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Running head: DOCENT COORDINATOR PERCEPTIONS

Art Museum Docent Coordinators' Perceptions: A Difficult Kind of Balancing Act

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

By

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Virginia Commonwealth University
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Abstract**ART MUSEUM DOCENT COORDINATORS' PERCEPTIONS: A DIFFICULT KIND OF BALANCING ACT**

By Jennifer E. Schero, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2021

Director: Dr. Pamela Harris Lawton, Associate Professor, Department of Art Education, School of Arts

With visitors numbering in the millions, museums provide numerous entry points for attendees to engage with the objects in their care, including offering tours of their collections. Looking specifically at art museums, many institutions utilize volunteers to facilitate these guided looking experiences. Considerable research within the field of museum education focuses on the qualities of effective touring and methods and theories to support these endeavors. However, there is a lack of research focusing on the docent coordinators who oversee these volunteer guides. This study utilizes interpretive phenomenological analysis to explore perceptions of encyclopedic art museum docent coordinators concerning their preparation and support for teaching and managing volunteer gallery guides/docents. Findings from this study suggest a complex lifeworld with multiple stakeholder expectations impacting seven docent coordinators' understandings of their professional identity, relationships, and abilities. Participants described numerous balancing acts, including bridging the pedagogical and the art historical, theory and practice, visitor needs and VGG/Ds needs, and the personal and the professional. At times, this balancing act created considerable stress, whether from relationship dynamics or anxiety over volunteer gallery guide/docent insensitivity as docent coordinators advanced inclusive practices

in the art museum. Results offer suggestions for future research and the Museological, Pedagogical, Content Knowledge model (M-PCK), which illustrates museum educators' domains of knowledge.

Keywords: docent coordinators, docent, docent training, museum, museum education, museum guide, gallery guide, museum volunteer, tour guide, adult learning, volunteer management

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Dedication

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List of Abbreviations

AAM	American Association of Museums, later the American Alliance of Museums
AAMD	.....	American Association of Museum Directors
IPA	.....	Interpretive phenomenological analysis
MER	.....	Museum Education Roundtable
NAEA	.....	National Art Education Association
NDS	.....	National Docent Symposium
PD	.....	Professional development
VCU	.....	Virginia Commonwealth University
VGG/D	.....	Volunteer gallery guide/docent
VGG/Ds	.....	Plural: volunteer gallery guide/docent

Chapter 1: Introduction

Volunteers are vital to the life of many museums. (Lord & Lord, 2009, p. 44)

Visitors to art museums can regularly find a range of opportunities to engage with works of art: from individual exploration to lectures, informal talks, audio tours, digital interactives, live performances, and more. On these visits, it is not uncommon to observe groups of visitors clustered around a guide imparting information and facilitating discussions around works of art, often called a *tour*. In many cases, the individuals leading the tours are volunteers, traditionally known as *docents*. These volunteer gallery guides, or docents, come from various backgrounds and experiences, not necessarily from an art history or education foundation. Hooper-Greenhill (1999) offered that museum docents are a means for “increasing motivation to learn, in enabling people to discover and develop new passions, in making a previously mundane set of facts suddenly come alive and become meaningful” (p. 1). Whether described as the frontline (Sweney, 2007) or the museum's public face (DePrizio, 2016; Johnson, 2009; McCoy, 1989), these volunteer gallery guides are often the only direct contact visitors have with museum staff.

Museum education's history is teeming with researchers and practitioners exploring methods for engaging visitors in relevant and meaningful discussions around collections. These explorations include learning in museums, visitor inclusivity and accessibility, relevancy, inquiry methods, and more. When considering that many art museums rely heavily on volunteers to carry out guided gallery experiences, such as tours for K-12 students, the value of these explorations is significant (Giltinan, 2008; Randi Korn & Associates Incorporated, 2015). However, research into

how museum staff members, often titled docent coordinators, are prepared and supported to teach and manage volunteer gallery guides' is lacking (Dudzinska-Przesmitzki & Grenier, 2008).

As a former art museum educator who worked with volunteer gallery guides at multiple institutions, I was cautious of drawing from my personal experience and using it within the research process. Discussions of bias and trustworthiness prompted this initial reaction. However, it is precisely these experiences that not only shaped my interest but caused me to question the lack of research focusing on how best to ready and assist docent coordinators who work with volunteers. In this study, I use semi-structured interviews to gather perceptions of art museum docent coordinators to inform future research and praxis related to the preparation of and support for these professionals.

Statement of the Problem

Research within the larger field of museum education reveals a breadth and depth of investigations related to teaching and learning in museums (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011; Falk & Dierking, 1992, 2012; Hein, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999; Villeneuve, 2007). Looking specifically at those related to volunteer gallery guides/docents (VGG/Ds), recent studies encompassed several topics within varying types of museums. Examples include identifying VGG/D motivations and competencies (Grenier, 2011; Martell, 2007; Schep et al., 2018) as well as VGG/D training methods and needs (Carr, 2016; Evans-Palmer, 2013; Fernández-Keys, 2010; Graves, 2020; Grenier, 2005a; McCray, 2016). Additional studies covered techniques for use by VGG/Ds when leading museum gallery tours (Murphy, 2018; Neill, 2010; Trinkley, 2014; Weisberg, 2006); as well as theories underpinning and informing practice in museum education (Acuff & Evans, 2014; Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2007, 2011; Carter, 2018; Crow & Bowles, 2018; Ebitz, 2007, 2008; Mayer, 2005; Roberts, 2006; Teeple, 2019). Studies also incorporated specific

aspects of VGG/D programs, such as evaluation, change, and leadership (DePrizio, 2016; Grenier & Sheckley, 2008; Stark, 2016).

However, while research in art museum education articulated various theories, practices, and issues related to touring and training, there is a shortage of research exploring how docent coordinators learn about and implement these concepts into the education and management of VGG/Ds. This scarcity prompted several questions, including what qualifications are necessary for instructing guides? Is it art historical (content) knowledge? Pedagogical knowledge? Volunteer management skills? How do these coordinators navigate working with volunteers, and what supports do they desire?

By gathering perceptions of docent coordinators who work directly with VGG/Ds, it is possible to gain an understanding of their lived experiences. These insights may assist other docent coordinators as they reflect upon their stories, prompting personal exploration into their preparation and support in working with VGG/Ds. Finally, these gathered understandings provide a means by which higher learning institutions and professional organizations can better understand the docent coordinator's complex lifeworld, whose work directly affects the efforts of VGG/Ds and the experiences of art museum visitors.

Rationale for the Study

The argument for studying the perceptions of docent coordinators must be considered within the ecosystem of museums. According to pre-COVID-19 statistics, the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) reported approximately 850 million visits annually to museums (AAM, 2017). This statistic included zoos, aquariums, historic, arboretums, science, art, and other institutions under the umbrella term *museums*. Approximately 2,600 museums in the United States are categorized as art museums (Frehill & Pelczar, 2018). Furthermore, roughly 51,663

individuals volunteer over 3 million hours to North American art museums (Association of Art Museum Directors, 2018). Citing the *2009 Museum Financial Information* survey, Merritt (2016) noted the ratio of volunteers in most museums outnumbered paid staff and added, “Volunteers are a necessary and desirable part of the museum workforce” (para. 10). Since global shutdowns and museums' shuttering due to the COVID-19 pandemic, AAM reported that nearly one-third of all museums surveyed ($n = 760$) might close permanently, and 30% of staff remained unemployed at the time of reporting (American Alliance of Museums, 2020a, 2020b). These figures suggested that perhaps now, more than ever, museums will rely on volunteers to support endeavors to reopen, operate, and connect with visitors.

In considering how museums connect with visitors, a portion of art museum volunteers facilitates educational experiences for visitors of varying ages, backgrounds, cultures, group sizes, and more. These volunteers “are responsible for sharing the fundamental intent of the curatorial staff, a staff that remains largely invisible and anonymous to visitors” (Leinhardt et al., 2002, p. 47). Whether identified as a *docent*, *guide*, *interpreter*, or other titles, these individuals are often unpaid educational staff who participate in ongoing, “rigorous training” programs that require time and effort of paid staff to facilitate (Meyer et al., 2016, p. 55). Moreover, as McCoy (1989) posited, volunteers understand their world from their specific vantage point, including biases of the collection and the world, which surfaces as they guide visitors through the museum. “The preparation and training of docents combined with their ability to know and meet the needs of the audience determines the quality of the visitor’s educational experience” (pp. 138-139). While some art museums rely on VGG/Ds to train and evaluate those within their ranks, others hire museum educators, often titled docent coordinators, to manage these efforts. Yet, there is a lack of research into the preparation and preferred

supports for art museum docent coordinators as *they* prepare and support VGG/Ds. A significant opportunity develops to strengthen the field's understanding of docent coordinators' lived experiences and the mechanisms for equipping and aiding these professionals in their work with VGG/Ds in the art museum.

Definition of Terms

Within the field of museum education, definitions vary for several terms. I believe it essential to share these terms to minimize confusion within this study. The U.S. Code of Federal Regulations defined a museum using the following conditions:

Public or private nonprofit institution which is organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes and which, using a professional staff: (1) owns or uses tangible objects, either animate or inanimate; (2) cares for these objects; and (3) exhibits them to the general public on a regular basis. (Office of the Federal Register, 2016, p. 509)

The term museum encompasses zoos, aquariums, botanical gardens, natural history, science, art, and more. Museums serve a multitude of constituents and provide a range of functions.

Narrowing further, *the art museum* is an umbrella term that includes but is not limited to: encyclopedic (exhibiting art and objects from various periods and cultures), academic (art museum connected to a college or university), monographic (museums that display the work of a single artist), medium-oriented (e.g., glass, textiles, digital art), and genre/period-focused (e.g., contemporary art museum, Impressionist museum).

Within all museums is a complex network of interrelated parts, with departments overseeing specific functions (e.g., curatorial, education, visitor services, finance, marketing). Earlier, I likened this to an ecosystem. The metaphor comes from biology, wherein interacting

organisms comprise a system that may or may not interact with other systems (Jung & Love, 2017). Using this metaphor, individuals (organisms) within museum departments interact with each other, visitors, and external organizations. These individual staff members contribute to the larger museum mission through their respective areas and may work cooperatively or in isolation. The museum (the system) is simultaneously influenced by those within the institution and external structures such as professional organizations, community groups, state and local policies, and individual visitors' interests.

Within museums, education departments plan and implement various programs for adults, intergenerational groups, and schools. To carry out these initiatives, several art museums rely on volunteer guides, often called *docents*. When first conceived, the docent was a “companion” in the art museum's experience (Gilman, 1918, p. 315). Today, there are multiple names for individuals who conduct art museum gallery activities, including *gallery educator*, *gallery guide*, and *docent*. Moreover, employed art museum educators facilitate tours, as do volunteer guides. In several art museums, paid museum educators manage volunteer efforts. Therefore, I will use *docent coordinator* to identify those paid staff members who supervise volunteers and *volunteer gallery guides/docents* (VGG/Ds) as the unpaid individuals who facilitate tours within art museums.

The word *tour* is a term that encapsulates the many ways in which museum staff (paid or unpaid) guide looking at works of art for individual visitors or groups within the art museum. Tours can be lectured-based or discussion-oriented. Today, terms for tour include *guided looking visit*, *gallery walk*, *gallery talk*, and more. For this study, I will use tours, not out of personal preference, but to reflect commonly used language from the field. Additionally, using an Internet

search¹, the word *training* frequently described the education of VGG/D in art museums. I problematized this term in my review of the literature but will continue to use training for the same reasons identified for using the word tour.

Not only is there the terminology of the museum ecosystem, but also within the design of my research. I am using the word *preparation* instead of education when discussing docent coordinators, as I recognize that not everyone moves into these roles from a purely academic trajectory. Preparation might include volunteering, job roles, time at other institutions, or other terms for which I may not have a current understanding. Participants will help unpack the word during the interview process. Moreover, *support* is intentionally vague to infer any resource that assists the docent coordinator in their work, offering space for interpretation. Examples of support might include but are not limited to professional development, conferences, financial resources, other staff, or professional networks.

Statement of Purpose

This qualitative study seeks to gain insight from art museum docent coordinators regarding their preparation and support for teaching and managing VGG/Ds in art museums. In gathering these perceptions, I hope to foster awareness that may lead to both theoretical and practical support for these endeavors. This study does not aim to provide a universal truth regarding art museum docent coordinators' work, as museums are unique owing to their

¹ Example search engine results from 2020 which incorporate the terms training, docent, and art museum or the name of the museum include the Metropolitan Museum of Art (<https://www.metmuseum.org/join-and-give/volunteer>), Denno Museum (<http://www.dennomuseum.org/education/docent/index.html>), the Asheville Art Museum (<https://www.ashevilleart.org/volunteer/docent-program/>), the Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami (<https://mocanomi.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Museum-of-Contemporary-Art-Docent-Program.pdf>), Palmer Museum of Art Penn State (<https://palmermuseum.psu.edu/education/become-docent/>), Museum of Fine Arts Houston (<https://www.mfah.org/about/become-docent/>), Baltimore Museum of Art (https://s3.amazonaws.com/artbma/documents/volunteers/BMA_Docent_Application_2015.pdf), Birmingham Museum of Art (<https://www.artsbma.org/get-involved/docent-and-volunteer/docents/>), Chrysler Museum of Art (<https://chrysler.org/learn/docent/>), Walters Museum of Art (<https://thewalters.org/support/volunteers/docent/>).

collections, resources, context, and structure. Instead, stories culled from docent coordinators' experiences offer others a means to consider their understandings and transfer ideas (Maxwell & Reybold, 2015). By sharing these lived experiences, it is also possible to generate models for preparing and supporting current and future art museum docent coordinators and the programs they manage, which then contributes to the visitors' experience.

Pond (1988) entreated that future research into the careers of art museum educators seek out their actual experiences, stating, "the stories need to be told" (p. 12). Pushing Pond's notion further, it is crucial to amass stories that recognize the varying responsibilities within art museum education departments. Museum educators typically divide according to audience descriptors (e.g., school programs, intergenerational programs, adult programs, docent programs). Therefore, stories from various art museum educators provide a robust understanding of the many ways these professionals engage the public and are prepared and supported for these endeavors. However, it is also essential to avoid flattening professional identities through generalizations across museum education. The experiences of a school programs museum educator are different from the docent coordinator. Brigham et al. (1988) echoed Pond's sentiment within their recommendations for future research into the profession of art museum education, calling for the interviews of leaders within the field concerning their experiences and sharing these findings with "entering professionals, university faculty, and work supervisors" (p. 10). The thread continues into contemporary research, with examples of how stories gleaned from museum educators help to shape the field's understanding of these professionals' roles, identities, demands, and outcomes of such demands (Bailey, 2006; Chen Cooper, 2007; Reid, 2012; Stafne, 2012).

Art museums are public and private entities with many stakeholders, from donors and community partners to members, staff, and visitors. Focusing on the latter, visitors are “looking for an entertaining way to learn and expect to receive value for their admissions and sales dollars” (Ebitz, 2005, p. 151). As DePrizio (2016) shared, “The public value that gallery educators add to our institutions is beyond measure. We would not be able to serve and educate the public in such broad-reaching ways without the commitment they make to our museums” (p. 8). Docent coordinators must be adequately equipped and supported for educating VGG/Ds. Managing volunteers requires significant contributions of time and resources, potentially yielding either positive or negative outcomes for the visitor, the volunteer, the volunteer coordinator, and the larger institution (Ward & Greene, 2018). Their experiences cannot remain within institutional memory alone but communicated with the broader field to identify opportunities, challenges, trends, and more.

Theoretical Framework

I acknowledge that individuals build their reality through experience and interactions with others and that multiple interpretations of reality are possible. These ideas align with the ontological and epistemological paradigm of constructivism (Costantino, 2012). In this way, I seek to understand the multitude of ways art museum docent coordinators perceive working with VGG/Ds. I am intrigued by the idea of knowledge and reality as fluid and evolving, wherein we are co-creators – constructors –of knowledge. As Lincoln (2005) shared, constructivists hold “the meaning-making activities of cognizing humans may be more critical to understanding how social life is organized, how historical structures (e.g., economic oppression) become reified, or how daily life is enacted, performed, and storied” (p. 61). Brooks (2013) expressed constructivism as understanding the processes of the mind through ontological explorations of reality and

knowledge construction, thereby questioning how we come to know what we know. This construction is active, rooted in experiencing and reflecting on the world. Moreover, as Lincoln (2005) noted, both the researcher and participants are of the world and cannot release their assumptions, attitudes, prejudices, and values.

Hein (1998) explored constructivism in museums, examining the co-construction of interpretation between museum staff and visitors through active meaning-making processes. Hein discussed a constructivist exhibition within museums, noting it would likely “validate different ways of interpreting objects and present various perspectives, refer to different points of view and different ‘truths’ about the material presented” (p. 35). Using the constructivist exhibit as an illustrative example for research design, this study seeks to offer participants various entry points for sharing perceptions of their lifeworld that validates different interpretations and allows for the plurality of understandings.

Next, hermeneutics offers a means to explore how communication and interpretation influence our understandings of reality (Gadamer, 2004; Heidegger, 1999). Hermeneutics began in antiquity as a framework for interpreting texts and grew within the twentieth century to become a philosophy of interpretation. The philosophical approach holds that all experience is a matter of perception, where experience and language are integral components, and individuals understand through engagement with the world (Zimmermann, 2015). As such, reality is neither singular nor fixed, but our ontological perspective shifts as we encounter new experiences. As a lens for considering art museum docent coordinators' experiences, hermeneutics focuses on how we interpret our experiences and acknowledges both the participants' and the researcher's sense-making efforts within the study of these experiences.

Within the philosophy of hermeneutics are various notions that apply to the design of this study. Firstly, there are limits to our understandings, wherein we only know what we know from our vantage point. Hermeneutic philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004) called this limit our *horizon* and posited, “To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand – not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and a truer proportion” (p. 304). Societal and historical factors affect the horizon, as does language, but they are not isolated or fixed. When we encounter new information, we fuse this with pre-understandings to form new understandings, or the *fusion of horizons* (Gadamer, 2004).

Furthermore, there is the *hermeneutic circle*, where individuals encounter new information that informs pre-existing knowledge, which then transforms the pre-existing understanding to become new knowledge, which then becomes pre-existing knowledge once the cycle begins again. “However, it is not a true circle because the learner never returns to the exact position: the circle has moved on and in fact it becomes a spiral of ever-increasing knowledge that builds consistently; it is in essence the ongoing nature of learning” (Flood, 2014, p. 35). This cycle is found within the origins of hermeneutics, recognizing a whole-part relationship of interpreting texts. Hermeneutic philosophers theorized the necessity of understanding a text's whole to understand its parts and vice versa. Eventually, these ideas moved beyond text analysis and into ideas of human understanding. As a continuous cycle of meaning-making without end, “the more we engage the topic in reflection and practice, the deeper we come to know” (Kezar, 2000, p. 387). Therefore one summarizing, universal truth is impossible.

Connecting hermeneutics with museum education, Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011) offered, “what art museum teaching shares with the hermeneutics of Gadamer is the core premise that conversation and dialogue are the foundation of understanding and interpretation” (p. 60).

Burnham and Kai-Kee appreciated the hermeneutics' lens in gallery teaching, pointing to the importance of dialogue. We build our understanding of the art by describing, discussing, reflecting, and testing these understandings. Just as with looking at a work of art, these same notions transfer to the research process.

Finally, systems theory also examines the whole-part relationship but focuses on the significance of the whole. From this perspective, we can observe how systems (the whole) contain elements (the parts) with processes, characteristics, and relationships that contribute (inputs) to the overall system's output (Vornberg, 2013). Furthermore, systems can be broken down into subsystems, characterized according to their boundaries, and explored via interactions and outcomes. While originating within biology, systems theory resonated with researchers in multiple disciplines, including education, psychology, and business. Consequently, it is possible to explore how individuals (the elements) interrelate within an organization and how these interactions affect the larger organization (the system). The process of exploring systems and the whole-part relationships is systems thinking (Jung & Love, 2017; Senge, 1990).

Looking to museums, Jung and Love (2017) hypothesized that systems thinking allows us to view museums as “networked systems composed of many interconnected parts and their interrelationships define what they are—but the systems will look different from museum to museum because they are always contextual” (p. 8). Jung (2011) called these networks a “web of relationships” (p. 328). Considering a museum as a unique ecosystem resulting from the combination of resources, staffing, collections, donors, location, and mission, imparting a universal truth of docent coordinators is impractical. Therefore, if the researcher does not consider the ecosystem, both internally and externally, then an understanding of “why things are

the way they are,” or how they will “react to change to their environments” is left unrealized (Vornberg, 2013, p. 812).

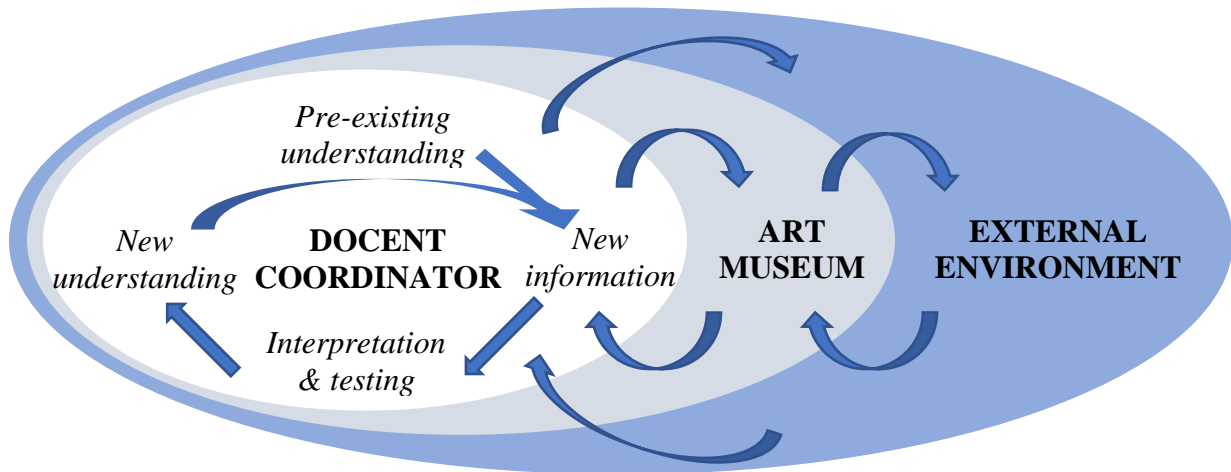
This study's design gathers perceptions of docent coordinators who comprehend their realities through *their* understandings, shaped and reshaped via the inputs from external systems (e.g., peers, their workplace, their community, the larger society). Placing the docent coordinator within context, the art museum, we see a system made up of departments (subsystems) comprised of individuals and their understandings of reality with whom the docent coordinator interacts. Therefore, it is relevant to consider the environment wherein the docent coordinator forms these perceptions. Art museums are systems with *their* understandings, histories, and identities, which are “situated within a complex of organizational, cultural, and temporal history and actions; thus they affect and are affected by these external environments (other systems)” (Jung & Love, 2017, p. 223). Examples of external systems include, and are not limited to, their community, region, other cultural institutions with which it interacts (or does not), professional organizations, political influences, and the larger society. The art museum affects and is affected by the individuals within the organization. This cycle of affect-and-affected occurs on multiple levels, and as new inputs enter, new understandings are possible for both individuals and organizations. Significantly, these understandings arise within a context and are temporal. To better illustrate these ideas, I offer a visual representation (Figure 1).

Using this tri-blend of paradigms to underpin this study's design, I seek to understand docent coordinators' stories as they prepared for and are supported in their work with VGG/Ds. The paradigms are an effective lens that acknowledges the plurality of docent coordinator understandings, the cycling interpretative process of both participants and researcher, and how these notions exist within time and context. It is crucial to note that this study does not seek to

generalize a truth of, or for, all art museum docent coordinators. Instead, by gathering docent coordinator perceptions, others can consider their understandings in light of new information shared within this study.

Figure 1

Theoretical Framework Visualized



Researcher Identity

As aspects of this dissertation touch upon race, gender, and other markers of identity, it is relevant to share that I identify as a White, cisgender woman. As a former art museum educator, I worked with volunteer gallery guides/docents within an encyclopedic art museum. These experiences informed the design of this study, the analysis, and the discussion. Within the third chapter of this study, I offer a deeper exploration of my subjectivity.

Methodology

The interpretations of our lived experiences--our story--ultimately lead to the construction of reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology). As shared earlier, it is not my intention to articulate a singular truth regarding how docent coordinators with art museums should or should not work with VGG/Ds. Instead, I am exploring a phenomenon described and characterized by

those who have experienced it. Therefore, I utilized interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), which draws upon hermeneutics, phenomenology, and idiography, which I unpack in Chapter 3. Within IPA, the role of the researcher is to “invite the participant to share this sense-making; (b) to act as a witness to its articulation; (c) and then, in turn, to make sense of it” (Smith, 2018, p. 1956). As I have experience working with VGG/Ds, I position this knowledge as an asset rather than a threat. My experiences shaped my focus of inquiry, my way of meaning-making, and, consequently, my understanding of my world. Therefore, the research questions that guide this study (developed from my knowledge of museums and VGG/Ds) invite art museum docent coordinators to share *their* perceptions of *their* experiences, using *their* language in *their* way.

Research Questions

The guiding point of interest for this study is: *How do art museum docent coordinators perceive their preparation and support for teaching and managing volunteer gallery guides/docents (VGG/Ds)?* To further drill down into these ideas, the following research questions offer specific aims, designed to gather perceptions of art museum docent coordinators’ understandings of their lived experiences:

1. How do art museum docent coordinators describe their preparation for educating volunteer gallery guides/docents?
2. What are the perceptions of art museum docent coordinators regarding the management of volunteer gallery guides/docents?
3. What theories do art museum docent coordinators ascribe to in the education of volunteer gallery guides/docents?
4. What supports do art museum docent coordinators consider helpful for their work with volunteer gallery guides/docents?

Summary

This study explores how docent coordinators in art museums characterize their preparation and support to manage and educate VGG/Ds to teach in the art museum. As such, this study relies upon the lived experiences of docent coordinators who work directly with VGG/D training. Through collected anecdotal evidence gained through semi-structured interviews, which offers both participants and the researcher the space to describe and interpret their understandings, this study seeks to inform future docent coordinators' preparation and support systems. Findings will contribute to the greater body of knowledge surrounding theory and practice in museum education and will benefit future VGG/D training and, ultimately, the visitor experience.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

I realized how little has been written about the history of museum education. As an established profession, museum education is less than fifty years old...But the practice of museum education is as old as museums. (Hein, 2012, p. 9)

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of docent coordinators concerning their preparation and support for educating and managing VGG/Ds in art museums. The review of literature began with the history of museums, docents, and the professionalization of museum education. Berry and Mayer (1989) emphasized the value of a historical perspective for museum education professionals, terming it a “historical imperative” and offered, “we must extend our depth dimension as well as our breadth.” (p. 6). Later, Curran (1995) asserted, “Without a historical perspective, common assumptions are absorbed into the discipline of museum education with little scrutiny” (p. 5). Research into theory and practice within museum education history offered insight into notions of effective docent education and management concepts.

The literature review also explored analysis and commentary related to the utilization of VGG/Ds within art museums in the United States. By identifying embedded traditions within the history of art museums and museum education, it was possible to gain insight into conventions within docent coordinators and VGG/Ds preparation. While the study's purpose is to tease out perceptions regarding training and managing VGG/Ds, it was relevant to consider how research in preparing and supervising VGG/Ds mirrored or departed from these ideas. To understand the

context of contemporary issues related to VGG/Ds, it was also necessary to move further afield from academic research towards observations and anecdotes shared within other sources, such as newspaper articles and blogs. Finally, the literature review ends with exploring learning in the workplace to consider how individual and organizational learning affect each other. In doing so, it became possible to consider how an individuals' actions, such as the docent coordinator or VGG/D, can impact the larger institution and how factors, such as stress, can affect these efforts.

A Brief History of (Western) Museums, pre-Twentieth Century

The history of museums in the United States cannot begin without a brief prologue that acknowledges the prior centuries of collecting and display. While many early collections were spoils of conquest, there is evidence of amassed objects with descriptive texts, such as those attributed to priestess Ennigaldi-Nanna of the sixth century BCE Neo-Babylonian empire (Gartner, 2016). The origins of gathering collections into treasuries of knowledge trace to Ancient Greece and buildings dedicated to the nine mythological muses, such as the Great Museum of Alexandria (Günay, 2012). Later, the Roman Catholic Church evolved as the foremost collector “of rare and precious objects,” eventually replaced by individual collectors (Kessler, 2017, p. 433). These private collections, known as *Wunderkammern* or “Cabinets of Curiosity,” became increasingly popular during and after the sixteenth century (Günay, 2012, p. 1252). They were unique to the individual collector, often displayed in private homes, and served as tangible indicators of knowledge, theology, power, and wealth (Kessler, 2017). The rise of Humanism brought a renewed interest in antiquity, classical texts, and artifact recovery. Findlen (1989) examined the epistemology of the word museum and noted:

The comparative and taxonomic functions of humanist collecting needed a defined space in which to operate, in part to identify the producers of and the audience for the museum,

that is, the intellectual elite of the Renaissance who identified themselves as patrons of learning; thus *musaeum* was a locating principle, circumscribing the space in which learned activities could occur. (p. 62)

By the late seventeenth century and into the eighteenth century, reason and individualism formed the basis of the Enlightenment, a European intellectual movement. Systematized taxonomies and scientific methods replaced the mishmash display of novel objects. Collections became “a source of information entirely integrated in the universe of Western Man” (Clifford, 1988, p. 228). Not merely sites exhibiting intellectual progress, museums evolved into centers of nation-building and symbols of burgeoning empires, such as the British Museum of England and the French Musee du Louvre.

Looking to European models, early museums in the newly formed United States of America held the promise of creating an American identity. The late eighteenth-century exhibition of Revolutionary War portraits by Charles Willson Peale serves as one example (Alexander, 1979). The exhibit led to establishing the first public art museum and art school in the United States, the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts (Buffington, 2007; Diethorn, 2015). In the latter half of the nineteenth century, post-Civil War America sought economic independence, with the arts serving to elevate American style and craftsmanship while educating the American artisan (Zeller, 1989). As a result, the beginnings of the American museum movement took root, which led to the establishment of such as museums as the Smithsonian Institution (1846), Harvard’s Peabody Museum (1866), the Corcoran Gallery of Art (1869), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (established in 1870), the Philadelphia Museum of Art (chartered in 1876), the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (1870), and the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences (later the Brooklyn Museum) (1890).

The Development of US Docents and Museum Education during the Twentieth Century

1900-1929

An 1892 letter from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA) trustee, J. Randolph Coolidge, Jr., shared interest in seeking “expert guidance in the galleries” (Gilman, 1918, p. 307). Experiments with gallery guides followed in 1895; the title *docent* was employed by 1906; and by 1907, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston installed the first docent followed by a second docent a year later (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011; Gartenhaus, 1990; Gilman, 1918; Zeller, 1985). Overseeing these efforts, the Secretary of the MFA from 1893 to 1925, Benjamin Ives Gilman, noted that museums should be of three minds: “*gardant*” (to preserve), “*monstrant*” (to exhibit), and “*docent*” (to teach) (Gilman, 1918, p. 280). This triad highlighted the growing understanding of the need to facilitate educational experiences within the art museum, but who would conduct these experiences, and how, remained uncertain.² Furthermore, the move to create adult educational offerings acknowledged the “newly articulated belief that humans learn throughout life” (Buffington, 2007, p. 13).

Meaning to teach or instruct, the term docent comes from the Latin *docere*, a title that connected docents to antiquity and lent a sense of tradition and authority (Bleick, 1980; Giltinan, 2008). For Gilman, the docent was not a guide but a “companion” in the art museum experience (Gilman, 1918, p. 315). Hartt (1910) described the docent as:

Broadly intelligent, trained to know not only pictures and statues but people, versed in the delicate art of imparting not information alone but inspiration—the real docent is born,

² The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston was not the only institution offering educational experiences in art galleries at the start of the Twentieth Century. Zeller (1985) offered examples of early education programs in art museums, including public lectures at the Detroit Museum of Art in the 1890s; organized educational activities at the Minneapolis Museum of Art in 1915; Henry W. Kent’s work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in which school groups could visit free of charge with their teachers and the growth of paid education staff; as well as the Art Institute of Chicago’s early educational programs, including children’s programs.

not made. His advent in American art museums means the doubling and trebling of their value to the masses of the people; it may mean nothing less than aesthetic salvation to those forlorn Americans who "don't know anything about art." (p. 703)

Louis Earle Rowe, an assistant in the MFA Egyptian Department, was one of the early docents at the MFA. Rowe (1911) identified the significant demand and value of educational offerings within the museum and the need to tailor gallery experiences to visitor needs. He described four types of gallery experiences: the general, the highlights, the focused study, and the meticulous exploration of one or more objects. These insights into customizing educational experiences acknowledged the range of visitors to museums (albeit a small-scale that excluded many groups based on race and socioeconomic status) and the scope of perceived visitors' needs. Rowe's discernments also functioned as a foretaste of ideas later researched within museum education (e.g., Falk, 2009; Hood, 1991; Lang et al., 2006; Mayer, 2005; Villeneuve, 2007).

During a 1919 AAM meeting, Miner et al. (1919) presented the paper, "Educational Training of Museum Instructors: How Far is Pedagogical Training or Teaching Experience Necessary for Museum Instructors?" Miner, Associate Curator at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, believed the qualifications necessary for a museum instructor were four-fold: "thorough knowledge of the subject," "enthusiasm for the subject," tact (what Miner described as a "natural sympathy for his fellow-beings") and personality that "we know when it is present, and we realize when it is absent, but it is not the result of pedagogical training" (p. 114). Both Alice W. Kendall and Louise Connelly of the Newark Museum Association adamantly argued against Miner, stating museum teachers were education specialists and therefore required pedagogical training (Miner et al., 1919). Gertrude Underhill of The Cleveland Museum of Art agreed pedagogy was pertinent in the preparation of museum

instructors. However, she contended, “the danger of a long teaching experience, it seems to me, is to cause one to become too academic in one's instruction; for the mission of an Art Museum is aesthetic rather than academic” (p. 117). These early discussions began to tease to the surface questions of what to teach, where, how to explain it, and what theories and practices effectively educated gallery teachers and, ultimately, the public (Kai-Kee, 2011).

Several museum educators and notable museum directors, such as John Cotton Dana of the Newark Museum, recognized museums' potential as sites in service of social reform (Moore Tapia, 2008). Progressivism, a movement overlapping the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, advanced political and social action, crediting education as a valuable means for social reform (Hein, 2012). Hein (2012) examined the work of education philosopher, reformer, and Progressivist John Dewey concerning museums. Dewey regarded museums as extensions of the learning environment and opportunities for improving traditional education models. Museum professionals recognized the value of Progressive principles for museum education, perceiving the need to make collections relevant and accessible for all visitors. Characterizing museums as gloomy temples, Dana (1917) admonished the museums of his day for collecting unrelatable objects and failing to educate the public in meaningful and relevant ways. These debates regarding the purpose of museums, the role of museum education, its theoretical underpinnings, and accessibility became the foundation from which museum education theory and practice developed. Investigations into these same ideas continue into contemporary research (see Appendix A).

It is also significant to address the transition into the twentieth century for the American museum primarily focused on White American identity and the cultivation of White social history. Black and Indigenous people's histories remained untold, and barriers to access further

enabled museums to remain sites of erasures rather than affirmation. Nineteenth-century efforts endeavored to cultivate collections and spaces for sharing these missing narratives. The Hampton University Museum, established in 1868, is considered the oldest African-American museum in the United States, with collections and curated displays that grew to include Pacific Islander, African, Native American, Asian, and African-American art and artifacts (Burns, 2013; Hampton University Museum, n.d.). By 1915, African-American U.S. Civil War Union Army veterans gathered to address the absence of their contributions, establishing committees to memorialize their accomplishments (Wilkins, 2003). It would take a century before these efforts were fully realized, eventually becoming the National Museum of African American History and Culture, a Smithsonian Institution, opened in 2016 (National Museum of African American History and Culture, n.d.).

1930-1980

The turn of the century in the United States saw a rise in industrialization, the effects of the first and second World Wars, the economic upheaval of the Great Depression, and social and racial tensions across the nation. These political, social, and economic factors contributed to further educational and social reform in the country. Between 1930 and 1980, museum education saw a growth in the number of museum teachers, variations in educational offerings, and attention to (some) visitor needs. A focus on school-aged children within museums intensified, along with the diversification of programmatic offerings (lectures, art history courses, studio classes), which created the need for staffing additional museum educators (Adam, 1937; Low, 1948; Munro, 1933; "Museum Education," 1959; "Museum Education Expanding," 1955). Concurrently, presentations and research on the value, rigor, and efforts of museum education, as well as the preparation and mission of museum educators, increasingly surfaced (e.g., Christison,

1948; Grove, 1968; Howard, 1931; Nicholson, 1962; Ritchie, 1949; Slatkin, 1947). Concerning VGG/Ds, women filled most docent positions, coming from educated backgrounds (McCoy, 1989) and as extensions of women's clubs such as the Junior League (Giltinan, 2008).

Boosted attendance to art museums met with a growing need to clarify museum education's practice and theories. Visits to museums rose to almost three hundred million by 1968, increasing the amount and range of educational programs offered (Patterson, 1968). Additionally, museum education departments expanded in response to the attendance upsurge (and grant-based funding), including a growing trend to offer outreach programs that traveled into museum communities (Zeller, 1985). At the same time, the publication of *America's Museums: The Belmont Report* (Fleming, 1968) emphasized museums as educational institutions, underlining the importance of knowledgeable, "specialized" staff, including those termed educators (Newsom & Silver, 1978, p. 600). To meet the growing need to cultivate skills and unite museum educators into a professional body, the Museum Educator's Roundtable (MER), later Museum Education Roundtable, formed in 1969 as an informal network for Washington, DC museum educators (Williams, 1994). MER also produced professional literature titled the *Roundtable Reports* (later the *Journal of Museum Education*), sharing articles on theory and practice in museum education (Ebitz, 2005).

Looking further into the museum education departments of this time, a 1963 survey conducted by AAM found that 131 of the respondent art museums (n = 222) utilized volunteers to provide tours of their institutions (Smithsonian Institution, 1965, p. 54). A little over a decade later, Newsom and Silver (1978) offered insights into museum education departments across the country through a collection of case studies. Within these examples, the authors found that museums relied heavily on docents. Volunteers "made up two-thirds of the museum

workforce...with 23,900 volunteers of whom 30 percent worked in education programs – that is, as docents or in a similar teaching capacity” (p. 242). Notably, fifty years after Newsome and Silver (1978), the National Art Education Association (NAEA) and American Association of Museum Directors (AAMD) released what became known as the *Impact Study*, sharing similar findings regarding the use of docents (NAEA/AAMD Core Team, 2018).

During the mid-twentieth century, the Black museum movement evolved to counter Eurocentric museum models that denied Black history and culture (Burns, 2013). Chicago’s DuSable Museum of African American History was founded in 1961, formerly the Ebony Museum of Negro History and Art, becoming the first museum dedicated to Black heritage (Rocksborough-Smith, 2011). In 1965, the International Afro-American Museum opened in Detroit, now the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History (Burns, 2013). By 1967, the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum opened to the public “as part of a unique partnership between the Smithsonian Institution and local African American community organizations based in the southeastern quadrant of Washington, D.C” (p. 9). Many of these museums started as independent efforts devoted to preserving and sharing Black identity, opening as community centers within homes, storefronts, and theaters. By 1978, the African American Museums Association, later titled the Association of African American Museums (AAAM), formed to support museums dedicated to “preserving and promoting the art, history, and culture of African and African American communities globally” (AAAM, n.d., para. 9).

By the 1970s, postmodernist explorations within museum education uncovered tensions that reflected societal changes. Early conceptions of museums in the United States sought to elevate these institutions from social concerns, while others sought to improve (White) society (Moore Tapia, 2008; Zeller, 1989). However, the latter half of the century saw museums no

longer able to avoid questions regarding power dynamics, discriminatory structures, and hegemonic practices. As shared by Kyran McGrath, director of AAM at the time, museums could no longer rely on traditions but should push towards “relevance” (Glueck, 1971, p. 32). However, attempts by museums to acknowledge marginalized communities served to expose discriminatory and racialized politics, such as the controversial 1969 Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition, *Harlem on My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America, 1900–1968* (Cooks, 2007).

As museums in the United States struggled with relevance and debates over unjust representations, Newsom and Silver (1978) reported that traditions within museum education endured as well. Tours remained the chief offering, designed to impart information rather than encouraging conversation with visitors. Hands-on, experiential encounters with art grew in acceptance but remained the exception. However, Newsom and Silver (1978) shared, “it should be understood at the beginning that the art museum is above all about art...Important as the educational process is, the museum is less a place to learn about art than a place in which to enjoy it” (p. 1). As Rice (1995) later pointed out, perhaps this guarded sentiment by Newsom and Silver (1978) stemmed from the need to appease publication stakeholders, namely the Cleveland Museum of Art.

As the emphasis on the role of museum education grew, museum educators refused to remain on the periphery. At an AAM conference in 1973, educators felt underrepresented, leading to the founding of the AAM Educational Committee, abbreviated to EdCom (Kai-Kee, 2012). This committee would eventually draft and publish professional standards for the field. The standards functioned to guide museum educators in crafting learning experiences for visitors, implementing technology, and evaluating their offerings (Task Force on Professional

Standards Standing Professional Committee on Education, 2005). Later, attendees to the 1976 NAEA convention observed the need to address fellow members' interests, those of the art museum educators (Buffington, 2007). The Museum Education Affiliate Group was formed within NAEA, ultimately creating the Museum Education Division of NAEA by 1981. The group helped advance museum education by establishing a professional network for educators, offering sessions connecting classrooms with museums, and creating a forum for sharing research, theories, and practice. Concurrently, the United States Association of Museum Volunteers (later changed to American Association for Museum Volunteers) was incorporated in 1979, becoming an AAM affiliate by 1981 (American Association for Museum Volunteers, n.d.).

1980-2000

In the history of museum education, the Eighties presented several watershed moments that significantly reshaped the profession. A 1984 report by AAM (now the American Alliance of Museums) emphasized the educational role of the museum, highlighting further work in adult learning programs, as well as a lack of diversity in representation and staffing that did not reflect visitors' identities (American Association of Museums Commission on Museums for a New Century, 1984). Additionally, the US museum sector struggled with significant funding cuts in the Eighties, fueled by controversies around censorship and intense criticism of National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grants (Koch, 1998). Museums could no longer operate within a bubble that served only its collection and donors. Transparency, accountability, and relevance were the new axioms.

Turning a critical eye inward, Zeller (1985) conducted a two-phase study that sought to understand who was professionally involved in the work of museum education (n = 181). Findings revealed art history remained the primary field of study for museum education, with

minor coursework, professional literature, conferences, or training related to education. “Many art museum educators have more in common with their curatorial colleagues and their art historian counterparts in colleges and universities than they do with classroom teachers or art educators” (p. 58). Furthermore, the Zeller study's findings identified a common practice of hiring curators and art historians to lead museum education departments.

It is pertinent to the discussion of museum educator preparation to consider what higher education programs were available at the time. Newsom and Silver (1978) speculated the *Belmont Report* (Fleming, 1968) contributed to the “mushrooming” of programs – numbering 91 by 1971 – designed to “train” museum professionals (Newsom & Silver, 1978, p. 600). Many of these programs offered by museums included internal training and educational fellowships. Examples of academic institutions include the University of Michigan’s two-year degree connected with their university art museum and its teaching collection, the University of Minnesota’s museology program, and George Washington University’s (GW) interdisciplinary M.A.T. degree in Museum Education. When Newsom and Silver (1978) examined these three universities, only GW incorporated teaching and learning theory and educational psychology courses. Notwithstanding, Newsom and Silver identified what they termed a “central dilemma” in the preparation of museum educators: unclear domains of “professional knowledge” to ascertain credentials for museum educators (p. 605).

Researchers Dobbs and Eisner (1986, 1987) gathered perceptions from more than three dozen museum directors and education leaders from a representative sample of 20 midsize museums. The study aimed to examine issues and needs within art museum education in the United States. Researchers identified several general concerns, including confusion over what museum education was and uncertainty over educator responsibilities. Moreover, the researchers

ascertained a lack of professional resources for museum educators; inadequate training in research and evaluation related to museum education; little clout and upward mobility for the profession; and a deficient pedagogical foundation. These findings gave the impression of a fledgling field fraught with vagueness, insecurity, and separation.

Indeed, the Dobbs and Eisner (1986) study sent ripples through the field of museum education. Critics targeted generalizations presented by Dobbs and Eisner, owing to the small sample size gained from larger institutions situated primarily in metropolitan cities (Rice, 1995; Williams, 1996). Rice (1995) determined the primary downfall of the study fell to the researchers, who were “both academic art educators,” focused on museums as “informal universities for art education” rather than the “recreational aspect of art museum use” (p. 17). Dobbs and Eisner acknowledged these and other limitations yet held to the hope that their study “helps further the dialogue which can help realize its [museum education’s] promise” (Dobbs & Eisner, 1987, p. 86). What can be sure is that, in striking a nerve, the Dobbs and Eisner study propelled the field into discussions and research into defining itself, museum learning, and its theoretical underpinnings (Kai-Kee, 2012).

A year after the Dobbs and Eisner (1986) study, twenty-five museum educators, all active in either EdCom or the NAEA Museum Education Division, met in Denver, Colorado (Brigham, 1988). Their goals were to draft a working definition of museum education, identify critical issues within the field, and articulate appropriate preparation and professional development for museum educators. The *Journal of Museum Education* (formerly the *Roundtable Reports*), a professional resource established in 1985, published findings from (what was later termed) the Denver Meeting (Williams, 1988). Participants in the meeting articulated the following definition in the journal:

Art museums function as educational institutions by presenting original works of art and by making these primary resources accessible to broad audiences. The purpose of art museum education is to enhance the visitors' ability to understand and appreciate original works of art and to transfer these experiences into other aspects of the visitors' lives. Such education of the public can be accomplished through the responsible application of learning and teaching principles to the actions of interpreting exhibiting, and collecting works of art. The art museum educator is a knowledgeable, creative, and skilled teacher, visitor advocate, and/or manager who causes meaningful interaction between people and art through a variety of educational endeavors. (Pitman-Gelles & El-Omami, 1988, p. 21)

Essential within this definition was the articulated emphasis on pedagogy as a foundation for art museum educators. Moreover, in the same journal issue, Pond (1988) and Brigham et al. (1988) noted a lack of management training. In both articles, the authors discussed management in relation to advancement into administrative or director roles. Yet, it does beg the question of why the Denver Meeting participants did not delve further into volunteer management, as many institutions continued to rely on volunteer docents at this time.

Docents: 1980-2000. Shifting to research related to VGG/Ds, Bleick (1980) offered that the average art museum docent was "...almost always a female, and characteristically from the white, upper-middle-class segment of the community" (p. 19). McCoy (1989) provided additional demographic information related to art museum docents: between 40 and 50 years of age, having some post-high school education and work experience, and often unemployed while volunteering. Yet, docents remained largely unrepresentative of the range of museum visitors. A 1984 AAM report noted that museums lacked diversity. Yet, they held the potential to aid humanity by highlighting cultural pluralism to preserve what the report called a "rapidly

disappearing” diversity of cultures (American Association of Museums Commission on Museums for a New Century, 1984, p. 23). A decade later, AAM addressed the need for all staff, including docents, to serve as representatives of museums and reflect “society’s pluralism in every aspect of their operations and programs” (American Association of Museums, 1992, p. 3). These sentiments continued into the twenty-first century, suggesting further work ahead for museums to diversify staffing and volunteer programs and become more inclusive spaces (NAEA ED&I Task Force, 2019; Task Force on Professional Standards Standing Professional Committee on Education, 2005).

Additionally, the sway of docents grew considerably over the twentieth century. “Docents have become a powerful force. Their function as museum representatives and contact persons with visitors, as well as museum advocates in their communities, have placed them in a position of strategic importance to the museum industry” (Gartenhaus, 1990, p. 25). This strength matured as volunteers began sharing their experiences and theories of museum education on a larger scale, such as through the National Docent Symposium (NDS). Founded in 1981, NDS steadily grew to accommodate 450 docents by its 1991 symposium (Long, 1991). The conference served as a forum for docents and paid museum educators to share ideas.

Furthermore, published texts related specifically to docents served as resources to guide practice and validate their continued use. *The Good Guide* was a sourcebook for many museum interpreters and guides, offering insights into visitorship, learning theories, and practical teaching strategies (Grinder & McCoy, 1998). The (now defunct) journal, *The Docent Educator*, founded for the “needs, interests, and teaching responsibilities” of docents in museums, also imparted theories and strategies for developing individuals and docent programs (Gartenhaus, 1991, p. 1). Topics included specific touring techniques and approaches, as well as examples of docent

trainings. One article from *The Docent Educator* challenged museum educators to interrogate docent training practices, asking the field to consider utilizing the same methods desired for teaching in galleries in the actual education of docents (Gough-DiJulio, 1994). Two decades later, DePrizio (2016) echoed these ideas, asking, “What if our training methods reflected the kind of teaching we expect gallery educators to employ?” (p. 5).

Williams (1994) revisited the Dobbs and Eisner (1986) study nearly a decade later. Most respondents in the Williams study (museum directors [n = 12], museum educators [n = 16]) utilized docents within their education departments. Participants reported that the number of docents often surpassed the number of employed museum educators, from three to thirty times more docents than employed museum educators. Curators and museum educators primarily facilitated training for docents and included various topics from exhibition-specific training to specific workshops related to particular visitor populations. All respondent museum educators received academic preparation in art history, a third of which held art education degrees, and two of the twelve from the discipline of Education. Notably, a single institution within the study listed “volunteer management” as specialized training (p. 341 and p. 374). This finding harkens back to the recommendations raised by Pond (1988) and Brigham et al. (1988) regarding management training as part of the career training and development of art museum educators.

Parallels Between Museum Education and Education Research. It is relevant to note that Shulman (1987) shared theories regarding categories of classroom teacher knowledge during this same time. These ideas provided a groundwork from which many later researchers in education and museum education would expand (Carlsen, 1999; Castle, 2001; Fernandez, 2014; Gess-Newsome, 1999; Grenier, 2005b; Lemelin, 2003). These categories of knowledge (Table 1)

provided a framework for comprehending a teacher's understandings. Moreover, the classifications offered a basis for exploring how to prepare and support educators.

Table 1

Shulman (1987): Categories of Teacher Knowledge

Shulman's Categories	Description
"Content Knowledge"	Understanding of concepts, competencies, histories, and theories related to a specific subject area (e.g., science, math, art)
"Pedagogical Knowledge"	Knowledge of how to teach that "transcends subject matter" (e.g., classroom management, assessment strategies, modeling)
"Pedagogical Content Knowledge"	The synthesis of what a teacher knows about the content and what they know about teaching and learning in the subject area
"Curriculum Knowledge"	Comprehension of learning structures, such as curriculum maps or standards, that inform what is taught and learned
"Knowledge of Learners and Their Characteristics"	Familiarity with human development, social and emotional needs of the learner, teaching neurodiverse learners, etc.
"Knowledge of Educational Contexts"	Awareness of political, economic, social, and ethical factors that influence teaching and learning within a setting (e.g., the classroom, the school, the community, the state, the country)
"Knowledge of Educational Ends"	Understanding of education "purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds"

Note: Quoted phrases in Table 1 from Shulman, L. (1987). Knowledge and teaching:

Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(1), p. 8.

Many of Shulman's ideas connect with Joseph J. Schwab's descriptions of four commonplaces of education: "the learner, the teacher, the milieu, and subject" (Schwab, 1973, p. 508). Looking specifically at the milieu, or setting, Schwab posited that understanding the learner's community, nested communities, and sociocultural groupings were significant contributors to the learning dynamic. Vallance (1995, 2003) examined the curriculum of the art

museum, pressing for museum educators to create an accessible *public* curriculum for a wide range of visitors. For Vallance, the milieu was the museum (which can be both the setting and content). The museum existed within a community and imbued with a sociocultural context, perceived as either “welcoming or intimidating,” owing to the architecture, staffing, content, and voices within these spaces (read or heard) (Vallance, 2003, p. 10). Furthermore, Vallance offered that while the abilities of museum educators and their efforts to engage visitors were critical, the unique qualities of the museum setting as a context for both teaching and learning required acknowledgment as well.

Discussions of museum education, curriculum development, and curriculum theory moved into the twenty-first century. Castle (2006) identified how the work of Shulman (1987) and Schwab (1969), when overlaid with their study’s gathered perspectives of docents and guides, provided a strong foundation for identifying practical approaches for preparing these individuals to teach in their respective museums. Rose (2007), building on the work of Schwab (1969, 1973) and Vallance (1995, 2003), pressed for museum educators to acknowledge curriculum theory and simultaneously indicated a lack of museum education doctoral programs to study curriculum in museums. Shortly after, Tran and King (2007) also drew upon Shulman (1987) to underscore the need for a theoretical foundation in museum education, simultaneously proposing the field incorporate categories of a knowledge base, re-termed to reflect museum education.

The close of the twentieth saw museums focusing on civic engagement, the rise of technology, an increased effort by museum educators to connect with school reform and standards of learning, and growth in museum curatorial and education cooperation (Williams, 2001). The publication of milestone documents such as *Museums for a New Century: A Report of*

the Commission on Museums for a New Century (AAM Commission on Museums for a New Century, 1984) and *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums* (AAM, 1992) elevated the educational role of museums and intensified the need to diversify both museum staffing and audiences. But, as the century came to a close, museums pondered whether they could be all things to all people (Kotler & Kotler, 2000; Williams, 2001). As Weil (1999) posed, it was time for museums to shift “from being *about* something to being *for* somebody” (p. 229).

Into the Twenty-First Century

Reviewing issues from the *Journal of Museum Education* since the year 2000, topics largely shifted towards a visitor-focus: building community relationships in a global society, the associations between museums and schools, critical analysis of museum education related to diversity and access, building inclusivity in museum education, and more. Regarding philosophies and models within museum education, Ebitz (2006) compiled a list of seventeen theories discussed over the previous two decades at a National Art Education Association’s annual conference, which he subsequently expanded two years later (Ebitz, 2008) (see Appendix A). Dudzinska-Przesmitzki and Grenier (2008) reviewed literature related to formal and nonformal education, finding “that although museum education research continues to document the impact of museums on visitors' learning, it falls short in capturing the process dimensions that lead to diverse learning outcomes” (p. 18).

Focusing on museum educators, researchers offered insight into these professionals’ preparation and perceptions. Chen Cooper (2007) provided empirical data gathered from job descriptions culled from *Aviso* (an AAM job resource), which highlighted required skills, responsibilities, as well as workplace rewards and challenges. Within the study, participants

discussed stressors within their role, including a lack of resources, feeling unproductive, inadequate staffing, desire to attend professional development, and feelings of burnout.

Stafne (2012) surveyed art museum educators ($n=123$), finding 87.8% completed an art history degree, and 77% reported a degree in education. Additionally, findings led to four encapsulating statements about art museum educators: they were flexible and discerning professionals who preferred open-ended experiences in museums and were both “educationally and professionally experienced,” coming from “diverse educational and professional experiences” (Stafne, 2012, p. 115). Shortly thereafter, Schmitt (2014) conducted a nationwide survey of educators and curators ($n = 118$, 88 educators, and 30 curators), finding 31% held art history degrees and 18% education degrees. However, several museum educators within the Schmitt survey came from other academic areas, including studio art and museum studies. Moreover, Schmitt explored communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) amongst curator and educator groups and the effects on members’ teaching approaches and persona. Schmitt (2014) also found that while curators identified as teachers, museum educators did not identify curators as educators.

Looking to VGG/Ds, the *Journal of Museum Education* focused its first issue of the year on training docents, where museum educators and researchers articulated case studies, models, and recommendations for the future (e.g., DePrizio, 2016; McCray, 2016; Oleniczak, 2016; Stark, 2016). Researchers continued to examine aspects of museum education into the second decade of the twenty-first century, whether collecting empirical evidence related to docent training theories and practices (Teeple, 2019) or exploring docents’ understandings and authority in the art museum (Graves, 2020). Much of the recent literature related to VGG/D education comes from self-reported descriptions of activities, methods, or programs within individual

institutions. Inside these descriptions is the potential for locating theoretical models that ground practice, with the potential for reproducing or reinventing praxis. Examples include growing docent self-efficacy (Evans-Palmer, 2013); sharing teaching techniques for use in museum gallery tours (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2011; Crow & Bowles, 2018; Weisberg, 2006); theoretical and practical models for teaching in the art museum (Carter, 2018; Falk & Dierking, 2012; Hein, 2007; MASS Action, 2017; McCray, 2016; Roberts, 2006; Villeneuve, 2007). Topics also included relevancy and intentionality in museum practice (Korn, 2018; Lynch, 2011; Simon, 2010, 2016); incorporating technology into docent training (Murphy, 2018); and examining inclusivity/exclusivity in museum education (Acuff & Evans, 2014; Jennings et al., 2019; Mann et al., 2018).

However, there is a shortage of research that explores how docent coordinators learn about these concepts and how they implement these concepts into the education and management of VGG/Ds. Professional conferences are options for docent coordinators seeking to develop skills and understanding. Topics at these conferences included exchanging or enhancing VGG/D programs with student or paid educators (Abare & Mackie, 2018). At the 2011 National Docent Symposium, a presentation titled, *The Good, the Bad, and the Docent*, provided an initial slide with the statement, “It takes intestinal fortitude to deal with problem docents” (Krupka & Rutledge, 2011, slide 2). The presenters, who were members of a docent guild, examined how to manage issues within a docent program managed by docents, including tardiness, unreliability, power struggles, and negativity towards museum staff. Significantly, Krupka and Rutledge (2011) drew upon their own experiences to share how to manage VGG/Ds with other docents, thereby strengthening other museum docent programs. Since the presentation took place within a

national docent conference, how might docent *coordinators* learn from these firsthand experiences?

VGG/Ds in the News. Looking at the relationship between the paid museum educator(s) and the VGG/Ds, it is understandable that there are considerable difficulties in locating research that reports on problems within VGG/D programs. Arguably, there is the risk that insights could result in a loss of workforce and potential public exposure of internal struggles. However, it is possible to move outside academic writing to explore actual conflicts within museums regarding the management and use of VGG/Ds.

Within the blog archives of the American Association for State and Local History (2015), a scathing response resides to a newspaper article published in *The Wall Street Journal* titled, “Docents Gone Wild” (Gamerman, 2015). The newspaper article contained descriptions of docents setting off alarms, arguing with museum staff, and mocking visitors. Moreover, reports of a national conference session devoted to sharing and addressing problems with docents highlighted the extent to which these concerns affected museum professionals. In response, the AASLH blog (2015) argued the Gamerman (2015) article was a “poorly researched, albeit humorous, article that could have been really good, but fails to address that docents are humans, mostly unpaid and under-appreciated, and more easily terminable for infractions than paid staff” (para. 3). The author suggested the onus fell to the volunteer manager, offering recommendations for dealing with problematic volunteer behaviors. Yet, while the author emphasized that, in their experience, most volunteers did not meet these descriptions, the indication that “every museum professional” had at least one “horror story” implied these occurrences were not uncommon (para. 8).

McGlone (2014), writing for *The Washington Post*, reported on the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden education department's decision to replace docents with college interns. Leadership described the rationale behind this move as, "Visitors don't want formal tours anymore; they want casual interactions with staff who can talk about the work and help them understand it better" (para. 6). Many docents were museum members and donors, harkening back to Gartenhaus's descriptions of power and docent. With such influence, it is not difficult to see why, less than a year later, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden double-backed on its decision (McGlone, 2015). Moreover, added accounts of the Hirshhorn's decision to replace their older volunteers with younger ones brought forth accusations of ageism ("A lesson in ageism, from the Hirshhorn Museum," 2015).

At the Phoenix Art Museum (PAM), recent changes to the docent program revealed, rather publicly, vastly different perspectives between staff and volunteers regarding education within the museum (Pela, 2019b). To provide context, PAM changed leadership in 2015. The new museum director, Amanda Cruz, tasked with meeting the changing needs of visitors and guiding the institution towards diversity, reorganized the docent program. Leadership viewed the docent program as unrepresentative of the community and outdated in its lecture-based tour structure (Cruz, 2019). As a result, the new training, according to former PAM docents, was less rigorous and less about educating museum visitors (Pela, 2019b). The docents preferred their previous model of training, which "lasted two years and offered a crash course in art history which, many say, was the equivalent of a master's degree" (Pela, 2019b, para 73). It would seem that new leadership and established volunteers were at odds over the goals of internal (docent education) and external (visitor) museum education.

Potentially, docents within the Hirshhorn and PAM held an “immunity to change” that caused them to see alterations to their programs as attacks rather than improvements (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. x). Conversely, it is possible that docents felt underrepresented in the choice-making process. Considering the museum educators’ or leadership’s perspective, the docents are volunteers subject to museum mission and strategic initiatives. Of note, the author who reported on PAM’s internal troubles also offered a glimpse into the ageism potentially faced by VGG/D. “So let’s talk about the docents for a moment. Let’s say that the docents in any museum, in any town, are people of a certain age who don’t like change” (Pela, 2019a, para. 4). Pela’s statement is an oversimplification that denies that docents are capable of learning and growing their practice. The idea also contradicts the concept of lifelong learning in museums (and beyond), which was acknowledged more than a hundred years prior (Buffington, 2007). While Pela targets the VGG/D as resistant to change, how were the volunteers prepared for these changes? Who taught the volunteer? How? Is there underlying ageism within the museum? The field will benefit from studies that discuss ageism in museum education docent programs.

VGG/Ds and Inclusivity. As researchers focused on visitors in the latter half of the twentieth century, questions surfaced around exclusionary practices (Hood, 1983; Sandell, 1998). Key to these discussions around museums and discrimination is acknowledging that museums are not impartial, neutral, or apolitical (Jennings & Jones-Rizzi, 2017; Saumarez Smith, 2000). They are social constructions that form, shape and erase identities (Golding, 2009). A dominant Western narrative pervades the history of art museums, which, if left unacknowledged, supports the perpetuation of heteronormative, patriarchal, racist, and hegemonic ideals (American Alliance of Museums, 2018; Cole & Lott, 2019; Dewhurst & Hendrick, 2018; McMillen, 2012; Ng et al., 2017; Schero, 2021; Sullivan & Middleton, 2020).

For museums to change, they must embrace the act of change. At a 1994 Southeastern Museums Conference, keynote speaker Rex Ellis (1995) employed the term *change agent*. A change agent is “someone who facilitates planned change or planned innovation” (Havelock, 1973, p. 5). The call for museum educators to embrace the position of change agent continued into the twenty-first century (Crum & Hendrick, 2014; Ng & Ware, 2014). Understanding how individuals within an organization, a system, can affect change is integral. How do individuals learn norms to alter norms? In what ways can an individual disrupt a system? How do the individual’s knowledge and learning contribute to an organization’s learning and growth?

Art museum educators, paid or unpaid, serve as the museum's voice when interacting with visitors and can challenge injustice directly with their audiences (Acuff & Evans, 2014). They are often the vanguard of institutional change, “using programing [*sic*] to respond to issues affecting our communities, and working internally to build staff capacities and competencies to align with our public-facing missions and stated values” (Greenberg et al., 2017, p. 139). Recognizing the necessity of confronting injustice within museums, fifty museum professionals gathered in 2016, known as Museum as Sites for Social Action (MASS Action), to challenge embedded traditions, explore equity in museums, and consider ways of decolonizing these institutions. From these proceedings, a free downloadable MASS Action publication, *Toolkit*, offered guidance, readings, theories, and methods for addressing social inequities in and through museums (MASS Action, 2017). Among those who attended the conference and contributed to the *Toolkit* were museum educators and education directors.

Looking specifically at how docent coordinators prepare VGG/Ds for discussions around race within museums, the NAEA Museum Division’s open access online professional publication, *Viewfinder*, offered several examples of museum educators engaging external

consultants to foreground Black and Brown experiences in the art museum. Examples included challenging whiteness in museums, involving guides in discussions of race and the museum (Mann et al., 2018), modeling culturally responsive teaching and confronting bias (Tobin, 2020), as well as gathering guides around discussions of implicit bias and cognitive dissonance (Kraehe & Evans, 2019). From these examples, it is possible to see how White museum staff troubled the notion of hosting discussions around race with predominantly White VGG/Ds. Instead, museum educators invited consultants whose lived experiences and research were foregrounded, thereby engaging VGG/Ds in mixed-race dialogue around race. Moreover, theories within these examples, such as cognitive dissonance theory shared by Kraehe and Evans (2019), explored potential reactions as VGG/Ds engaged in discussions of racism as well as methods for addressing these responses.

The history of museum education and docents offers a means to understand how the field arrived at contemporary theories and practices while also providing support for considering opportunities for the future. From this contextualization, it is possible to explore specific roles within art museum education, such as the docent coordinator. Pulling on this thread, discussions of volunteer management appear and reappear within the fabric of museum education history (Firer, 1986; Graves, 2020; Grinder & McCoy, 1998; Hirzy, 2007; Johnson et al., 2009; Martell, 2007; McCoy, 1989; Pond, 1988; Rapone, 1986; Van Hoven & Wellman, 2016).

Volunteer Management in Museums

Before considering the action of managing volunteers, it is helpful to understand why people volunteer in art museums. Petite (1984), in an exploration of art museum docents, offered, “studies infer that volunteering makes a meaningful contribution to the volunteer's own psychological health and self-actualization; individual volunteers may need volunteering just as

much, or perhaps more, than organizations and the community need them” (pp. 48-49).

Volunteering in an art museum provides opportunities for lifelong learning, and more explicitly, learning about art, as well as personal growth and civic engagement (McCoy, 1989). Moreover, volunteers within museums are often passionate about the topic of the museum or collection and often enjoy the social nature of connecting with visitors (Van Hoven & Wellman, 2016).

Harnessing these passions and organizing VGG/D efforts fall to the role of the docent coordinator, which is sometimes called a docent manager or volunteer guide manager. The beginnings of this role occurred shortly after the development of the docent position, wherein titled posts oversaw the work of docents. Giltinan (2008) noted this change, appearing first at the MFA Boston, as significant, indicating the beginning of a hierarchy wherein paid museum educators supervised the work of docents and moved into a perceived “professional echelon of educational work” (p. 126). Some institutions continued utilizing volunteers to train and supervise their volunteer programs, while others shifted to creating docent committees and leadership councils managed by and collaborating with the paid education staff (McCoy, 1989).

The term *professional* appeared regularly throughout the history of museum education and the history of docents. *Professional* and *professionalize* encapsulate a journey beginning with an individual doing a task to a designated occupation with credentials, canons, and a regulating body overseeing these qualifications and standards (Wilensky, 1964). The efforts of museum educators to professionalize began with educators in 1915, followed by a 1919 AAM conference session devoted to discussions of the appropriate preparation for museum educators (Howe, 1946; Miner et al., 1919). By 1965, an AAM report defined professionalism as “specialized,” requiring “intensive” preparation; however, the report indicated a small portion of museum staff met these criteria and speculated, “it is obvious that professionalism will not be

attained in the museum field until it can be achieved only through personnel with academic training and experiences” (AAM, 1965, p. 53). Significantly, the history of museums provides a potential rationale, as many museums experienced climbing attendance rates but little financial support and strained staffing to meet the needs of visitors (Patterson, 1968). Thus, a reliance on training, managing, and utilizing volunteers continued.

A decade later, Williams (1976) contended, “professionals teach and volunteers give tours,” thus emphasizing a divide between the museum educator and the VGG/D based on a thorough knowledge of pedagogy and the museum collection (p. 3). Wrapped within this statement are the suggestions of quality, proper preparation for teaching in an art museum, and a recognition of professionalism that elevated the skills and knowledge of the museum educator. Notably, Williams (1976) suggested a fusion of art historical and pedagogical knowledge with discussions of differences between the two. Shortly after, Newsom and Silver (1978) questioned, “Why do institutions that increasingly call themselves, and are expected by the public to be, ‘educational resources,’ use unpaid nonprofessionals to do their teaching for them” (p. 33). Exploring if changes occurred in the subsequent decade, it appeared little shifted. McCoy (1989) examined docents in art museums and shared, “museum teaching is done by very few docents in any art museums, while most are still delivering commentaries” (p. 138).

Discussions of professionalism and management of volunteers came to the forefront of museum education around the mid-1980s. Simultaneously, the field underwent considerable efforts to define qualifications, standards, research goals, and ambitions. Within art museums, Rapone (1986), Pond (1988), and Brigham et al. (1988) touched upon the need to raise awareness and provide further professional development in areas of volunteer management. The summer 1986 issue of the *Journal of Museum Education* explored volunteers and volunteer

management in the museum. Rapone (1986) presented a primer for these endeavors while simultaneously promoting The American University's volunteer management certification.

Within, defining characteristics of the museum volunteer manager emerged:

Must possess supervisory skills with a solid understanding of voluntarism...responsible for recruiting, interviewing, and placing volunteers, as well as designing and implementing effective training programs. In addition, the volunteer manager will be responsible for generating all funds to support the volunteer program. Knowledge of publicity and public relations is a must. Good communication skills and an understanding of the management politics involved in nonprofit organizations are essential. (p. 3)

Moreover, the option of certification inferred these skills were not included within specific programs for preparing future museum educators and required deeper engagement, which merited endorsement.

In the same issue, Firer (1986) perceived a crucial component of volunteer management shifted into understanding predispositions and bias:

Our society does not readily acknowledge the experience, talents, skills, and wisdom which accompany later life, and the policies of many cultural institutions echo this fact. As individuals, museum trainers are likely to absorb similar biases. All sources of bias - societal, institutional, and personal collide when older volunteers enter into the museum environment. To prevent these sentiments from having their subtle, yet devastating effects on a volunteer program, it is critically important to have a staff advocate who can move gracefully among the many parts of the institution and pave the way for acceptance of older volunteer. (p. 14)

Firer cautioned museum educators to hold an awareness of ageist attitudes towards VGG/Ds, suggesting a need to incorporate sensitivity, advocacy, and care in the management of volunteers.

Volunteer Management Resources for the Docent Coordinator

In the past thirty years, several published resources attempted to offer pragmatic advice for managing VGG/D programs. *The Good Guide* served as a practical text focusing mainly on touring techniques related to K-12 groups, touching upon learning theory from educational philosophers Piaget and Dewey and relevant museum education research (Grinder & McCoy, 1998). Kuyper (1993) provided a comprehensive guide covering a range of volunteering positions within museums. Significantly, the text calls upon prior research and discussions of standards within the field of museum education to underscore the value of volunteers. While Kuyper offered standards endorsed by the American Association for Museum Volunteers (AAMV) and ethical and legal considerations for volunteer conduct, the author also bulleted a list of responsibilities that included: a mission focus, being a “liaison between the volunteer program and museum staff,” awareness of recruitment, evaluation, record-keeping, and being a “committed leader, advocate, communicator, a capable manager, and a good communicator” (Kuyper, 1993, pp. 31-32).

In 2001, *The Docent Handbook* offered docents, guides, interpreters, and coordinators a how-to compendium for teaching in galleries (National Docent Symposium Council, 2001). From this guide, docent coordinators could extrapolate ideas for recruiting, training and evaluating VGG/Ds. While clear-cut in its guidance, the manual failed to identify the pedagogical theories from which its recommendations stemmed. What references to learning theory that did occur touched primarily upon “types of thinkers” (referencing research from three

decades prior) and “characteristics for each type of learner” (without a specific reference for additional reading) (National Docent Symposium Council, 2001, pp. 25-26). These references barely scratched the surface of the considerable headway made in museum education research during the latter half of the twentieth century. In 2017, NDS republished the handbook and retitled it, *The Docent Handbook 2: Revised Edition*, yet it contained little to no updates to the pedagogical framework on which its content was based (National Docent Symposium Council, 2017). Lists of theories related to museum education existed, such as Ebitz (2008). If added, these ideas might have offered a theoretical grounding for the handbook.

Sweney (2007) described docents as “professional volunteers,” advocating for VGG/D managers to employ methods from human resources for screening, vetting, and contractually engaging volunteers (p. 83). Similarly, within *The Manual of Museum Education*, Johnson et al. (2009) offered three chapters concerning the management of volunteers, including discussions of recruitment, retention, and other notions drawn from the field of human resource management. Significantly, a chapter subtitled “Taming Wild Docents” highlighted potential complications with managing volunteers in museums:

The docent is a resource of information, and institutions lose credibility with the public if the docents are not knowledgeable about the museum and the exhibits. Likewise docents can struggle, tell made-up stories, and misinform the public if they are not given good information and direction about touring – docents gone wild! (Johnson et al., 2009, p. 47)

Johnson (2009) also emphasized the *training* of docents, implying the importance of docents replicating skills rather than becoming critical, reflective thinkers of their efforts.

Conversely, Grenier (2011) deemphasized the notion of training and encouraged education staff overseeing VGG/Ds to cultivate learning communities and social interactions that

promoted informal learning rather than content mastery. Drawing upon the work of Argyris and Schön (1974), Grenier (2008) explored the dynamics of actual and espoused theories within docent education programs. The researcher found, “a constructivist approach to learning was espoused by both educators and the museums they represented, yet the docents in both organizations were taught through passive, linear modes of lecture” (Grenier, 2008, p. 17).

Within this paradox, it is possible to glimpse the potential dilemmas of docent coordinators believing their VGG/D educational/training programs reflected their core pedagogical values, but the actuality was quite different. Therefore, it is essential that not only do museum educators understand their educational philosophy but that they can, using Grenier’s colloquialism, “walk the talk” (p. 19). Otherwise, museum educators cannot expect volunteers to shoulder ideal practice if they are educated using erroneous methods.

Van Hoven and Wellman (2016) provided general advice for museum staff to recruit and manage volunteers in museums. The authors humanized the volunteer and looked to adult learners' needs, advocating for matching volunteer expertise with museum roles. “Knowing what motivates a volunteer and how to keep them engaged with the organization will lead to mutually beneficial relationships for the volunteer, the museum staff, and the institution as a whole” (p. 30). Just as Rapone (1986) and Sweney (2007) proposed, Van Hoven and Wellman (2016) included aspects of human resource management in the overseeing of VGG/Ds, including recognition and service rewards. Additionally, the authors touched upon conflict resolution, insubordination, enforcing rules and regulations, “rogue” volunteers, and dismissing volunteers (pp. 73-85). If these passages existed, a certain amount of commonality or frequency motivated the authors to address these issues. Yet, like Johnson et al. (2009), Van Hoven and Wellman (2016) offered an all-purpose, universalizing approach with succinct guidance for managing

volunteers. This brought forward the idea that it is one thing to read about management, it is another thing to do it.

The Docent Handbook (National Docent Symposium Council, 2001, 2017), *The Museum Educators Manual* (Johnson et al., 2009), and similar publications were straightforward, workable guides; yet, they lacked the depth needed to both learn about and reflect upon the *why* and not just the *how*. These manuals imparted information with the goal of a motivated and capable VGG/D workforce (read *trained*) rather than nurturing volunteers and docent coordinators towards critical, reflective, and intentional praxis. Furthermore, contemporary research is often contained within journals or storehouses that are inaccessible without either membership in a professional organization or registration within a higher learning institution. As institutions of public learning, do museums have access to professional resources, publications, or journals for their educators (such as the docent coordinator) to utilize? If not, how might the docent coordinator identify and gather research related to their work? Rather than continuing to drill down into intellectual and physical access, what happens if the question is simply: how do docent coordinators learn about volunteer management, theories, and models of praxis?

Learning in the Workplace

In current Bachelor and Masters programmes in many disciplines – such as human resource development, psychology, business studies, economics, sociology, labour pedagogy, anthropology, medicine, teacher training, management programmes, leadership programmes, engineering, educational sciences, MBA, learning sciences, etc. – research and theories on the workplace learning of professionals play a pivotal role.

(Dochy et al., 2011, p. xi)

The docent coordinator regularly educates VGG/Ds in art museum teaching methods, cultivating a teacher-learner relationship. Consequently, it is necessary to consider learning theories in the workplace, a form of lifelong learning. The docent coordinator is a teacher *and* a learner *within* their workplace. Dochy et al. (2011) identified interconnected learning theories in the workplace, including transformational learning, experiential learning, situated learning, communities of practice, and systems thinking. Many of these theories appeared in research related to museum education and VGG/D education. Therefore, it is relevant to briefly discuss these ideas to provide insight into these concepts within the museum's context and how these ideas have surfaced in museum education research.

Before moving further, one missing element in Dochy et al. (2011) and their discussion of learning in the workplace are theories that critique power structures. As employees partake in professional development, how do the views or philosophies of the larger institution factor into the individual's learning experience and vice versa? It is significant to interrogate which ideas are foregrounded, why, and for whom they benefit. Critical theories provide:

voice for the repressed and marginalized, exposing assumptions and values, revealing the use of power and control, and challenging inequities and sacrifices made in the name of efficiency, effectiveness, and profitability through a self-reflexive critique of rhetoric, tradition, authority, and objectivity. (Antonacopoulou, 1999 as cited in Fenwick, 2004, p. 195)

Critical management studies (CMS) within business and management utilizes a post-structuralist approach that scrutinizes prevailing organizational structures around concepts of power, exclusivity, and control (Grey et al., 2016). Educational researchers use critical theories as a lens for analyzing authority, bias, injustices, and knowledge construction within learning

organizations. In museum education, critical theories form the basis for interrogating practice and envisioning inclusive experiences for staff and visitors. The addition of critical theories within an examination of workplace learning moves beyond learning towards considering underpinning value systems and power structures. Therefore, when possible, I have incorporated these ideas within my analysis of workplace learning theories.

Andragogy

Castle (2001), Grenier (2005b), McCray (2016), and Teeple (2019) posited that knowledge of adult learning theories was a crucial ingredient in preparing museum guides. Therefore, it is pertinent to highlight the work of Malcolm S. Knowles and the concept of *andragogy*, a term synonymous with adult education. The word pedagogy combines two Greek stem words, “paid,” meaning child, and “agogus,” meaning leader of, so the term implies leading children. (Knowles, 1973, p. 42). Knowles did not originate the term andragogy, which uses the Greek stem *aner*, meaning man (therefore andragogy translates to the leading of men). His interest sprouted from a perception that investigations of children’s learning far surpassed research into adult learning. Consequently, Knowles (1973) began with four assumptions of adult learning: the adult learner is 1) self-directed; 2) holds a wealth of accumulated experience to which they wish to relate new learning; 3) is more problem-centered than subject-centered, and 4) experiences learning readiness when there is a reason or need to learn. Later, two additional assumptions shared that adults 5) value intrinsic motivations, and 6) need to know *why* they are learning the content presented (Merriam et al., 2007).

These assumptions characterized adult learners, providing a conceptual framework for educators of adult learners. Opponents of Knowles’ andragogy cited several issues, including the assumptions did not amount to theory, and there were undercurrents of sexism (Merriam et al.,

2007). Additionally, there should not be a separation that implied andragogy was only valuable for adults and pedagogy for children (Holmes & Abington-Cooper, 2000). Merriam et al. (2007) highlighted critiques of these assumptions as “value-neutral and apolitical,” supposing “adult learners all look and learn the same— and this universal image is of a White middle-class individual learner,” and “relationship between self and society is ignored” (p. 88).

Several discussions within museum education pointed to the significance of incorporating adult learning into practice, but more often concerning adult visitors and not on VGG/Ds or staff learning (Dudzinska-Przesmitzki & Grenier, 2008). Castle (2001) compared pedagogy and andragogy within museum touring, touching upon the learning needs of adult participants and characterizations of lifelong learning in museums. McCray (2016) offered the significance of museum educators incorporating adult learning in VGG/D education. “When museum educators model solid adult learning practices with gallery educators, the gallery educators, in turn, develop greater awareness of their own practices and educational interactions with visitors” (p. 17). Teeple (2019) examined how components of VGG/D training aligned with a model for professionals working with teachers of adult learners, citing insufficient evidence for the field concerning docent training methods in use. Teeple’s research suggested a need for an adult learning model within museum education to guide the development, implementation, and evaluation of VGG/D training. In combing through these ideas, it becomes apparent that there remains considerable space for further exploring adult learning models in the preparation of both VGG/Ds and docent coordinators.

Transformational Learning Theory

Mezirow (1991) posited transformative learning theory as “ the process of effecting change in a *frame of reference*” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). As adults experience the world, their

frame of reference is structured by the beliefs, values, associations, and assumptions that then shape their understanding. These become the habits and viewpoints that inform political views, cultural bias, professional opinions, attitudes toward religious or sexual norms, ethnocentrism, and more. As we encounter new ideas, there is the potential for transforming the way we define our world and may lead to action. These alterations in our understanding are the points of transformative learning.

Merriam et al. (2007) explored transformative learning theories through various lenses, considering individual transformation and sociocultural approaches. Examining the latter, the authors drew upon the work of Freire (2000), whose explorations of social change shifted the focus from White, middle-class society to empowering the oppressed through radical change. Here, transformation is liberation through what Freire called *conscientización*: “humankind emerge from their submersion and acquire the ability to intervene in reality as it is unveiled. Intervention in reality - historical awareness itself - thus represents a step forward from emergence and results in conscientização of the situation” (Freire, 2000, p. 109). Moreover, the investigation of adult learning offered by Merriam et al. (2007) critiqued assumed worldviews and challenged learning assumptions at the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and gender. The complexities of knowledge construction require incorporating multiple lenses to understand the opportunities and challenges of transforming understandings within adult learning.

Studies of transformative learning within art and museum education include aspects of creative lifelong learning (Lawton & La Porte, 2013) and organizational change related to inclusivity in museums (Taylor & Kegan, 2017). When considering contemporary issues in museums concerning VGG/Ds, it is possible to recognize how transformative learning theories

support efforts to shift embedded traditions, implicit bias, or navigate cognitive dissonance within VGG/D training. Moreover, the application of these theories need not remain with the VGG/D program alone, as the docent coordinator exists within a larger system, the museum, wherein organizational change occurs when embedded habits and assumptions are scrutinized and moved toward critical consciousness and action.

Experiential Learning Theory

Returning to the theories shared by Dochy et al. (2011), ideas of experiential learning postulated how experience becomes knowledge, where:

Truth is not manifest in experience; it must be inferred by a process of learning that questions preconceptions of direct experience, tempers the vividness and emotion of experience with critical reflection, and extracts the correct lessons from the consequences of action. (Kolb, 2015, Introduction, "Experiential Learning in ELT," para. 1)

Kolb (2015) first explored these ideas in 1984, inspired by arguments taken from education philosopher John Dewey. Dewey (1938) criticized the schooling of his time, characterizing these institutions as insular, decontextualized, and filled with students as passive recipients of knowledge. Kolb (2015) drew upon these ideas and developed the experiential learning cycle, wherein modes of experience shifted between the sensory ("concrete experience") and conceptualizing ("abstract conceptualization"), as well as transforming ("active experimentation") and reflecting ("reflective observation") (Kolb, 2015, "Understanding the Learning Cycle," para. 1). Kolb attempted to create a model designed to empower learners by cultivating trust in their experiences rather than relying on transmitted knowledge alone. Types of experiential learning within the workplace include internships, simulations, role-play, and job shadows, which offer a hands-on or active exploration into situations or job responsibilities.

Grenier and Sheckley (2008) and Grenier (2009) explored experiential learning concerning VGG/D preparation. Grenier and Sheckley (2008) offered suggestions for incorporating experiential learning into VGG/D training, explicitly pointing out the relevance of practice tours, observing peer tours, reflective journaling, and self-evaluation. The valuing of experiential learning is interwoven within suggestions for best practices (American Alliance of Museums, 2014); however, the larger question surfaces as to how museum educators learn of these ideas and apply them to their work with VGG/Ds. These ideas beget new questions, such as what is the value of experiential learning in the preparation of the docent coordinator? Within the pre-service docent coordinator preparation, how do internships and simulations support their transition into the workplace? Are these methods used? How?

Situated Learning and Communities of Practice

Lave and Wenger (1991) posited that learning was a social process embedded within unique social and environmental conditions. Just as Dewey (1938) and Kolb (2015), the instructional approach of situated learning is through the active participation of the learners. As the name implies, learning is located within a context, exploring real-world issues, interacting, sharing, and imagining ideas and solutions. It is the learning of the everyday. In this way, it is a cooperative approach, where co-construction of knowledge is possible. It is not a replicable or codified process, as participants bring their unique understandings to the discussion and action. Falk and Dierking (1992, 2012) explored these ideas in their discussions of learning in museums. Later investigations of situated learning in museum education provided case studies of museum educators and VGG/D programs within several types of museums (Bailey, 2006; Chenoweth, 2009; Good, 2013; Leinhardt et al., 2002).

When individuals gather around a shared interest, a *community of practice* (CoP) forms, wherein knowledge is co-constructed, and members contribute via their varying levels of experience and understanding of their world and the shared interest (Farnsworth et al., 2016). Moreover, examining membership within a CoP offers insights into identity and identity building (Wenger, 1998). By acknowledging the community, the relationships within, and individual contributions, it is possible to see the many ways of participating and the intercession of identity. According to Wenger et al. (2002), there are seven principles of CoP: 1) it evolves (new members bring new ideas), 2) it values insider perspective *and* welcomes outsider perspectives 3) acceptance of variations participation (from active to “peripheral”), 4) builds one-on-one (private), small group, and whole group (public) connections, 5) sparks curiosity and anticipation, as well as comfort in the familiar, 6) value-focused (understanding mission and impact), and 7) keeps the pace of involvement steady, without becoming inactive and dull, or overpowering and chaotic (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 51).

Considering the history of VGG/Ds, it is possible to understand how these programs developed into CoPs, situated within museums and with a shared desire to guide visitors in looking at art. Traditionally, veteran docents trained new docents in the philosophies and practice of guiding visitors through the museum. As museums shifted away from volunteer oversight towards establishing formal staff roles, such as the docent coordinator, it is possible to imagine how VGG/Ds programs were altered, as well as the potential fallout of these experiences. Moreover, as Bailey (2006) observed, the development of CoPs for museum educators is a means by which to encourage and sustain the profession:

Among the things that relationships with multiple communities of practice appear to do for museum educators is to: engage their learning; stimulate and help them make

connections among ideas; permit and facilitate dialogue with its members; help them to define what they do and believe; provide support; give them access to a shared repertoire of practice; and allow them to contribute to the community's evolution. (p. 194)

Schmitt (2014) also examined museum educator and curator CoPs, finding museum educators centered pedagogy and visitor-centeredness, extending their CoPs beyond their institutions to peers within other museums, as well as visitors.

Systems Theory, Systems Thinking

As discussed within this study's theoretical framework, systems theory is a means by which to examine the complex interactions of elements within a system. System theory began in the mid-twentieth century with biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy's efforts to explore the complexity of living systems (Montuori, 2011). Interconnected parts (elements) form the whole (the system). These systems either exist as *open*, interacting with their environment or without interacting, known as a *closed system*. "General system theory positioned itself as transdisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary. Interdisciplinary refers to *inter*-action between disciplines, whereas transdisciplinarity refers to going beyond or across disciplines" (Montuori, 2011, p. 414). Through systems theory, it is possible to explore how organizations (systems) break down into departments (subsystems), wherein individuals (elements) affect the larger organization (the system). However, and importantly, systems thinking does not remove the elements from the system or the system from the environment. Context is key.

Senge (1990) theorized that within systems theory, system *thinking* was an integral component for developing a "learning organization" wherein individuals acknowledge their interconnectedness, scrutinize structures, and envision the bigger picture (p. 13). Senge argued that successful organizations resisted stagnation. Key to the work of Senge was the idea of

personal mastery. While I have attempted to condense these concepts, it is best to read the intended description of personal mastery, however long, as offered by Senge:

Personal mastery goes beyond competence and skills, though it is grounded in competence and skills... It embodies two underlying movements. The first is continually clarifying what is important to us. We often spend too much time coping with problems along our path that we forget why we are on that path, in the first place... The second is continually learning how to see current reality more clearly. We've all known people entangled in counterproductive relationships, who remain stuck because they keep pretending everything is all right. "Learning" in this context does not mean acquiring more information, but expanding the ability to produce the results we truly want in life. It is lifelong generative learning. And learning organizations are not possible unless they have people at every level who practice it. (Senge, 1990, p. 126)

Within museums, Jung and Love (2017) hypothesized, "museums will be better off when they operate as open, dynamic, and learning systems as a whole as opposed to closed, stagnant, and status quo systems that are compartmentalized and hierarchical" (ch. 1, para. 1).

Understanding the museum as a learning system calls for these institutions to be mindful of their internal and external relationships beyond the museum walls. Moreover, "a learning organization acknowledges that organizations are complex, interconnected and can be better managed with team learning, shared vision, decentralization, and non-hierarchical structure" (ch. 1, para 19).

While not mentioned within Dochy et al. (2011), I include the work of Robert Rosen within system theories of workplace learning. Rosen posited the concept of *anticipatory systems*, wherein a change in the "present change of state depends on future circumstances" (Rosen, 1985, p. v). Critics of Rosen rejected *anticipation* as it defied a long-held notion: the past affected the

present, the present affected the future, but the future does not affect the present (Louie, 2010). Contrary to traditionalist ideas, Louie (2010) highlighted control within Rosen's anticipatory system being *feedforward* instead of feedback:

The essence of feedback control is that it is error-actuated; in other words, the stimulus to corrective action is the discrepancy between the system's actual present state and the state the system should be in. Stated otherwise, a feedback control system must already be departing from its nominal behavior before control begins to be exercised. In a feedforward system, on the other hand, system behavior is preset, according to some model relating present inputs to their predicted outcomes. The essence of a feedforward system, then, is that the present change of state is determined by an anticipated future state, derived in accordance with some internal model of the world. (p. 20)

Transferring anticipatory systems to organizational learning, feedback sees the organization as reactive and motivated by restorative action. A feedforward organization envisions a future state and develops a model directed towards predicted outcomes.

However, it is also significant to recognize that the use of anticipatory system theory within corporate, military, policy-making, or other structures contains implications worthy of scrutiny. Miller et al. (2010) explored the link between decision-making and knowledge and proffered:

Knowledge, as we define it, goes beyond a simple notion of truth or true claims about the world...Knowledge, for us, refers to claims made by actors (who can be individuals or institutions) that either purport to tell us something of a factual character about the world (of potentially varying degrees of certainty) or are taken by actors to tell us something factual about the world. (p. 1)

Implied within this statement is the need to dissect *who* is making claims, *for whom*, and *to what end*, much like Freire (2000) in his critique of educational systems. Nelson et al. (2008) looked at how anticipatory knowledge is used to envision possible technological and societal futures. The authors noted that if left unchecked, anticipatory knowledge is “spread and repackaged, often without rigorous testing of credibility, as actors such as politicians and military analysts use it to make and legitimate decisions” (Nelson et al., 2008, p. 549). As museum educators envision a future state, such as inclusive, they must remain ever mindful of leadership decisions that may or not may not authentically reflect this desired state.

Stress and Learning in the Workplace

The concept of stress within the docent coordinator experience had not occurred to me during my initial conceptualizing of the study design or literature review. As it manifested across interviews, I realized the necessity of further exploration and inclusion within workplace learning. First, it is necessary to identify a working definition for stress. “The basic concept is that stress relates both to an individual's *perception* of the demands being made on them and to their *perception* of their capability to meet those demands” (McVicar, 2003, p. 633). Selye (1956) offered a succinct definition, “Stress is essentially the rate of all the wear and tear caused by life” (Selye, 1956, p. viii). Moreover, there is positive stress (eustress) on one end of the spectrum, with negative experiences (distress) on the other that can lead to physical and mental manifestations of suffering (Hargrove et al., 2013).

Studies of workplace stress occurred across disciplines and included the development of measurement tools, such as a stress scale found in nursing. Gray-Toft and Anderson (1981) identified areas of potential stress in the nursing workplace for their scale, including inadequate preparation, problems with peers and supervisors, workload, lack of support. These topics

resonated with concepts found within this study's findings, as did the term *burnout*. Therefore, defining burnout was necessary. It is a "psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity" (Maslach et al., 1997, p. 192).

Looking to research in education, Larrivee (2012) discussed teaching as emotional labor, or "the effort required to express, repress, or manufacture emotions in order to do your job" (p. 40). The term was not a new concept, as Hargreaves (1998) characterized assumptions for teaching as emotional labor and offered that emotions strongly connect to purpose and achievement for educators. However, "the teacher who is overwhelmed by the emotional investment required to put on a happy face may shut down that part of her emotional being that responds to students in a genuine manner" (VanSlyke-Briggs, 2010, p. 14). Therefore, it is possible to appear confident and positive to students yet internally struggling with frustrations, concerns, or fears that lead to inauthentic relationships.

Conversely, McVicar (2003) noted potential positives of stressful situations, such as increased mental alertness, enhanced awareness, and heightened responsiveness to change. Exploring job stress and organizational learning, Mikkelsen et al. (1998) noted that when a deviation from expectation occurred, individuals (employees) who questioned conditions to identify solutions held the potential for organizational change. This returns to Argyris and Schön (1974) and Senge (1990) and their notions of organizational learning. However, distress within the workplace can lead to individuals feeling unable to cope or change, potentially developing a resistance to change, feeling misunderstood, unsupported, or unable to alter their work conditions (Mikkelsen et al., 1998). Finally, severe distress leads to psychological and physiological problems that can become life-threatening (McVicar, 2003).

Concerning museums, many researchers examined the benefits of reducing visitor stress (Mastandrea et al., 2019; Silverman, 2010; Weil, 1999). In 2018, *The Journal of Museum of Education* published an issue devoted to examining trauma and memory in museums and historic sites. Still, many of the contributions primarily looked to the museum visitor's experiences and not towards museum professionals. Recent discussions and explorations delved into museum staff's well-being within spaces of trauma and memorialization (e.g., 9/11 Memorial and Museum, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Old Slave Mart Museum) and managing vicarious distress in the workplace (Tisdale & Becker, 2016). While Chen Cooper (2007) offered insight into workplace challenges for museum educators, there remains space for exploring how individual stress impacts personal and organizational learning within museums and particular job roles.

Summary

The literature reviewed provides context through a historical analysis of museum education and VGG/Ds, as well as aspects of volunteer management, stress, and learning in the workplace. Early literature focused on conceptualizing the role of museum education, and thereby the educator, which then shifted to focus on the visitor experience. Latter explorations within museum education analyzed traditional and postmodernist models' processes and outcomes, focusing on transforming VGG/D education and practice. However, a shortage of literature focused on those who teach and manage VGG/Ds: the docent coordinator. What are docent coordinators' perceptions regarding their preparation for managing and educating VGG/Ds? What theories do they ascribe to, and what ideas do docent coordinators perceive as needing further exploration? How do docent coordinators characterize their support for these endeavors? Through a study of docent coordinators' perceptions framed by these questions, it is

possible to contribute to current and future docent coordinators' understandings. By gathering their stories, these insights may lead to influencing decisions within art museums, higher learning institutions that prepare museum educators, and museum and museum education professional organizations. Moreover, these perceptions do not remain solely within the realm of museum education. As the art museum docent coordinator prepares and supports the volunteers described as the public face of the museum, the docent coordinator's role is a significant contributor to the public's experience.

Chapter 3: Methodology

We gather other people's experiences because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves. (van Manen, 1990, p. 62)

How we “approach problems and seek answers” is what defines methodology (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 14). Qualitative research involves analysis that allows connecting, comparing, sensing, reasoning, and interpreting patterns and themes (Swanson & Holton, 2005). Maxwell (2013) described five intellectual goals of qualitative research. These goals are: 1) to understand the meaning of experiences from the participant viewpoint, 2) to preserve the individuality of participants, 3) to understand the “process of which events and actions take place,” 4) to identify the unanticipated and their influences, and 5) to explore the “how” to consider which processes possibly lead to outcomes (pp. 30-31). While each of these goals resonated with me, as I hoped to explore the plurality of experiences of docent coordinators who work with VGG/Ds, the first and second of these goals held particular significance as these aims recognized the value of the individual’s lifeworld and sense-making.

For this study, I utilized interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). Beginning within psychology, IPA grew as a methodological approach within other fields, including the health and social sciences and educational research (Smith, 1996). The theoretical foundations of IPA draw from three paradigms: hermeneutics, phenomenology, and idiography. Within this study’s theoretical framework is an explanation of hermeneutics. Therefore, I will discuss the other two underpinnings, first phenomenology, then idiography.

Finlay (2011) offered that “phenomenology invites us to slow down, focus on, and dwell with the ‘phenomenon’ – the specific qualities of the lived world being investigated” (p. 3). This study of the human experience and its subjectivity explores descriptions from the perceiver's vantage point.

From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings...In doing research we question the world's very secrets and intimacies which are constitutive of the world, and which bring the world as world into being for us and in us. Then research is a caring act: we want to know that which is most essential to being. (van Manen, 1990, p. 5)

However, the function of hermeneutics within IPA moves beyond a description (phenomenology) into interpretation (hermeneutics). Smith and Shinebourne (2012) offered hermeneutics is not solely the participant describing their lifeworld but also the interpretive engagement of the researcher. The IPA researcher is intertwined in the process of meaning-making and must “recognize that any exploration must necessarily implicate the researcher’s views as well as interactions between researcher and participant” (Finlay, 2011, p. 140).

IPA is also idiographic, focusing on individual cases and their unique circumstances. It does not seek to make general or universal claims of or for a larger population, known as a nomothetic study (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). IPA analysis identifies patterns amongst a small number of cases and presents, as Smith and Shinebourne (2012) shared, “convergence and divergence within the participant sample” (p. 74). This study focused on gathering perceptions of seven docent coordinators regarding VGG/D training (phenomenon) gained through semi-structured interviews and open dialogue, which encouraged participants to interpret

(hermeneutics) their experiences without imposed limitations for responding. The analysis involved prolonged engagement with the data from individual interviews (idiography) and then moved to analyzing ideas across cases.

IPA was helpful within the context of this qualitative study, as it delves into the lifeworld of individuals and the nuances of their interpretations (e.g., word choice and metaphors). Through dialogue, there is the potential of teasing out the essence of experiences (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Moreover, IPA does not suggest the researcher remains isolated from their experiences or removes their sense-making from the process. Instead, the researcher actively participates in the meaning-making process. Consequently, it is necessary to share aspects of my experience which diverge and converge from the topic of study.

Statement of Subjectivity

A core component of IPA is the “dynamic process with an active role for the researcher in that process” (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 53). I am a part of this study. I chose the questions to ask, was present within the interviews, analyzed findings, and composed the discussion. Therefore, I offer a statement of my subjectivity within my research design framework to disclose the basis of my understanding, interest, and connection with the phenomenon of interest. Within IPA, “presuppositions or expert knowledge on the part of the researcher are valuable guides to inquiry and, in fact, make the inquiry a meaningful undertaking” (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 729). Notably, the very act of reviewing literature associated with the history and trends related to docents and museum education led to a developed historical and conceptual knowledge of the phenomena. This knowledge was valuable in guiding the interview as well as the analysis of findings. However, my subjectivity moves beyond being informed through literature. I worked

as a museum educator and participated in the education of VGG/Ds in an encyclopedic art museum.

My interest in understanding how art museum docent coordinators were prepared and supported in their work with VGG/Ds stemmed from my experiences' shortcomings. While working within an encyclopedic art museum, I oversaw professional development workshops for docents. I relished the opportunity to share in the theories and models of my field, gathered over my career. What I was unprepared for was the resistance. Art history had been a central focus, and while new docents were ready to delve into these ideas, many experienced docents were perplexed by my efforts to foreground pedagogical theories. I was ill-prepared for dealing with these challenges.

What support I did seek sent me down metaphorical rabbit holes, which yielded little more than models of practice that only worked at other institutions. Additionally, advice from fellow professionals often came with a litany of commiserations, and attending state and local workshops about volunteer management found me in the company of other professionals with similar stories of apprehensions and frustrations. It seemed this was the norm. Later, I shifted to working with volunteer guides at a contemporary art institution. I noticed that dialogues around changes to practice and pedagogical discussions were quite common. Why were these volunteers more receptive to change?

I also recognized that the interpretation of these experiences altered according to new knowledge. I encountered several philosophies and theories during my doctoral journey, many of which are found within my theoretical framework, which shifted my understanding of museums and museum education. Initially, I found the purpose of researching VGG/D training tepid. It took time to realize that what needed examining was how I could have been better prepared and

supported in my work with VGG/Ds. My understanding was the result of my reality in the context of my own experiences. What were others' experiences?

Through the lens of IPA, I recognized that this prior knowledge was of value. I understood commonly used language, situations, museum education theory, typical institutional policy and expectations, and was familiar with museum standards. Moreover, in revealing these experiences to participants, it developed a strengthened rapport. Keeping mindful of my perceptions and how they influenced the responses or interpretations of participants was critical. To ensure my reactions were acknowledged and documented to identify both similar and divergent experiences and researcher bias, notations were made within the interview protocol, alongside the transcriptions, during the reading and re-reading, and in a secured journal. Moreover, once noted, I set aside these ideas and focused on the participant experiences rather than my own.

IPA recognizes the *double hermeneutic*, wherein “the researcher is making sense of the participant, who is making sense of *x*” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 35). As the researcher, I draw on my everyday experiences and recollections of past experiences, like the participant. However, they do not signify that my understandings are the same as the participants'. Each participant granted me insight into their experiences through access provided *by* that participant. I then engaged in the interpretation process more “systematically than the participant usually does” (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012, p. 74).

Furthermore, I had access to multiple participants' accounts, which altered my understanding each time I encountered new information. In gathering these perceptions, I viewed these perceptions from two vantage points. As Smith et al. (2009) discussed, I am empathetically “standing in the shoes” of the docent coordinator while I am also “standing alongside the

participant” questioning, which leads to “analyzing, illuminating, and making sense of” their experiences as docent coordinators (p. 36). My previous experience working with VGG/Ds does not limit this analysis, instead it offered me an insider’s understanding of the opportunities and challenges of the position – I have worn the shoes, but I have taken them off in order to observe others wearing theirs.

Finally, it is also relevant to offer a statement of positionality within the context of this study. I identify as a White, cisgender woman. I offer this information as aspects of this study touch upon identity, and therefore I believe it is significant to share with the reader this information. As I analyze and discuss topics and themes, my identity is also present in these processes.

Research Design

This qualitative study relied on semi-structured, one-on-one interviews to develop a detailed description of docent coordinator experiences working with VGG/Ds. The purpose of the design was not to uncover a universal truth for the role of docent coordinators. Instead, findings from this study may lead to *transferability*, wherein the results “*may* apply more broadly, depending on differences in the nature and context of the situation to which they are transferred. This puts the burden of determining transferability on the person making the transfer, rather than on the original researcher” (Maxwell & Reybold, 2015, p. 688). The use of a semi-structured protocol allowed for docent coordinators to describe their experiences using their own words, examples, and concerns to the extent they wished to share (Leavy, 2017). Semi-structured interviews were beneficial owing to the flexibility of, on the one hand, engaging in an authentic dialogue while, on the other hand, having a structure to maintain the focus of the interview (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012).

Within the interviews, questions cultivated “episodic memories,” wherein recollections connected in time and space rather than “abstractly in terms of semantic relationships” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 103). As such, the interview questions did not follow the same sequence across all interviews and allowed participants to be “the experiential expert on this particular topic” (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012, p. 76). The design of questions encouraged participants to impart meaning and to explore the topic at their own pace and according to how they perceived the question. Probing questions helped clarify meanings and encouraged participants to expand on their initial responses (McCormack & Johnson, 2018; Smith & Osborn, 2003; Way et al., 2015). When possible, the structure incorporated what Smith and Osborn (2003) called *funnelling*, or moving from general views towards specific concerns. “The general point is that by asking questions in this sequence, you have allowed the respondents to give their own views before funnelling them into more specific questions of particular concern to you” (p. 62).

Consequently, the interview design required an awareness of flow that authentically followed participant’s choices rather than a researcher’s agenda. Interpretations, both imparted by the participant and evolving from the researcher, were integral. Therefore, it was necessary for the researcher to be aware of the “expansion and contraction of the researcher’s subjectivity,” noting these experiences during the interviews and within the analysis (McCormack & Johnson, 2018, p. 6). Moreover, during interviews, participants and the researcher co-constructed a shared understanding of docent coordinator preparation and support through dialogue which emphasized interpreting lived experiences (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). Therefore, to determine opportunities and challenges within the interview protocol, I chose to conduct a field test to examine how others construed the questions and to build confidence in the process of being authentically responsive to participants.

Field Test

Before recruitment, I conducted a field test of the interview protocol in the summer of 2020 that changed the initial wording and sequence of questions. Through *snowball* sampling, a method of referrals, I utilized my professional network to generate potential field test participants (Crouse & Lowe, 2018; Leavy, 2017). I purposefully selected three participants for 1) their experiences working with docents, 2) to represent a range of identities (e.g., age, race, gender) of potential participants in the study, and 3) they did not meet one or more of the eligibility requirements and would therefore minimize using potential participants for this study within the field test. Each field test took approximately fifty minutes to one hour, and the debrief lasted no more than 20 minutes.

During the field test, I practiced question phrasing and question order, pacing, and notetaking during the interview. I then debriefed each field test participant regarding question clarity, sequencing, and significance. After each encounter, I practiced transcribing and coding interviews. Changes to the interview protocol reflected speaking (the initial questions felt stilted and written formally). Alterations to the question order occurred owing to how field test participants typically moved through their perceptions. Moreover, some probing questions seemed leading and, as a result, discarded.

Notably, while practicing field test interview transcriptions and then spending time reading and re-reading each transcript, I noticed emerging themes across the three field test cases. Concerned that this would cloud my study, I stopped the process. I then journaled my concerns, which brought about a new understanding. It is relevant to offer that the study's findings echoed field test participant recollections. Specific examples include aspects of diversity, equity, access (FT1, FT2, FT3); the dynamics of age (FT2, FT3); the fusion of content,

pedagogy, and volunteer management (FT1, FT2, FT3); navigating VGG/D behaviors (FT2, FT3); and the personal/professional role of the docent coordinator (e.g., helping VGG/Ds during life transitions) (FT2). The field test bolstered confidence in both the protocol and the decision to move forward. Moreover, the similarities between the field test and the study suggested opportunities for future research using the same interview protocol in studies of docent coordinators employed at other types of museums.

Criteria for Participation

Aligning to the philosophical underpinnings of IPA, the criteria for participation was designed to create a small, purposeful, and homogeneous sample to gather docent coordinator perceptions (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Initially, the following criteria articulated the nature of the purposeful sampling: 1) currently employed, 2) encyclopedic art museum, 3) VGG/Ds are the primary facilitators of tours for the art museum, 4) art museum educator's role is the docent coordinator, and 5) has been a docent coordinator for more than two years. This sample was not representative of the entire population of art museum docent coordinators. However, I realized that a few aspects of the above criteria were limiting as, owing to the impact of COVID-19 and museum closures, considerable shifts occurred in organizational structures. In some instances, potential participants were no longer actively employed because of layoffs or furloughs. Additionally, many art museums no longer used VGG/Ds for touring, as these tours took place virtually with paid museum staff or contracted educators.

Consequently, I questioned my assumptions within the original criteria that rendered a docent coordinator's years of experience no longer relevant if they were not *currently* employed or if their title and responsibilities shifted. Moreover, just because VGG/Ds were not currently

facilitating tours did not mean they would no longer do so in the future. Therefore, I amended the criteria to the following:

- 1) Participant is currently employed as a docent coordinator or was recently employed as a docent coordinator (within the last two years),
- 2) Employment as a docent coordinator within an encyclopedic art museum,
- 3) VGG/Ds were/are the primary facilitators for touring at the art museum where the participant was/is employed, and
- 4) Participants was/is the docent coordinator at their current institution, or in combination with their current museum and other art museums, for more than two years.

Recruitment

I conducted research online to compile a list of encyclopedic art museums across the United States which utilized VGG/Ds, then followed with a search for employees identified as docent coordinators. This search yielded email addresses. Initially, I obtained telephone numbers for docent coordinators, but closures meant telephone communication was the least reliable recruitment method and removed. Of note, I did not collect or send recruitment messages to museum leadership or general email address for institutions. I did not want potential participants to receive forwarded emails from supervisors or other staff, leading to experiencing coercion.

I entered the list of potential participants into a password-protected Excel spreadsheet. As I researched contact information for docent coordinators on encyclopedic art museum websites, I moved geographically across the United States. To avoid respondents coming from the same geographic area, I utilized Excel to autogenerate random numbers for each potential participant. I then sorted the list from smallest to largest. Next, an emailed recruitment solicitation was sent to

the first fifteen docent coordinators on the Excel spreadsheet (see Appendix B). The email contained a link to a secure REDCap survey with questions to establish eligibility. The RedCap survey auto-generated a spreadsheet, allowing for an analysis of homo- and heterogeneity (Maxwell, 2013).

Beginning in late summer 2020, two rounds of email recruitment commenced. In the first, eight docent coordinators of the fifteen emailed completed the REDCap survey. One of the eight respondents did not meet the eligibility requirements. Another was excluded as they were employed at an institution where I corresponded about field testing questions, which could lead to identification. I then contacted the docent coordinators listed in the following five slots using the same email protocol. Of those five, three responded. One was excluded as they did not meet eligibility requirements, another met the requirements but was prevented from interviewing due to employment changes. The remaining eligible respondent was added to the previous six respondents from the first round, creating the final group of seven participants.

It is relevant to consider the high response rate to the recruitment emails. Eight of fifteen potential participants completed the survey the first time, and three of five responded the second time. There are many possible reasons, but without collecting rationale from individuals who self-selected to participate, the reasoning remains elusive. Based on sentiments communicated within one field test interview and three participant interviews, a potential justification was an interest regarding studies explicitly focused on docent coordinators.

Once eligibility was determined, participants received a number (to avoid names while scheduling) and a link to the online scheduling platform, Doodle.com. Participants chose from 12-15 time slots to select a convenient time. Moreover, the interview schedule allowed for prolonged engagement with data from one transcript before moving to the next participant.

Finally, once participants selected a time, they received a confirmation email with a Zoom link and password. The password provided another layer of protection during the videoconference.

Participants

This study included seven adult participants whose perspectives offered the most reliable connection to understanding the phenomenon of the preparation and support needed to work with VGG/Ds. It is their lived experience. I did not include additional information as the sample is small and considerable detail was shared that might identify participants. Since the discussions touched upon race, gender, and age, I included these aspects within Table 2. Moreover, employment locations may also lead to identification. As a general description, participant workplaces were located in the Southeast, Northeast, and the Midwest.

Table 2

General Participant Information

Variable	Options	Responses
Age Range	18-24	0
	25-34	4
	35-44	1
	45-54	2
	55+	0
Ethnicity	White	5
	Black/African American	0
	Asian	0
	American Indian or Alaska Native	0
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0
Preferred Pronouns	Hispanic/Latino	2
	She/Her	6
	He/Him	0
	They/Them	0
Years of Experience	Prefers not to answer	1
	1-5 years	2
	6-10 years	4
	11-15 years	1
	16-20 years	0
	21+ years	0

Art Museum Location	Rural	0
	In or near a small city	0
	In or near a mid-sized city	3
	In or near a major metropolitan city	4
Number of Docents Overseen	Less than 20	1
	20-50	1
	50-100	2
	100+	3

Note: I initially proposed six participants, with the option to go as high as nine within my IRB. As one participant indicated changing their position during their interview, I was initially concerned that the participant was ineligible. However, this would suggest that a recent role change within the same institution implied insights gained from years of employment as a docent coordinator were somehow less. To this, I disagreed and included these perceptions within this study.

Methods of Data Collection

Between September and November 2020, all interviews took place via the online videoconferencing platform, Zoom owing to social-distancing practices related to COVID-19. The interviews utilized a semi-structured protocol (see Appendix D) with open-ended questions, which provided room for gathering the “universe” of responses (Vannette & Krosnick, 2018, p. 445). Whenever possible, participants were encouraged to give examples or to clarify meanings. This flexibility of sequence followed the flow of memories, shifting according to when each participant touched upon a topic. The intention was to cultivate genuine engagement between researcher and participant rather than a regimented sequencing. The interview protocol incorporated language taken directly from the field or which emerged during the interview. “The aim is to get into that moment and know how it was or is experienced by the person emotionally/cognitively/bodily and in the context of their life” (Finlay, 2011, p. 197). The recording of each interview utilized the Zoom option for transcription. However, Zoom transcripts were problematic and ultimately made for more work (e.g., interrupting responses

with time codes, mistranscribed words, and incorrect sentence structure). In the end, the Zoom transcripts served as a starting point for re-watching participant videos and correcting transcription errors via manually transcription.

A Postmodern Approach to Interviewing. Over the course of the field test, I noted that after the interviews when I shared having similar experiences, field test participants disclosed more and, often, far more candidly. This caused me to question my understanding of the interview process, as my attempts to remain a quiet vessel, receiving the flow of information, felt dishonest. During the field test, I began the interview by stating I oversaw docent education and then put on a researcher façade to remove all bias. “The interviewer is not unlike a highly trained instrument and remains substantively detached from the situation and the respondent” (Fontana, 2002, p. 162).

I strongly felt inauthentic. Moreover, in building a rapport with participants, I thought I owed it to this relationship to be transparent when we shared similar experiences. In researching this notion, I came across postmodernist interviewing strategies that supported these intuitions. As Fontana (2002) explained, “the so-called detached researcher and interviewer are re-cast as active agents in the interview process and attempts are made to deprivilege their agency” (p. 166). Seidman (2006) discussed interviewing as relationship building: “It is a reflection of the personalities of the participant and the interviewer and the ways they interact. The relationship is also a reflection of the purpose, structure, and method of in-depth interviewing” (p. 95). Seidman continued discussing the interviewing relationship as approaching *we*, but the *we* is never fully realized as it placed the researcher-participant relationship on equal footing and nullified the process of conducting an interview. Notably, Seidman (2006) provided guidance that resonated both with my experiences and the design of this study: “I try to strike a balance, saying enough

about myself to be alive and responsive but little enough to preserve the autonomy of the participant's words and to keep the focus of attention on his or her experience rather than mine" (p. 96). To that end, whenever experiences between participant and researcher overlapped, I admitted my prior knowledge or similar experience without moving into considerable detail. More often, this resulted in participants sharing further. In the handful of instances where it appeared to create a shorthand, where the participant assumed I knew and they did not need to delve further, I redirected and asked for examples or how they coped or felt.

Data Security

Survey information was secured via RedCap, accessed on the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) server, and password-protected. I deleted the survey from RedCap once the interviews concluded. All audio-video recordings of interviews used the Zoom online platform, which was encrypted. VCU maintained security updates for the online videoconferencing tool. Additionally, I removed participant names from video recordings to maintain anonymity. Zoom recordings were automatically uploaded to the VCU password-protected server and deleted from the Zoom account. I set all files to private. De-identified transcripts and audio files were loaded to the password-protected, two-part authenticated Blackboard Content System on the VCU server, with a locked file setting. I deleted all files at the close of the study. I stored all paper documentation in a lockbox in my home. During the transcription process, I used a personal laptop, which was also password-protected, and secured in my home throughout the study duration.

Human Subject Protection

For the purposes of gaining informed consent, I shared an information sheet about the study as required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Virginia Commonwealth University

(see Appendix C). Within the information, participants received information about the potential length of the interview (determined by the field test). Participants were encouraged to identify a space in which they would not be interrupted or overheard. The researcher also identified a location within their home that was private and without distraction. One of the seven participants joined the online interview from a private room within their place of employment but assured the researcher it was a secure space.

Before each interview, I reminded participants of the study's goal and reviewed the information form to determine if there were questions before the start of the interview. Additionally, when the interviews were recorded, the option to record with names was removed, and I saved recordings using a numeric identifier. Participants consented to the study by reading the statement, "I have read the information sheet and consent to participate in this study about docent coordinators." I removed all identifying information from potential and actual participants stored in the spreadsheet on REDCap and gave participants a number identifier. I deleted the survey and corresponding spreadsheet at the close of the study. Finally, I removed all identifiers related to the institution, VGG/Ds, or other personal identifiers and replaced them with an all-cap noun (e.g., SUPERVISOR, DOCENT, or MUSEUM).

Social Distancing

Owing to circumstances related to COVID-19 and the demand for deliberate increasing of physical space, all recruitment, interviewing, and consent took place using videoconferencing and participants' preferred email. While the original research design proposed in-person interviews, the necessity for social distancing guided my choice to use online videoconferencing through Zoom. Because the videoconference is synchronous, or conducted in real-time, I was able to pose questions to participants in which they could interpret and respond immediately.

Studies of videoconference interviews, conducted using Skype, indicated that while there are the limitations of not being in the same physical space as the interviewee, there is still the ability to see facial expression and nonverbal cues (Bertrand & Bourdeau, 2010; Janghorban et al., 2014; Salmons, 2012; Sullivan, 2012). Salmons (2012) identified several nonverbal cues that researchers should recognize during interviews, such as pacing and timing of speech (“chronemic communication”), variations in the quality of voice (“paralinguistic communication”), and communication-related eye contact, gestures, and body movements (p. 2). These are as important in videoconference interviewing as they are in face-to-face interviews. Therefore, participant nonverbal cues were added into the transcription process using notations.

Data Analysis

As shared earlier, the Zoom platform provided a transcription of each interview; however, these transcripts contained multiple errors and intrusions to the reading flow. Using the Zoom transcripts as a foundation, I listened to each interview and manually transcribed the recorded interviews in the 24-hours after each interaction. I formatted transcripts according to the layout suggested by Smith et al. (2009): the main body of the transcript was placed in a center column, a column on the right for researcher notations, and a column on the left for emerging themes. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), the researcher may:

Focus on content (what is actually being discussed), language use (features such as metaphors, symbols, repetitions, pauses), context, and initial interpretative comments. Some comments associated with personal reflexivity may also be generated (e.g., how might personal characteristics of the interviewer, such as gender, age, social status, etc. affect the rapport with the participant). It is useful to highlight distinctive phrases and emotional responses. (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012, p. 366).

I watched the recording a second time to review initial notes taken during the interview and to note body language and or points emphasized by the participant, whether vocally or physically (e.g., tapping a table, gestures). The transcripts were then read multiple times in the subsequent days. Notations were color-coded according to categories of comments suggested by Smith et al. (2009) (e.g., blue for descriptive, green for linguistic, and red for conceptual). Potential quotations were highlighted, and a one-word theme noted alongside each quote. Moreover, I looked for “language use (features such as metaphors and other figures of speech, repetition, pauses), context, and initial interpretative comments...distinctive phrases and emotional responses” (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012, p. 77).

Analysis of each interview was an “iterative and inductive cycle” that moved line by line through each participant's responses, creating an immersive experience that brought about a “dialogue” between researcher, data, and their interpretation of participant experiences (Smith et al., 2009, p. 79). To avoid separating researcher meaning-making from participant sense-making, memos took place within the transcription. These entries included details of my experiences, questions, and assumptions. At one point, I noted the process reminded me of Slow Art Day, wherein museum visitors participate in sustained looking at a work of art for several minutes (Morse, 2011). Slow looking “foregrounds the capacity to observe details, to defer interpretation, to make careful discernments, to shift between perspectives, to be aware of subjectivity, and to purposefully use a variety of observation strategies in order to move past first impressions” (Tishman, 2018, p. 6). Here, I am the viewer, and the work of art is the participant’s understanding of their experiences.

Initially, I utilized ATLAS.ti to organize codes and researcher memos during each iteration. As Saldaña (2011) shared, “These codes function as a way of patterning, classifying,

and later reorganizing each datum into emergent categories for further analysis” (p. 95). I entered the first de-identified transcript into ATLAS.ti after the interview and named codes based on the notations made in the transcript. Upon trying this same process after the second interview, I perceived feeling disconnected from the data, as if removed from the text. I recognized the value of staying deeply connected to the transcripts, metaphorically and physically. I returned to the process suggested by Smith et al. (2009) and maintained a list of frequently used notations or ideas.

I called this period *coding into oblivion*, wherein everything appeared worthy of noting. As I was initially taught the terms *code* and *coding* within my doctoral journey, I often called my notations codes within my journal. Overwhelmed, I soon realized the multitude of ways to interpret findings. As the analysis progressed, I identified participant comments which moved beyond the descriptive towards interpretation. This led to setting aside descriptive sections which primarily elucidated aspects of the role or function of the position. Saldaña (2016) described the analysis process as “heuristic (from the Greek, meaning ‘to discover’),” involving critical consideration of aspects such as similarities, frequency, and absences within the data that lead to “essence-capturing” (p. 9).

Initially, themes within each transcript were listed chronologically (as they occurred in the interview) and highlighted to indicate frequency. As patterns evolved across participant stories, encapsulating phrases, metaphors, or words surfaced. Smith et al. (2009) suggested typing themes into a list and moving into “clusters of related themes,” then physically cutting up the list and explore relationships (p. 96). I engaged in this process of construction, deconstruction, and re-construction. The frequency of a topic might suggest the importance to the docent coordinator (e.g., recruitment) but did not always indicate significance for developing

an overarching theme. Other themes surfaced as the result of connections with the review of the literature. As participants described their experiences, shared language and encapsulating ideas appeared as themes. Eventually, through clustering, superordinate themes emerged from groupings of related themes (which formed the subordinate themes).

Three key ideas evolved from the data analysis. The first was despite having read about the analysis process in Maxwell (2013); Saldaña (2016); Smith et al. (2009), I had a novice determination to get *it* right. But what was *it*? My memos indicated a moment in which I realized *it* was categorizing themes. I failed to see that the painstaking process of grouping and regrouping was systematically strengthening my choices. This leads to a second key point: the clustering process is the active double hermeneutic described by Smith et al. (2009). The themes contained within this study are but one interpretation, my interpretation, of the data. Finally, while the frequency yielded a method for grouping, it was during the process of visually constructing themes within a table and writing the analysis that yet another recategorization occurred. I cannot define this moment other than a gut feeling. By abstracting the themes further and delving into the language of participant interpretations, new groupings evolved that, as Alase (2017) posited, looked to the *essence* of participant experiences. In the end, the process exemplifies a single “manifestation of the hermeneutic circle. The original whole of the interview becomes a set of parts as you conduct your analysis, but then come together in another new whole at the end of the analysis in the write up” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 91).

Peer Review

“A counseling folk saying I often pass along to others goes, ‘You cannot see the frame when you’re in the picture.’ Sometimes we need an outside pair of eyes or ears to respond to the work in progress” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 288). To determine the credibility of analysis, two

reviewers were invited to respond to ten de-identified responses from three participants, for a total of thirty quotations. Both reviewers obtained PhDs in different concentrations within the discipline of Education, and both were familiar with aspects of qualitative research. Neither reviewer received additional information about the research questions, interview protocol, or rationale for the study, allowing space for the reviewers to meet the quotations on their terms.

Reviewer 1 received the de-identified quotations and a corresponding codebook organized using five superordinate themes divided into thirty-seven subordinate codes. The structure of the codes resulted from the comments made within participant transcripts. Responses from Reviewer 1 demonstrated close alignment with my thematic analysis. Moreover, Reviewer 1 noted three additional codes that strongly matched my written notations within the transcripts. Seeing Reviewer 1 acknowledge these very same ideas (in one instance using the exact wording) strengthened my resolve that these concepts were significant.

As I considered replicating this same method with a second peer reviewer, I believed that the codebook applied predetermined themes identified by me, the researcher. What would happen if I asked a peer reviewer to attempt the methods described by Smith et al. (2009)? Therefore, Reviewer 2 received the same quotations without a codebook. Instead, I asked Reviewer 2 to read through one participant's quotes at a time and note themes next to each quotation; then, move to the second set and repeat the same process; and finally, move to the third set and repeat. In this way, Reviewer 2 recreated the iterative process and thematic analysis described by Smith et al. (2009). Results of Reviewer 2's list of themes largely harmonized with my analysis. Reviewer 2 offered ideas that pointed to interpretations found within my researcher memos and noted concepts not yet considered during a debrief. While both methods were beneficial in exploring the credibility of my analysis, I found the written notes shared by

Reviewer 2 helped to convey their sense-making of participant interpretations. This, combined with a debrief, located points of agreement, as well as alternative interpretations. While Reviewer 1 focused on the quality of the code structure, Reviewer 2 was attentive to the essence of each quotation. The inclusion of two processes provided a means to examine my interpretations from two vantage points: inward-outward (my codes to another reviewer) and side-by-side (reviewers interpretations next to my own).

Trustworthiness

Recordings were transcribed and analyzed by me; then shared with participants as a means to confirm the trustworthiness of the analysis, also known as *member-checking* (Maxwell, 2013). All seven participants received a written narrative that included block quotations, then provided two weeks to review and return any comments. Four participants returned comments. Alterations resulting from member-checks occurred due to concern over anonymity or to clarify participant's meaning further. Any changes were reviewed by the participant once more and confirmed. Moreover, the use of member-checking moved beyond validation towards strengthening the research design and reinforcing the notion that the "hermeneutic interview tends to turn the interviewees into participants or collaborators of the research project" (van Manen, 1990, p. 63).

Prolonged engagement with data, diagramming connections, using peers to audit thematic codes, and journaling throughout the process are ways researchers can establish credibility and reliability of analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). My sustained engagement with the transcripts consisted of several readings, layering notations within the transcript, and participating in the deconstruction-reconstruction exercise described by Smith et al. (2009). Additionally, I utilized peer reviewers to confirm the dependability of themes. As Latham (2015) modeled within their

study of museums, which employed peer review, “All iterations involved staying true to the participants’ words, attempting to relate their meanings through the researcher’s interpretive process” (p. 5). Finally, feedback from participants through member-checking offered both participants and researchers a means to confirm their understandings.

As an aspect of trustworthiness, it is also imperative that I share situations encountered over the course of the study that provides the reader with examples of this trustworthiness in action. In two cases, I held concern about participants continuing in the study. In the first, I determined that the employment of a potential participant coincided with a location in which I had discussed my field test with other personnel. Therefore, I shared my concerns with the potential participant and suggested they not continue to protect their identity. They understood and offered to participate in future research, as they were interested in the topic.

In the second case, I determined that a participant and I had a past connection *after* the interview. While this did not impact the participant’s responses during the interview, I was concerned it might affect the study’s credibility. I reached out to my chair, one committee member, and an outside methodologist to seek council. Of note, I did not identify the participant nor specific details to those for whom I sought guidance. Both methodologists advised that this was not a conflict since the interview occurred before ascertaining the connection. I emailed the participant with the option to unenroll from the study should they feel uneasy or concerned. They indicated they were comfortable and wished to continue participating in the study. I then journaled the experience and included it here for the sake of transparency.

Limitations

Before delving into a discussion of findings, it is relevant to address the limitations of this study. It was not my intention to uncover generalizable truths. Based on the small sample size

and focus on individual perspectives gathered from seven docent coordinators from various art museums (which have unrelated resources, staffing, collections, communities, and histories), the potential resides, not in generalizability, but applicability to other situations. The seven participants in this study and the three field test participants were of varying ages, genders, experience levels and hailed from small and large institutions. However, while the field test offered variability in race and gender, most participants in this study identified primarily as White and utilized her/her pronouns. The concern for an unbalanced sample stems from statistical theory but is significant when considering topics related to diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusivity. Participants in this study self-selected. It may be possible there is an overrepresentation within the field of art museum docent coordinators of those who identify as White and using she/her pronouns. Achieving representativeness relies on an understanding of docent coordinator population characteristics, which is an opportunity for future research.

There is also the potential for researcher bias, wherein my understandings or analysis may lead to misinterpretation of participant experiences. Therefore, I utilized reflexive and descriptive notes during interviews, member-checks, and discussions with peer reviewers (Maxwell, 2013). Reflexive notes documented my pre-conceived notions, questions, and even the experiences right before the interview to monitor the potential impact on the research process (McKechnie, 2012). Additionally, multiple readings of each transcript kept me directly engaged with participant interviews (Smith et al., 2009).

It is possible that participants altered their responses to meet a perceived measure of acceptability, answering according to what they felt I wished to hear. It is also conceivable that participants acted cautiously to avoid identification, or to risk exposing issues within their institution, or to protect people or aspects of their workplace. “A good qualitative researcher

should not only examine what people say but also consider how they structured their responses and how they talked about the subject being discussed, for example, the person's emotions, tone, nonverbal communication, etc.” (Anderson, 2010, p. 5).

Internet service quality was an issue encountered over the course of some interviews. In one interview, the participant turned off their camera midway through the interview owing to a slow internet connection. In two instances, participants froze momentarily, or the sound would pause due to service issues. I informed participants of the problem and repeated what was last heard to avoid missing aspects of their responses. Finally, one participant had difficulty with their computer sound and required I call them. We conducted the telephone call on a video call to record body language, and the audio from both the researcher and participant was heard on the video recording.

It is undeniable that events with the year 2020 significantly impacted this study. Firstly, the global pandemic, COVID-19, required social distancing and the use of videoconferencing for interviews. While most participants conducted interviews from within their homes, one participant identified a private location within their workplace. Fear of being overheard may have skewed responses. Moreover, museum closures and related pressures of the pandemic conceivably affected responses. Secondly, the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery (an unarmed Black man murdered while jogging on February 23, 2020, by a White father and son), Breonna Taylor (a Black woman murdered on March 13, 2020, by White Louisville, KY, plainclothes police officers), George Floyd (murdered on May 25, 2020, underneath the knee of a Minneapolis police officer), and the national protests regarding systemic racism during the summer of 2020, imaginably affected participants on, either or both, personal and professional levels.

Transparently, I cannot deny that I was also affected by both COVID-19 and the civil unrest of 2020 and was sensitive to these discussions as they arose. IPA involved the researcher making sense of participant sense-making (Smith et al., 2009). It does not deny the researcher's identity or presence. As a result, the findings from this study are primarily co-constructed by the participants and me. I would argue that sensitivity to social issues is not a limitation to research, as it would deny the context within which the study took place. However, being mindful of the potential for increased bias, the use of peer reviewers offered a means by which to test findings.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

Although IPA is concerned with experience and the meaning of experience to people, it recognizes that this experience cannot be transparently extracted from people's heads—rather, it involves a process of engagement and interpretation on the part of the researcher.

(Smith & Shinebourne, 2012, p. 73)

The purpose of this study is to understand how docent coordinators perceive their preparation and support for teaching and managing volunteer gallery guides/docents (VGG/Ds). Seven participants who were recently or currently employed as docent coordinators within encyclopedic art museums shared their experiences via individual, semi-structured interviews. Specific aims of this study supported the inclusion of questions that sought to gain insights regarding:

1. How do art museum docent coordinators describe their preparation for educating volunteer gallery guides/docents?
2. What are the perceptions of art museum docent coordinators regarding the management of volunteer gallery guides/docents?
3. What theories do art museum docent coordinators ascribe to in the education of volunteer gallery guides/docents?
4. What supports do art museum docent coordinators consider helpful for their work with volunteer gallery guides/docents?

As shared in Chapter 3, this study utilizes interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). The philosophies of hermeneutics (interpretation), phenomenology (experience), and idiography (the individual) serve as the foundations of IPA (Smith et al., 2009). After conducting each interview, prolonged engagement with transcripts through multiple readings brought forward emergent themes. Once all interviews concluded and the final transcript brought forth additional concepts, I compared ideas across cases. It is important to note that the findings presented in this chapter are the participants' lived experiences within a specific time and place. Therefore, this qualitative study does not aim to identify generalizable results but rather transferability (Maxwell & Reibold, 2015).

Examples shared within Smith et al. (2009) guided this chapter's organization, as did models found within other disciplines (Benitez, 2020; Callary, 2015; Charlick et al., 2015; Dussault, 2020; Holland, 2014; Jacobs, 2018; Latham, 2015). Consequently, I present key findings within a thematic structure, using quotations assembled from participants' transcribed interview data. Throughout, I offer an analysis which is my interpretation of the themes and ideas presented. This analysis is one way to interpret participant's meaning-making. Of note, in early drafts of this chapter, I separated findings from the analysis, believing the reading should follow the process of the research design (first the participant interpretation of their experiences, then my interpretation of their interpretations). While the intention was sound, the effort made for difficult reading. Upon condensing the findings and analysis into one structure, I once again submerged into another iteration of reading and rereading participant interpretations. New ideas formed and shifted as the physical relocating of the analysis into the findings occurred. I offer this for fellow researchers to consider how time *and* space (the proximity of text) can impact interpretation and analysis.

Four superordinate themes and fourteen corresponding subthemes emerged. Table 3 provides a visual of the organization of themes.

Table 3

Organization of Superordinate and Subordinate Themes

Theme No.	Super-ordinate	Subordinate
1	“What I Bring to the Table” (P2, P6)	1.1 A Multilayered Knowledge Base 1.2 Hierarchies 1.3 Theory & Practice: “Bridging the Gap” (P6)
2	The Docent Coordinator-VGG/D Relationships	2.1 “It’s A Difficult Kind of Balancing Act” (P4) 2.1.a The Human Connection 2.1.b Entitlement & Boundary Crossing 2.2 Age-Related Dynamics 2.3 Power Dynamics
3	“A Labor of Emotional Love” (P3)	3.1 “All The Plates I’m Spinning” (P3) 3.2 Stress 3.3 Support: “I Was Heard” (P7) 3.4 “I Yearn for Real Workshops” (P2)
4	Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI)	4.1 “If I Let That Comment Go, Then the Museum Let’s That Comment Go’ (P5) 4.2 The Weight Responsibilities

Theme 1: “What I Bring to the Table” (P2, P6)

The phrase *bringing something to the table* indicates that someone provides something, such as a skill set, that benefits others. The expression, utilized by two participants, captured the essence of participant understanding of their value. Subordinate themes arose related to knowledge domains, valuing specific knowledge over others, and the role of theory.

During interviews, participants defined the word *prepared*. Meanings included “knowing the content” (P1), “having all the tools” (P2), “due diligence” (P3), doing the “necessary homework but also recognizing that you can't have thought of everything” (P4). Moreover, Participant 4 added, “being ready for anything sounds crazy, but to a certain point, I mean tours and museums, something is always going wrong that you might not have anticipated.” Finally, Participant P7 defined the word prepared as knowing “what to do, when, at the time that you have to do it.” These definitions offered insight into how participants characterized the act of readying themselves. As many participants applied the word to either teaching VGG/Ds or being a VGG/D, it is possible to interpret the term to mean the knowledge to anticipate, act, and adapt.

1.1 A Multilayered Knowledge Base

As participants contemplated their preparation, discussions revealed multiple domains of knowledge. The term *multilayered* encapsulated the breadth and depth of these observations, suggesting gradations and levels of intensity. Later, within Chapter 5 of this study, the idea of layering knowledge evolves into *integration* and *fusion* of domains. However, I retain the use of multilayered here to provide the base from which the progression developed.

Art History and Pedagogy. The seven docent coordinators within this study described having either undergraduate or graduate degrees, primarily in art history or education. Four participants indicated an art history degree, three noted education degrees, and one participant created a “hybrid” degree, with exposure to art history and museum education. Four participants (P1, P3, P4, P5) indicated they did not intend to become a docent coordinator. Each had museum experience before their employment as a docent coordinator (e.g., serving as a guide, interning at a museum, or as a student tour-guide trainer).

Of those who categorized their academic experience in art history, half noted undertaking personal research on teaching and learning theory. Conversely, those with an educational background stated a lack of instruction or endorsement in art history to be challenging. As participants shared examples of efforts to amend gaps in preparation, it is possible to construe the time and resources expended to bolster their perceived lacking knowledge. Furthermore, inserted into a role where they felt insufficiently prepared, participants indicated uneasiness regarding their proficiency, be it their perception of themselves or views of how VGG/Ds perceived them. As an example, Participant 3 offered:

I wish I knew or had been better prepared on the art historical side. I mean, I did do a lot. I had a lot of education in that I've gotten a lot of training. But it's like they [VGG/Ds] seem to respect that the most – a secondary degree in art history, or curatorial position, or a PhD. Sometimes I feel like I'm just seen as a teacher who has worked in museums, you know, 'finger paint and talk about art'. But when it comes to aesthetic analysis, I personally feel very confident in those kinds of areas. But I feel like if I had more training in that they [VGG/Ds] might be that much more successful. (P3)

Participant 3 utilized the example of fingerpainting to represent education, embodied as a frivolous activity requiring little skill and chance. When connected to the word “just,” the implication is that pedagogical experiences are inconsequential in place of an emphasis on art historical proficiency. There resides a sense of devaluation, signified as an underestimation of abilities. Finally, Participant 3 drew a through-line that demonstrated an awareness that their professional development would lead to VGG/D success.

Volunteer Management. While art history and pedagogy were common to all discussions of academic preparation, six participants wished for further exposure to managing

people. As participants oversaw volunteer programs, most employed the term *volunteer management* and will subsequently be used here to reflect those observations. “As a docent coordinator, you're an HR manager. And to know that early on, I think it's helpful -- that people management is so much a part of this job” (P5). Participant 7, who identified prior experience in customer service as beneficial to their role as docent coordinator, observed, “These are more deeply issues that have to do with people and how they behave and how they act and how they talk to other people.”

Discussions of volunteer management included knowledge of administrative tasks (P4), scheduling (P2), determining how to effectively impart the necessity for evaluation when VGG/Ds do not want to be evaluated (P1), and creating methods for “protection” and “parameters” through policy manuals and codes of conduct (P2). Moreover, descriptions of dealing with “personality management” (P3), VGG/D accountability (P4), having “difficult conversations” (P5), coping with misinterpreted communication (P6), as well as navigating VGG/Ds resistance to change (P1, P2, P3, P5) highlighted the struggles within these workplace relationships. Words such as “protection” (P2), “boundaries” (P1, P2), and “limits” (P6) indicated a desire for the safeguarding of participant’s personal and professional selves.

Participant 5 described docents going “awry” and feeling ill-prepared to address these problematic behaviors. When asked how they learned to navigate these situations, Participant 5 stated:

I've sought out some things myself, like guides on having difficult conversations from different kinds of fields. I think I've read more from the HR business field. There's a lot of resources from that field on how to have difficult conversations in general. (P5)

When asked what they wished to know before becoming a docent coordinator, Participant 3 also desired exposure to aspects of volunteer management, supposing:

Oh, personality management training. Soft skill training. Because it's not all about content. Those are things that are harder to teach. We can go and do webinars and stuff on how to manage a team and soft skill stuff, but I personally believe those kinds of things are way better learned when you get to practice them and do them. Even just test them out with somebody else. (P3)

Experiential Knowledge. In the above quote from Participant 3, the suggestion of role-playing touched upon aspects of experiential learning. Understandably, learning is a by-product of doing a job, which cannot be gained merely through reading, observing, or discussing the job. It must be experienced. Participant 2 discussed how they learned to recruit and evaluate docents:

At this point, it's been years of practice. But when I first started, I remember vividly to this day, my direct supervisor at that time sat me down on one of my first days and was kind of going through some of the first big projects. I was going to be responsible for docent recruitment, and she basically gave me all the folders and communication and things from previous recruitment... It gave me ideas for what we were looking for and kind of let me go. It was a lot of trial and error. (P2)

Participants 1, 2, 3, and 6 served as guides at other institutions before becoming a docent coordinator, which brought forth confidence and intuitiveness (P1). However, it is relevant to point out that while those who served as guides felt assured in their ability to teach in galleries and instruct others to teach in galleries, participants indicated gaps in their understanding of volunteer management. This suggests that while it is one thing to *do* the role you are managing, it is another to supervise *others* doing it.

Participants 2 and 5 identified predecessor's files as one orientation method for their role. Recalling this experience, Participant 2 felt they were "a deer in the headlights" (P2). This behavioral metaphor of a deer experiencing the fear of oncoming danger captures an initial lack of either confidence or preparation (or both). It also summarized the distress felt when realizing neither predecessor's files, prior academic knowledge, or experience in museums would sufficiently prepare them for the docent coordinator role. Significantly, it imparted a sense of vulnerability, being in the dark and searching for understanding.

Negative connotations related to learning on the job surfaced as well, such as "trial and error" (P2, P3), "learned from my mistakes" (P2), and learning "the hard way" (P3, P6). The colloquialism of *trial and error* suggests judgment, experimentation, and ordeal. Despite these expressions of difficulties, participants' continuation as docent coordinators demonstrated overcoming those initial issues, or perseverance. This is not to imply that all discussions of experiential learning were negative. Participant 3 offered insights that signified an evolution of understanding regarding their role developed from experience. It also reflected a particular pride in their growth or certainty based on experience:

I'm only just now, in the last five years, branching out and developing my own louder voice. Authority is not the right word. Confidence, perhaps. I have enough experience now that I can talk about this and project a sense of confidence in training other people.
(P3)

1.2 Hierarchies

A hierarchy is the ranking or ordering of something in relation to something else. For something to be elevated within a hierarchy, something else is lessened. The notion of hierarchies initially took the form of organizational dynamics: understanding where the docent

coordinator position resided and the autonomy of the role in the structure of the art museum. However, the concept of hierarchies evolved as participant accounts suggested comparative relationships implying a ranking of expertise. This categorization inferred status within the art museum, often placing curators above educators according to participants' perceived classifications by VGG/Ds. Participant 7 indicated a physical realization of a perceived hierarchy in the art museum, sharing "Education was in the basement, and the other, the administrative group of people, they were in the top floor. So, physically you were at different levels."

Many participants identified positive working relationships between curatorial and education departments (P2, P3, P6, P7). Constructive collaborations beyond VGG/D training included co-presenting on collections (P2), seeking support for "managing personalities" (P3), discussing individual needs and museum trends (P6), and collegial support (P2, P7). As Participant 7 offered, "those are our first information-go-to people." Participant responses indicated respect for their curatorial colleagues, and several participants suggested VGG/Ds shared in this esteem. However, as participants shifted to discussing VGG/D perceptions of educators, descriptions imparted a desire for this same respect.

A common observation across all interviews was VGG/Ds' desire for time with curators and art historical content. In some cases (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6), this desire ran contrary to participants' remarks about their training goals. Participants characterized curator-led experiences through the eyes of VGG/Ds, suggesting VGG/Ds found curators "more scholarly" (P6), more "respected" (P3), "preferred" (P4), and "vision" sharing (P5). The language suggested a prizing of curatorial time over time examining gallery teaching and learning concepts. To support this interpretation, examples offered by participants, wherein VGG/D ambitions for

training differed from docent coordinator goals, exposed a hierarchy of curatorial content over pedagogical content within VGG/D training.

It's really interesting how when there's a high-level theory, or book chapter, or text that's in the realm of art education or museum education, they [VGG/Ds] think it's too scholarly. But then they seem to seek it out when it's art history. They don't mind it as much when there's a curator who has nearly bored them to death with details about something really arcane. But for some reason, when it's about the teaching process, it's too much. I mean, I'm generalizing. Not everybody feels that way, but it is kind of interesting when that happens sometimes. (P6)

The implication is a ranking of content, art history (read curator), over pedagogical research. Moreover, the use of terms “bored to death” and “arcane” indicated Participant 6 experienced a situation, or situations, in which they felt the content proffered by the curator lacked relevancy. The role of the docent coordinator, according to participant accounts, is often about finding relevancy for the VGG/D and the visitor. Therefore, witnessing VGG/Ds preferring the arcane over the relevant is interpreted as choosing art history over education. Finally, Participant 6 highlighted a disconnect in their experience: the perceived resistance or lack of appreciation by VGG/Ds for research in the realm of pedagogy, which is the very thing the docent coordinator and the VGG/D *do* in the art museum.

Participant 1, while sharing what VGG/Ds did not want in training, observed:

They don't want to have to do homework or do outside readings or given work that involves working in teams with other docents outside training. They want to have time with all the curators to hear about exhibitions and that sort of thing. (P1)

Participant 4 also noted similar experiences regarding VGG/D emphasis on curatorial content, which intensified as VGG/Ds compared new and traditional models of training:

I think there's some friction, where if you're only making changes to the new docent training, you've got people who you trained the way that you want to train in the 21st century. And then they go into the regular docent pool, and they have docents who were trained maybe 15 years ago, who feel very confident in what they're doing. Of course, newer folks don't feel as confident. So, I think there is sort of a disconnect there where they're like, "Oh well, I didn't receive adequate training, I guess. Because these people are telling me they had all this sort of curatorial training, and I didn't get that. So I must not be prepared." And it's like, "No, actually we intentionally changed the training to try to **not**³ make you focus on all the curatorial stuff." (P4)

Participant 4 perceived VGG/Ds favoring curatorial training as "adequate" preparation for their role rather than contemporary museum education theories. This insight offered another hierarchy within VGG/D programs, where veteran VGG/Ds chided newer VGG/Ds based on a lack of time with curators. Participant 4 indicated a purposeful break from these traditions and simultaneously revealed having to justify choices to VGG/Ds. Participant 2 also detected friction between VGG/D desires and docent coordinator goals:

I feel like there's sometimes a difference between what [VGG/Ds] want to be trained on and what the training is - especially with what we're really trying to enforce right now, which is this visitor-focused. It's a different type of approach. We really felt that we had to practice what we preach and not just book curators to do lectures. Because if we're just doing that for training, how is that teaching them? (P2)

³ Participant emphasis is indicated in bold typeface.

At the heart of these oppositional views of training are changes in museum education theory and practice. Traditional models of training VGG/Ds meant rigorous exposure to art history through curator-led lectures, as described by participants. In contrast, most participants shared a desire to impart a conversational model for gallery experiences that positioned the visitors' experience and prior knowledge at the forefront. Participant 3 observed how this juxtaposition affected their VGG/D program:

Their training model, up until recently, was 'art in the dark' – slides, slides, and projections in art history, lectures. Occasionally walking through the galleries, but only with a curator. And then it drastically shifted to all in the gallery with, really, no curatorial or art history. It was all how to engage -- how to do improv games, how to ask all the questions in the world. It's almost as if they went a complete 180 degrees into the other. And there was really no middle ground for most of them to find themselves in. So that has been my goal: to recognize that there needs to be middle ground in museum education. And they, in particular, need to feel that that middle ground is available to them. (P3)

The implication of a "drastic" shift suggested a profound change that, if considering the VGG/D perspective, implied prior trainings that centered art historical content were incorrect or incomplete. Participant 3 explained the dynamics of the tension between art history and pedagogy within the training of VGG/Ds, building empathy for their frustrations. The desire to find a "middle ground" suggested conciliation, a bringing together of both knowledge domains.

While several participants indicated a perceived hierarchy that valued the curator/art history knowledge over education/pedagogy, three participants specified downplaying art history when recruiting VGG/Ds. Participant 4 declined potential volunteers who viewed the docent

programs as an art history course. Participant 5 found volunteers left once they realized they would not receive an “extended college-type experience.” Lastly, Participant 2 specified their effort to diminish volunteer expectations of joining their program to become an “authority” on art history. The goal of these efforts was to taper VGG/D focus on art history, yet Participant 2 indicated a desire to be recognized for *their* art history background:

...Anytime that I get to talk about the art and share my original passion with them, that's always so much fun. And to remind them that there's more. I do more than just the docent stuff. (P2)

This desire for recognition is significant. Notably, several participants held degrees at either the undergraduate or graduate levels in art history, which mirrors curators' preparation. Despite having similar certifications, participant descriptions characterized their role as undervalued.

Participant 3 and 5 understood their ultimate contributions as meeting the visitor's needs through their teaching of VGG/Ds. Yet, Participant 3 indicated they simultaneously navigated VGG/D devaluation of their contributions:

I just had to learn to be okay with it. They wouldn't accept that I have experience; they wouldn't accept that I have anything to say on this topic. (P3)

This insight speaks to feelings of resignation when faced with denying one's teaching identity as a relevant contribution. Earlier, Participant 3 indicated growth in confidence due to experiential learning. There is also a different type of self-assuredness found within this sentiment: a resilience learned from navigating dismissal.

1.3 Theory & Practice: “Bridging the Gap” (P6)

All participants named or described theories during interviews. When asked what the word *theory* meant, participants characterized the word as “ideas” (P4), “a framework” (P5), or

“the approach” (P2). Participant 1 suggested, “An idea that we're going to either prove or disprove.” At the same time, Participant 3 tendered, “Philosophy or collection of ideas that are mostly rooted in science, or at least rooted in evidentiary kind of thinking.” Other words surfaced in the discussions of theories, such as “possibilities” (P6), regarding location, such as academia (P2, P6), and “lofty” (P2).

At points when participants discussed theory, many indicated shifting concepts into practical applications for VGG/Ds. During their interview, Participant 6 observed:

I think the trick sometimes is how to bridge the gap between academia and the rest of the world because there are definitely times when it's hard to translate. I keep using anti-racism as an example. But it's a great one in that a lot of the really great ideas and important contexts that comes with it. It comes out of an academic setting, and inevitably with it comes a lot of terminology and concepts that are completely new to people. And so when you use terms like “dismantle” and “White supremacy” and all these other things, they're new concepts to a lot of people. And I've even found with some of the conversations I have with docents that there's a lot of unpacking that has to be done. And that, itself, can create a barrier to engaging with the ideas and with the content in some cases. I don't know what the solution to that is...if there are more people like me who have been in academia and then went into museums, that have to bridge the gap. (P6)

The bridge-maker metaphor implied connecting, wherein the docent coordinator links the theoretical and practical. New ways of understanding may evolve and create new information in joining the two sides.

Participant 2 discussed offering “comparable talks,” interpreting content knowledge into pedagogical, and later added:

I always like to take the lofty theory and make it applicable. I come from [CITY]. I didn't even know what art history was until I got to college. I didn't even know it was a thing. I don't know...a lot of this is just... doesn't it sound almost as pretentious? Like the word "docent," which is what we're trying to get away from, right? That's pretentiousness. ...So, I like to always take these theories and show that this is not what – **we're** not the ones -- these are specialists. These are, you know, doctors. These are people who are skilled. They know what they're talking about, who have written about this. But, I like to then take it and put it into a real-life application to make it resonate. (P2)

Here, another hierarchical structure is revealed, placing theory above practice, as seen in the elevation of specialists, "doctors," over practitioners. Moreover, Participant 2 suggested theory was "lofty" and required shifting into everyday relevance. The inclusion of personal history by Participant 2 offered a point of contrast, with humble beginnings differentiated from notions of superiority and pomposity within the museum field. The use of the word "pretentious" further supported the interpretation that Participant 2 found aspects of theory and museum education snobbish or off-putting. There is the impression of how it might feel to be intellectually excluded.

Participant 5 also discussed moving the theoretical into practical application, suggesting VGG/Ds held a disinclination for abstract concepts:

With the curators, they [VGG/Ds] want both their knowledge and some sense of their vision of whatever exhibition we're in. I think, with me, I have geared my trainings towards, "Okay, we have this information. How are you going to translate it?" And I think one of the big things I learned about them [VGG/Ds], early on, is they want

concrete takeaways⁴. They do not want abstract things... They want things that relate back to the collection, and that can easily translate into doing. (P5)

Considering the language of participant observations, three metaphors surfaced: the translator, the interpreter, and the bridge-maker. Placed within the art museum and as suggested by participants, the *translator* converts information into concrete or tangible touring methods. The translator serves as a conduit of information in one direction (e.g., curator to VGG/D), not the information's originator. The *interpreter* also converts content, but in both directions, serving as an intermediary. Within this process, the interpreter actively engages in paraphrasing and rendering meaning but interprets others' understandings. The *bridge-maker* links the theoretical to the practical or the art historical to the pedagogical. In joining the two sides, information and ideas can travel back and forth rather than flowing downward or through other conduits. The key to this last metaphor is whether the docent coordinator imparts their bridge-making methods to VGG/Ds, a potentially significant step in fostering VGG/D self-agency and eliminating hierarchies.

As Participant 3 recalled imparting teaching and learning theories to VGG/Ds, they also communicated aspects of working with adult learners:

So, with theory, there's really not a direct right way to apply it. I tried to be really explicit with the VGG/Ds when teaching them about learning theory, in particular, or teaching engagement strategies. This is a very hard skill to learn. Because, if you follow the theory, you're like, "Oh, I have to ask these questions, in this order, every single time." But, actually, "No. You've got to learn there's got to be some like autonomy, and flexibility, and organic..." And that's way harder to teach. So, I try to tell them: with

⁴ Participant 5 emphasized these two words, both verbally and nodding.

theory, follow the theories -- see it as a guideline -- not like not an imprisoning script.

(P3)

Recalling that Participant 5 also discussed VGG/D desire for “concrete takeaways,” as well as participant discussions of the practical applicability of curatorial content, it is possible to see how adult learning awareness plays into the role of the docent coordinator. Participant 7 likewise discussed adult learning, presented to VGG/Ds for their work with adult visitors. However, only one participant discussed applying assumptions of adult learning directly to teaching VGG/Ds:

Something I learned in grad school that I found really helpful to working with docents was we did a class on adult development. We spend so much time talking about child development...I don't remember the exact terminology that was used, but I remember it was very helpful to me in thinking about -- people in this one stage are very concrete thinkers, and they just want you to tell them what to do. And I was like, “Oh, that's like a lot of the docents.” So that was sort of eye-opening to me to think about there being phases of adult development and that theory as it applies to working with volunteers who are adults. (P4)

The indication of an “eye-opening” experience is interpreted as the actualization of connecting theory and practice. It is also the realization of adult learning embodied by an adult learner: the docent coordinator (an adult) sees the relevancy of learning about adult learning theory when it serves a purpose: teaching VGG/Ds (adult learners).

Theme 2: Docent Coordinator-VGG/D Relationship

“If you don't have patience and you're not a people person, you should not be docent coordinator.” (Participant 7 on advice for future docent coordinators)

Here, the working definition of relationships is “the way in which two or more concepts, objects, or people are connected or the state of being connected.”⁵ Descriptions of docent coordinator relationships were further subdivided into perceived positive and negative experiences. The dynamics of these same relationships revealed undercurrents related to age and power. These themes indicated the large portion of the docent coordinator job fell to developing and maintaining bonds and identifying the balance point within these relationships.

2.1 “It’s A Difficult Kind of Balancing Act” (P4)

The phrase “balancing act” surfaced within two interviews (P4, P5) and appeared in researcher memos suggesting a shared metaphor representing the act of finding equilibrium. One side was the joy docent coordinators felt in working with VGG/Ds, while on the other were participants' frustration as they navigated a range of issues related to VGG/Ds. Significantly, a commonly shared concern raised by several participants touched upon balancing personal and professional relationships. The idea of a balancing act suggested the precarious nature of finding tactful methods for coping with the shifting weight of these contrasting experiences.

2.1.a The Human Connection. When discussing the favorite part of their role as docent coordinator, all participants favored the: “interpersonal” (P1), making “connections” (P2, P7), and “the human element” (P3). Participant 6 remarked:

I think the fact that I get to interact and have relationships with so many interesting people in the docent corps. I really like being around people... I've very casually said to people that this is kind of like being a college professor without being in academia... I've gotten to know a lot of my docents really well. I'm really honored by the fact that some of them had invited me into their homes for meals and I've met their family. They are really

⁵ Definition provided by Oxford Languages Google Dictionary, as written, November 2020.

supportive, and I try to be supportive of them as much as I can. I've got limits. I'm just one person, and they're 100-plus of them. (P6)

Participant 6 conveyed their joy and imparted the personal nature of their association with VGG/Ds, such as being invited into VGG/D homes. Furthermore, Participant 6 likened their role to a college professor, suggesting academic rigor or perhaps considerable intellectual effort to perform a docent coordinator's role. While discussing support between themselves and the VGG/Ds, Participant 6 interjected with "limits," supported by the disproportionate ratio of one docent coordinator to 100-plus VGG/Ds. In this brief moment, it is possible to gain insight into just how many relationships a docent coordinator might balance and the potential rewards and dilemmas.

While characterizing relationships with VGG/Ds, Participant 3 considered how the responsibilities of these connections impact both parties, as well as the institution:

I think it really means this really meaningful transference of knowledge. Because it's a symbiotic relationship, right? The guides are older and have been through a number of life experiences that I haven't...I'm helping them learn more about the museum field...how to make it more relevant for this time. And they share with me things that I might not have thought about. Very symbiotic in that way. They're going to share their time with us, dedicate hours of energy and time, then why shouldn't that relationship be symbiotic? I think it's about this special teacher-learner relationship, you know? I really don't see it as like, 'You work for us,' even though it's free, 'You volunteer for us.' You know, 'You're here to serve us.' I really don't see it that way... It's not talking at them. It's not filling their head with facts. It's like kind of standing next to them and guiding them through the path they're going to get to. To learn. (P3)

This concept of a mutually beneficial relationship highlighted the reciprocal nature of the docent-coordinator-VGG/D connection. Participant 3 suggested that the VGG/D is a learner within the relationship, not an employee. Significantly, these observations drew attention to two critical balance points for the docent coordinator to maintain: 1) working with a learner who is simultaneously responsible for teaching others, and 2) working with a volunteer who is also someone who conducts critical functions of the art museum for the public.

In all cases, participants shared examples that highlighted the personal, emotional side of being a docent coordinator. “Love” appeared in a multitude of responses, whether loving the teacher-learner relationship (P5), encouraging a love of art in VGG/Ds (P7) or that their role as a labor of emotional love (P3). Participant 2 divided their response, offering:

I love art. I **love** art... That's obviously what I'm really connected to, like mind, body, and soul. I just love it. I love having access to the museum. But in terms of volunteer management, I honestly do like the real connections that I have with some of these folks. [OVER TEN] years is a pretty long time. I've gotten to know these people. I really feel close to some of them. I've really built some real relationships... I think I'm good at reaching people on a certain level, letting them know that we're all in this for -- I'm in it for their best interest. (P2)

Exploring the VGG/D perspective, Participant 3 offered insight into their motivation, as well as a rationale for VGG/D volunteerism:

That's one of my favorite parts, you know? People don't volunteer for money or for fame. They're really in it for the passion. And when you work with people who are just doing it for the passion's sake, you tend to get, I think, a little bit more out of it emotionally. (P3)

Participant 4 shared perceptions of VGG/Ds rationale for joining the program as well:

I think a lot of people become docents because they want to learn about art history. Or they want to feel important within the organization. Like, 'Being a docent at an art museum gives me some sort of status or makes me feel good about myself,' or whatever it might be. I think at the root of it: you don't become a docent if you're not a lifelong learner. They just love to learn, and they love to learn about anything for the most part.

(P4)

There were two types of pride indicated: VGG/D pride in their association with the docent program and the docent coordinator's appreciation for VGG/D lifelong learning. Participant 3 echoed this observation: "I'm pleased that they're pleased, and proud of their proud" (P3).

Participant responses pointed to the personal-professional dichotomy of the docent coordinator role. There were emotional connections, be it enthusiasm for sharing one's passion with others or the pleasure of helping others. It is the teacher-learner relationship. Participant 2, when characterizing this relationship with VGG/Ds, observed:

It's kind of like family. You love them. And you hate them... I can vent about them, but if somebody outside was to talk about them, I would be the first to jump right up and defend them. And so I feel protective over them. Sometimes, unfortunately, responsible for them. So, affectionately, yes, I do feel protective over them...But they drive me crazy. They do. Even quote-unquote "good ones." The good ones are sometimes difficult.

(P2)

The family metaphor functioned to reveal the multifaceted subtleties of the docent coordinator relationship with VGG/Ds. The alternating intensity of emotions substantiated the balancing act described by several participants. The tenderness shared for VGG/Ds within Participant 2's program revealed itself in their numerous attempts to clarify, for me, the outsider,

VGG/Ds intentions. Participant 2 wanted me to see the VGG/Ds' good even when sharing their deep frustrations.

As Participant 6 recalled feeling valued by VGG/Ds, generating a sense of satisfaction and appreciation, they offered, "There's a lot of joy to be had in this program, and docent managers can't lose sight of that. That's, that's one of the best parts of doing this job."

2.1.b Entitlement & Boundary Crossing. Discussion of challenges with docent coordinator-VGG/D relationships arose in several positions within interviews. Participant 6 valued cultivating relationships with VGG/Ds. Still, when asked about the most challenging part of their job, they offered, "I mean, the flip side of that is that you have a hundred different opinions about virtually every little thing, and that can get exhausting." Participant 3 also discussed VGG/D personalities as a challenging aspect of their job, "The kind of sense of entitlement that comes as a result of difficult personalities. Or times when the personality is more stubborn than it needs to be. The sense of ownership...that conflicting sense of ownership." When asked to elaborate on the idea of ownership, Participant 3 observed, "Their ownership of the broad program...the shape it's taken, how many of them are in it, who's in it, what they get to do. That went away for them. They are still very bitter."

As participants relayed experiences in which VGG/Ds deviated from the docent coordinator's expectations, characterizations of VGG/Ds arose that implied frustration, such as "entitled" (P1, P3), "outspoken" (P2), "bothersome" (P1), "prickly" (P4), and "difficult" (P3, P4, P5, P6). As an example of these frustrations, Participant 1 shared:

They're very kind in our personal interactions, like, "How's your [FAMILY MEMBER] doing? Sometimes that can be a little too personal, like, "Oh, you lost weight." They don't have boundaries. I guess what's difficult is the boundaries situation.

Furthermore, Participant 1 recalled:

For one [TRAINING] session in the galleries, docents were spread around far enough away so that I gave them my cell number in case they were having questions about the activity. And then they would call me in the evening to talk about like, “You know, an idea for a program, or an idea for training...” And I would say, “Thank you. This is sort of my family time. I would love it if you can send me an email.” I would never think to call someone that I was, in a way, working for, and to talk about what I wanted. (P1)

Participant 1 suggested professional expectations for volunteers. It is possible that VGG/D expectations do not reflect professional goals but personal interests. Therefore, the docent coordinator's role is interpreted as managing personal expectations in a professional environment. Participants 4 and 6 echoed similar needs for creating boundaries within their relationships with docents. Participant 4 addressed the professional and personal aspects of the relationship between the docent coordinator and the VGG/Ds:

I think anyone who works directly with docents and has that as the bulk of their job, it's a difficult sort of balancing act. I think because a lot of it is about relationship building. It was interesting, with my first manager, who had been there for a long time. I think there was sometimes some friction between us. I think we made a good team because we sort of went in a little bit of opposite directions. They had close personal friendships with many of the docents, and I was sort of more like, “This is professional...I love you, but you're my work-friend.” (P4)

The creation of this boundary, of friendship within the confines of the workplace, exemplified the docent coordinator's balancing act. Participant 2 discussed how creating limitations defined the relationship's parameters and served as “protection” for the docent coordinator and the larger

institution. When talking about managing volunteers who were “skimming by,” Participant 2 returned to their family metaphor and offered:

Not trying to sound patronizing, but it’s like parenting in a way, you know? You discipline your kid because you love them. You know what I mean? Because you want the best for them. You want them to learn how to do this. (P2)

Whether calling up a familial representation (P2) or categorizing VGG/Ds as “work-place friends” (P4), implied within these descriptions is a constant awareness of the equilibrium between the personal and professional. Furthermore, emotional descriptions, whether using the term love or feeling “personally let down” (P4), evoked a blurring of the personal and professional on the part of the docent coordinator. Attempting to characterize the docent coordinator-VGG/D relationship, Participant 4 further observed:

It's a little bit different than any kind of other museum work, I think, because it's sort of like the professional, and also the like personal relationships coming in, which can go either way. Like sometimes it is really warm and fuzzy when you get along well.... And then sometimes it's like...not as much like “You work for me.” But that's how I always saw the relationship...Some of them didn't really seem to see it that way. (P4)

2.2 Age-Related Dynamics

Discussion of age occurred within all interviews. Most participants identified within the 25-34 age range, while all remarked many VGG/Ds within their programs were older than themselves (see Table 4).

Table 4

Age Ranges of Participants

Age Range	Number of Responses
25-34	4
35-44	1
45-54	2

Recalling the early stages of their employment within their art museum, Participant 5 offered:

I started when I was [AGE], and I think that was a little bit of a hurdle to get over because I looked like a tiny baby to them. So, I had to earn their respect. And it happened, but the first little bit was tough. (P5)

The notion of earning respect indicated a need to demonstrate competence and prove worth, therefore setting up an odd balance of power between the docent coordinator and VGG/D. There were also two types of effort here: the proving to VGG/Ds of the participant's abilities and the confirming for museum leadership or supervisors the ability to remain in the role. Moreover, the word "respect" requires additional unpacking. While not asked during the interviews, it is of interest whether participants defined respect as courtesy and kindness or as approval. Participant 6, entering the profession at a similar age, noted parallel experiences:

I was [AGE] when I started in the job, and I've had [PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTIC] my entire life. I just knew that there might be some preconceived notions of what a young, White person who looks like me would be about. And so I definitely had to earn my keep. (P6)

And later:

I knew going into it that many people in this program have experience with being a docent that outlives my professional career, and in some cases, outlives my life on this planet. (P6)

The word “earn” surfaced in statements from Participants 5 and 6. It is possible to define the term as to deserve or to gain. Yet, it can also be defined as to secure, as in securing their job. Therefore, it is possible that when considering job security, the relationship between the docent coordinator and VGG/D sees the docent coordinator navigating relationships overtop safeguarding their livelihood.

Participant 4 recognized the considerable interval between their age and the average VGG/D age at the beginning of their career. Accepting this difference meant, according to Participant 4, demonstrating ability and maturity:

I’m sort of honoring their experience and showing them sort of respect, while at the same time showing them that I am a person who needs to be taken seriously and knows how to do my job. I don’t know if this is coming up in any of your research if there are people who started that type of a job when they were younger. It does take a person who already is maybe more mature for their age or has to sort of put that on in order to succeed in that role. Because I think that people who come off very young are very successful in working in school programs and family programs and all that. I would be curious how that works when you’re working with docents. Because I do feel like they sometimes have a bias toward, maybe, dismissing people who come off as being very young. (P4)

It is possible to infer that Participant 4’s offering of respect to VGG/Ds is based on perceived cultural norms (respecting elders). This suggested that while Participant 4 was required to prove their value owing to their age, VGG/Ds need not.

Additionally, there is a regard for the number of years' experience within VGG/D programs, inferred in the commonly used titles for VGG/Ds, such as "emeritus" (P2, P3, P7), "veteran" (P2), and "new docent" (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6). There is the potential to construe an undercurrent of bias, based on age and years' experience, that positions younger docent coordinators at a disadvantage regardless of experiential or academic learning. Participant 3 also shared the tension related to age between volunteers and paid staff:

We're [PAID STAFF] all younger than them. So, they have a hard time. I think sometimes they have a hard time hearing either, "No," or, "We really feel should be done this way. This is kind of the state of the field now." And they are like, "No. We've been around longer. We've been to all the museums in Paris. So, we know what's up." (P3)

When asked how they coped with this, Participant 3 revealed the perceptions around age and experience, as well as tolerance:

I remind myself that they are older adults with opinions and experiences. That they're okay. That they're allowed -- these opinions and experiences are allowed. We wouldn't be in any better boat if they didn't feel like they could express themselves. (P3)

Participant 3 attempted to rationalize conditions within their workplace, imparting their thinking behind age dynamics' intricacies. The repetition of the word "allowed" could be read as permission; however, Participant 3's emphasis may well signify acceptance and tolerance. In rationalizing behaviors in the workplace, Participant 3 revealed a coping method towards reconciliation.

Rationalizing, or what might be construed as excusing behaviors, surfaced in other ways as well. Participant 2, when describing experiences of discomfort with VGG/D personal comments, explained:

I've been called a "little girl." It was used in an affectionate way. But I was extremely upset. I mean, it was generational. Absolutely. Absolutely. As I breathed and counted to 10, I told myself, "I know... This is a dear, dear man. He's older. He's a very sweet man." But I don't think that he understood the implication of that, you know? It just really made me mad. (P2)

Participant 2 earlier described a love/hate family relationship, and it is possible to see this dynamic within their recollection. In this vulnerable moment, being belittled by a VGG/D, Participant 2 appeared to protect the VGG/D by explaining their actions as "generational." This is an actualizing of the family metaphor. While Participant 2 attempted to protect the VGG/D, who or what protects the docent coordinator?

When discussing age-related issues with VGG/Ds, specifically around the use of conversational strategies in touring, Participant 4 observed:

If they're older, which the majority of our docents are, they grew up in an education system that was much more based on the teacher delivering information to you and you absorbing it. So that's the educational experience they had and telling them to do it in a more conversational way -- where what the students have to contribute is just as valuable as what you do -- is new. (P4)

Whether justifying actions as "generational" (P2), explaining the disconnect between traditional school models and contemporary practices (P4), or defending VGG/D unawareness of museum trends owing to a lack of literature intended for volunteers (P6), these accounts demonstrated participant efforts to empathize. Moreover, it speaks to the protective nature wherein participants endeavored to help me, the outsider, not fault the VGG/D.

Participant 2 also touched on navigating life transitions and quality of life changes when working with older VGG/Ds:

Sometimes, people get to the point where they're not able to tour, but they don't know.

It's hard when they don't recognize it or won't admit it. That is the most difficult part.

Sometimes, it involves a friend, or a spouse, or partner getting involved to talk about it because it's an issue. [NAMES VGG/D TITLE] was created to let people stop touring but still let them feel involved. I feel pretty good about having that transition period... One of our docents had [DIAGNOSIS], and she was struggling. She wasn't getting better. I wasn't going to make her resign... We still realize that everybody's a human. (P2)

Later, Participant 2 offered:

I do know these folks, for better for worse. I know them. I think about when somebody passes away. I send an email out to everybody. I always try to say something personal about that person. And nine times out of ten, I can say something. I can tell a story. (P2)

Participant 2's comments echoed data collected during this study's field test, wherein a field test participant discussed attending VGG/D funerals. The family metaphor extends to assisting VGG/Ds through life transitions with grace and dignity (P2, P3). Moreover, it reemphasized how the docent coordinator's role balances the professional and the personal, "for better or worse" (P2).

2.3 Power Dynamics

Reiterating sentiments shared by Gartenhaus (1990), museum docents can be both volunteers and influential stakeholders (e.g., donors, trustees, or art collectors). Participant 5 oversaw docents who meet all three of these prominent positions. In discussing their experiences, they commented, "It's a weird, like, 'Oh, I'm your volunteer manager, and you're also my boss's

boss.” Additionally, Participant 5 recalled that their interview committee included members of VGG/D leadership. These examples highlight the complex undercurrents of power and influence potentially facing other docent coordinators. Participant 7 likewise discussed dealing with VGG/Ds who were also donors:

I have donors in my docent group. And I don’t see that. I just see them as part of the team. Although sometimes I’m reminded, “Remember, he and she is…” I know. But I don’t treat them differently. (P7)

Participant 2 also discussed docents' influence but indicated constant vigilance to specific VGG/Ds' dual role as volunteer and stakeholder. When recalling these experiences, they voiced frustration owing to feelings of powerlessness:

But if it’s the right tour guide—docent--that catches the ear of a senior staff member... We have to sometimes walk it back in, and that is extremely frustrating. And it makes us feel like, “Why do we even bother? What are we doing? Is this program about catering to volunteers? Because if so, just tell me, and that’s what I’ll do.” But, if it’s about producing good programs, the quality programs, and resources, then we’ve got to build a program that we can manage. And people need to be accountable. And we need to be able to measure their productivity, and effectiveness, and all that stuff. I guess when we run into situations like that, which we do sometimes, it’s frustrating. It’s part of the job that we just have to deal with sometimes. You know the money, the donor. That’s how museums function. (P2)

This quotation unexpectedly resonated with me. I would be remiss in not mentioning that within my notations, I recalled parallel experiences. As Participant 2’s recollection ended in resignation, the shrugging of shoulders, and the decrescendo of their inflection, I was reminded of similar

feelings of surrender. At that moment, I realized the significance of hearing another's story and finding a connection. It was, perhaps, a triple hermeneutic: the researcher interpreting their experiences which are impacted by their efforts to interpret the participant making sense of a similar experience.

Returning to the participant experiences, all participants worked within institutions with longstanding VGG/D programs, wherein programs ranged from roughly 40 to 60 years. In all instances, participants noted a structure within their VGG/D program that suggested a means by which VGG/Ds could exercise a degree of say in aspects of their volunteerism. Participants 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 identified a board or council with leadership (e.g., president and vice president), with some boards or councils having additional subcommittees. Functions of these structures included the creation of operating and bylaw policies for VGG/D membership (P3), accounting of dues and recording of meetings (P4), recruitment (P7), and social committees (P6, P7). As in the case of Participant 5, the existing structure meant alterations to operation or bylaws required a larger membership vote. This resulted in a perceived "compromise" (P5) between what was desired by VGG/Ds and what was preferred by the docent coordinator.

Participants 1 and 2 classified the institution's structure as representational, serving as liaisons between the docents and the education staff. Participant 6 noted that the VGG/D group within their institution was not a policymaking group but an "advocacy" group. This statement was echoed by Participants 1, 2, and 3. Finally, when participants discussed relationships with VGG/D leadership, the term "buy-in" surfaced in multiple interviews (P2, P4, P5, and P6). In these instances, participants observed that VGG/D input before making decisions provided VGG/Ds an opportunity to feel valued while serving to smooth potential conflict between VGG/Ds and paid staff.

I wanted the committee to support it. Our [VGG/D LEADER] wrote this great email. I think that really struck a nice tone with the committee members and got them all on board. Even anybody who, maybe, was going to react poorly at first to it, I think they read through her reasoning and realized that she was right. They agreed. They approved it. (P2)

These efforts to cultivate VGG/D “buy in” revealed participant attempts to gain support from VGG/Ds for their (the docent coordinator’s) choices. The VGG/D is empowered through their contribution to the decision-making process. It is also possible to construe the docent coordinator’s efforts as gaining permission. When seen from the VGG/D perspective, it is the granting of permission. Within examples shared by Participants 2 and 5, agreement with VGG/Ds did not always occur. This required either to “walk it back” (P2) or settle with a compromise (P5).

Several participants cited changes to VGG/D programs before or during their employment, specifically diminishing authority and control of the VGG/Ds (P2, P3, P4, P6). Statements alluded to power struggles, such as:

They feel like they don’t have ownership over it at all anymore, and that that does come out with tension. And then there’s ownership over what they get to do, their specific active role within the department, in terms of leading gallery experiences. They’re entirely coordinated and scheduled through the department, the paid staff. We train them in the tour. We tell them what tour is on what day. (P3)

Participant 3 also questioned their current system:

Is there really no other way that we can keep them involved on the content development side? But on the other hand, content development really should come from...I don't

know, a variety of voices is a good thing. I go back and forth. Sometimes, it makes me really question my values and -- not my values -- but like some of the things that we think are really valuable to our philosophy and the department. Because from the sounds of it, it's so game-changing – a tectonic level of change that happened. They don't really express too much outward verbal frustration. It comes out in kind of micro-aggressive ways here and there. Little things like, “Well, two years ago we used to do it this way. Can we don't go back to do it that way?” (P3)

The use of the term “tectonic” underscored the perceived magnitude of the change felt by VGG/Ds. The VGG/Ds witnessed traditions, passed from docent class to docent class, rejected. It is possible to reason the docent coordinator is the embodiment of change for VGG/Ds. Within several participant accounts, the creation of the docent coordinator role meant the end of VGG/D leadership. The “micro-aggressions” described by Participant 3 are the consequences of this tension between tradition and change. This power struggle has two vantage points. If viewed from the VGG/D perspective, the docent coordinator is authority without a past. Conversely, Participant 3, who is endeavoring to follow contemporary museum education theories and practice, perceived the VGG/D influence as power gained *from* their history.

When attempting to consider alternative methods for facilitating tours, such as ending the use of VGG/Ds or greatly diminishing their service, Participant 2 recounted:

We have flat out addressed the fact with [LEADERSHIP] in the museum before that it would be beneficial to the quality of our programs if we could entertain the idea of working with paid educators to lead tours and what that would look like. And it's been like “Nope. Shut it down. Shut. It. Down.” And I get it. No director wants to deal with that kind of undertaking. And I don't blame [them]. (P2)

Recalling contemporary accounts of changes to VGG/D programs by other institutions and the public fallout of these endeavors, such as those recounted in this study's literature review, it is possible to understand leadership's hesitation. This suggested the power dynamics extended beyond the docent coordinators' experience, affecting other roles within the art museum.

Theme 3: "A Labor of Emotional Love" (P3)

The unclear boundaries and changing equilibrium of the VGG/D-docent coordinator relationship underscore issues that impact participants' understanding of their professional role, from feeling devalued to unrecognized. While enjoying connections made with VGG/Ds, participant accounts included discussions of stressful circumstances. As Participant 3 noted, "I feel like overseeing them [VGG/Ds] is more of a labor of emotional love than it is an administrative or educational content side of things." The phrase "labor of emotional love" encapsulated the indefinite boundaries between work and emotion, expressively combining the two. Participant 3 performed their role from a place of passion, be it for art, teaching, or other motivations, but also touches upon exertion.

The range of duties described by participants held many similarities and descriptions of stressors, resilience, support systems, and growth points. Furthermore, the role is often defined by the individuals the docent coordinator directly supervises: the VGG/Ds. Yet, participants within this study described their role beyond the VGG/D, expressing their importance in terms of the visitor experience. As Participant 5 acknowledged:

I think my job is serving two audiences. In the best of times, they're to serve the docent, as well as to serve the public. ... I think my job is to try to serve the docent serving the public. Essentially the same thing. Which is making them an empathetic, inclusive group

that's going to be empathetic and inclusive to the public. And then, my job is also trying to fix that when those two things are no longer in concert. (P5)

Participant 2 also shared these ideas, offering:

The tour guides aren't my only focus. I treat it as if they are a volunteer group. They are extremely important. They do an important job, but they obviously aren't my only focus/ We really tried to make it clear that the visitor is the focus and that our primary goal is to serve them. Our needs have to take a backseat sometimes to that. So yeah, it's a complicated role. (P2)

This dual focus created a complexity of navigating the needs of both volunteers and visitors. When combined with previous descriptions of balancing the personal and the professional and the pressures of proving their worth and abilities, the docent coordinator's role is dynamic and complex. The position resides at the nexus where the visitor, the volunteer, the collection, and the museum mission meet.

3.1 “All The Plates I’m Spinning” (P3)

Participants in this study described an assortment of responsibilities related to their roles as docent coordinator:

Sometimes I’m over here like, “Do you not see the two dozen hats I’m wearing? All the plates I have spinning in the air?” I know that sounds kind of unprofessional. There are just like...man...the personality piece of this is really what is – can be – most time-consuming. (P3)

The idiom of plate spinning symbolized the multitude of accountabilities shared by participants, which included:

- Scheduling and facilitating training (all),

- Scheduling tours or overseeing tour schedules (all),
- Recruiting and evaluating VGG/Ds teaching (all),
- Teaching or guiding visitors in the galleries (all),
- Hosting VGG/D social or recognition of service events (P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7),
- Speaking or presenting outside their museums (P2, P6),
- Assisting with other museum programs (P1, P2),
- Mediating VGG/D issues with each other or with touring (P4, P5, P7),
- Managing other paid staff (P2, P3)

In their advice for future docent coordinators, Participant 7 described various responsibilities:

You're going to be talking to people all day, and you're going to be in front of people all day, and you're going to be answering questions all day, and dealing with different groups. Good news...bad news... And also you need to know about everything that has to do with audiences, how to approach audiences. You have to be able to do tours. You should know the theory, and know the practice, and to have been there. (P7)

Participant 7 specified multiple roles: customer service, teacher, theorist, practitioner, and mediator. Moreover, there is the implication that the docent coordinator must “walk the talk,” similar to sentiments previously shared by Grenier (2008, p. 19). Whether considering the bulleted list above or the description offered by Participant 7, the number of metaphorical plates whirled by docent coordinators is plentiful.

Participants 1, 2, 3, and 6 noted the need for workload acknowledgment from their institutions. Participant 6 offered a striking statement regarding the extent of the docent coordinator's role:

It is a real grind to be responsible for managing so many people. And there are very few people elsewhere in the museum that understand what that's like. Even a director of an entire museum, depending on how they run it, they may not really care to manage their staff that closely and develop relationships with the people that are underneath them. I don't really have a choice. (P6)

Considering the comparison offered by Participant 6, it is possible to envision an organizational chart with the museum director atop layers of staff, indirectly overseeing employees' work. Yet, the single docent coordinator is required to maintain numerous *direct* relationships. Most participants within this study supervised over fifty, some over one hundred, VGG/Ds. As described by participants, the docent coordinator is responsible for addressing the expectations, needs, and concerns raised by and about each VGG/D. The final insight shared above, the lack of choice, emphasized the docent coordinator's inability to detach or distance themselves from the uncomfortable or stressful encounters with VGG/Ds.

All participants described either support employees, team members, or staff in other departments who assisted in either tour scheduling or VGG/D scheduling. Three participants noted the loss of this staff, whether due to changes in funding or the impact of COVID-19 (P2, P3, P6). This shortfall of staff meant additional tasks for these participants without modifications to their existing workload. Participant 2 noted workload frustrations allayed when the institution funded part-time positions for scheduling VGG/Ds:

I was screaming, "I don't feel like I can do a good job with the resources that I have!"...Like, you cannot expect me to do all of this and be responsible for keeping up with booking groups with teachers. All of those logistics and details in the back and forth, it's just too much. I was trying to do it. And I was. I was also messing up so many

bookings that I found I was like, “I can’t do this anymore!” So, we hired another temporary part-time person. But, [THEY] will be leaving, unfortunately, after this exhibition. (P2)

This description's intensity began with a cry for help, feeling overwhelmed and powerless to meet their job's expectations. There are layers of anxiety and resignation at the end, indicated by a drop in force through a decrescendo in the participant's voice. The support staff hired to provide a perceived need was leaving. Or, Participant 2’s relief was vanishing.

Participant 6 also noted the workload was more than one person might manage and suggested a model whereby the coordination of VGG/Ds fell across several positions. “It would be better if the program didn’t revolve around one person, but if it revolved around a group of people” (P6). Participant 6 saw the docent coordinator role as central, with the more extensive program (museum mission, VGG/D recruitment, training, touring) turning around them. There is a desire to decentralize responsibilities. What also came to mind was the eye of a storm, with obligations and expectations swirling around the docent coordinator. Finally, Participant 3 offered a bookend to their initial description of plate spinning:

It’s just such a big job. We need them [VGG/Ds], in a sense, to support us, and we need to support them back. So, if we expect them to invest in learning theories and really putting them into practice taking risks and failing, that’s emotional investment. Right?

It’s a big job. Even if you only had a group of five or ten [VGG/Ds], that would be pretty big for one person. (P3)

3.2 Stress

The word stress is used to indicate points at which participants described anxiety, strain, or perceived pressures outside their control that impacted their ability to perform their role or

which affected them emotionally. Verbalizations included, “It’s really been tougher than I thought it would be” (P1), “They wear you down” (P2), “It wears you out (P6), “It’s tough” (P4), “I take it hard emotionally” (P5), “It’s too much for one person” (P6) and several variations on the word “frustrating,” “frustration,” or “frustrated” (P2, P3, P4, P6). Participants described VGG/Ds being overtly critical, whether taking “personal shots” (P6), “always pointing out all the little things that I’m doing wrong” (P3) or personal critiques (P1, P2). Moreover, descriptions of feeling exhausted (P6) and safeguarding time or personal lives (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6) peppered interviews. Participant 6, when discussing the various challenges, suggested a length of time most docent coordinators maintained their positions:

There are many times when I walk away from the office on a given day and think, “This is just too much for one person to do and be responsible for.” And my tenure is probably an outlier. I know a lot of people tend to stay in a job like this from one to three years because it wears you out. (P6)

Of note, this observation runs contrary to the demographics in this study, as three years is the minimum experience for participants. However, the suggestion implied a perception that merits further exploration beyond the scope of this study.

Participant 4 disclosed that, despite having considerable hands-on experience training VGG/Ds at their institution, when the role of docent coordinator opened, their initial reaction was emotional owing to prior knowledge of the position:

I sort of had this moment of like I probably would have been really well placed to say, "I want this job. I want to be the manager of the docents." But I had this moment of, just this sort of visceral reaction of, “I don't want to do that.” There are lots of great things

about working with docents. There are lots of challenges about working with docents. It takes a special kind of person to run a docent program. (P4)

This rejection is a release from predicted challenges ahead should they accept the role.

Participant 4 left their position as a docent coordinator, desiring to undertake a different trajectory within their museum. This refusal also indicated Participant 4 did not see themselves as the “special person” they described, a person who is willing to navigate the difficulties relayed in themes one and two.

When asked what the most challenging part of their job was, Participant 2 touched upon their perceived drawbacks of having their job performance determined by the quality of work produced by volunteers:

There’s so many things that are inherently problematic with volunteer programs. I think ensuring quality is very difficult, and you feel, in a sense, that you’re expected to produce quality programming for your job, and you’re expected to use volunteers to do it. People don’t seem to see the problem that is inherent in that. I think that is the most frustrating thing in that it plays out in so many different ways. You can only require but so much. I suppose we go back and forth. We want it to be a program that we can be proud of. (P2)

This inherent problem is the reliance on volunteers. These individuals are not employed by the institution based on professional credentials and may or may not be held accountable to the same standards as employed professionals. “You can only require so much” indicated limitations placed on the docent coordinator who envisions a level of excellence to their programs. At the end of the above quote, Participant 2 offered a simple goal: to be proud of their programs. The pride appeared to stem from a notion of quality. The implication is that for a program to be of high quality, there is less reliance on volunteers. Perhaps the concept of quality is also an

“inherent problem” if the inputs (the volunteers) limit the outcome (a positive visitor experience). Finally, another inherent problem is the underlying notion of job security related to job performance. In the case of the docent coordinator, job performance is tied to volunteer performance.

Descriptions also included stress produced when these two forces, the VGG/D and the visitor, were at odds. Participants described coping with VGG/D frustrations and negotiating VGG/D expectations regarding how museum audiences should treat them (the VGG/D).

Participant 3 recalled:

They get disgruntled with visitors. Either the tour is not going how they wanted to, or the visitor is standing too close, or the visitor...the chaperone's on their phone or they're being loud. They just get frustrated. (P3)

Participant 5 echoed these ideas:

But, on occasion, there have been docents who decided that if I'm talking with them about something they've done with the public that didn't go well, that my job should be protecting the docents as if there's some kind of oppositional relationship between them and the public. (P5)

It is not my intention to determine the rationale behind VGG/D frustrations with visitors. Instead, it is to consider the interpreted frustration from participants at having to negotiate these issues. It also caused me to pause and wonder: who advocates for the docent coordinator?

Returning to descriptions of stress, Participant 7 recalled awaiting a VGG/D to arrive for their scheduled tours and their corresponding anxiety. Participants 2 and 4 also discussed similar stressors, conducting impromptu tours in place of the volunteer. To avoid these issues, several participants (P2, P4, P5, P6, P7) discussed VGG/D agreements (described as either contracts,

requirements, standards, or bylaws) that outlined expectations for their programs. Participant 2 described these efforts as “protection.” Despite having similar written agreements to articulate expectations, Participant 4 noted, “They didn't necessarily adhere to everything that was in there, but at least we had it on paper...So if there was an issue, we had something to point back to.”

Finally, Participant 1 expressed stress within the position, sharing, “I was experiencing a lot of burnout and my attitude, a little bit, changed toward them.” Later, they shared:

It was a lot of work. And, I have to say that, as awful as COVID has been, having a few months off has been a lifesaver. Because I was looking for other jobs at that point. I've been at the museum for [OVER SEVEN] years. I was just burnt out. (P1)

The suggestion of burnout surfaced in a multitude of ways, from direct statements, as above, to sentiments of exasperation. Viewing the pandemic as a “lifesaver” imparted the depth of dissatisfaction Participant 1 felt. The use of the terms “burnout” and “burnt” indicated continual stressful experiences within their job, which led to feelings of either exhaustion, possibly feeling less productive, or unable to manage challenges with VGG/Ds effectively. Participants 3 also saw COVID-19 as a period of relief

I'd say up until we closed for the pandemic, I had a little bit more frustration than pleasure. If I had to weigh it, maybe I was feeling that frustration a little bit more. They take a lot of work and a lot of management. But, things kind of changed since we closed...Our relationships have changed. My relationship with all of them. It's improved. (P3)

Other effects of the COVID-19 pandemic included significant alterations to recruiting, training, and maintaining VGG/D programs. By the time of their interviews, participants 3, 5, and 7 utilized remote learning platforms to create social opportunities for VGG/Ds, in addition to

trainings. Noting the positive effects of the move to remote learning, Participant 7 shared VGG/Ds being “technologically savvy” and “embracing” distance learning:

I have 100+ people that are connecting every two weeks to Zoom trainings. So, for me, it is mind-blowing...They loved that part of the new process, to be able to have discussions and to share with different colleagues. Because, here, they tend to stay with their classes. If they were in the class of 2018, that class stays together. And sometimes they mingle. But, the thing is, when we do training in-person, they will seek people that they already knew. So, this new thing has brought a different dynamic. The technology is helping us to get them connected with other people that they didn't use to talk to or share ideas with. (P7)

This description of VGG/D categorization of their groups into graduating classes highlights other dynamics of relationships that participants encounter. If thinking of the VGG/D program as a system, it is interesting to consider the subsystems of docent classes and docent titles (e.g., “emeritus,” “master,” and “new docent”). The idea of the VGG/D program divided into graduating classes and statuses indicated yet another layer of relationship dynamics that the docent coordinator must negotiate. However, the indication that distance learning potentially assuaged docent class division and title-based hierarchies is a potential idea for future research.

The ambiguity of the future for VGG/D programs within art museums appeared to affect participants. Two participants mentioned potential changes to their VGG/D programs. Participant 4 indicated their institution, “pivot towards paying educators to do school tours,” while Participant 1 noted:

First of all, you know, we have an aged docent core...I don't know if we're going to go to a hybrid model with teaching educators and then the docents...Trying to figure out that

model before the fall when they would come back and train. **If** they're coming back. **If** we bring them back.⁶ (P1)

Museum closures due to the pandemic brought relief for some participants, while others shared their work continued via VGG/D remote learning. The uncertainty for VGG/D programs also suggested an unclear fate for the docent coordinator. Intertwined are notions of job security and the anxiety of unknown changes related to COVID-19 within museums.

3.3 Support: “I Was Heard” (P7)

Definitions of the word *support* ranged from “honoring” choices (P1), “having a team” (P2), “being there for” (P3), and “It's the feeling of I'm not in this alone” but also “I can help you.” (P4). Participant 5 suggested, “Having your emotional, intellectual needs met so that you can do the work that you're trying to do.” Participant 6 shared, “Knowing when to put someone else's needs over yourself. And in turn, it means when to take care of your own needs.” Lastly, Participant 7 noted, “I'm there to support that decision, and I have to look for the right tools to help that person get there.”

When asked what supports they relied upon, all participants identified supportive relationships either within their institutions or more extensive museum education networks. Responses included mentorship from supervisors (P1, P2, P3, P5, P7), support from their education team/colleagues (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6), and assistance through museum education networks (P1, P3, P6). Participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 discussed specific examples that illustrated relationships with their supervisors while also revealing aspects of overseeing a VGG/D program: supervisors served as mentors when “managing personalities” amongst VGG/Ds (P3)

⁶ Participant emphasized words in bold.

or jointly addressing VGG/D issues or misconduct (P4, P7), or helping facilitate training or interviews during recruitment periods (P2). Participant 6 shared supervisor advice and its impact:

I'm very fortunate that I have a really supportive boss and really supportive staff who see the value in what I do and encourage me...It is a constant struggle of wondering if I'm doing the right thing. I have to balance doing the right thing by the docents versus doing the right thing for the institution. My boss always reminds me, 'You are an employee of this museum. You're not an employee of the docents. You have to balance that.' I do take more solace in the fact that my job is fairly secure in that I won't necessarily get fired over a casual grumble from a docent. (P6)

Within the above statement are several aspects which require further exploration. The word "fortunate" denoted the appreciation felt for their circumstances, which is also tied to feelings of being valued. The encouragement offered by peers and leadership indicated a reassurance, a further valuing, of the participant's choices. Delving deeper into the ideas presented, Participant 6 recalled competing for attention between VGG/D needs and the institutional mission, reminiscent of the perceived struggle between VGG/D expectations and the docent coordinator's visitor-focus (discussed in Theme 3.2). This served as a reminder of the delicate equilibrium the docent coordinator constantly attends to while also indicating potentially conflicting expectations for the docent coordinator. Participant 6 shared the clarifying direction offered by their supervisor while again touching upon notions of job security. Was there fear or trepidation at some point, which brought the participant to seek clarification from their supervisor? If the supervisor stated the docent coordinator was *not* "an employee of the docents," perhaps there was a miscalculation on the part of the VGG/Ds or docent coordinator as to who was working for whom.

Regarding team support, many participants indicated having supportive colleagues within their museum was vital. This included discussing theories or new trends with peers (P1, P2, P5), “venting” (P4), “bouncing ideas” (P5), relying on colleagues to help with VGG/D trainings (P2, P3, P4, P6, P7), and “getting the pulse on what’s going on in the museum” (P6). Participant 7 indicated the openness and collegiality experienced with their supervisor was “refreshing.” Recalling an instance of feeling disrespected by another employee, Participant 7 brought the situation to their supervisor and observed:

I was heard by my supervisors and the people I work with. And I was heard, and they took action. And that, for me, is very important because sometimes you are in a workplace that they don't hear you. (P7)

Concerning professional networks as support systems, several participants mentioned specific organizations such as NAEA (P1, P2, P3, P6, P7), AAM (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6), as well the professional learning communities, MuseumNext (P6), Museum Education Roundtable (MER) (P3), regional professional museum education organizations (P5, P6), and the Museum-Ed listserv (P5, P6). Participants 3, 6, and 7 noted budgetary constraints that caused them to be far more selective of what they attended (P6), applying for scholarships or requesting their museum’s financial support (P3, P7). Discussing their perception of their professional networks, Participant 6 observed:

I really do try to carve as much time as I can talk to my colleagues. You know, no one else but a docent manager knows what it’s like. I try to talk to my colleagues at other museums that manage docents. Those of us that do, we have really good relationships with each other. We talked a lot about what's similar and what's different. We share ideas; we shared data at conferences. Certainly, it's a good opportunity for us to talk and huddle

up about what's happening, what's not happening. It's a combination of all those things and while also acknowledging that there's a lot outside my control that I just have to roll with. (P6)

The indication that no one else but a docent coordinator knows what it is like can be viewed in more than one light. Initially, this suggested relating to others based on shared experiences. When considering the idea further, there is also the indication of isolation. While they shared similar experiences or responsibilities with peers, the docent coordinator is the primary, sometimes the only, staff member working directly with VGG/Ds. Moreover, museum educators within the same department commonly focus on different audiences, whereas the docent coordinator concentrates on VGG/Ds interacting with all audiences. Finally, the sentiment revealed the importance of creating spaces and opportunities for docent coordinators to gather and address aspects of their role and develop support systems for navigating difficulties.

3.4 “I Yearn for Real Workshops” (P2)

All participants noted attendance at workshops or sessions hosted by art museums and art/museum education professional organizations (see Theme 3.3). Participants reported positive experiences in which they were able to apply information from sessions to their practice. Several participants noted a lack of opportunities when asked for sessions specifically related to their work with VGG/Ds (P2, P3, P6, P7). Participant 2 extended:

Honestly, no. I mean, no. I **yearn** for real workshops and things like that on this type of thing. But I feel like that's lacking, and...I mean, I don't mean to disrespect any of the presenters that I've been to. I'm sure I presented an equally unhelpful presentation at some point. But until coordinators can talk just to coordinators, it's not going to be a real, truthful conversation. Until we can talk about the realities, you know, the real things,

some of the real issues that we deal with, I don't think I'm going to get anything out of it. I don't mean to say that I can't learn anything from anybody because obviously, I'm always wanting to hear about different ideas. But...yeah. I feel like a lot of the ones I go to they just walk on eggshells. (P2)

Participants' desire for professional development related explicitly to docent coordinators repeated across several interviews. When asked what they would like to see provided, Participant 5 considered:

Well, I think one of the things I would be interested in hearing more about is how people sort of balance where their museum is with where the docent group is expected to be. I think that would be interesting. I honestly think some acknowledgement of the difficulty... and that equity and inclusion and conversations about race, whether we want them to be or not, are deeply political. (P5)

The word "acknowledgment" alluded to a desire for professional development that recognizes the docent coordinator position's complexities. Moreover, Participant 5 revealed another balance point for docent coordinators: the institution's aims with the capabilities of volunteers. They touched upon topics of race and inclusion, which occurred in all interviews and will be discussed in more detail within Theme 4.

Many participants indicated locating resources for professional growth outside of professional conferences. These included identifying related workshops from alternative sources (P1), reading about other disciplines or fields and relating (P5), sourcing teaching websites (P5, P6), utilizing social media sites (P4), and reading emailed newsletters from professional organizations (P3). However, these efforts to research and identify related resources, as Participant 3 shared, are "overwhelming."

More than a few participants mentioned the National Docent Symposium (NDS), a conference primarily designed for docents. While some attended the annual conference (P5, P6), others sent VGG/Ds but did not attend with them (P1, P4). Participant 5 viewed attending NDS conferences as helpful for networking with those docent coordinators in attendance and as an opportunity to build relationships with VGG/Ds within their museum. Conversely, Participant 6 offered:

It's pretty clear that the value in that conferences is that it's by docents for docents. And they invite staff, but they don't really make a space for staff. Once, when we had lunch where all the staff reps could get together and get into breakout groups and talk about things that matter to them, which was really helpful. And I wish that there were more opportunities like that. (P6)

While NDS is geared towards docents, the indication that docent coordinators found a way to gather and discuss matters relevant to their experiences outside the workshop structure revealed a potential opportunity for future conferences. However, making space for docent coordinators at any meeting that also invites VGG/Ds holds possible challenges, as encapsulated by Participant 2:

There were docents in the audience. I said that, right there, is going to impact how the material is presented. I mean, I learned some. Most of what everybody else was doing... But I felt like the reality of situations weren't discussed, like how much staff oversight is involved in what these tour guides or docents were doing. They don't talk about that kind of thing, which is a real... it's an issue. It's a reality. So, I find myself always eager to talk about those things, but never feeling safe to do so. (P2)

Participant 2 indicated that conferences that do not provide a protected space for unpacking difficult issues related to VGG/Ds do little to touch upon the role's actualities. These networks are communities of practice where interactions with fellow docent coordinators encourage reflection, sharing, understanding, and support. However, if participation hinges on censure owing to mixed attendance with volunteers, there is less opportunity to meaningfully and authentically explore the realities of participants. This is what Participant 2 called walking “on eggshells.”

The use of terms such as “yearn” (P2) and the implied eagerness to attend professional development tailored to docent coordinators indicated the aspiration to find or build a community of individuals whose shared experiences acknowledge the successes and difficulties of the role. There is also the hint of feeling disregarded. Recognizing that many conferences rely on membership to create sessions and workshops for peers, I would be remiss to suggest the professional association is at fault. However, as I pondered the absence of conference sessions devoted to discussing the merits and challenges of working with VGG/Ds, I returned to participant accounts of power dynamics. I then considered the word “safe” in a new light. It is not just safety from VGG/Ds partaking in these discussions; it is also security when revealing institutional troubles in a public setting.

Finally, during several interviews, including the pilot study, participants indicated an appreciation for a study regarding docent coordinators (P2, P6, P7). Furthermore, there was a stated interest in whether participant experience might be similar to others (P4). This interest, alongside expressed desires to gather with other docent coordinators in professional development, reminded me again and again of Participant 2’s use of the word “yearn.” This is a longing for acknowledgment and a desire to break from feelings of isolation. Supposing none but

a docent coordinator understands (P6), the value of dedicated gatherings for docent coordinators to nourish this professional craving holds numerous potentials. These include creating robust support systems, affirming professional identity, and addressing contemporary issues within their profession, such as those described in theme four.

Theme 4: Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI)

I chose to bring together discussions of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEAI) into one theme, which reflects terminology within the field of museums and found within participants' interviews. To clarify meanings, the American Alliance of Museums (2018) Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Working Group defined each term as:

- Diversity is all the ways that people are different and the same at the individual and group levels.
- Equity is the fair and just treatment of all members of a community.
- Accessibility is giving equitable access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience.
- Inclusion refers to the intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals fully participate in all aspects of organizational work, including decision-making processes. It also refers to the ways that diverse participants are valued as respected members of an organization and/or community. (p. 8)

While none of the questions focused on DEAI specifically, all participants discussed one or more of these topics during interviews. Most offered descriptions of efforts to address DEAI within VGG/D trainings, such as examining bias with VGG/Ds (P1), neurodiversity and museum visitation (P4), "DEI conversations" (P5), anti-racism workshops, "facilitating information about LGBTQ+ communities" (P6), and annual diversity and inclusion training (P7). Others, such as

Participant 7, discuss diversifying recruitment. While describing a lack of Black, Hispanic, and Asian VGG/Ds within their program, Participant 7 indicated a change in their self-awareness:

For me, it is very different. Although I'm aware of the differences in race and gender, I didn't have that in [HOMELAND]. I'm aware of the differences -- we had that -- but it was still very traditional in my [HOMELAND]... So, when I got here, that's one of the things. It didn't shock me, but people are very aware of all those differences. And now I'm aware that I am [ETHNICITY] in the middle of all the people. (P7)

Finally, interviews also included accounts of emotional struggles and contained descriptions of observing, experiencing, or fearing racism or insensitivity in the workplace (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5).

Significantly, most participants who self-selected for this study identified as White and used her/her pronouns, as does the researcher. Therefore, interpretations within this theme are voiced mainly by those who do not represent marginalized identities. However, this does not negate these ideas as findings. The frequency of DEAI-related insights imparted a shared experience within the docent coordinator experience among participants. Whether acknowledging their identity, the identities of VGG/Ds and visitors, efforts to create inclusive spaces, or concerns regarding discrimination and injustice within the museum, these insights are firmly a part of the docent coordinators' experience working with VGG/Ds in encyclopedic art museums.

4.1 "If I Let That Comment Go, Then the Museum Lets the Comment Go" (P5)

As the VGG/D is the public face of the art museum, their language and actions are the museum's embodiment. The statement, "If I let that comment go, then the museum lets the comment go" (P5) embodied the depth of responsibility for the docent coordinator to address DEAI with VGG/Ds, as shared by several participants within this study. While some participants

indicated collaborating with outside organizations (P1, P4, P6, P7), others discussed identifying and undertaking personal/professional development related to decolonizing museums (P5), altering insensitive language (P6), and anti-racist teaching (P6).

In many instances, participant examples highlighted a contrast between intention and impact. While the VGG/D intended inclusive or affirming instruction, the impact of these intentions exposed insensitivity and aspects of implicit bias (the subconscious stereotypes or attitudes that affect our actions). Of note, I will not thread analysis within the following participant accounts, as I believe the repetition of examples reflects the recurrence found across interviews. Participant 2 shared:

Like with speakers we've had for training, we've had some complaints from docents in the past about their accent. [ONE] Curator has a very strong accent, and people have complained to me -- suggested that I recommend the Rosetta Stone to her. (P2)

Replaying a conversation with a VGG/D, Participant 1 recalled:

"Yes, we'll have a curator come speak. But in this situation, perhaps we need to know about appropriate terms that we use with African art. We don't use the word "primitive" or "Africa is not a country." You know? It's just those sorts of things. Like, "Okay, what could they potentially slip up on, and what do we need ready to go?" (P1)

Participant 3 feared:

Either we will not be able to provide the guides with proper and adequate training on issues of sensitivity, or there may be a fallout, or there may be actual interactions that are harmful to people as a result. So, I don't know whether it's funding or it's time. It's getting all the guides on board... I still have a guide or two that doesn't understand why they need to have any air of sensitivity, being a 65-year-old White woman and talking

about the plight of African Americans. Not like talking about it, but like why she would need to exercise sensitivity. (P3)

Finally, from Participant 5:

Something that I'm actively working on is trying to address things when they come up in the moment. I feel more confident. We had a training with [SPEAKER], and she used a term about a certain racial group that I thought was outdated and kind of offensive... And I did [ADDRESS IT]. And that was good. Because it needed to be addressed, and it needed to be addressed publicly. Because, while I don't want to embarrass anyone, I also don't want anyone to think that whatever is said or done is okay. I feel like as their representative in the museum, most directly, if I let that comment go, then the museum let's the comment go. (P5)

These examples contain aspects of fear and apprehension as well as determination. The anxiety over VGG/Ds' "slip up" (P1) or "fallout" (P3) indicated the anticipation of hurtful or disturbing visitor experiences, potential conflict with VGG/Ds, as well as concern over institutional harm. There is also the emotional strain of connection to discriminatory incidents in the workplace, whether from VGG/D or staff. As Participant 5 shared, "I take it as my responsibility for what the visitors experience. I take it very hard emotionally when insensitivity happens." The onus of the visitor experience and the remorse when that experience is hurtful or traumatizing are considerable.

These examples also brought forward the idea of *guilt by association* within researcher notes. Participant 5 drew a direct line between docent coordinator and visitor, even though the VGG/D is positioned between the two. If the VGG/D is insensitive, it directly reflects on the docent coordinator and the art museum. Conversely, the art museum expects the docent

coordinator to ensure a volunteer represents the organization in an inclusive manner. As Participant 5 concluded, “The docents...are the face of the museum... So, I take my job really seriously in terms of how much they can positively or negatively affect how people perceive the institution broadly and the art more specifically.”

4.2 The Weight of Responsibilities

All participants within the study discussed their efforts to address topics related to DEAI, whether incorporating in VGG/D trainings, attending professional development, or via institutional workshops. Several participants noted collaboration with peers or other organizations in which they invited speakers to VGG/Ds training to specifically address DEAI topics (P1, P4, P6, P7). Participants 3 and 7 also cited partnerships with organizations that hosted DEAI workshops for staff, which may serve as potential models for future VGG/D training. These efforts indicated the importance participants placed on these responsibilities and the expectations placed on volunteers to carry out inclusive practices. In looking back on prior efforts, Participant 4 offered:

In the last couple of years, we've been doing a lot of work with our docents around those conversations. But I think one of the challenges I've often noticed with docents mainly manifests in training. If they realize there's an area where they feel ill-equipped, they want to do better. But the way that they see it going is like, “Just tell me what to do,” like, “Tell me what I need to do, and I'll do it.” And that's not really how you get the sort of work around equity, and race, and all those things. That has to come more from a place, like starting from a point of personal work. (P4)

This immediate relevance or desire for direct application aligns with assumptions of adult learning. Moreover, the indication of self-work signified that both the docent coordinator and

VGG/Ds are not simply engaging in professional development for the sake of the institution but engaging in what Participant 4 observed as “personal work.” The magnitude of the work becomes significant as we consider the potential of change in one system (viewed as the individual or the organization) affecting another system, then changing another, and so on. Finally, there is the development of the personal self to develop the professional self. Yet, Participant 5 questioned:

Sometimes I wish that there was more of an acknowledgment that creating an equitable, inclusive space in the museum is not the job of the docents, and by proxy me. Because it is a lot of pressure. While I acknowledge that they’re a big part of the story, I think that things like what exhibitions we hold, our programming, how the curators speak about the collection when they’re speaking to the public, and just the overall working environment and the priorities set are just as important. I’m hoping that will change as the staff and board do more training in this vein in the coming year. But I have sometimes felt like the docents, who are mostly an older group of volunteers, are expected to somehow be way ahead of the pack in terms of how sensitive they are -- and they’re capable, certainly, and most of them are willing. But, I feel like that’s an imbalance in responsibility. (P5)

Participant 5 advocated for the VGG/D and appealed for consideration of the weight placed upon volunteers. Revealed is the disparity of requiring more from the volunteer than from the institution. The term “pressure” can be interpreted as outside influences pressing on the docent coordinator to act through volunteers in the service of a more inclusive and equitable art museum. There is also pressure from VGG/Ds. They look to the docent coordinator to give guidance, which requires the docent coordinator to have already, or be in the process of, unpacking *their* identity, privilege, implicit bias, history, and more. Finally, the internal pressure

one experiences in justice-oriented work can be tremendous. Without the institution's support to validate this work, the personal self is at odds with the professional self.

Several participants indicated that VGG/D program were comprised of mostly White women, which recalled findings from Newsom and Silver (1978). The group is then unrepresentative of society. Participants 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 all indicated recruitment efforts to address this disparity, but indicated that diversifying their program was also reliant upon the schedules of those who chose to volunteer. Participant 7 indicated that efforts to diversify their VGG/D program was largely encouraged by museum leadership as well as VGG/Ds, indicating the importance of support for these endeavors at all levels of the museum. Conversely, as Participant 5 observed:

There's a lot of focus on how frontline staff can incorporate ideas about equity and inclusion-- though without a lot of specific, explicit, vocal support from the institution.

And I felt really uncomfortable being in a place where I did not want to get ahead of what the museum was willing to commit to, publicly, with the docents. (P5)

The above account expressed the docent coordinator's difficulty progressing inclusive policies that preceded institutional policy and procedures. Docent coordinators are well-positioned to affect change that promotes respectful and affirming experiences for visitors. However, if museum leadership is slow to address these issues on the larger institutional level, the implication is a tenuous, unsupported position for the docent coordinator. As Participant 6 offered:

I think this was the year where a lot of museums realize status quo is not going to work anymore. And for any museum professional who's not familiar, in any sense, with critical

race theory, now is the time to kind of look at that and think, “What is this about, and how does this change the way that I do my job as a museum professional?” (P6)

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Part of real understanding, however, is that we regain the concepts of a historical past in such a way that they also include our own comprehension of them. Above I called this "the fusion of horizon." (Gadamer, 2004, p. 367)

This study's central axis revolves: *How do art museum docent coordinators perceive their preparation and support for teaching and managing volunteer gallery guides/docents?* Four research questions delved into art museum docent coordinators' perceptions: 1) descriptions of preparation, 2) observations of managing VGG/Ds, 3) theories ascribed, and 4) characterizations of support for their role. The use of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) within this study guided the examination of participant understandings that led to identifying four superordinate themes and fourteen subordinate themes (see Table 3). Interpretation of these understandings is supported by the seven participants' rich descriptions of their lived experiences as docent coordinators working directly with art museum VGG/Ds.

It is vital to remind the reader that this study exists within time and space, tied to the researcher who designed the study and the individuals who participated in it. It is one way to explore docent coordinators' experiences, sharing the stories of seven individuals who have deep and authentic engagement directly with the phenomena. To that end, this study provides a lens by which others may consider their circumstances and experiences. Findings and analysis of data drive the discussions, implications, and recommendations presented here. Within this chapter, I explore key findings within Chapter 4 alongside existing literature reviewed in Chapter 2. As

there is limited research that examines the role of those who teach and manage VGG/Ds in art museums, this study seeks to fill this space with stories and understandings gathered from seven art museum docent coordinators' lived experiences.

Summary of Key Findings

The participant experiences within this study suggest a complex lifeworld with multiple stakeholder expectations impacting seven docent coordinators' understandings of their job performance, their responsibilities, and their perceived value. Participants described bridging the pedagogical and the art historical, theory and practice, visitor needs and VGG/Ds needs, the personal and the professional. While all participants employed volunteer management skills, most indicated a lack of exposure to these concepts before entering their profession. Moreover, the data revealed varying degrees of stress and frustration stemming from workload, challenging relationship dynamics with (VGG/Ds), as well as a lack of recognition for participant knowledge and contributions. Discussions of fear over insensitive interactions between VGG/Ds and visitors surfaced, despite participants' efforts to address topics of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusivity (DEAI) within VGG/D preparation.

Despite encountering these difficulties within their role as docent coordinators, participants' resilience revealed coping mechanisms and a range of supportive networks for docent coordinators, from peers to professional organizations. Several participants noted a desire for professional development opportunities designed explicitly for docent coordinators, suggesting that these offerings focus on fostering safe spaces while discussing difficulties with VGG/Ds. Significantly, findings indicate a need for professional development opportunities focused on DEAI to support docent coordinators' self-work and their endeavors to prepare VGG/Ds. These offerings should not focus on theory alone but help docent coordinators to shift

theory into practice. Moreover, these insights revealed a dilemma faced by participants, whose jobs are to ensure inclusive art museum spaces for visitors while also relying on volunteers to carry out these ideas.

Discussion and Recommendations

The following discussion, implications, and recommendations focus on topics related to preparation and support for docent coordinators based on analysis of the findings. Within, participants' experiences inform a model for understanding docent coordinator preparation and domains of knowledge. Following, a consideration for the complexity of relationships and balance points for the docent coordinator leads to a discussion of professional development and models related to DEAI and the preparation of VGG/Ds. Suggestions for future research are included when possible, as the collection of more stories from the field is vital for understanding the present and envisioning the future.

“No One Else But A Docent Manager Knows What It’s Like” (P6)

When I began this research journey, it was with a superficial understanding of museum education history. The review of literature developed my awareness while also highlighting the recurrence of themes within this history. Discussions of who the museum educator was and how to prepare them began near the beginning of the last century and included debates over content versus pedagogical knowledge as the soundest theoretical underpinning for museum education (Miner et al., 1919), as well as the mission of museums and the teaching within (Dana, 1917; Gilman, 1918). Professionalization grew in response to critiques of art museum education lacking a shared understanding of its theoretical foundation, as well as the nature of learning in the museum (American Association of Museums, 1965; Dobbs & Eisner, 1987; Falk & Dierking, 1992; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999; Newsom & Silver, 1978; Villeneuve, 2007). These discussions

continued into contemporary studies, with a range of quantitative and qualitative efforts designed to capture the experiences of museum educators, their roles, theories-in-use, and professional growth (Chen Cooper, 2007; Grenier, 2005a; Lemelin, 2003; Prottas, 2019; Reid, 2012; Schmitt, 2014; Stafne, 2012; Teeple, 2019). Yet, it was not until Participant 6 offered, “No one else but a docent manager knows” that I understood the complexity of this journey.

Though research exists regarding museum educator preparation, there is less regarding the preparation of the docent coordinator. The docent coordinator organizes, teaches, and evaluates the “public face” of the museum (DePrizio, 2016, p. 5). The work of the docent coordinator is significant and, perhaps, the least understood. They can no longer exist as a variable within studies of VGG/D teaching or evaluation or expertise. They are an entire system to be explored, a significant subsystem that can affect the larger system of the museum. “The field of museum education will benefit from more studies conducted ‘from the inside,’ that is from the perspective of a practitioner who is part of a social structure” (Lemelin, 2003, p. 79). “Sharing their rich narrative experiences with fellow museum educators and colleagues outside of the profession will do wonders to develop their collective voice - making it more articulate and more audible” (Reid, 2013, p. 236).

Future research that explores commonalities and differences within other docent coordinator experiences will continue to refine and expand the field’s understanding of the preparation, demands, and supports for this role. Furthermore, research that examines the various *types* of museum educators is necessary (e.g., school and teacher educators, family and intergenerational programs educators, adult learning educators, and docent coordinators). Moreover, the impact of COVID-19 on all museum educators requires additional study. Regarding the docent coordinator, how has their role changed since the shift to virtual learning

for VGG/Ds and virtual visitors? What will these changes look like in one year or several years from now? What have they learned from their experiences that can be extrapolated to cultivate ideas for other museum educators?

What They Bring to the Table

The first research question was: *how do art museum docent coordinators describe their preparation for educating volunteer gallery guides/docents?* Owing to the literature review conducted before undertaking this study, I was mindful of debates regarding art historical or pedagogical knowledge as the theoretical underpinning of museum education over the decades, beginning with Miner et al. (1919), then Peters (1934), Low (1948), Nicholson (1962), and Bay (1973). By the Eighties, Dobbs and Eisner (1987) noted a continued emphasis on art history as the foundation of museum education. They cautioned that the centering of art history held a “double disadvantage” for museum educators, wherein a desire to be viewed on-level with curators as “scholars of art” reinforced art history training, but then rendered the museum educator’s “special contributions as educators” dubious (p. 81). Williams (1994), Chen Cooper (2007), Stafne (2012), and Schmitt (2014), within their studies, reported a continuance of art history degrees amongst museum educators. However, those studies, conducted within the twenty-first century, also reported increasing numbers of participants with education degrees. Participants within this study described similar pathways as they moved into their role as docent coordinators. In most cases, participants attempted to grow their knowledge in the opposite subject (art history majors desired more teaching and learning theory, education majors wanted further art historical knowledge).

Participants within this study also discussed a lack of preparation related to volunteer management. “As a docent coordinator, you're an HR manager. And to know that early on, I

think it's helpful -- that people management is so much a part of this job" (P5). While one participant identified experiences within the customer service, several participants described extending into other fields, such as human resources, for help or reaching out to professional networks to find support. Three decades prior, Rapone (1986), Pond (1988), and Brigham et al. (1988) noted a need for exposure to aspects of management. Chen Cooper (2007) offered insight into the responsibilities associated with museum educators, including organizational skills, staff management, trainings, communication, and evaluation, yet these descriptions applied to all museum educators and gathered from job descriptions. This begs the question of who drafted these descriptions and whether these were espoused or actual responsibilities. Without a clear understanding of what docent coordinators are tasked to do, how these responsibilities divide the docent coordinator's time, and the required skills to carry out these tasks, how is it possible to prepare or support this role?

Within this study, participants described the pressures of "earning their keep" while simultaneously learning on the job, via "trial and error," or from predecessor files and the informal support of peers. These experiences potentially contributed to feeling unprepared for their role as docent coordinator. While participants touched upon experiential learning (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 2015) within VGG/D education, participants negatively characterized these same ideas when sharing their experiences learning on the job. This suggests that imparting theories and models to pre-service museum educators should be both theoretical and practical, with space for practicing ideas (e.g., simulations, practice tours, job shadows). Moreover, pre-service museum educators should examine how to apply these theories and models to teaching *others* to teach in the museum (e.g., VGG/Ds, paid gallery educators, contract educators, teaching artists).

While proving their worth and learning on the job, many participants perceived a hierarchy between curators (art history) and educators (pedagogy) from VGG/Ds. Believing their abilities, studies, and prior experience were significant assets to VGG/Ds and the larger institution -- what they bring to the table -- many participants perceived they were viewed as lesser in status, or as merely administrators, even someone who “finger painted” (P3). Within these accounts is a desire for recognition, and recall Lemelin (2003), who noted a lack of recognition for museum educators owing to ill-defined or nebulous preparation that weakened their credibility.

Implication: M-PCK Model. Shulman (1987) examined teachers’ knowledge and theorized multifaceted categories of understanding (see Table 1). Later research developed the work of Shulman, with considerable focus on merging content and pedagogical knowledge into pedagogical content knowledge (e.g., Ball et al., 2008; Carlsen, 1999; Depaepe et al., 2013; Gess-Newsome, 1999). However, it is significant to recognize that museums, while having educational offerings or missions, are not schools. The art museum encompasses various educational activities designed to engage learners of varying ages, experiences, and expectations. It has a curriculum, as Castle (2001) offered, “in the broadest sense of the word” (p. 9). Moreover, Vallance (2003) observed:

Art museums are special and rarefied milieus of schooling. They provide solace and respite, but they can also intimidate in their aura of quiet expertise. Working in this milieu requires that curriculum planners take into account the special messages that the building and its amenities may be conveying to visitors, more so than schools must do. Because the milieu itself conveys such strong messages about the content and visitors'

expected reaction to it, "teaching" is a far less differentiated function in museums than it is in schools. (p. 14)

Crucially, museums are not-for-profit institutions that rely upon grants, donors, and underwriters, whose funds help realize objects' acquisition and display. Examples of ethical dilemmas include partnering with companies that market within educational and exhibition spaces, displaying looted art owned by museum collectors, associations with companies or people connected to unethical practices, and more (e.g., Dunning, 2020; Klein, 2000). It is then necessary to consider the hidden curriculum, or the unofficial or unintended lessons, within the art museum that impart values and principles (Karp & Wilson, 1996).

Exploring the significance of context in relation to content and pedagogical knowledge, Gess-Newsome (1999) examined two models of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK): the Integrative Model and the Transformative Model. "The Integrative Model considers PCK as the intersection between the educational, disciplinary and contextual knowledge. The Transformative Model puts PCK as a result of a transformation of pedagogical knowledge, subject matter knowledge and context knowledge" (Fernandez, 2014, p. 93). Gess-Newsome (1999) described the Integrative Model as a mixture and cautioned against the three domains' separation or isolation. Looking to the Integrative Model of Gess-Newsome (1999), it is possible to visualize a model for preparing art museum docent coordinators that overlaps three domains of knowledge: content (art), pedagogy, context (the museum).

Of note, I do not claim to originate the idea, as I came across a similar suggestion for combining art, education, and museum knowledge in the preparation of art museum educators. The combination was discussed within a 2006 NAEA presentation titled, "Graduate Study in Museum Education: Programs, Content, and Competencies" (Villeneuve, 2007, p. 71). However,

locating a model remained elusive until I chanced upon a book published three decades ago. Caston (1989) presented three components as a philosophical framework supporting *museum education programs*: 1) museum, 2) education, and 3) subject area. The repetition of the same three categories by Villeneuve (2007) and Caston (1989) strongly emphasized the significance of the combination and further lent credibility to a proposed model.

To develop the model, I looked for other examples from the field. Tran and King (2007) drew upon Shulman (1987), offering six components for museum educators' knowledge framework: "context, choice and motivation, objects, content, theories of learning, and talk" (p. 138). The researchers offered that their list was incomplete, sharing additional potential components such as management and museum logistics. However, I argue that despite the effort to distinguish between classrooms and museums, the researchers created elements that appeared to be the same as Shulman's (1987) original ideas. Nevertheless, a model of museum educators' domains of knowledge built upon the framework of Shulman's categories, like Tran and King (2007), held potential. Of note, the authors did not delve further into how management integrated into their framework.

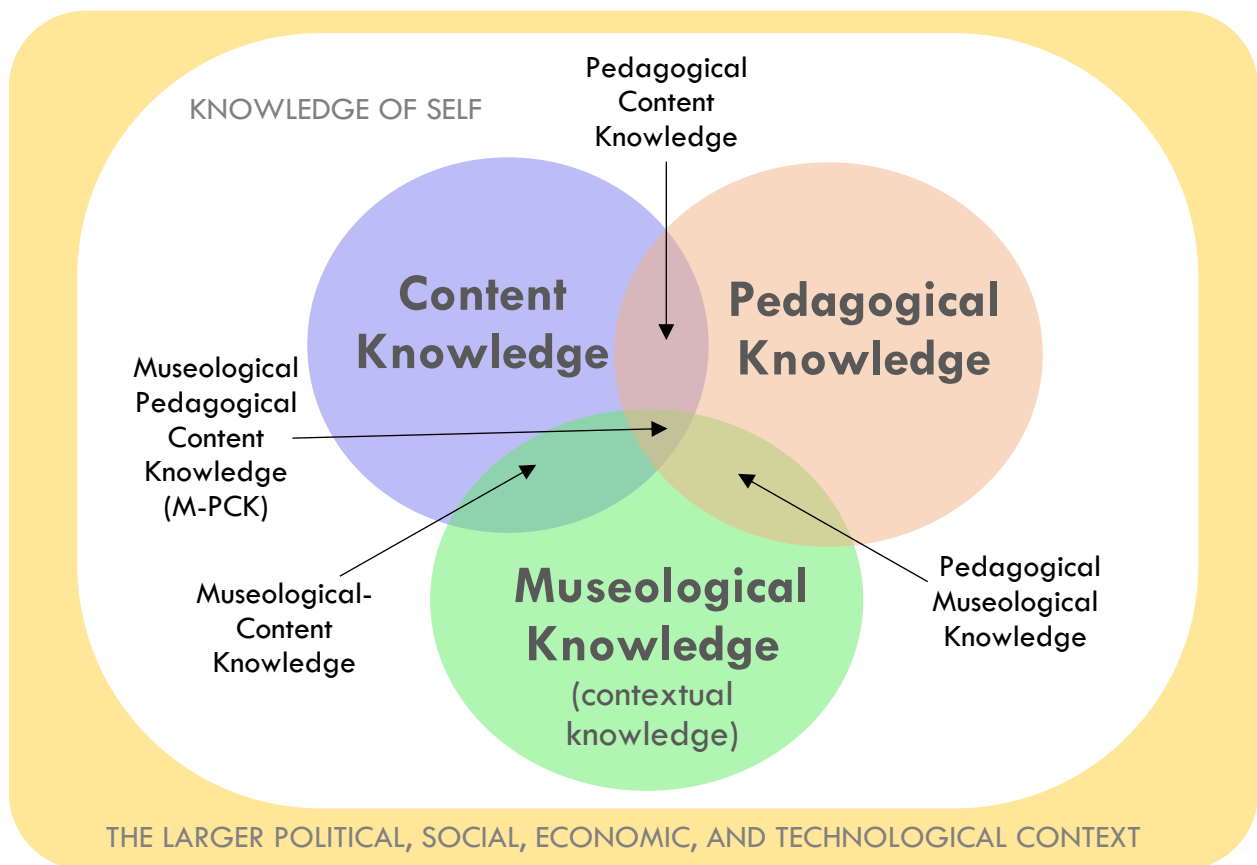
Therefore, considering the insights shared by participants, I am compelled to offer the following model to visualize their domains of knowledge, which I titled the "Museological, Pedagogical, Content Knowledge Model," or M-PCK (see Figure 2). It acknowledges the model once imparted by Caston (1989) for developing museum programs, the suggestion found in Villeneuve (2007), and the efforts of Tran and King (2007). It is also fortified by Shulman (1987) and models that evolved from Shulman's work, such as the technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPCK or TPACK) first introduced in 2005 (Herring et al., 2016). The TPACK model visualized teachers' domains of knowledge and the integration of technology.

Centered is technological pedagogical content knowledge, or the fusion of all understandings regarding teaching with technology.

Transferring these ideas to the M-PCK model, the visual illustrates the museum educator’s domains of knowledge, with the center representing the entire understanding of the museum educator. Like the model offered by Caston (1989), the M-PCK model remains somewhat general and encompasses the many types of museums and the variations in content knowledge (based on the museum's collection). Later, in Figure 3, I offer how the M-PCK can be adapted to fit specific roles within varying types of museums.

Figure 2

M-PCK Model (Museological, Pedagogical, Content Knowledge Model)



The following bulleted list explains each domain represented as the larger circles within the model:

- Pedagogical knowledge is the general understanding of teaching and learning theories and models (Shulman, 1987). The term *pedagogical* enfolds knowledge of adult learning (andragogy).
- Content knowledge for the art museum educator is the awareness of concepts such as, but not limited to, artistic styles, periods, artmaking techniques and media, methods of interpreting works of art.
- Contextual knowledge, re-termed as *museological knowledge*, is the awareness of museology. These understandings include, but are not limited to, departmental functions, knowledge of museum policies, strategic plans, logistical protocols, and ethical practices (Desvallées & Mairesse, 2010). It is also institutional knowledge culled from exhibition histories, published literature, visitor studies, files, staff stories, and community memory.

This is perhaps where the Caston (1989) model and the M-PCK model derived from this study diverge. Caston viewed the framework as a philosophical foundation for developing a non-standardized museum curriculum that supported museum program creation, realization, and evaluation. I posit these three elements move beyond philosophies of program development towards the domains of knowledge required for museum educators. Caston also asserted that the museum component's primary element was the objects within the museum's collection, followed by an awareness of the museum's purpose and function. However, I theorize that the historical emphasis on objects has brought about the contemporary criticism of museums as inaccessible, irrelevant, and perpetrators of hegemonic narratives. Instead, I advance that it is knowledge of

visitors, museum ethics, and the histories of museums that are essential when exploring teaching and learning within the setting of museums (Schwab, 1973). The shift from object-focused to audience focus (Weil, 1999) has meant museums are more responsive to the needs of their visitors, recognizing that without these visitors, they return to the gloomy temples described by Dana (1917). Caston (1989) shared that helping visitors understand the museum's function meant that "museums are developing an audience that is cognizant of and sensitive to the role of museums in this society and in their lives" (p. 99). However, I read this as what the museum brings to the people, rather than acknowledging what communities bring to the museum. Museums need to be cognizant of *their* role within society and the lived experiences of *their* community. Without this understanding, there is no admission of the potential harm caused by museums and their educational offerings, where there is the potential for misrepresentation of identities and micro/macroaggressions towards staff and visitors.

Finally, Caston (1989) began their model in 1978, well before the explorations undertaken by Shulman (1987) and the subsequent researchers exploring the overlapping of Shulman's classifications of teacher knowledge. As such, Caston focused primarily on the three main components (museums, education, and subject area) for program development and evaluation. While there is some discussion of the overlaps between these components, there remained the opportunity to delve further into the blending of these areas. Within the M-PCK model, the fusion of domains are emphasized as these are the points where the museum educator unites, analyzes, and reflects upon their awareness to create meaningful and relevant experiences in museums.

Where pedagogical and content knowledge combines, Shulman (1987) described this as *pedagogical content knowledge* (PCK). Here, the teacher comprehends teaching and learning strategies for concepts related to a specific subject area, as it is the:

Special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding...It represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction. (p. 8)

For the art museum educator, PCK is the awareness of theories and strategies for teaching and learning about art and art history. Delving further, the PCK for the docent coordinator is two-fold: the understanding described above *and* the comprehension of theories and strategies for teaching VGG/Ds to teach within the art museum.

This moves towards the third research question within this study: *what theories do art museum docent coordinators ascribe to in their work with VGG/Ds?* The word theory was primarily described by participants to support their choices and to validate training methods. These theories also demonstrated awareness of approaches for teaching visitors and VGG/Ds. Examples of these theories, as described by participants in this study, include dialogical looking, Visual Thinking Strategies, See-Think-Wonder, and anti-racist teaching. While only one participant described applying andragogy to VGG/D training, docent coordinators may incorporate assumptions without an awareness of the larger concept. It is also relevant to consider that the theories discussed are potentially espoused theories rather than theories-in-use, as first described by Argyris and Schön (1974) and later by Grenier (2005a). Conversely, it is possible that participants incorporated approaches to teaching and learning without awareness,

and therefore could not report on it. Finally, further discussion of theory occurred as participants shared descriptions of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion training for VGG/Ds, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

Several participants indicated their role as docent coordinator was a “translator,” or helping to “bridge the gap” between theory and practice, moving curatorial content into pedagogical praxis. While I initially viewed these efforts as a conduit of information rather than an originator, I posit that bridge-building is the active embodiment of PCK. When seen in this regard, the art museum docent coordinator unites (bridges) the pedagogical with the content (art history) using different understandings of PCK to guide and support VGG/Ds as they learn to facilitate discussions around works of art in the art museum. Therefore, the docent coordinator simultaneously holds within their understandings how to teach *visitors* within the art museum and how to teach *VGG/Ds to teach* in the art museum.

Next, the fusion of content knowledge and museological knowledge is termed *museological content knowledge*. This is the understanding of the museum’s specific subject area (e.g., art, science, zoology, botany, architecture, military, historical period) and the awareness of museum systems related to this subject area. It is awareness of specific practices and policies regarding the care, display, interpretation, and security of the museum’s specialized collection. Within the art museum, this is the historical and ethical understanding of display, how the collection is shared, and methods of interpretation within the type of museum (e.g., encyclopedic, history, zoo, botanical). Within the art museum, it enfolds how departments contribute to the larger art museum mission, from general comprehension of registration and preservation of artworks to programming, label writing, and donor cultivation. While these do not fall within the docent coordinator's purview, it *is* within the larger learning milieu.

Awareness of this overlap and how it impacts the learner (the visitor, the VGG/D) is essential for understanding how learning occurs within the institution around the subject area.

Finally, the overlay of museological knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, or *pedagogical museological knowledge*, is the point at which the museum educator holds awareness of teaching within the museum's context. Examples include pondering useable teaching space within the gallery that will allow for both a group of learners to hear and see while also considering the safety of the collection and visitor wellbeing (e.g., maintaining a three-foot lane of traffic for fire emergencies or the use of mobility aids). Another example is the museum educator's role in advocating for the range of museum visitors as staff develops exhibition content. This may take the form of addressing readability, accessibility, voice, and message.

Moreover, pedagogical museological knowledge is the understanding of learning within the workplace, wherein staff envisions transformation and opportunities to challenge the status quo. Here, the docent coordinator accesses their awareness of the art museum's individual and collective efforts to sustain or change their perceived reality, recognizing that change can occur through personal growth and shared vision (Senge, 1990). Taylor and Kegan (2017) emphasized the importance of organizational learning in museums regarding inclusivity, utilizing transformational learning theory (Mezirow, 1978) to support change in museums. However, these ideas remain elusive if not included in the preparation of docent coordinators. Without knowledge of espoused versus theories-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1974), docent coordinators may well repeat the situations described by Grenier (2008), training VGG/Ds in a manner inconsistent with how they wish VGG/Ds to teach. It is not merely teaching these theories to

current and future docent coordinators but placing them within the museum's context and exploring how docent coordinators can empower change.

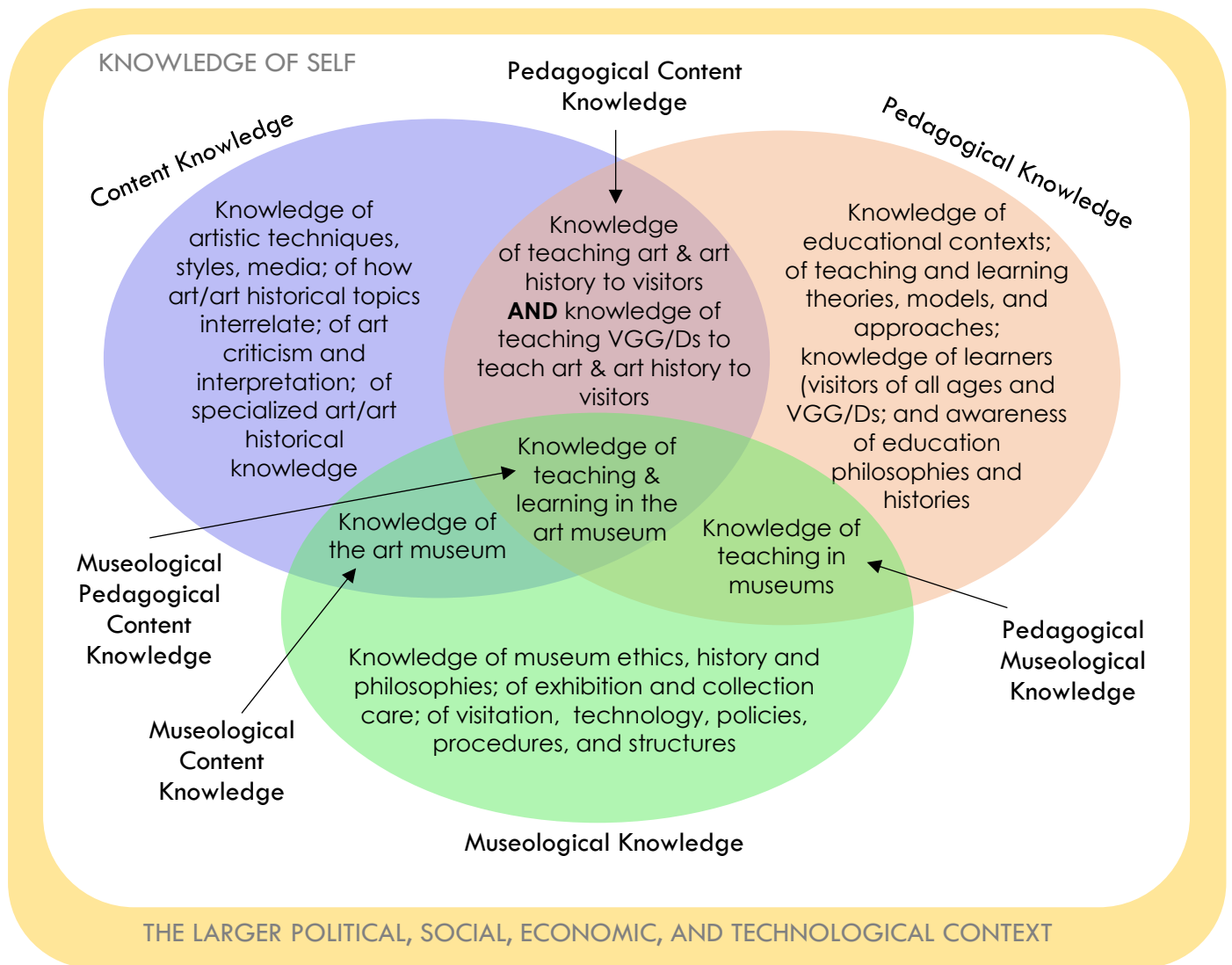
The M-PCK Model is situation-specific, as each institution, its resources, collection, and staffing are different. Moreover, the experiences and understandings of docent coordinators vary. Within this study, the M-PCK model visualizes participant perceptions of being a docent coordinator in relation to extant literature. Just as Falk and Dierking (2012) offered for their Contextual Model of Learning, the same could be said of the M-PCK Model:

Even this description does not quite capture the true dynamism of the process, since even the layers themselves, once laid down, are not static or necessarily even permanent. All the layers, including and particularly those laid down earliest, interact and directly influence the shape and form of future layers; the individual both shapes and is shaped by [their] environment. (p. 29)

I also found visuals of mathematic pedagogical content knowledge helpful in visualizing the docent coordinator experience, specifically those offered by Ball et al. (2008) and further discussed in Depaepe et al. (2013). These examples helped to conceptualize how within classroom education, researchers worked to tease apart their understandings of teacher knowledge related to a content area (e.g., math, science, language arts). Within museum education, it is also possible to mirror this approach according to the type of audience. Many art museums employ museum educators who supervise specific programs for particular audiences (e.g., schools, intergenerational groups, adults, docents). It is possible to explore a model related to the different museum educator roles in relation to their audience. To illustrate these ideas, I present Figure 3.

Figure 3

M-PCK Model and the Docent Coordinator



Note: Adapted from Ball, D. L., Thames, M. H., & Phelps, G. (2008). Content knowledge for teaching: What makes it special? *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(5), p. 403.

Finally, in thinking about the VGG/D perspective, I advance the use of the M-PCK model with VGG/Ds to make visible their domains of knowledge as art museum educators. The model helps to visualize a union rather than a hierarchy of art historical knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Research into the use of the model with both docent coordinators *and* VGG/Ds holds

additional opportunities for reinforcing, enhancing, or altering the model, further aiding in the field's understandings of teaching and learning in the art museum.

The Difficult Balancing Act

Discussions of relationship dynamics related to the second research question within this study: *what are the perceptions of art museum docent coordinators regarding the management of VGG/Ds?* Participants described encounters with VGG/Ds that ranged from pride in developing VGG/D growth as teachers to descriptions of stressful encounters leading to burnout. Discussions of boundaries suggested many participants desired limitations to these workplace relationships. Stories of the docent coordinator-VGG/D relationships also revealed stress points related to notions of power, entitlement, age, and recognition. In looking at participant descriptions, it is possible to consider how relationships might affect the participants, their workplace environment, their professional identity, and the larger institution.

Relationship Descriptor: Symbiotic. Participant 3 discussed the relationship between the docent coordinator and VGG/D as “symbiotic.” Symbiosis, defined by Merriam-Webster (n.d.), is “1) the living together in more or less intimate association or close union of two dissimilar organisms, and 2) a cooperative relationship (as between two persons or groups)” (para. 1). It is possible to delve further into the metaphor used by Participant 3 to describe their interactions, or relationships, with VGG/Ds. Using the working definitions provided within biology (*Symbiosis*, 2019), *mutualism* is when both entities jointly benefit from their interactions. *Commensalism* is when one entity benefits while neither helping nor harming the other entity. Finally, within a *parasitic* relationship, one entity benefits while harming the other. Unlike a predator-prey relationship, within the parasitic relationship, the host is kept alive to continue benefiting the parasite.

The concept of symbiosis illustrates a number of layers to the museum-VGG/D relationships. Several participants described aspects of a mutualistic relationship with VGG/Ds; wherein there is an exchange of knowledge that benefits both parties: the teacher-learner relationship. Moreover, the volunteer provides time and energy that the museum benefits from in terms of a return on investment: paid staff time to prepare VGG/Ds is recouped when the unpaid volunteer facilitates a tour for a (potentially paying) visitor. Finally, the VGG/D benefits through personal fulfillment, social gain, civic engagement, lifelong learning, or other motivational factors.

Pausing for a brief thought experiment, what happens if the symbiotic relationship is not mutualistic? There is the potential for a mutually destructive relationship, or competition, in which two organisms contend for the same resources and, ultimately, both suffer. Replacing these terms, it is possible to imagine the docent coordinator and VGG/Ds contending for control of the VGG/D program. In doing so, both endure negative experiences, which may convey to visitors. Participants within this study shared accounts of VGG/D resistance to docent coordinator changes and VGG/D frustrations with changes in their longstanding self-governance. These recollections are reminiscent of Kai-Kee (2011), who observed:

Many older, more experienced docents resisted the new approaches to gallery teaching. They were accustomed to traditional notions of education and had experienced prior museum education regimes, under which they had been instructed to transmit to the public the authoritative wisdom of curators. They had indeed often volunteered precisely in order to gain privileged access to the curator's expert knowledge...Furthermore, museum educators themselves were not unanimous in endorsing the reforms and

improvements necessary in gallery education, and many longtime docents were tossed back and forth by changing docent coordinators with different ideas. (p. 47)

It is possible to envision how the demise of VGG/D authority contributed to relationship strain that often sees the VGG/D challenging the docent coordinator, as described by participants within this study. These points of resistance surfaced around paradigm changes. To shift the relationships towards mutualism, it becomes necessary to consider the elements within the system and the dynamics of their connections to contemplate who benefits, how, and how these experiences impact the larger system (Jung & Love, 2017). Doing shifts to what Participant 4 described as “middle ground.” Moreover, exposure to assumptions of adult learning (Knowles, 1973; Merriam et al., 2007) and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) may afford the docent coordinator a lens by which to better support VGG/D learning. This may lead to forging pathways for supporting and empowering adult VGG/Ds, creating opportunities to learn together within the context of the art museum.

Relationship Descriptor: Hierarchical. Many participant insights revealed perceptions of a hierarchy that positioned curatorial knowledge above pedagogical knowledge. Hierarchies, or ranking, include social status systems based on notions of power, dominance, and subordination (Koski et al., 2015). These hierarchies are systems of control, manufacturing accountability structures, and rules of behaviors (Miura, 2013). Dominant elements, such as apex predators within biology or the CEO of a company, are often visualized at the top of a chain or organizational chart. Looking at social hierarchies, a potential byproduct of these constructions is inequity. These systems allow some to benefit based on schemes designed to maintain power systems and a preferred status quo. Objects become symbolic representations to categorize and

rank within a social hierarchy. These systems are not always apparent or codified and are subjective.

When there are challenges to perceptions of rank and order, tension arises, much like encountering new information that challenges prior knowledge and the experience of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957; Kraehe & Evans, 2019). For the VGG/D, education departments desire a deeper awareness of the visitor, challenging embedded and familiar traditions of curator-centered, art historical VGG/D training. The docent coordinator's dissonance stems from an awareness of current trends and a desire to impart and implement these ideas, yet encountering VGG/D resistance. The conflict between the VGG/D's goals and the docent coordinator's goals manifests in relationship strain, as discussed within Theme 2. This hierarchy appeared as a physical realization within one participant's recollections (educators are lower, in the basement [P7]) as well as emotional comprehension of being dismissed or disregarded (P3). Essentially, for something to be deemed superior, something is then lessened, diminished, or devalued. For the curator to be in the elevated position, the educator is reduced. These ideas recalled statements within museum education research:

The role of museum educators is further exacerbated by the fact that museologists or educational researchers who conduct studies in museums have traditionally not been interested in the practice of museum educators. And for these education practitioners, this often leads to two major gaps: a) a need for recognition of their work on the part of their peers; and also b) a need for resources available for professional development. Failure to respond to these needs often leads to situations where educators are often almost invisible in museum organizational charts leaving them to lag behind in terms of improving

practice and leaving them either frustrated and/or aspiring for a more prestigious career in the museum (Lemelin, 2003, p. 2)

Relationship Descriptor: “You’re My Work Friend” (P4). Several participants within this study indicated experiencing issues with VGG/Ds understanding professional and personal boundaries. Descriptions included overly familiar or offensive comments by VGG/Ds and intrusions into participant’s personal time. Simultaneously, some participants characterized these relationships as family-like, implying the docent coordinator was protective of VGG/Ds and accustomed to VGG/D behavior, both welcomed and unwanted. Participant 4’s encapsulation of the VGG/D being a workplace friend is an apt description for the nebulous rapport docent coordinators build with VGG/Ds.

While the art museum employs the docent coordinator to manage VGG/Ds, the VGG/Ds are not held to the same professional standards. Participants reported that not all VGG/Ds adhered to volunteer standards, despite having codes of conduct or volunteer agreements. This creates a problematic situation in which the docent coordinator is both charged with holding themselves to professional standards and holding volunteers to these same standards. However, what is the recourse for the docent coordinator who attempts to dismiss a VGG/D, or a VGG/D who is also a donor? Moreover, participants reported VGG/Ds without prior work experience, and therefore little understanding of professional conduct. These ideas recall the debate posed by Newsom and Silver (1978) as to volunteer professionalism. Over the last two decades ago, Gartenhaus (1994) and then Sweney (2007) championed docents' professionalization, suggesting this step would establish expectations, respect, status, and a shared understanding of competency.

It was the museum profession that chose to use volunteers to perform the essential responsibility of public education. Therefore, it is the museum profession that should be

held accountable for providing these volunteers with the best and most rigorous training, support, and resources possible. (Gartenhaus, 1994, para. 17)

It would seem that in addition to preparing VGG/Ds for touring, it is also necessary for docent coordinators to prepare VGG/Ds for working in a professional environment. A potential suggestion is to consider expanding the museum staff who facilitate VGG/D training to incorporate the institution's human resources staff.

Further Recommendations. Reflecting on participants' desire for familiarity with volunteer management principles and considering participant accounts of relationship strain, it is possible to theorize how these concepts are connected. Participant experiences showcased the escalating demands for supervising volunteers' work beyond teaching adults to teach in the art museum. Responsibilities discussed within interviews related to mediation, conducting performance appraisals, expediting schedules, supporting volunteers during life transitions, and navigating difficult conversations with VGG/Ds regarding observed behaviors or statements. These are aspects that are more closely aligned with human resource management or volunteer management. While it is possible to conceptualize how these ideas are similar to practices taught within pre-service teacher education, it remains problematic to expect museum educators to transfer pedagogical knowledge into management and leadership understandings. We must first ask if teaching and managing are similar, and if not, where can the field make room for volunteer management in the museum educators' domains of knowledge? As Participant 7 shared, "These are more deeply issues that has [*sic*] to do with people and how they behave, and how they act, and how they talk to other people."

Based on perceptions gathered from this study, I explore three options. These are not the only options, but they help to create a starting point for discussion. The first is to maintain the

status quo and continue to prepare docent coordinators via art history and pedagogy and depend on experiential learning to cover management aspects. It will then follow that the individual docent coordinator is responsible for identifying methods and models that work within their institution's context. However, this is tantamount to denying the lived experiences of those within the field and the suggestions of participants within this study. Further research will help determine if these sentiments are shared amongst other docent coordinators or even amongst museum educators in general, providing additional evidence to support or reject the inclusion of management and leadership principles within the preparation of museum educators.

A second option is to incorporate relevant discussions around the skills, abilities, theories, and models for overseeing other adult personnel within the museum within museum education higher learning programs and professional development (PD) offerings. As indicated by findings within this study, the creation of PD experiences should be tailored for docent coordinators and include consideration for attendees' safety and well-being as they discuss topics related to both positive and challenging VGG/D relationships. There may also be opportunities to develop cohorts within these museum education networks, wherein docent coordinators might meet and develop mentor-mentee communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). While practical discussions of how to conduct managerial tasks related to the docent coordinator's role exist (Johnson et al., 2009; Kuyper, 1993; Van Hoven & Wellman, 2016), what are the experiences of docent coordinators who have exposure to management and leadership theories and models? Budding from this possibility is the potential for studying two groups of docent coordinators: a sample with exposure to management theories and models, and one without these experiences.

Finally, returning to Newsom and Silver (1978), “Why do institutions that increasingly call themselves, and are expected by the public to be, ‘educational resources,’ use unpaid nonprofessionals to do their teaching for them” (p. 33). This question remains relevant today. Burnham and Kai-Kee (2011) emphasized that museum educators who teach should be highly capable and the best-qualified educators to represent the museum and facilitate experiences for visitors. Yet, many art museums remain reliant on volunteers to carry out museum teaching. Participant 2 called it an “inherent problem.” It speaks to the more significant relationship that the docent coordinator is tasked with upholding: the museum-visitors connection. Therefore, if art museums continue to utilize VGG/Ds, thereby requiring staff to prepare and support them, understanding the rationale for these efforts is imperative. Future research to examine VGG/Ds' continued use is vital, as it contextualizes the justification and motivation for maintaining, expanding, or even concluding VGG/D programs.

There remains space for additional research in exploring how management and leadership fit within the docent coordinator's understandings. Through this research, models for addressing these concepts will aid docent coordinators in traversing these complex issues. Based on this study's findings, strategies within these models must address how docent coordinators build professional rapport, cultivate and clarify boundaries, manage workplace confrontation, and navigate unprofessional encounters.

Perceptions of DEAI and Implications for Docent Coordinators

The majority of participants within this study indicated emotional stress and concern – fear – over VGG/Ds unintentionally causing harm to visitors through insensitive comments or action. Without adequate preparation for facilitating conversations around cultural sensitivity, inclusivity, heteronormative and ableist language, or mental health, there is a potential for

harmful engagement between VGG/Ds and visitors. Moreover, unprepared docent coordinators may unknowingly perpetuate stereotypes and stigmas, tokenism, and manifestations of hegemonic ideals. Compounding the concerns are the “inherent problems” (P4) of creating inclusive spaces while simultaneously relying on volunteer engagement with visitors. This is a more significant question, which cannot be answered by the docent coordinator alone. It is a larger challenge for all museums, which must grapple with centuries of exclusivity.

The history of museums in the United States is a history of White, Eurocentric values; the result of which has been the further marginalization of communities and the fortifying of collections behind physical, intellectual, racial, sexualized, and emotional barriers (Acuff & Evans, 2014; Crum & Hendrick, 2014; Hood, 1983; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999; Jackinsky-Sethi, 2015; Jennings, 2017; Kennedy, 2015; Lang et al., 2006; Moore Tapia, 2008; Murawski, 2016; Ng & Ware, 2014; Rice, 1995; Sandell, 1998, 2007; Sullivan & Middleton, 2020). Anderson (2006) observed, “Too many museums are still engaged in work at a comfortable distance from the very people they claim they want to serve and partner” (p. 3). Almost fifteen years later, on June 1, 2020, Christine Anagnos, Executive Director of the Association of Art Museum Directors, openly criticized art museums, stating,

As a community, I do not think art museums have done enough. We have dabbled around the edges of the work, but in our place of privilege we will never live up to the statement that “museums are for everyone” unless we begin to confront, examine and dismantle the various structures that brought us to this point. (Anagnos, 2020, para. 3)

The resulting global protests in 2020 brought into sharp focus the multitude of manifestations of Whiteness. These include national monuments revering slaveholders and confederate figures,

racialized media reporting, and the endurance of discriminatory practices in educational institutions, including museums.

Participant 5 indicated that it is entirely too much to ask volunteers, and thereby the docent coordinator, to be the primary source for creating and sustaining a welcoming and inclusive environment within the art museum. It must become the work of every museum board, staff, and volunteer member. These ideas reflect discussions within the field of museums (American Alliance of Museums, 2018; MASS Action, 2017). Examples of efforts exist within the field of museum education. These models demonstrate how to bring staff and volunteers together, beyond just the education department, to transform larger institutional policies and practices (Jennings et al., 2019; Mann et al., 2018). However, more research is needed.

Recommendation. Critical awareness of sociocultural factors and critical theories related to content, pedagogy, and context is essential. Several participants indicated the integration of theories into practice that critiqued inequities. As Participant 6 offered, these interrogations are necessary to challenge the “status quo” (P6). Studies which examine how museum educators shift from espousing these ideas to putting them into action are essential for the field. For the art museum docent coordinator, what are the power structures within museums, and what critical exploration can better inform their practice? How do these critical theories find their way into docent coordinators’ training of VGG/Ds, and how are they applied? How will these theories transition into action, as with VGG/D training and evaluation, as well as gallery teaching? What does antiracist teaching look like in VGG/D training and practice? To answer these questions is to participate in individual learning, which can lead to organizational learning. It is necessary for larger entities, such as higher learning institutions and professional organizations, and museum leadership, to address how they will move towards actionable steps. More specifically, if VGG/D

programs continue, how will these systems support docent coordinators as they prepare and maintain the museum's face and voice (the VGG/Ds)? Importantly, how will the face and voice directly and authentically reflect the museum mission and practices?

To be transparent, I discussed topics related to museums and race within the book, *Engaging Communities Through Civic Engagement in Art Museum Education* (Bobick & DiCindio, 2021). In drafting the chapter, I looked for accessible examples of engaging VGG/Ds in discussions around race. I turned to the NAEA e-journal *Viewfinder* to locate recent examples, a decision inspired by the rationale that some docent coordinators might not have access to research journals or paid membership resources (Kraehe & Evans, 2019; Mann et al., 2018; Tobin, 2020). In doing so, I found examples of White museum staff collaborating with Black and Brown⁷ external consultants and presenters. As bell hooks (1992) noted, there is the paradox of white people who “do not have to ‘see’ black people,” while simultaneously creating an us-them opposition (p. 340). Therefore, it was crucial to locate collaborations whose efforts attempted to avoid further harm by positioning White staff members presenting to primarily White VGG/Ds topics about Whiteness, racism, and the Black and Brown experience. The model that I, Schero (2021), suggested demonstrated the following strategies:

1. Museum staff recognizing the limits of their abilities (whether owing to their identity, knowledge, or comfort). This acknowledgment sets the groundwork for,
2. Identifying theories, scholars, professionals, and models to support,
3. Bringing in external professionals of varying identities to facilitate workshops that,

⁷ I refrained from using BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) or POC (People of Color) owing to current debate as to whether these acronyms flatten identities. Lucas, H. (2020, October 29). Why BIPOC is a complicated term. *Canadian Voices Against Racism*. <https://www.canadianvoicesagainstracism.com/blog/why-bipoc-is-a-complicated-term>

4. Encourage dialogue that examines institutional and individual bias collectively, during which participants model and test theories and identify points of discomfort in supportive spaces. At the close of these discussions, there are then,
5. Opportunities for reflection and feedback to develop action plans for future workshops and to identify areas for continued work. (p. 256)

How might ideas such as these make their way into docent coordinator practice? It is necessary for professional organizations that address museum education issues to consider how to provide both wide-reaching, general sessions that invite a range of museum professionals, as well as role-specific offerings. The potential for creating a docent-coordinator workgroup to examine research and models, as well as regular sessions or webinars designed for docent coordinators to hear and share ideas around sociocultural topics, needs further consideration. Otherwise, if left for docent coordinators to work in isolation or within self-selected groups, the possibility of unintended outcomes built from biases (unconsciously or otherwise) is real and harmful.

Stress In The Role of the Docent Coordinator

Descriptions of the emotional labor involved in working with VGG/Ds revealed both pride and stress levels ranging from eustress to burnout. Participant experiences indicated a desire to balance their passion for working with people with the emotions of frustration and anxiety as they navigated strains within these same relationships. Points of exasperation included a lack of recognition by VGG/Ds of docent coordinator contributions and skills that suggested feelings of inadequacy. Moreover, descriptions of workload indicated a range of responsibilities with, sometimes conflicting, expectations. These descriptions recall Johnson et al. (2009), and

their cautioning of museum educations, “These challenges are exciting and stimulating; however, the pressure can cause burnout” (p. 10).

Participant descriptions of multitasking included creating training, tour, and VGG/D schedules; sending emails, researching and presenting both within and outside of the museum; interceding in inter-VGG/D issues; resolving issues between VGG/Ds and visitors; filling in for VGG/Ds; hosting social and VGG/D recognition events; as well as finding time for professional growth. These descriptions reflected the same experiences of educators surveyed in 2004 by Chen Cooper (2007), where one participant commented, “I know multitasking is the job of a manager, but sometimes I feel that I am juggling too many balls, and I am afraid I am going to drop them” (p. 71). In 2004 the metaphor was juggling balls; in this study, almost two decades later, it is “spinning plates” (P3).

All participants revealed varying levels of stress, from manageable frustrations to professional burnout. This range matches research of other fields, reflecting understandings of workplace stress on a spectrum from eustress to distress (Collie et al., 2012; Gray-Toft & Anderson, 1981; McVicar, 2003; Mikkelsen et al., 1998). Accounts of stressful experiences also exposed participants' coping mechanisms, such as reliance on peer and network support, personal research, and finding compromises with VGG/Ds. These efforts towards conciliation demonstrate resilience on the part of the docent coordinator. Participants revealed their ability to see the complexity of their relationships with VGG/Ds and empathized with their experiences. Moreover, it is possible to interpret participants' accounts of efforts to turn challenges into opportunities as perseverance.

Within examples shared by participants, we see a perceived lack of control for their circumstances. Examples include Participant 2's efforts to shift towards paid educators denied by

museum leadership; Participant 5's desire to change VGG/D policies resulted in an unwished compromise; and Participant 1's implementation of evaluation met with resistance by VGG/Ds. There is a perceived demand to maintain a status quo that the docent coordinator perceives as flawed and attempts to change according to their perceptions of their abilities and understanding of current practices within museum education. In some cases, this stress evolves into distress, such as the emotional reactions to their job role (described as being "worn down," "taking it hard emotionally," or descriptions of frustration), or as burnout (explained as a desire to look for other jobs or to escape).

However, participants also indicated support systems that served as a means to release the building pressure. These discussions provided descriptions that responded to the fourth research question: *what supports do art museum docent coordinators consider helpful for their work with volunteer gallery guides/docents?* Most participants highlighted their involvement within professional organizations that included listservs and affiliate groups that created networks for docent coordinators. Additionally, positive descriptions of colleagues and leadership backing and encouragement indicated the importance of cultivating supportive frameworks within the art museum. As museum educators consider leadership roles within their institutions, understanding the dynamics of empowering people, developing empathy and well-being, and aiding others in developing their professional selves is imperative. These ideas are also found within human resource management and volunteer management, further suggesting the need to include these ideas within the preparation and support of docent coordinators.

Recommendation. Discussions of the docent coordinator role being a "labor of emotional love" (P3) reflected descriptions found in classroom teaching (Hargreaves, 1998). Furthermore, participant feelings of stress echoed findings from the Chen (2004) study,

suggesting a need to move beyond cataloging stressors to doing something about them. However, while this is a significant finding, it is beyond the scope of this study and the researcher to analyze the psychological or physiological manifestations of stress within the docent coordinator role or the outcomes of such experiences. This is an opportunity for future research. Examining the perceived stressors within the docent coordinator's role will shape methods for preparing and supporting current and future docent coordinators. Future research might investigate what coping strategies and techniques for navigating stress exist within teaching/training/coaching from other fields. How might these models or techniques be applied within museum education and the role of the docent coordinator? Participants within this study discussed fears and anxiety related to VGG/Ds causing harm to visitors through insensitive dialogue or action. Finally, some participants characterized these apprehensions as emotional strain. While it is not a component within this study, I encourage future research to examine museum educator activism fatigue. How can the field support these professionals before we lose these professionals?

Conclusion

When I first began developing this study, I was hesitant to address issues around volunteer gallery guides/docents. These notions stemmed from my experiences and believing there was little to contribute to the range of research about teaching in galleries, docent competencies, or strategies for teaching docents. It was not until I stopped looking at the outcomes and looked at the inputs that I saw potential. The docent *coordinator* prepares the volunteer gallery guides/docents (VGG/Ds), but how were *they* prepared. The docent coordinator supports VGG/Ds, but how are *they* supported? This began my exploration, which recognized that my experiences, my story, shaped these understandings as well as the questions I formed. As

a result, I believed that the gathering of stories culled from docent coordinators' experiences would contribute to a deeper understanding of how docent coordinators were prepared and supported in teaching and managing VGG/Ds.

Findings from the study revealed opportunities to visualize a model of docent coordinator's knowledge based on perceptions of their preparation, the M-PCK model. They also indicated that content, pedagogical, and museological knowledge served as the three primary domains of a museum educator. Preparation for museum educators must focus on the overlap of these domains, where knowledge mixes and a union of new knowledge forms. Key to this preparation is the addition of management and leadership theories. Moreover, theories that highlight adults' learning and learning in the workplace serve to contextualize and support organizational development. Significantly, participant observations underlined the need for preparation and support around diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion. The inclusion of critical theories is vital to the preparation of docent coordinators, as is the sharing of models taken from research and practice that offer a means to transfer these ideas into their lifeworld. As a result of concerns over VGG/D insensitivity, as well as the strain of balancing professional and personal relationships with VGG/Ds, there is a strong indication that the emotional worry and anxiety, as well as workplace relationship tension, experienced by several participants within this study, could lead to professional burnout. Participants within this study indicated a desire for professional development designed specifically for docent coordinators. Moreover, opportunities that provide a safe and supportive space for discussing VGG/D issues are significant. However, the problematic power entanglements with VGG/Ds described by participants (e.g., VGG/Ds serve as museum donors and high-level stakeholders) underscore the docent coordinator's precarious position.

I return once more to the word of the seven participants within this study to offer a closing. If no one else but a docent coordinator knows what it's like, how can others understand what they bring to the table? Their position involves multiple balancing acts: meeting the needs of the visitors and the volunteer gallery guides/docents, personal and professional relationship boundaries with volunteers, theory and practice, art history and pedagogy, pride and stress. Fear and concern over harmful encounters between visitors and VGG/Ds that further marginalize and exclude the visitor are profound. These apprehensions stem from lived experiences, not the theoretical. The VGG/D is the face and voice of the museum, and the docent coordinator is the connection between the volunteer and the institution. With scores of potential interactions with visitors and often only one docent coordinator, their work is monumental, their insights significant.

These are more deeply issues that have to do with people and how they behave, and how they act, and how they talk to other people. (Participant 7)

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Appendix A

Table of Museum Education Theories based on Ebitz (2006, 2008) and researcher experience.

Theory	Researcher
Object-based learning	Paris, S. G. (Ed.). (2002). <i>Perspectives on object-centered learning in museums</i> . Retrieved from https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.library.vcu.edu Schlereth, T. J. (1992). Object knowledge: Every museum visitor an interpreter. In S. K. Nichols (Ed.), <i>Patterns in practice: Selections from the Journal of Museum Education</i> (pp. 102-111). Museum Education Roundtable.
Discipline-Based Art Education	Dobbs, S. (1992). <i>The DBAE handbook: An overview of discipline-based art education</i> . Getty Center for Education in the Arts.
Museum literacy	Stapp, C. (1984). Defining Museum Literacy. <i>Roundtable Reports</i> , 9(1), 3-4.
Learning styles	Kolb, D. (1984). <i>Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development</i> . Prentice-Hall.
Theory of multiple intelligences	Gardner, H. (2011). <i>Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences</i> . Basic Books.
Flow and aesthetic experience	Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2008). <i>Flow: The psychology of optimal experience</i> . Harper Collins.
Visual Thinking Strategies	Housen, A. (2007). Art viewing and aesthetic development: Designing for the viewer. In P. Villeneuve (Ed.), <i>From periphery to center: Art museum education in the 21st century</i> (pp. 172-173, 175-179). National Art Education Association Yenawine, P. (2013). <i>Visual thinking strategies: Using art to deepen learning across school disciplines</i> .
Museum and community	Karp, I., Kreamer, C. M., & Lavine, S. D. (Eds.). (1992). <i>Museums and communities: The politics of public culture</i> . Smithsonian Institution.
Museum as communication	Hooper-Greenhill, E. (1999). Education, communication, and interpretation: Towards a critical pedagogy in museums. In E. Hooper-Greenhill (Ed.), <i>The educational role of the museum</i> (2nd ed.) (pp. 3-27). Routledge
Museum as ritual	Duncan, C. (1995). The art museum as ritual. <i>The Art Bulletin</i> , 77(1), 10.

Museum as meaning-making	Silverman, L. (1993). Making Meaning Together. <i>Journal of Museum Education</i> , 18(3), 7-11.
Museum as narrative	Roberts, L. C. (1997). <i>From knowledge to narrative: Educators and the changing museum</i> . Smithsonian Institution.
Museum as performative site	Garoian, C. R. (2001). Performing the museum. <i>Studies in Art Education</i> , 42(3), 234-248.
Post-museum	Hooper-Greenhill, E. (Ed.). (1999). <i>The educational role of the museum</i> (2nd ed.). Routledge.
Constructivist theory of learning in museums	Hein, G. (1998). <i>Learning in the museum</i> (Museum meanings). London; Routledge. ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.library.vcu.edu/lib/vcu/detail.action?docID=164934 .
Contextual model of learning	Falk, J.H. & Dierking, L. D. (1992). <i>The museum experience</i> . Retrieved from https://books.google.com/books?id=4a5mDAAAQBAJ
Visual culture theory	Reese, E. B. (2007). Art museums and visual culture: Pedagogical theories and practices as process. In P. Villeneuve (Ed.), <i>From periphery to center: Art museum education in the 21st century</i> (pp. 41-48). National Art Education Association.
Experience in Education**	Dewey, J. (original work published 1938) (1997). <i>Experience and education</i> . Simon and Schuster.
Theory of Cognitive Development**	Piaget, J. (1954). <i>The construction of reality in the child</i> . Basic Books.
Sociocultural Theory of Learning**	Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). <i>Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes</i> . Harvard University Press.
Teaching for Understanding (Harvard Project Zero)**	Wiske, M. S. (Ed.). (1998). <i>Teaching for understanding: Linking research with practice</i> . Jossey-Bass.
Releasing the Imagination**	Greene, M. (1995). <i>Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change</i> . Jossey-Bass.
Pedagogy of the oppressed**	Freire, P. (1973). <i>Pedagogy of the oppressed</i> (Rev. ed.). Continuum.

Cognitive Development**	Sobel, D. M., & Jipson, J. L. (2015). <i>Cognitive development in museum settings: Relating research and practice</i> . Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315667553
Hermeneutics**	Gadamer, H.-G. (1975). <i>Truth and method</i> . Crossroad
Contemporary Art Start**	Kanatani, K. (1998). <i>Contemporary art start</i> . <i>Art Education</i> , 51(2), 33-39.
Aesthetic Development**	Parsons, M. J. (1987). <i>How we understand art: A cognitive developmental account of aesthetic experience</i> . Cambridge University Press
Andragogy**	Knowles, M. S. (1981). Andragogy. In Z. W. Collins (Ed.), <i>Museums, adults and the humanities: A guide for educational programming</i> (pp. 49-78). American Association of Museums.
Proster Theory**	Hart, L. (1975). <i>How the brain works: A new understanding of human learning, emotion and thinking</i> . Basic Books.
Making Learning Visible**	Project Zero & Reggio Children. (2001). <i>Making learning visible: Children as individual and group learners</i> . Reggio Children.
Postcolonialism**	Said, E. (1978). <i>Orientalism</i> . Routledge & Kegan Paul.
Feminist Theory***	Kletchka, D. C. (2007). Moralizing influences: The feminization of art museum education. In P. Villeneuve (Ed.), <i>From periphery to center: Art museum education in the 21st century</i> (pp. 74-79). National Art Education Association.
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy+	Ladson-Billings, Gloria. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: A.k.a. the remix. <i>Harvard Educational Review</i> , 84(1), 74-84
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy+	Gay, G. (2000). <i>Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice</i> (Multicultural education series). Teachers College Press.
Multiculturalism/Diversity+	Acuff, J., Evans, Laura, editor, & American Association for State Local History. (2014). <i>Multiculturalism in art museums today</i> (American Association for State and Local History book series).
Dialogic Looking+	Wilson-McKay, S., & Monteverde, S. (2003). Dialogic Looking: Beyond the Mediated Experience. <i>Art Education</i> , 56(1), 40-45.
Decolonizing+	Tuck, E. & Wang, K. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. <i>Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society</i> . 1(1), 1-40.

Curriculum Theory+	Roberts, L. (2006). Curriculum Theory and Museum Education Practice. <i>Journal of Museum Education</i> , 31(2), 77-78.
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Note: Currently unable to locate a specific supporting article(s) for Ebitz (2006) list.

** Additional theories added by Ebitz (2008)

***Implied in body of article, but not articulated in Table 1 (Ebitz, 2008)

+Additions made by the researcher

Appendix B

Email and RedCap Survey Recruitment

Email Script

Hello,

My name is Jennifer Schero. I am a doctoral student at Virginia Commonwealth University. I am conducting a study about volunteer gallery guide/docent training, specifically the perceptions of docent coordinators who do this training. I am particularly interested in how docent coordinators were prepared and are supported in their work. I am looking for participants who will meet with me, using videoconferencing or over the phone, for approximately one hour. Participation is completely voluntary, and answers will be de-identified (I will remove identifying information). .
If you are interested, please click this link to complete six eligibility questions.

(If forwarding email to professional contacts, add the last line, "'If you know of anyone who would be a strong candidate for participation, please forward this email.'")

(Link to REDCap Form)

Thank you for your time.

REDCap Survey Script

Introduction

Thank you for considering participation in my research study regarding how docent coordinators were prepared and are supported in their work educating volunteer gallery guides/docents for touring in encyclopedic art museums. Participation is entirely voluntary, and answers will be de-

identified (I will remove identifying information). I am looking for participants who are museum educators with a minimum of two years' employment as a docent coordinator at an encyclopedic art museum that utilizes volunteer gallery guides/docents for touring. Additionally, they must be involved in the training of volunteer gallery guides/docents.

Survey Questions

1. Preferred email address: _____
2. Are you over the age of 18? YES NO
3. Are you the docent coordinator for your museum? YES NO
4. Do you work in an encyclopedic art museum? (Museum's collection includes art and artifacts spanning multiple cultures and/or periods) YES NO
5. I would describe my museum as...(check all that apply)
 - a) Having less than 20 docents
 - b) Having 20-50 docents
 - c) Having 50-100 docents
 - d) Having 100+ docents
 - e) In or near a major metropolitan city
 - f) In or near a mid-sized city
 - g) In or near a small city
 - h) In a rural area
6. How many years have you been a docent coordinator? _____
7. Have you ever been a docent coordinator at another institution? YES NO
 - a) If yes, for how many years? _____ N/A

8. Does your museum rely upon volunteer gallery guides/docents to conduct tours of its collection? YES NO
- a) To what extent? REGULARLY SOMETIMES RARELY NEVER
9. What is your role in training the volunteer gallery guides/docents at your institution?
(entry box for writing response)

Follow Up Email Regarding Eligibility

Hello,

Based on the answers provided in the survey, you are eligible to participate in this research study. The next step is to set up an interview. The interview will take approximately one hour. Attached to this email is information to be reviewed before our meeting. Please respond to this email at your earliest convenience with your availability.

My deepest appreciation for participation,

(signature line with affiliation)

Follow Up Email Regarding Ineligibility

Hello,

Thank you for completing the survey questions for my research study. Unfortunately, based on your answers, you would not be eligible for this study. Your responses and information will be deleted to maintain your anonymity. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. I greatly value the time you took to complete the form and wish you all the best.

Kind regards,

(signature line with affiliation)

Appendix C
RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

STUDY TITLE: Art Museum Docent Coordinator Perceptions of Preparation, Training, and Professional Supports for Their Work with Volunteer Gallery Guides/Docents⁸

VCU INVESTIGATOR: Jennifer Schero, Doctoral Student, Virginia Commonwealth University

VCU FACULTY SPONSOR: Dr. David Naff, Assistant Director of Research and Evaluation and Dr. Pamela Harris-Lawton, Associate Professor, Art Education

OVERVIEW

You are invited to participate in a research study about docent coordinator views on their preparation and professional supports for training volunteer gallery guides/docents. Your participation is voluntary, and the information collected will be deidentified (I will remove any identifying names or places). In this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Identify a date and time to participate in a videoconference interview. Please select a private location where you will be uninterrupted and unobserved.
2. Participate in a video interview, which may last one hour or slightly longer, depending on how much you wish to share. The interview will be recorded for the purposes of transcribing the conversation. The recording will be deleted after transcription and will not be shared or used for any other purpose.
3. Review the researcher's findings to confirm their interpretations of your interview.
4. A second interview may be requested and conducted through videoconferencing should you wish to share additional information or if the researcher requires clarification or additional information. This second interview will be scheduled in the same manner as the first.

QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, COMPLAINTS

Please contact:

Primary Contact:

Jennifer Schero
Doctoral Candidate, VCU
(*contact info removed*)

Secondary Contacts:

Dr. David Naff,
(*contact info removed*)
Dr. Pamela Harris-Lawton,
(*contact info removed*)

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

You are being asked to verbally state your consent to participate in this research study. Please do not do so unless your questions regarding the study received satisfactory answers. You will be asked to read the statement below at the start of the recorded interview. Reading this statement is your consent to participate. When prompted, please read aloud the following:

“I have read the information sheet and consent to participate in this study about docent coordinators.”

⁸ Former working title

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

WELCOME

Hello! Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this study. I am going to read from a sheet near the side of my screen, as I want to be sure I say the same thing to each participant, that's why I'm looking off to the side. I will be asking you questions about your work with volunteer gallery guides/docents at your museum, and before we get started, I'd like to go over a few guidelines.

GUIDELINES

- First and foremost, there are no right or wrong answers.
- You can choose to stop the interview at any time.
- I will be recording the interview. The purpose of the video recording is to ensure I don't miss anything you say when I transcribe this conversation. I will delete the recording after the transcription process. **Is that OK?**
- Your responses will be de-identified during the transcription process, meaning I am going to delete any names mentioned. Should you mention a location, I will use a general geographic location (e.g. mid-Atlantic). No identifying information will be mentioned in any reports, quotations, or summaries produced from this interview.

Do you have any questions?

Next is your statement of consent, which was explained in the information sheet I emailed to you. Did you have a chance to read the information sheet?

- **Could you please read your statement of consent?**

Thank you.

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCHER

I wanted to quickly share why I developed this study. I am a museum educator and have worked with many docents over the course of my career. I've had some great experiences, and some challenges. But I realized I wanted to know if others had similar experiences and how telling these stories could help develop our profession. I want to offer our field insights into the realities of docent coordinators, how they were prepared for their jobs, what they use to help them educate volunteer gallery guides, and how they are supported in these efforts. Most of my questions focus on your lived experiences, so there are no right or wrong answers. It's your story. Speaking of which...

PART I: BUILDING RAPPORT

1. Tell me your story. How did you become a docent coordinator?
2. What is your favorite part of your job?
3. What is the hardest part of your job?

(Probe: How do you cope with that?)

PART II: CONTEXT QUESTIONS

1. Could you describe the VGG/D program at your museum?

(Probe: Do they report directly to you? Do they have a separate board? How do you navigate that?)

(Probe: Could you share some general demographics?)

2. Could you walk me through your docent trainings?

(Probe: What is your role? Do you work with anyone else? What is that like?)

(Probe: What are some of the challenges you face?)

3. What changes have you made to your VGG/D program?

(Probe: What influenced these changes?)

(Probe: How were these changes received? How did you respond to this?)

PART III: FOCUSED QUESTIONS

1. What does the word “prepared” mean to you...What prepared you to be a docent coordinator?

(Probe: Can you give me an example of how this helped you?)

(Probe: Is there anything you wish you knew before becoming a docent coordinator?)

2. What would you say are your strengths as a docent coordinator?

(Probe: How did you learn to do this?)

3. What challenges do you face in your work with VGG/Ds?

(Probe: How do you cope with that? What prepared you for dealing with that?)

4. What’s it like teaching VGG/Ds?

(Probe: How did you learn to do this?)

5. What does theory mean to you?

6. Can you tell me about a time you discussed theories with VGG/Ds?

(Probe: How did you learn about this/these theories?)

(Probe: What do you think VGG/Ds think about these theories?)

7. How would you define the word “support”...What supports do you need as a docent coordinator?

(Probe: Is there something you don’t have that you wished you had?)

8. How do you learn about trends?

9. Can you describe a conference session or workshop that you attended that helped you as a docent coordinator?

(Probe: Do you find many workshops specifically designed for docent coordinators?)

(Probe: What kind of sessions do you hope to see more of/wish were offered?)

(Probe: What books or journals help you in your work?)

(Probe: Are you a member of any professional networks or groups?)

PART IV: ENVISIONING QUESTIONS

1. If you could change one thing about your job, what would it be?
2. What advice would you share with future docent coordinators?

PART V: CONCLUSION

1. Is there anything you would like to add that I missed?
2. Do you have any questions for me?

WRAP UP

Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with me. This conversation does not have to end here, and you are welcome to email me any additional thoughts. If there are any documents you use in your work that you think are important for me to see, please feel free to email me.

Again, anything you share with me will be de-identified.

Just so you know, my next steps are to transcribe this interview and remove names and identifying information. I'll be reading it and processing what you've shared. I'll also be interviewing other participants. I'll provide you a copy of my interpretations for your feedback, but I'll explain more about that process later.

Do you have any final questions?

Thank you so much for your time!

GENERAL PROBES

While these probes are not listed within each protocol question, they may be utilized as needed:

Why?

How?

How did that make you feel?

How did you cope with that?

How did you navigate that?

How did you learn to do that?

What did that mean to you?

Can you give me an example?

VITA

Jennifer E. Schero was born in 1976 in Portsmouth, Virginia. After living on a naval base until the age of 12, Mrs. Schero returned stateside and completed her high school degree in Virginia Beach, Virginia. She received a Bachelor of Science in Studio Art from James Madison University in 1999, then employed as an elementary art educator in Virginia. After receiving her Masters of Arts in Museum and Gallery Management from City, University of London, in 2004, Mrs. Schero worked as a museum educator in historic sites and museums, including the Brooklyn Museum, the Chrysler Museum of Art, and the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art. In 2013, Mrs. Schero returned to teaching art at the middle and high school levels before commencing her doctoral journey at Virginia Commonwealth University in 2017.