table 3).

Table 3

Distribution of Scores for Survey Question #30.

Group	**Strongly Disagree n (%)**	**Disagree n (%)**	**Agree n (%)**	**Strongly Agree n (%)**
Museum Educators	4 (5.26%)	21 (27.63%)	**41 (53.95%)**	10 (13.16%)
Curators	0	2 (8.33%)	**11 (45.83%)**	**11 (45.83%)**

Notes: Mean scores are rounded to two decimal places.
Bold indicates the higher mean score for that survey question.
Possible range of scores was 2.0 (Strongly Disagree) to 5.0 (Strongly Agree).

APPENDIX G

FINDINGS ABOUT "DON'T KNOW" RESPONSES

Survey Findings About "Don't Know" Responses

Question #19 had more frequent response rates of "Don't Know" than other questions (Table 1).

Table 1

Frequency of "Don't Know" Survey Responses

Question #	Question	n	Percentage
Q19	When the interpretation of the artwork is based the viewer's personality, it is less effective.	13	11%

Thirteen participants (11%) selected "Don't Know" for Question #19. This survey question pertained to the personal approach. Q19 was: "When the interpretation of the artwork is based on the viewer's personality, it is less effective." Perhaps, participants were unclear about how interpretations might be evaluated as "effective."