Micromuseology In Practice:
A Collective Assessment of Philadelphia's African American Museums

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to improve upon the methods of collective assessment of small museums. Currently, the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) and American Association of State and Local History (AASLH) approach the definition of small museums through primarily numerical criteria of staff size and annual budget. While these determinants are decisive in their ability to separate what *is* and is *not* a small museum, numerical criteria cannot speak towards the experiential circumstances that characterize small museums beyond the matter of size. Further, in 2017 the Association of African American Museums (AAAM) assessed the operational parameters of African American Museums nation-wide (regardless of size) in order to develop long-term strategies to support the African American museum community. While the needs assessment by AAAM identifies standards which all museums should strive towards, the inclusion of micromuseum characteristics can further ground collective assessments in the shared experiences of their small museum communities. It is through the collective analysis of small museum's experiential circumstances that actions to support small museums can develop on a wider scale than one-on-one consultative approaches.

In order to demonstrate the characteristic patterns of micromuseums, and the usefulness of such categorization, the researcher developed a two-part qualitative study that consisted of online surveys and observational analyses. The first part of this study included a survey instrument that reflected the 2017 National Needs Assessment for the Association of African American Museums. The second part of this study leveraged the characteristics of micromuseums from the 2016 publication *Micromuseology* as an observational analysis. The researcher then compared the emergent themes of each assessment and acknowledged the implications of each method of study. The study of Micromuseology is a newly founded branch of knowledge dedicated to the distinct characteristics and practices of small museums. It is through the continuous assessment of micromuseums that this field of study can develop into a multi-faceted discipline through which small museums can be further cultivated and supported.

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to the late Dr. Helen M. Shannon. Thank you for guiding me through your vision of what museums are and have the potential to become. Because of you, I know what it is to sustain an air of grace and dignity through all matters of growth and transition.
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- Hannah

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Nomenclature

Museum - A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.

Micromuseums - museums operated by a small staff in a physically limited space and focus on a single subject which falls outside or is segmented within traditional academic disciplines. (Also referred to as small museums for the purpose of this paper.)

Micromuseology - the branch of knowledge dedicated to the distinct characteristics and practices of small museums.

Major Museums - museums with 50+ staff members in large, high reaching/wide building(s) with multi-subject foci.

African American Museums - museums that focus primarily on an aspect of African American and/or African diaspora history, life, or culture.

In situ displays - mimetic displays that preserve or recreate a setting.

In-context displays - displays organized to form an historical or thematic progression.

CHAPTER I.

A. Introduction

All museums, no matter size nor focus, are founded upon the ideal of permanence for their respective audiences. African-American museums within the United States share in this ideal, but have evolved within tumultuous social contexts that continue to challenge their sustainability. The endeavor of permanence can seem even more so daunting for small museums that operate with limited staffing and time to commit to their institutions. Still, these museums have arisen since 1868 and persist through what many in the field would consider difficult circumstances. There are many that did not sustain the test of time, but closed down as a dream deferred.

Small museums or *micromuseums* are the most commonly found museums within the United States. The experiences of small museums can vary from that of larger museums due to their vast differences in size and structure. In an effort to identify the distinct traits and practices of small museums, a new field of *micromuseology* has recently emerged. Micromuseology can be defined as the branch of knowledge dedicated to the distinct characteristics and practices of small museums. The term "micromuseum" comes from the 2016 book *Micromuseology* by Fiona Candlin. Candlin defines micromuseums as:

"*...collections that are variously run by trusts, businesses, special interest groups, and private individuals, and are open to the public; that concentrate on types of objects, themes, or individuals, that fall outside of the traditional academic compass, occupy a low level in the hierarchy of traditional academic classificatory tables, or that take a non-scholarly approach to subjects that could be encompassed by academe; and finally, are small insofar as they have relatively low visitor numbers, and/or modest incomes and/or occupy a physically limited space."*[1]

[1] Candlin. *Micromuseology*. Bloomsbury Academic. New York, NY. 2016.12.

Recognizing that the above full definition is far too long to be remembered and used outside of an academic setting, Candlin provides summarizes the definition of micromuseums as *museums operated by ten or less staff members in a physically limited space and focus on a single subject which falls outside or is segmented within traditional academic disciplines.*[2] Beyond Candlin's definition, there is also the definition provided by the American Association of State and Local History. Unlike Candlin's definitions, the AASLH definition is nationally recognized within the United States by the American Alliance of Museums and is focused primarily on numerical criterion. AASLH uses these working criterion:

- have an annual budget of less than $250,000,
- operate with a small staff with multiple responsibilities,
- and employ volunteers to perform key staff functions[3].

There are also characteristics of micromuseums that can follow suit as supplementary attributes to the definitive criteria above. While the above criteria set small museums apart from major museums through numeric terms, micromuseums also differ through interior and exterior factors that shape their public perceptions. By including the characteristics of micromuseums with the above criteria for defining small museums, a more experience-based understanding of micromuseums can shape the means by which small museums understand themselves and are collectively assessed. In turn, the strategic plans to support micromsueums can be tailored to fit the unique conditions that small museums often share.

[2] The researcher's definition of micromuseums comes from the definition produced by Kenneth Hudson in his book *The Museum Refused to Stand Still*, along with a critique to this definition by Fiona Candlin in her book *Micromuseology*.

[3] American Association for State and Local History. "What Is a Small Museum?" *AASLH*, 2018, community.aaslh.org/small-museum-what-is-a-small-museum/.

B. Statement of the Problem

Most African American museums that are in operation today opened during the second half of the 20th century following the Civil Rights Movement. These museums typically evolved from grassroots organizations without the planning required for most grant applications (i.e. collection policies, operating procedures, and professionalized staffs).[4] As America was just beginning to overcome the injustices of segregation, black museums were not initially welcomed with open arms to local and national associations that vowed to support America's museums.

In an effort to advocate on behalf of America's black museums, the Association of African American Museums (AAAM) was established in 1978. AAAM set out with a mission "*to support African and African American focus museums nationally and internationally, as well as the professionals who protect, preserve and interpret African and African American art, history and culture.*[5]" Over the years, AAAM has conducted two national assessments of African American Museums. The first assessment, conducted in 2008, reported on an analysis of the field, including an overview of African American organizations, their service to the public, their collections and their greatest needs. Recently, in 2017, AAAM released their second national assessment of African American Museums. This assessment "sought to identify the needs of African American MLA's (museums, libraries, and archives) that AAAM can consider as part of its new strategic planning initiative.[6]"

In both reports, the size of participating organizations was gathered in the data. Micromuseums (as well as small libraries and archives) made up 90% of participants in the

[4] DeVos Institute of Arts Management, Diversity in the Arts The Past Present and Future of African American and Latino Museums Dance Companies and Theater Companies. University of Maryland. 2015. 10.

[5] "Association of African American Museums – The Official Web Site of Association of African American Museums." *Association of African American Museums*, blackmuseums.org/.

[6] Association of African American Museums. 2017 National Needs Assessment. (People, Places, & Design Research. Northampton, Massachusetts) 2016. 4.

national survey. In recognition of this sizable percentage, AAAM would benefit from incorporating the characteristics of micromuseums into their assessment practices.

Currently in the United States, the defining criteria of small museums that have been studied via collective assessment has reflected only the numerics that set small museums a part from their larger counterparts. These criteria, while useful in defining museums by size, cannot elude to the experiential differences that set small museums apart from larger ones, and more importantly, bring together small museums for further investigation of their nuanced approaches to museum management. The potential that collective assessments of small museums can have is evident in the very nature of the study. Collective assessments often precede the work of collaborative efforts between small museums and/or the local/national organizations that represent them. By focusing the assessments on experiential criteria (as this paper does), the results of such assessments will be grounded in more pragmatic evidence than has been seen in previous assessments of small museums. Through the inclusion of the characteristics of micromuseums, participating institutions can benefit from a paradigm that recognizes the distinct traits of micromuseums. To test out the paradigm of micromuseology, this thesis incorporated the characteristics of micromuseums in a study of nine African American museums within the city of Philadelphia.

C. Background and Need

In her book *Micromuseology*, Fiona Candlin recognizes how "the study of micromuseums can offer alternative perspectives on specific areas of museological inquiry."[7] Being so independent in their scope and management, it may seem as though small museums have nothing more in common with each other besides their "smallness." When assessing

[7] Candlin. 2.

micromuseums, it is best not to let the size of these institutions be the primary determinant in projecting or measuring success. Doing so belittles the impact that these museums have on their surrounding communities and overlooks the diversity that exists within the micromuseum field.

Micromuseums are the most common type of museum found throughout the United States. Ironically though, these museums are not initially considered in most literature regarding best practices within the museum field. This largely has to do with distinguishing characteristics that cause micromuseums to "blend in" with their surroundings (for better or for worse in some cases). Micromuseums are known to share some defining characteristics within the realm of settings, buildings, curatorial style, labeling, ambience, and interactions with staff:[8]

It is important to get eye level with the micromuseums. By acknowledging the distinctive traits of micromuseums in their assessment, the analysis will, in turn, provide a basis for practical solutions to benefit small museums on a larger scale. It is also important that micromuseums work *with,* rather than against, the characteristics that define them. Instead of seeing the characteristics of micromuseums as limiting, it is more important to establish best practices within them for the benefit of one's own institution and the larger museum field.

D. Purpose of the Study

i. Purpose Statement

The purpose of this paper is to utilize Fiona Candlin's characteristics of micromuseums through an assessment of nine African American Museums in Philadelphia order to improve upon the means by which small museums are collectively assessed by the Association of African American Museums.

ii. Research Question

[8] Candlin. 21.

How can the incorporation of Candlin's characteristics of micromuseums benefit AAAM's assessments to help them better understand their members and provide for them?

iii. Rationale for Study

Micromuseums can become more vulnerable to closure than major museums as their operations and support are often held in the hands of a few dedicated persons. Their work can be especially difficult if they are not members of any likeminded associations, or if they hold no partnerships that significantly contribute to their ability to achieve their institutional mission. Moreover, African American micromuseums are disproportionately affected by economic fluctuations as they are heavily reliant on their surrounding communities and governmental and non-governmental grant funding. In order to secure funding by governmental and nongovernmental grant sources, micromuseums are required to incorporate more formalized policies and procedures in their institutions. Through the incorporation of Fiona Candlin's characteristics of micromuseums, associations like that of AAAM can better approach the nuanced commonalities of their small museum members.

iv. Description of study

To test out the incorporation of micromuseology in an assessment, the researcher implemented a survey instrument to nine participating organizations that corresponded with the 2017 National Needs Assessment put forth by AAAM and incorporated the characteristics of micromuseums through observational analyses of each museum.

The sample used in this study was the following nine institutions:

1. The Aces Museum
2. The African American Museum in Philadelphia
3. The Black Writers Museum

4. The Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection
5. The Colored Girls Museum
6. The Johnson House Historic Site
7. The Lest We Forget Museum of Slavery[9]
8. The Paul Robeson House
9. The Richard Allen Museum

v. Expected Outcomes

By incorporating micromuseology into the assessment of Philadelphia's African American museums, the researcher will identify qualities that exist within the nine African American museums that participated through the characteristics of micromuseums. These characteristics will compliment or clearly relate in some other way to the 2017 assessment put forth by AAAM. These micromuseum trends will point towards best practices that can influence the broader field of micromuseology.

F. Significance to the Field

Micromuseology is a new field of study; the term was only recently coined in 2016 by Fiona Candlin in her book *Micromuseology.* To further advance the field, it is important that the methods of study put forth by the paradigm are tested in multiple settings and with new subjects in order to refine the means by which micromuseums are studied. Furthermore, by recognizing the shared characteristics of micromuseums, this study has the potential of improving the means by which AAAM can support the vast majority of their micromuseum members and non-members alike. Finally, this project can directly benefit Philadelphia's African American museums by placing their endeavors in context in the local community of museums with which they share a common practice.

[9] Formerly known as the *Lest We Forget Black Holocaust Museum.*

Chapter II. Literature Review

African American museums possess a shared history within the United States. Although their founding often begins through an independent vision, the collective experience brings together more similarities than differences regarding their structure, practices, and public perceptions. According to a 2003 national survey of African American museums[10], the two most foundational periods for African American museums throughout the country were in the 1960's and 1990's. Though these decades offered immensely different economic, social, and political climates, there is something to be gleaned from trends in the "lifespan" of African-American museums. Time can reveal repetitive factors that affected sustainability in older African American museums and will similarly shake or solidify the foundations of newer ones.

In her chapter titled "African American Museums in the Twenty-first Century," (2006) Christy S. Coleman presents a backdrop on the commonly-held grassroots origins of African American museums. Secondly, she juxtaposes the strengths and challenges of grassroots museums alongside those of federally/municipally supported museums--and recognizes the often necessary and uncomfortable evolution that grassroots museums have to undergo in entering into what Coleman refers to as "the mainstream."

The tumultuous Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's-60's created a fertile environment for the founding of grassroots-led museums. Coleman recognized that grassroots-led museums are "symbols of validation and community pride.[11]" These institutions had the apparent benefit of shared community support during their initial years. This support, as we shall see, was not

[10] National survey of African American museums: prepared for the National Museum of African American History and Culture Plan for Action Presidential Commission, 5.

[11] Coleman, Christy S. "African American Museums in the Twenty-first Century." Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-first Century. Amherst & Boston. 2006. 152.

always enjoyed by museums founded through partnerships with municipalities or government entities. Grassroots-led museums, both then and now, often functioned on par with the characteristics of micromuseums (See Chapter 1).

Along with these traits, she asserts that there was a definitive "anti-establishment ethos" ignited through the ongoing traumas faced by African Americans throughout the Civil Rights Movement. The anti-establishment ethos allowed early African American museums to push programs and lectures that, while outside the primary missions of the museums, addressed direct needs of their local communities (i.e. promoting literacy, organizing against injustice, or combatting infestation)[12].

Andrea Burns presents a more personalized view of the "anti-establishment ethos" in her 2013 publication *From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement.* In this book, she cites a fiery quote by African American poet June Jordan who criticized the New York City Museums Collaborative or *MUSE* during their 1969 conference proceedings:

> *"Take me into the museum and show me myself, show me my people, show me soul America. If you cannot show me myself, if you cannot teach my people what they need to know--and they need to know the truth, and they need to know that nothing is more important than human life--then why shouldn't I attack the temples of America and blow them up? This is one America, and after black citing have been manipulated and after somethin like a nigger room has been reserved in the basement of the Metropolitan Museum for us, the people who have the power and the people who count the pennies and the people who hold the keys better start thinking it all over again."*[13]

It is with this sort of passion, anger, love, and initiative that grassroots museums of both the Civil Rights Movement and today were founded across the nation. Grassroots museums

[12] ibid.
[13] Burns, Andrea A. *From Storefront to Monument Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2014.2.

serve to heal and inspire communities in great distress. Their establishment is often made without the strategic planning needed for long-term sustainability because they are formed by people who recognize the urgency of the need for a museum more than they know best museum practices. Of course, the principles of structure, practices, and public perception are always in need of consistent examination in order to sustain the test of time.

Although grassroots movements of the late 1950's and 1960's offered strong community foundations for new museums, economic and political fluctuations left these same communities far more vulnerable to financial collapse and a loss of community interest. Coleman adequately describes this economic phenomenon in her chapter through use of the poignant phrase that "when the nation's economy caught the proverbial cold, African American communities got pneumonia and their institutions suffered right along with them.[14]" Politically, the eventual integration of work and housing often drew upwardly mobile African Americans (and their financial investments) out from previously segregated communities and into the wider "integrated" society.

The pressure put forth by African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement was met with heightened support by the government and municipalities to better meet the needs of black museums. For a handful of museums founded in the 1950's and 60's, securing federal funds helped evolve their status from more localized grassroots museums into the leaders of influence they are today. Museums like the African American Museum in Cleveland (1953), DuSable Museum of African American History in Chicago (1961), the Museum of African American History in Boston (1963), Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit (1965), and the Studio Museum in Harlem (1968) all began at one time as smaller independent nonprofits. Along with the procurement of government grants, some grassroots museums

[14] Coleman. 152.

partnered with "mainstream" museums and institutions to widen their audience base, draw meaningful connections between those institutions, and optimize their shared finances.

The branching out of grassroots museums can be a necessary undertaking in order to secure new sources of revenue. There is also the added benefit of professionalization that comes from collaboration with like-minded institutions. Starting out, most small museums do not have many of the core documents that can be required when applying for grant funding. These core documents are outlined by the American Alliance of Museums Accreditation Program.[15] They include:

- Mission Statement
- Institutional Code of Ethics
- Strategic Institutional Plan
- Disaster Preparedness/Emergency Response Plan
- Collections Management Policy

The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) champions museum standards of excellence with events, resources, and opportunities to compete for grants/awards by showcasing best museum practices for review and recognition. AAM offers their resources to both members and non-members alike. The ability to secure accreditation with AAM is a feat that, through months of rigorous institutional reflection, preparation, and patience, can provide a museum with a certification that "increases a museum's credibility and value to funders, policy makers, insurers, community and peers."[16] Of course, the accreditation process is one that not all museums can or

[15] American Alliance of Museums. "Core Documents Verification." *Accreditation & Excellence Programs*, 2018, www.aam-us.org/programs/accreditation-excellence-programs/core-documents-verification/.
[16] American Alliance of Museums. *Accreditation*, Institute of Museum and Library Services, aam-us.org/resources/assessment-programs/accreditation.

(in some cases) want to achieve. Aside from accreditation, AAM offers a Museum Assessment Program for eligible institutions.

The Museum Assessment Program (MAP) is provided by AAM and funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). In a webinar put on by the online community of *Collecting for Collections Care*, MAP program officer Danyelle Rickard expressed the role that MAP can play in the lives of professionals and the museums they serve. Rickard underscored the benefits of participating in a museum assessment as the following:

- Improves professional practice
- Re-energizes board and staff
- Foundation of planning
- Non-judgmental support

MAP is a one-year consultative self-assessment and on-site visit that examines one of three areas of museum practice. These areas are:

- Organization
- Collections Stewardship
- Community Engagement

The cost of MAP for a museum can range from free to $750 based on the operating budget of the museum. An immediate benefit of MAP that sets it apart from all other assessment programs for museums is the personal factor of face-to-face consultation, which allows for tailored advice from other museum professionals. The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) has also produced the Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (StEPs). StEPs is a voluntary, guided, self-study for small historic organizations that positions their policies and practices alongside that of national standards. This process is done through the

use of a workbook that serves as a "manual and compass for progress.[17]" The StEPs program focuses on the following criteria of operation:

- Mission, Vision, & Governance
- Audience
- Interpretation
- Stewardship of Collections
- Stewardship of Historic Structures & Landscapes
- Management

Both of these organizations approach their assessments from the viewpoint of one-on-one consultation for individual organizations. Two other organizations, the Small Museum Association (SMA) & Small Museum Administrators Committee (SMAC), do not offer assessment programs but do offer online materials that seek to answer the same kind of institutional concerns as that of MAP and StEPs. As we shall see later on in this chapter, the Association of African American Museums (AAAM) differed from this type of assessment in that it sought to analyze the collective similarities that exist amongst African American museums. This distinction is key in furthering the study of Micromuseology. Collective assessments in the field can allow for conventional standards of museum associations to be affirmed or revised in order to better reflect the collective they serve.

Of course, when considering the ethos of grassroots-led museums, procuring support and "best practices" from federal, municipal, and "mainstream" sources can put them into conflict with their original ideal of being "anti-establishment." There also are times when museums relocate themselves altogether in order to diversify their target audiences and maximize their

[17] American Association of State and Local History. *What Is StEPs*. 2018, tools.aaslh.org/what-is-steps/.

finances. For example, the DuSable Museum (chartered in 1961 as the Ebony Museum of Negro History and Art) was originally located on the ground floor of the founder's home, but, after 12 years, moved out of the neighborhood to the Chicago Park District. The Studio Museum in Harlem, Detroit's Museum of African American History, and the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum hold similar origin stories as "neighborhood" museums that moved away and took the opportunity to expand their collections ten-fold.

For some founder-led museums, this "branching-out" led to a perceived divergence from the original institutional vision. Burns recognizes this conflict of interests in stating that "the physical manifestation of this grassroots spirit was embodied in the ordinariness of the very buildings and landscapes in which many of these museums were first housed--former movie theatres, modest apartment buildings, and clubhouses that historically catered to African Americans."[18] During a conflict of interest, the phenomenon of becoming a "sellout" can conjure an air of mistrust between boards, staff, and audiences from whom the museum must have support. Coleman addresses these unfortunate realities by recognizing that, although there may be some truth to such accusations of "selling out," "perceptions can be more damning than reality"..."Ultimately," she states, "the real truth was the museums were evolving."[19]

And evolve they did. Between the 1980's and early 2000's, the nation gained over 200 African American museums. Rita Organ, president of the Association of African American Museums in 2000 recognized a problem, though. "For every three museums that opened up, at least one closes."[20] Coleman notes that, in the late 1990's, it became more popular for black museums to partner with school districts and universities. "The goal was to increase student

[18] ibid.
[19] Coleman, Christy S. "African American Museums in the Twenty-first Century." Museum Philosophy for the Twenty-first Century. 2006. 153.
[20] Burns, Andrea A. *From Storefront to Monument Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2014.183.

visitation and to strengthen credibility in the academic community...This is perhaps one of the most successful partnerships available."[21] A second form of partnership also became more common—the ones between black museums and mainstream museums. These partnerships, she warns, were "generally imbalanced and, therefore, failures in many respects, regardless of whether or not the exhibit or project was completed or had good attendance." She continues… "With significantly greater resources, both in terms of capital and personnel, the larger institution inherently controls the relationship. More often than not, when funding for the project came from an outside source, those funds were held by the larger organization. Generally, the African American museum had to give accounting for funds required to complete its phase of work in a highly scrutinized environment. And while this is not necessarily negative, the fact is that operating differently can carry the implication of operating poorly."[22]

The pressure that African American museums receive can also take on a more personal tone given the sometimes triggering concepts that are touched on in their exhibits. Coleman recognizes that "knowing that your racial identity or cultural allegiance can be called into question is something that few can fathom...For example, an exhibit about George Washington that is less than stellar will seldom be met with calls to white curators accusing them of being race traitors. But if an exhibition about George Washington Carver depicts him in a less than favorable light, the likelihood of a black museum curator receiving such a call is almost guaranteed."[23] Although this example may seem dramatized, the work of deconstructing racial concepts, and/or memorializing black hero's, heroines, or moments in time, (which many African American museums do) is a thematic path that unfortunately can be met with ridicule and even threats by both professionals as well as members of the general public. However, it is

[21] Coleman. 156.
[22] ibid.
[23] ibid

also highly rewarding to those who seize the opportunity the serve their communities through working to develop and sustain such an accessible means of engagement.

To conclude her chapter, Coleman finds that the question facing African American museums in the 21st century is a question of audience. "The future well being of these museums is directly tied to their ability to *sustain themselves* and do the kind of programming that *appeals to their chosen demographic*...Essentially, the key to solvency is relevancy."[24] Burns echoes the viewpoints of Coleman in her own conclusion on the path to success for African American museums. She states, "To achieve success comparable to that of early African American neighborhood museums---success not necessarily measured by monumental architecture or elaborate fund-raising galas, but rather by audience response and appreciation--all African American museums and public history sites must recognize this 'peripheral edge' that pushed black museum movement leaders to challenge and refashion the staid conceptions of how a museum must function."[25] Both Coleman's and Burn's historical analyses argue for the importance of managing public and professional perceptions of African American museums. Coleman's note on sustainability (italicized above) was further considered in a more recent study put forth by the The Devos Institute of Arts Management.

In 2015, the DeVos Institute of Arts Management published their study *Diversity In the Arts: The Past, Present, and Future of African American and Latino Museums, Dance Companies, and Theater Companies.* This study looked closely at the structural and financial disparities facing 20 large African American and Latino Art Organizations in 2015. DeVos found that "Arts organizations of color are, in general, much less secure and far smaller than their mainstream counterparts. In fact, the median budget size of the 20 largest arts organizations

[24] ibid.
[25] Burns.186.

of color surveyed in this paper is more than 90 percent smaller than that of the largest mainstream organizations in their industries. African American and Latino organizations have fewer individual donors and are more reliant on grants from foundations and government sources."[26]

Regarding donations, in the year 2000, approximately 60 percent of funding for mainstream arts organizations came from individual donors. For African American and Latino organizations, this number fell to 6 percent of funding from individual donors. DeVos recognized the implications of such stark contrasts in stating that "because there are a limited number of institutional donors, and their gifts also tended to be limited in size. This placed a ceiling on the size of organizations of color that continue to this day. Mainstream organizations, however, could grow as quickly as they found and cultivated new pockets of individual wealth; by the turn of the 21st century it was not unusual to read of single gifts exceeding $1 million.[27]"

Though the DeVos study does not directly include micromuseums in its analysis, its findings offer insight on the difficulties faced by the largest and considerably most "well off" African American museums in the country. Regardless of size, all African American museums (to a degree) share the same pool of grant funding and individual/institutional donors. Knowing this, and understanding that funding is primarily granted to "professionalized" institutions, (with formal models of nonprofit governance, trained and paid staff, and policies for operations within the museum), the limitations of African American micromuseums can make sustainability unfeasible for newly burgeoning institutions.

[26]DeVos Institute of Arts Management. *Diversity In The Arts: The Past, Present, and Future of African American and Latino Museums, Dance Companies, and Theater Companies.* University of Maryland. September 2015. 15.
[27] ibid.

To address the concerns of financial disparity, DeVos offers these suggestions as essential elements for sustainability in art organizations of color:[28]

• Build stronger boards that lead arts organizations of color;

• Invest in management education and effective staff leadership;

• Prioritize great content rather than new buildings; and

• Encourage responsible philanthropy that promotes long term growth and fiscal health.

To help facilitate a culture of support amongst museums nationwide, The Association of African American Museums (AAAM) was formed in 1978 as a volunteer-led non-profit organization. Since their founding, AAAM has conducted two national analyses of African American museums, libraries and archives. Their first assessment in 2008 served as "an overview [that] summarizes the principal dimensions of the field of African American cultural organizations."[29]

This study, titled "Assessment of the Field: African American Cultural Organizations," surveyed 162 African American organizations to document their current status and needs to sustain their institutions. AAAM found that majority of African American museums have facilities under 5000 square feet, three or fewer full-time employees, and annual operating budgets under $200,000.[30]

The 2008 Assessment of the Field then broke down their study into four main sections.

A. Overview of African American Museums
B. Service to the Public
C. Collections
D. Looking Forward

The following text boxes present the major findings from each section of their study.

[28] ibid.
[29] Association of African American Museums. "Assessment of the Field: African American Cultural Organizations." People, Places & Design Research Northampton, Massachusetts 2008. 1.
[30] ibid.

A. Overview of African American Cultural Organizations

This section presents an overview of the growth and characteristics of African American cultural organizations.

The principal findings are:

- After slight increases in the number of African American cultural organizations during the 1950s and 1960s, the pace at which they were founded accelerated greatly in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The current decade continues to witness new organizations with more being planned for the near future.

- The South is the hub of growth of African American cultural organizations. More have been founded in the South than the other regions of the United States during each of the last several decades and more continue to be built there during the first years of the 21st Century. In contrast, the rate of growth in the Northeast was greater during the 1970s and 1980s than during the ensuing twenty years. Growth in the Midwest and West was greatest in the last 20 years.

- The size of facilities ranges from small (half are under 5000 square feet in size) to large (16% are over 40,000 square feet in size). Over half have some sort of landmark status and the large majority are ADA handicapped accessible. Slightly over half have gift shops or stores.

- In terms of staff, the size of organizations varies greatly, from relying entirely on volunteers to dozens of full-time employees. However, most African American cultural organizations have three or fewer full-time employees and a similar number of part-time employees.

- African American cultural organizations also have a wide range of financial resources. Many survive on operating budgets under $100,000 while others have operating budgets over $1 million. Most organizations rely on multiple other sources of income: primarily donations, grants and parent organizations.

- Like other cultural organizations, African American cultural organizations are users of modern technology. The large majority have access to the internet and have their own web site. In addition, most have a computer database inventory of their collections and in this survey expressed interest in being part of a technology network.

31

[31] Figure 1. ibid.

B. Service to the Public

This section examines the ways in which African American cultural organizations serve the public.

The principal findings are:

- As illustrated in Section A6 of this report, admission charges are not among the most important sources of income; in fact, only about half of African American cultural organizations charge admission at all. Among those who do charge, adult admission averages about $5.

- Most African American organizations offer memberships (even if some don't regularly charge admission). Aside from presenting their collections, many also rent their facilities and host private functions and hold special events.

- Visitation at most African American cultural organizations tends to be fewer than 10,000 visitors per year, with one-tenth of the organizations reporting over 100,000 visitors annually. Most of these visitors are free general public or school groups, but about one-fifth are paid general public visitors.

- African American cultural organizations offer a wide variety of public programs: on-site school and adult programs, community outreach, on-site children's programs and programs at schools. Larger organizations offer a wider variety of programs than smaller organizations.

[32]

[32] Figure 2. ibid.

C. Collections

This section examines the collections held by African American cultural organizations.

The principal findings are:

- The size of collections ranges from relatively small (about one-third have fewer than 500 items) to very large (about one-fourth have over 5000 items). Most organizations display less than half of their collections during any particular year.

- The contents of the permanent exhibitions are primarily about African American history, but some are about African American art or African art and history. Organizations presenting African American history are most likely to present local/regional history and the stories of famous individuals. The most frequent specific topics are slavery (including abolition and the Underground Railroad), schools, the Civil War and civil rights.

- The most common types of collections are photographs, historic artifacts, printed materials and art, but many African American organizations also present film, oral histories and furnishings.

- One of the greatest needs for African American cultural organizations is collections care. Slightly over half of the organizations have a formal collections policy and about one-fourth have a conservator or conservation program.

- African American cultural organizations produce many temporary exhibits about the African American experience (arts, history, textiles and famous individuals) and most have an interest in traveling exhibits and are willing to lend items from their own collections. About half currently rent or receive temporary exhibits, but only about one-fifth have any budget for them.

[33]

[33] Figure 3. ibid.

D. Looking Forward

This section examines the institutional needs and associations of African American cultural organizations.

The principal findings are:

- Fundraising, grant writing and additional staff are the greatest needs perceived by African American cultural organizations. Collections care (especially among smaller organizations), guidance about publicity, and technology are also needed by some organizations. Web design, professional development and financial management are "greatest needs" for a few organizations.

- Most of the organizations surveyed for this research have at least some institutional affiliations: half are AAAM members and about one-third are AAM members. Many are members of regional or local associations.

34

[34] Figure 4. ibid.

The needs identified in the 2008 study fell within the four matters of fundraising, staffing, collections care, and grant writing. (AAAM 2008, 36) Much like the findings of the DeVos study, AAAM asserted that "preservation-infrastructure activities are essential for long-term viability."[35] To offer a comparison in the shifting needs of African American museums from 2008 - 2017, AAAM conducted a second study in 2017 titled *The National Needs Assessment for the Association of African American Museums*.

The 2017 National Needs Assessment for the Association of African American Museums was conducted through the support of the National Leadership Grant for Community Anchors provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The publication represented and assessed the field by reporting on the state of African American museums and the professionals working in those institutions. The report summarized the needs of both institutions and individuals and how the Association of African American Museums could offer support.[36] The 2017 needs assessment found these paralleling trends in Section A of the earlier study. (Overview of African American Cultural Organizations):

- Two thirds of responding organizations were 501(3)c, private non-profits. 20% were state owned: 13% municipal and 7% state owned. The proportions were similar in the 2008 study.
- The number of board members varied widely both in 2016 and in 2008. In both studies, organizations indicated that their boards were commonly composed of 7, 15 or 20+ board members.
- In both studies, museum representatives were affiliated with sites that had opened their doors in a wide variety of different periods, starting in the 19th century.
- Most African American organizations have small budgets, a pattern evident in 2008 National Survey and 2016 National Needs Assessment.
- Related to the small budget, a substantial number of organizations did not have any full time paid staff.[37]

The study then expressed differences in the findings of the two assessments:

[35] ibid.
[36] Association of African American Museums. "2017 National Needs Assessment for the Association of African American Museums." People, Places & Design Research Northampton, Massachusetts. 2016. 38.
[37] ibid.

"In terms of needs expressed by constituents, the limited data about needs in the 2008 survey does align with the results from the 2017 Needs Assessment. Museum representatives wanted help with funding, and with resources that could help them with their operations and development. They were also interested in networking opportunities and professional development."[38]

Beyond the overview, AAAM asked its participants to rate (on a 1-5 scale) the following sources of strength in their organizations.

A. Clarity of mission
B. Well-functioning governance
C. Making the most of resources
D. Creativity of spirit
E. Good Image in community
F. Security of property and staff
G. Accessibility (physical & linguistic)
H. Ability to attract audience
I. Ability to attract resources

As an entirely volunteer-led nonprofit organization, AAAM has taken on a notable and monumental task of supporting the nation's African American museums. Their assessments have outlined key factors that hinder sustainability in the nation's African American museums.

Section 2. Micromuseology: Implications to the Field

As mentioned in the previous chapter, 90% of African American museums are also small museums. Since AAAM primarily serves micromuseums, the use of micromuseology can serve as a paradigm to assess the shared characteristics of small museums. In accordance with Fiona Candlin's definition, **micromuseums** are museums operated by ten or less staff members in a physically limited space that focus on a single subject which falls outside or is segmented within traditional academic disciplines.

This definition is by far not the only one recognized in the museology field. In 2010, the Association of Independent Museums (UK) defined small museums as having maximum 20,000

[38] ibid.

visitors a year. Further, in defining small museums, most American associations focus on budget and staff size. In 2007, after completing a survey of 455 members, the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) Small Museums Committee refined their definition of "small museums" as having the following qualifications:

- an annual budget of less than $250,000,
- operate with a small staff with multiple responsibilities,
- and employ volunteers to perform key staff functions.

AASLH further considers that "other characteristics such as the physical size, collection size and scope, etc., may further classify a museum as small."[39] The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) shares the same definition as AASLH. The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) defines small museums as having five or fewer paid staff members and an annual budget of $350,000 or less.

In the early years of micromuseology, the ability to characterize micromuseums by their unique structures, practices, and public perceptions can redefine what success looks like for these institutions. The study of micromuseology evolved out of a museum boom in the United Kingdom between the late 1960's and 1980's in which the number of museums in the UK skyrocketed from 900 to 2,500 museums (as estimated by the Museum Galleries Commission in Report 1987-1988: Specifically Featuring Independent Museums)[40] In response to this museum boom, Kenneth Hudson, founder of the European Museums Forum, gathered that nearly all of the new museums, (about 1,600), had three traits in common: "they were small in their staff size, independent, and they concentrated on single subjects or themes that fell outside of the academic

[39] American Association for State and Local History. "What Is a Small Museum?" *Communities*, community.aaslh.org/small-museum-what-is-a-small-museum/.
[40] Candlin Fiona, *Micromuseology*. Bloomsbury Academic. Micromuseology: An Introduction. New York, 2016.

disciplines."[41] With these defining characteristics in mind, Hudson concluded that "the change in style 'amounts to a revolution - the word is not an exaggeration - in museum philosophy and practical application.'[42]

The unprecedented growth in museums generated further debate as to what the "character of small museums" meant for the larger field of museum studies. In her 2012 article, *Independent Museums, Heritage, and the Shape of Museum Studies*, Fiona Candlin describes the British heritage debates of the 1980's and 1990's. In this article, Candlin sites that, even after the UK museum boom, many museological discussions discounted the practices of small, independent, museums in the scholarship of museum studies and instead discussed small museums only in relation to heritage studies. This designation of small museums existing only in the realm of heritage studies came from the notion that, while the historical preservation of small museums could be influential from a historical perspective, the distinct practices of small museums could not and should not impact museological discussions that focus on the practices and perceptions larger museums.

In agreeance with Kenneth Hudson's approach to the UK's small museum boom, Candlin shares the following response:

> "This disciplinary partiality maintains ingrained structures of social and cultural exclusion, but it also homogenizes museum studies, limiting its concerns and scope. Many independent museums do function in similar ways to public-sector institutions: an educational ethos is assumed, professional levels of security, conservation, and collections management are taken for granted, as is a commitment to posterity. Yet, if one bears in mind that the majority of the new independent museums are small venues, often run on a low income by enthusiasts, groups, or private collectors, the academic bias towards national and larger organisations means that potential areas of enquiry are ignored.[43]"

To further prove the heterogeneity of small museums, Candlin then ventured throughout the United Kingdom to investigate 61 micromuseums in her effort to develop a framework to

[41] ibid.
[42] Kenneth Hudson, 'The Museum Refuses to Stand Still' in Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts, ed. Bettina Messias Carbonell. Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2004. 90.
[43] Candlin Fiona, "Independent Museums, Heritage, and the Shape of Museum Studies." University of Leicester, 2012.

study micromuseums. Through her research, she defined, developed and dedicated a book to the unique practices of small museums titled *Micromuseology*.[44]

Her book posited the following characteristics that distinctly set micromuseums apart from their fellow midsize and macro institutions. It is through the understanding of these characteristics that an analysis can be catered specifically for the benefit of small museums.

Interior characteristics:

A. single-subject in nature
B. displays are organized either in-situ or in-context
C. more likely to showcase politically contentious objects and themes than large museums
D. operated by a small staff (less than 5) whom share expertise in the subject matter
E. centers of social interaction for specialty circles, non-specialty circles (i.e. tours, program collaborations, program participation, research scholars, board and membership meetings, informal conversation with curators)
F. passed down generationally within families

Exterior characteristics:

G. visited through word-of-mouth marketing
H. directly connected to the physical location of their institution
I. not immediately recognizable in regards to building structure
J. located outside of "museum districts(s)" that feature multiple large museums

These defined characteristics may seem obvious to museologists and museum staff alike, but recognizing the structures, practices, and public perceptions that define micromuseums is essential in asserting best practice within the field. The ability for micromuseums to assess themselves in relation to these criteria has the potential for immediate progression. Thus, the multiple hats worn by small staffs can be simplified through the help of having a better defined "arena" through which they can develop and codified best practices.

[44] ibid.

While the above criterion set small museums apart from major museums through numeric terms, the characteristics of micromuseums approach these differences through interior and exterior factors that shape the social experiences of these institutions. By instituting the characteristics of micromuseums into the means of assessment by which associations understand small museums, the shared circumstances and interests of small museums can be supported by the associations that support them.

Chapter III: Methodology

A. Introduction

To demonstrate the characteristic patterns of micromuseums, and the usefulness of such categorization, the researcher developed a two-part qualitative study that consisted of online surveys and observational analyses. The survey was developed to collect the same data as was collected by the Association of African American Museums (AAAM) in their *2017 National Needs Assessment.* These surveys were paired with an observational analysis that was fulfilled through on-site visits to each participating museum. The observational analysis was designed to incorporate the characteristics of micromuseums as outlined by Fiona Candlin in her book, *Micromuseology*. By pairing the observational analysis with the online surveys, this thesis will identify key themes in the structure, practices, and perceptions of micromuseums that were not initially identifiable through the survey portion alone.

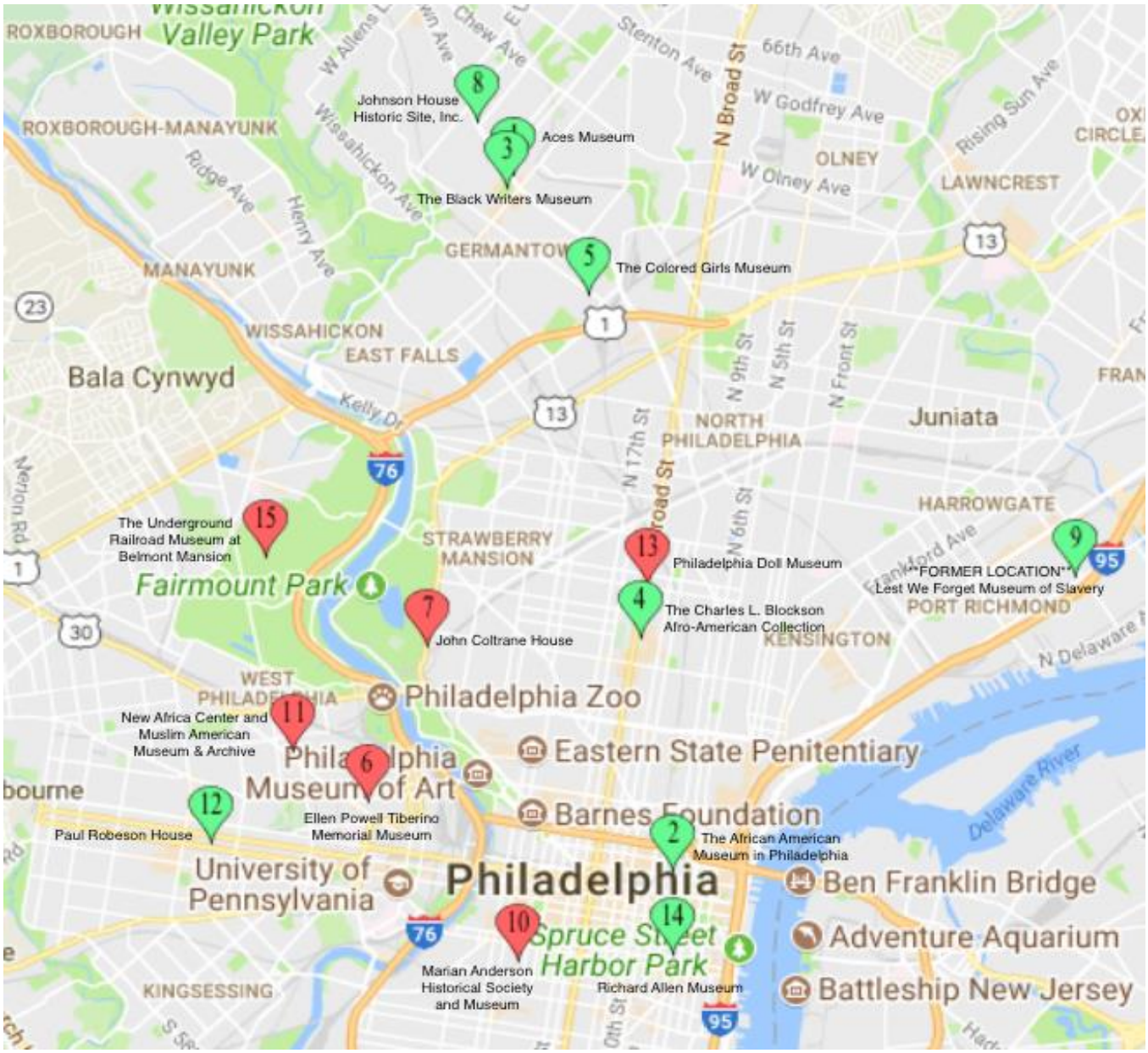
The research question of this study:

a. How can the incorporation of Candlin's characteristics of micromuseums benefit AAAM's assessments to help them better understand their members and in turn provide for them?

B. Setting

Philadelphia is home to fifteen African American museums. Of these fifteen, this study took place at nine museums located throughout the city. The map below provides locations for

all fifteen African American Museums in Philadelphia.[45] Those with green markers participated in this study, those in red did not.



[45] Note that #9, The Lest We Forget Slavery Museum is currently in transition to relocate elsewhere in the city.

C. Participation

A number of sources were used to locate African American museums throughout the city. As is the case for most localized African American museums in the United States, many of these institutions are difficult to find through the internet alone. Most were found through word-of mouth inquiries with seasoned Philadelphians. This study identified 15 African American museums throughout the city of Philadelphia. Of these 15, 9 participated in an online survey through Survey Monkey and were visited by the researcher for observational analysis.

Fifteen identified African American Museums within Philadelphia:

1. The Aces Museum
2. The African American Museum in Philadelphia
3. The Black Writers Museum
4. The Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection[46]
5. The Colored Girls Museum
6. The Ellen Powell Tiberino Museum
7. The John Coltrane House
8. The Johnson House Historic Site
9. The Lest We Forget Museum of Slavery
10. The Marian Anderson House
11. The New Africa Museum
12. The Paul Robeson House
13. The Philadelphia Doll Museum
14. The Richard Allen Museum
15. The Underground Railroad Museum at Belmont Mansion

Of these fifteen, nine participated in the online survey:

1. The Aces Museum
2. The African American Museum in Philadelphia
3. The Black Writers Museum
4. The Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection
5. The Colored Girls Museum
6. The Johnson House Historic Site
7. The Lest We Forget Museum of Slavery

[46] The Charles L. Blockson is a rare case in this assessment as it is a non-profit, collecting institution that offers public access for research and visitation. Though not a museum by name, the Blockson was included as it holds many similarities with the definition used to define museums within this thesis.

8. The Paul Robeson House
9. The Richard Allen Museum

D. Procedure

The data was collected through surveys and observations by the researcher. For the survey portion, the researcher contacted each museum via email to introduce herself and send out the survey. For the observation portion, the researcher did not inform the museum of her intention to visit. If the museum had open hours for visitation, the researcher attended with no prior contact to the museum. There were some museums that had "appointment only" visitation. For these visits, the researcher did not make reference to the thesis in the appointment setup, thus ensuring an informal visit for data collection. Each visit to a museum lasted about 1.5 hours.

A. Materials

An online survey titled: "Needs Assessment Survey for Philadelphia African American Museum" was developed and disseminated via email to participating institutions. This survey sought to collect the same data found in the *Summary of Findings* section of the 2017 National Needs Assessment. The survey can be found in the Appendix of this document. Questions 1, 2, 3, 12, & 17 were added to provide additional background information on the individual taking the survey as well as the museum they operate.

E. Measurement Instruments

The researcher also conducted an observational analysis of participating institutions to experience the museum from the perspective of a visitor. In accordance the Characteristics of

Micromuseums[47] outlined in Chapter 1, the researcher created the following observational checklist for consideration:

Interior:

F. Subject matter of museum

G. The approach to collection display and management

H. Staff size and responsibilities

Exterior:

I. Location of institution

J. Recognizability

K. Marketing tactics

L. Data Analysis Procedure

The collected data was coded and categorized into terms representing the survey questions, and the interior/exterior observational characteristics. From these codes, emerging themes were recognized and expounded upon in the Results section of this paper.

[47] Candlin, Fiona. Micromuseology. (Bloomsbury Academic. New York, NY.) 2016. 17. 144.

Chapter IV. Results

The following results were collected through an online survey and an observational analysis of each museum. These two methods of data collection examined the participating museums from the perspective of the 2017 National Needs Assessment for the Association of African American Museums and from the characteristics of micromuseums put forth by Fiona Candlin in her book *Micromuseology*. In what follows, the researcher lists the results of each survey question and interior/exterior characteristic. The researcher will elaborate upon these results and identify emerging themes in the next chapter.

The survey instrument for this study designed to reflect the 2017 National Needs Assessment for the Association of African American Museums. This survey collected data on the following criteria to gather background information on each individual museum.

- Year Opened
- Organizational Structure
- Sources of Revenue
- Staff Size and experience level
- Board size
- Target Audience
- Association Memberships

The survey also used a rating scale of 1-5 to measure the confidence that participants felt in their ability to meet the following parameters of operation:

1. Clarity of Vision
2. Creativity of Spirit
3. Well Functioning Governance

4. Ability to Attract Audiences
5. Ability to attract resources
6. Making the most of resources
7. Having a Good Image in the Community
8. Security of Property and Staff
9. Accessibility

Through the use of the survey instrument, the following data was collected about Philadelphia's African American museums. These survey results provided background information for each museum, their sources of revenue, and revealed the strengths and weaknesses of their operational parameters.

1. Participants in this study opened to the public as 501c3 organizations during the latter half of the 20th century and into the early 21st century as both independent museums and through partnerships.
    1. Richard Allen Museum, Line Dept. to Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church- Founded circa. 1960
    2. African American Museum in Philadelphia, Partner of Amtrak, Historic Philadelphia, Comcast, and WURD Radio - Founded 1976
    3. Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection, Line Dept. to Temple University - Founded 1984
    4. Johnson House Historic Site Inc., Partner of Historic Germantown- Founded 1997

5. Paul Robeson House, Member of West Philadelphia Cultural Alliance- Founded 1994
6. Aces Museum, Partner of Historic Germantown -Founded 2001
7. Lest We Forget Slavery Museum - 2002
8. Black Writers Museum - 2010
9. Colored Girls Museum - 2015

2. Most participant museums are primarily volunteer led with minimal paid positions.[48] Furthermore, the number of entry-level professionals outweigh that of senior professionals.

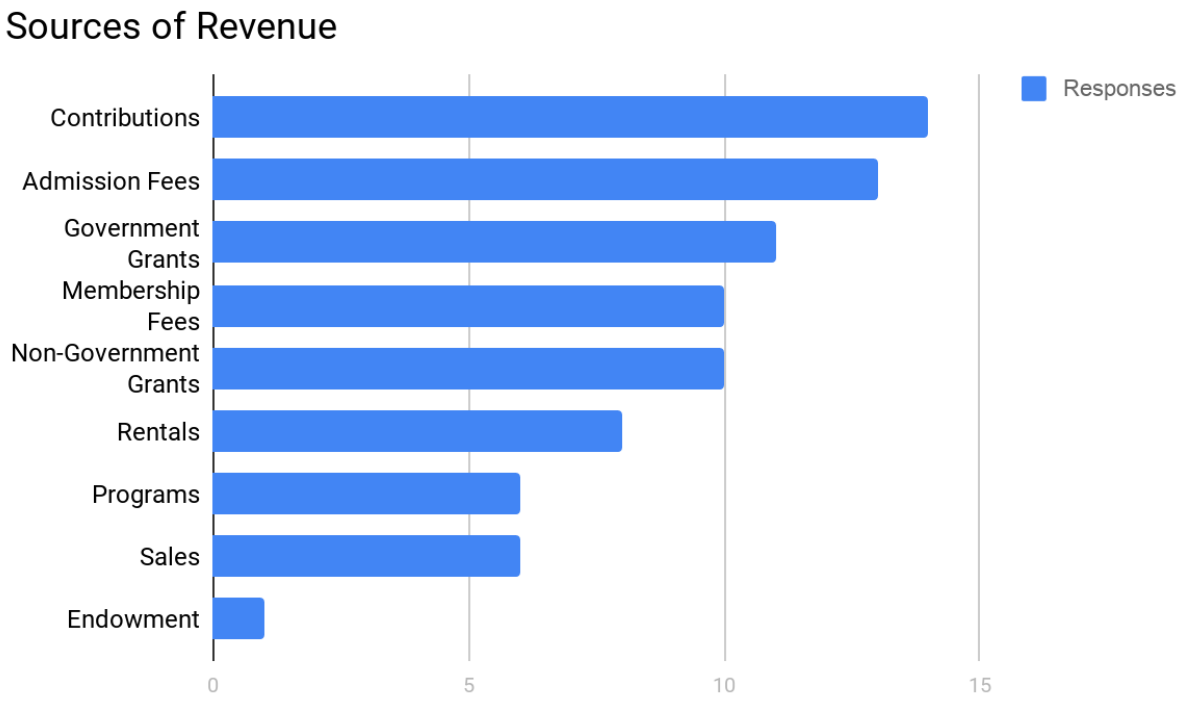
Museums ranged from being all volunteer to having 10+ full time and part-time staff members. Regarding staff experience, after tallying the responses for all museums, for every 1 senior professional identified in the survey, there could be found 4 entry-level professionals.

3. With the exception of AAMP (which has 20+ board members), African American micromuseums range in board leadership from 0 - 10 board members. Board member career backgrounds ranged widely. The most common professions held by board members included:

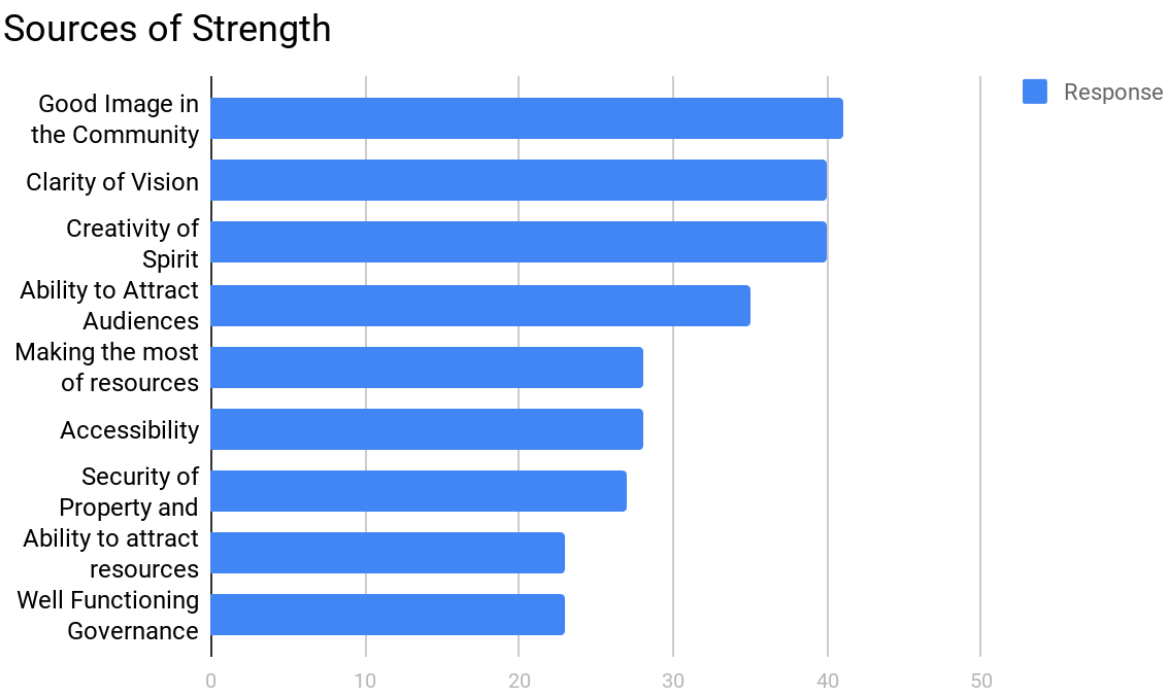
- Healthcare
- Entrepreneurs
- Community Organizers

[48] With the exception of the African American Museum in Philadelphia and Charles L. Blockson Afro American Collection

4. Regarding sources of revenue, the most and least substantial sources of revenue were recognized as the following:



5. Participants rated the strengths and weaknesses of their museums as the following:



The results of the ranking scale questions reveal that most museum professionals participants feel secure in their ability to curate relevant programs/exhibits through the means they have for audiences on whom they can rely to attend. The results also reveal that participants do not feel as secure in their ability to manage funds or secure and sustain their museums through the essential realms of governance and funding. Accessibility to the museums, (meaning linguistic, handicap assistance, etc.) was also a parameter that participants believed their museums address inadequately.

Emergent Themes: *Observational Analyses*

Through the observational analysis portion of this study, the researcher identified the following characteristic patterns that shape the operations and visitor experiences of each museum. These patterns ranged from the exterior characteristics--which showed effects on marketability, and interior characteristics which focused more on collections management.

Aces Museum	Single Subject in Nature	In Situ Displays	In-Context Displays	Socio-Political Themes	Small Staff Size (<10)	Marketing is primarily word-of-mouth	Preserves the history of their direct location	Immediately recognizable to visitors	Located in a "museum district"
The African American Museum in Philadelphia	X	x	✓	✓	x	x	x	✓	✓
The Black Writers Museum	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓
The Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection	X	x	✓	✓	x	✓	x	x	x
The Colored Girls Museum	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	x	x	✓
The Johnson House Historic Site, Inc.	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓
The Lest We Forget Museum of Slavery	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x	x
The Paul Robeson House	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x
The Richard Allen Museum	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	x

Emergent Themes: *Exterior Characteristics:*

1. Word of mouth marketing is the primary method by which Philadelphia's African American micromuseums reach potential audiences.

    The researcher designated word-of-mouth marketing to include: Person to person recommendations, email blasts from museum staff to potential visitors, unpaid radio shout-outs, social media posts by museum staff (paid boosted social media posts not included).

    An exception to this rule was found in the African American Museum in Philadelphia. As a mid-sized museum (possessing both the traits of small and large museums), the African American Museum in Philadelphia possesses specialized staff who consistently produce and update marketing materials. For museums that exist in partnership organizations, marketing is handled by the larger organization of which they are a part. Further discussion on this emergent theme can be found in the next chapter of this paper.

2. Five out of the nine African American Museums in this study have a direct connection to their physical location.
    1. Aces Museum
    2. Colored Girls Museum
    3. Johnson House Historic Site
    4. Paul Robeson House
    5. Richard Allen Museum

To have a direct connection to one's physical location means that the location is intrinsic to the wider narrative of the museum (historic houses being the most common to meet this criteria).

3. Philadelphia's African American museums (with the exception of The African American Museum in Philadelphia) are located outside of the city's major museum districts. This takes away access to major tour bus lines that can bring forth potential visitors. Three African American museums are located within Historic Germantown, which is a museum district populated solely by small museums.

4. All museums in this study (with the exception of the African American Museum in Philadelphia) are discrete in their recognizability. The style of buildings that most micromuseums in this study possess were not originally designed for the purpose of being museums. Most buildings sit alongside visually similar buildings with little to no signage along the street to announce their presence.

Emergent Themes: *Interior Characteristics:*

1. All but two of the museums are single-subject in nature.

With the exception of The Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection and The African American Museum in Philadelphia, all museums in this study were single-subject in nature. The term "single-subject" can be traced back to Fiona Candlin's book *Micromuseology*. She describes single-subject as meaning subjects that falls outside or are segmented within

traditional academic disciplines.[49] All other African American museums in this study celebrate people, places or events that are either not recognized, or recognized only briefly, in academic settings. (i.e. The Aces Museum, The Black Writers Museum, The Colored Girls Museum, The Johnson House Historic Site, The Lest We Forget Slavery Museum, The Paul Robeson House, The Richard Allen Museum)

2. Regarding display methods, three of the museums use in-situ methods of display while six use in-context methods of display.[50]

In short, in-situ displays are mimetic, meaning they seek to preserve or recreate a setting (i.e. historic house rooms), In-context methods of display are organized to form an historical or thematic experience. Six museums had in context methods of display while 3 museums had in-situ displays. The implications of these two methods of display are further discussed in the next chapter of this paper.

3. All African American museums in Philadelphia can be considered "politically contentious" in that they represent a history of overcoming injustice towards African American people. Moreover the politicization of African American museums can be further measured based on the variables of time, location, and affiliation.

The history of African Americans within the United States is inherently tied to political themes due to the foundations of African American life in the United States. While the subject matter of these museums may be considered politically contentious to some, the degree of this "contentiousness" can increase or decrease based on how

[49] Candlin Fiona, *Micromuseology*. Bloomsbury Academic. New York, 2016.
[50] ibid.

contemporary a museum's message is, whether or not the museum developed "organically" over time in the direct location they hold, and the affiliations a museum has. Further discussion on the politicization of African American museums will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter V. Discussion

African American museums exist as unique members of the wider museum community with their own shared history and perspectives. African American communities have adapted to overcome centuries of barriers to freedom within the United States. And so African American museums preserve these memories of hardship and celebrate moments of progress and joy. As a community consisting primarily of small museums, it is important for African American museums, like all small museums, to undergo assessment in order to build networks, improve their practices, and share their unique experiences with the wider museum field. The implementation of museum assessments is a task that has been approached differently by every museum association that has produced them. As new theories on museum assessment emerge, it is important to test, refine, and in some cases, combine these theories in order to improve upon the current paradigms in operation. This study seeks to push that envelope through the use of a new paradigm dedicated solely to micromuseums.

Thus far, major museum associations (AAM, AASLH, SMA, & SMAC)[51] have come to define small museums through primarily numerical criteria on staff size, budget, visitation, and sometimes the square footage of their building(s). While these criteria are conducive in their ability to distinguish what is and is not a small museum (which is necessary for the sake of grant funding), the criteria do not speak towards the shared realities of small museum practice and perception.

The associations listed above have also produced assessments and resources that are designed to improve small museum practice. These assessments work as one-to-one programs between the participating museums and their consultants. While these one-to-one programs are

[51] American Alliance of Museums, American Association of State and Local History, Small Museum Association, & Small Museum Administrators Committee

being widely praised as successful, assessments that analyze the collective circumstances of small museums are not common and thus not thoroughly developed within the field of museology. Such collective assessments have the potential to better inform museum associations about the museums they serve and expedite the process of assisting them on a wider scale.

The Association of African American Museums (AAAM) is one such association that has produced two national assessments[52] to better understand the current status of African American museums throughout the United States. How can the incorporation of Candlin's characteristics of micromuseums benefit AAAM's assessments to help them understand their small museum members and provide for them?

The following themes emerged from intersecting multiple survey results listed in the previous chapter. Some results from the previous chapter are not mentioned further in this chapter, as they bore no significance towards emerging themes:

1. **Older African American museums in this study, in contrast to newer ones, were founded through partnerships and have memberships with related associations.**

In line with the observations of Dr. Coleman (see Chapter 2), museums founded shortly after the Civil Rights Movement and during the second "Black museum boom" in the 1990's were founded with partnership organizations.

The African American Museum in Philadelphia is the first institution built by a major United States city that is dedicated to African American history, art and culture. As an institution founded by the city of Philadelphia, the building costs and utilities of the museum are covered. Further, AAMP has numerous sponsorships with companies and corporations that

[52]Assessment of the Field: African American Cultural Organizations (2008) & 2017 National Needs Assessment for the Association of African American Museums

provide a number of benefits, such as advertisements, special discounts for visitors, and funding for annual programs.

The Richard Allen Museum and Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection are both associated with larger organizations that oversee their legal and financial obligations. The technical term for these kind of museums is "line department." Line departments like the Richard Allen Museum and Blockson Collection either evolve out of or are adopted into their larger organizations. In the case of these two institutions, the Richard Allen Museum evolved out of Mother Bethel A.M.E Church whereas the Blockson Collection came under the care of Temple University. The benefit of being a line department is that the resources needed for the institution are covered as *line* items in the larger organization's budget. The buildings that house line departments is also paid for by their larger organizations. Beyond this, The Blockson Collection and Richard Allen Museum have their preservation materials (i.e. acid-free boxes, mylar, office supplies, etc.) covered and the Blockson Collection's marketing materials designed and produced through Temple University Libraries. (The Richard Allen Museum does not currently host programs in the museum but rather in the lecture hall of the church.)

The Johnson House Historic Site Inc. and Aces Museum are members of Historic Germantown. Historic Germantown or "Freedom's Backyard" is a partnership of 16 museums throughout Germantown. Their mission is "to preserve its extraordinary historic assets, increase access, interpret them to the public and raise their visibility." The benefits of this partnership include boosted marketing, annual event planning, and assistance in grant research/writing.

The three most recent African American museums founded in Philadelphia (Lest We Forget Slavery Museum, Black Writers Museum, and The Colored Girls Museum) were

developed with no identifiable partnerships that provide consistent support to one or more areas of operation within the museum.

2. Modes of governance that do not involve board leadership can still offer functionality and success.

Three African American museums noted that they do not have a board of directors leading their museum. Two of the three board-less museums scored themselves highly on the 1-5 scale measuring their governance functionality. These two museums were the Richard Allen Museum and the Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection. Both of these museums are line departments. Meaning that, while they do not operate with a board directly, their operations are recognized by the board(s) of their larger organization.

While this is surely not a commonality of the majority, this finding is significant due to the rarity of such a mode of governance and more notably, the success that it has to offer. When asked about the unique structure of line departments, the Director of the Blockson Collection maintained that,

"While budget cuts are bound to occur, being a part of a University offers stronger footing for our collection...and if budget cuts are the only concern you have, than you are probably in the best situation you can be in, because you know you're going to be sustained."

Emergent Themes: Observational Analysis

In the following discussion piece, the Interior and Exterior characteristics of micromuseums are leveraged to reveal emerging themes. As in the survey portion of this discussion, some characteristics which yielded no significant influence over discussion will not be further considered for the remainder of this work.

Interior Characteristic Results Discussion

1. **Regarding display methods, three of the museums use in-situ methods of display while six use in-context methods of display.**[53]

In chapter six of *Micromuseology*, Fiona Candlin finds that, unlike major museums, most micromuseums do not use space as liberally to display their objects. In major museums, (especially art museums,) it is not uncommon to find pieces hanging or sitting at some remove from another. Some exhibits dedicate an entire room to one or two objects. This can instill a sense of the heightened value of the work(s) in the visitor. Exhibit walls can be built and knocked down in order to create and recreate new paths for visitors to explore.

Of course, institutional size is the key factor in this characteristic. For small museums it is not uncommon to see an entire collection on display within a few rooms. The volume of objects can obscure the sense of heightened value that one object might have over another. Also, unlike large museums, exhibits at some small museums can remain unchanged over time. This is especially common in historic sites. Within almost all museums, it is common to find in situ or in-context displays. Sometimes a museum can have a mixture of both. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in situ displays are mimetic, meaning that they preserve or recreate a scene that relates to the overall mission of the museum. Examples of this include period rooms and dioramas. In-context displays place objects into frameworks with proposed historical,

[53] ibid.

classificatory, or thematic relationships. The significance of these different forms of display in connection to the needs of these museums becomes apparent in recognizing the tendencies that exist for each method.

In-situ displays

- Typically do not rotate out their exhibits
- Less likely to collect, loan-out and receive loans of artifacts
- Less storage space needed for collections
- Less cataloging needed for collection

In-context displays

1. Space for display is often tighter
2. Storage space needed for non-exhibited collections
3. Cataloguing is a continuous process
4. Exhibit rotation can bring in new audiences
5. Accession and deaccession policies are necessary
6. More likely to partake in loaning and receiving loans of artifacts

2. All African American museums in Philadelphia can be considered "politically contentious" in that they represent a history of overcoming an injustice towards African American people. Moreover, the politicization of African American museums can be further measured based on the variables of time, location and affiliation.

All African American museums in Philadelphia preserve an instance or instances in US history when African Americans overcame a limitation to the rights of black people. At one point in time, documenting or discussing this "instance" would have been considered politically

contentious based on the surrounding climate that thrusted the significant moment into the center stage of history. As time passes, the "instance," sediments into the collective consciousness of America--thus disabling or reducing the consideration of it being "politically contentious." Historic houses often point towards this kind of conceptual shift.

An example of this can be seen at the Johnson House Historic Site. Throughout the early to mid-19th century, the Johnson House Historic Site Inc. served as a station of the Underground Railroad. The actions of the Johnson family and fugitive Africans who stayed there were illegal in their time, the consequences being imprisonment for the Johnson family and re-enslavement and death for the fugitive Africans seeking shelter within their home. At the time, the term, "politically contentious" could not even adequately describe the magnitude of this family's crime and the notion of enslaved Africans running away[54]. Today, the preservation of Underground Railroad Sites is hardly considered politically contentious. The history of the Underground Railroad is now commonly taught through public education as well as on national television. The Johnson House has even received national recognition as an Historic Landmark by the National Park Service. As such, the variables of time, location, and affiliation all have affected the consideration of the Johnson House as being "politically contentious."

The Paul Robeson House and the Richard Allen Museum similarly share in the conceptual shift, locational significance, and affiliation benefits of the Johnson House. The Aces Museum also shared all three variables, but since the site it preserves (historic Parker Hall) has not received recognition either as a national landmark or through the medium of an historical marker, the general public cannot easily recognize the significance of the museum's location. Thus, Aces Museum cannot wield the variable of time or location as strongly as the other historic

[54] Drapetomania was a conjectural mental illness that, in 1851, American physician Samuel A. Cartwright deemed as the cause of enslaved Africans fleeing captivity.

sites. African American museums that do not have this configuration are often considered as being "more political" due to their objectives being more "contemporary" in nature, their locations having no direct connection to their missions, and their affiliations having less influence over the general public.

The Black Writers Museum, Colored Girls Museum, and Lest We Forget Slavery Museum do not carry the variables of time, location, and affiliation to the proverbial "table" as do the historic houses and historic church considered above. These museums were all founded within the 21st century by individuals who acquired a building to manifest their own visions as museums. Their decision to serve the general public in such a profound manner ought not go unrecognized. The ability for these kinds of museums to gain recognition is often more difficult due to their contemporary nature and newness to society. Furthermore, as African American museums, the message put forth by these institutions can unfortunately be misunderstood as "politically contentious" and thus overlooked by potential audiences. Just as the grassroots museums of the 1960's were deemed "anti-establishment" and the acts of the Johnson House were illegal during the period of enslavement, the missions of African American museums without an historic narrative connected to their location are often not fully accepted by the community that surrounds them. For example, the mission of the Colored Girls Museum is "*to be a public ritual for the protection, praise and grace of the ordinary/extraordinary Colored Girl."* While this mission is not inherently contentious, in the era of BLACK LIVES MATTER, such a mission as this as can be deemed by some audiences as being more politically contentious than say, a site that preserves the history of the Underground Railroad. Like the purpose of the BLACK LIVES MATTER movement, the mission of the Colored Girls Museum brings the shared experiences and histories of African American women to the forefront for reflection and

celebration. Just as the BLACK LIVES MATTER movement has received considerable backlash; most notably the retort of "ALL LIVES MATTER" in an effort to represent all races, (thus overlooking the injustice directed specifically to black people) mission's like the Colored Girls Museum's can be seen as contentious when placed in context with contemporary political movements.

While there are, of course, racist communities in America that still believe in the institution of slavery and would find museums like that of the Johnson House as offensive, the mission of the Johnson House has received federal recognition and it is one amongst several Underground Railroad sites in the country whose missions have similarly been affirmed by the federal government and the general public who share value in the mission of preserving Underground Railroad sites. In the age where BLACK LIVES MATTER is retaliated upon with the saying "ALL LIVES MATTER," a mission to protect and praise the ordinary/extraordinary colored girl, while fundamentally close at heart to that of the Johnson House Historic Site, would not have the same acceptance by all facets of public perception within the United States to the extent of the mission of the Johnson House Historic Site.

What's more, since the Black Writers Museum, Colored Girls Museum, and Lest We Forget Slavery Museums are not directly connected to the history of their locations, and since they were not founded with close affiliations to larger organizations, their ability to gain credibility in the field often begins from square one as new "neighbors" alongside well-seasoned institutions who may or may not find cause to associate with them at all.

Lastly, there are museums that perform with neither variables of time and location, but have strong affiliations to jumpstart their institutional missions. The African American Museum in Philadelphia and the Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection are two such institutions

that originated within this context. Founded within ten years of each other (1976 and 1984), AAMP and the Blockson both have major institutions supporting their missions through finances, public relations, and legal guidance. AAMP is the first African American Museum to be founded by a major municipality within the United States. As such, the museum was founded with sponsorships that would be much more difficult to assemble for all other museums in this assessment. AAMP is also an official Smithsonian affiliate. The Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection was founded in 1984 as a line department to Temple University. Their direct affiliation with Temple provides resources and audiences to keep the collection in constant use and in good condition.

While both institutes are considerably young in such an old city as Philadelphia, and do not preserve the site history on which they sit, their connections have skyrocketed their reputations to the point of being renowned both within and beyond the city itself. Further, as "highly affiliated museums," the missions of AAMP and The Blockson are, in a sense, "certified" by the larger institutions that support them. This opens up their visitation to members of society who might not initially have considered visiting the institutions based upon their matters of interest. Of course, as mentioned in chapter two of this paper, associations with "mainstream" organizations may also bring about conflicting perceptions of an institute by the folks who do not wish to associate within the "mainstream."

To a degree, the affiliations that these museums hold disable the identity of the museum of being politically contentious for some members of their wider community, while these same affiliations pronounce the notion of contentiousness to another. Such concerns, while ethically in flux, do not heavily affect the institution's ability to keep the lights on. And so, the missions

of these institutions do not inherently effect their degree of contentiousness, but rather, the affiliations by which they bear their name.

Exterior Characteristic Results Discussion

1. **Word-of-mouth marketing was used to locate most museums in this study.**

Philadelphia currently does not have a directory or authoritative source that identifies all African American Museums in the city. This is not out of the ordinary. Given the "localised" nature of micromuseums, as well as the swift changes they often go through, it can become too difficult and time consuming for individuals to locate and update directories on the status of these institutions. (It is the hope that through work such as this study, that such directories can become more common.)

Four museums in this study are partners with "umbrella" organizations that oversee the primary marketing tactics of the museums. Two of these four museums pay for their partnership benefits, while the other two are line departments to larger organizations that own the museums and include the costs of marketing in their annual budgets.

Five museums in this study are featured on Philadelphia's official promotional website *Visit Philadelphia. (Visit Philadelphia* is the region's official tourism marketing agency.) Their features can be found under the page: *African American Historic Sites in Philadelphia.* No museums in this study are official partners with *Visit Philadelphia* (which is different than being featured on their website). A partnership with *Visit Philadelphia* provides the opportunity for broadcast, hotel promotions, social media posts and followings, publications, website promotions, as well as other partnerships and sponsorships to boost marketability.

All museums in this study are present on one or more type of social media (i.e. Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Youtube, or Twitter). Four of the nine museums seem to regularly update

one or more of their social media pages, while others post irregularly or not at all. Some of the social media pages doubled as personal pages for the museum founders.

3. Five out of the nine African American Museums in this study have a direct connection to their physical location.

1. Aces Museum
2. Colored Girls Museum
3. Johnson House Historic Site
4. Paul Robeson House
5. Richard Allen Museum

As institutions that essentially evolved from one purpose into another, the surrounding community for the above museums have also experienced the evolution of these museums. Such museums in a sense "know their neighbors." Since museums are essentially sustained through the relationships they build (i.e. donors, boards, returning audiences...etc.), the connection and endurance that a museum has in its immediate location can benefit or inhibit the relationships it builds.

Of course, neighbors move and new neighbors can take their place. The Richard Allen Museum and Paul Robeson House are two historic sites that have seen the gentrification of their neighborhoods over time due to social and economic shifts in their regions of the city. In conversation with the Executive Director of the Paul Robeson House, she shared the following thoughts on the issue:

> *"This neighborhood is in transition...it is dealing with gentrification. And so, it is important for us to get out and meet the people face to face, one on one, shaking*

hands, and being outside. We're on a bus route, we have a bus stop right here, and it allows us to talk to people in the neighborhood to get them acquainted with what we're doing."

On the opposite end of the spectrum, there are four African American Museums that do not have an immediate connection to their physical location:

1. The African American Museum in Philadelphia
2. The Black Writers Museum
3. The Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection
4. The Lest We Forget Museum of Slavery

This reality offers a very different perspective by those museums who move into a new location in hopes of gaining acceptance and visitation by their surrounding community.

The negative effects of being a "new neighbor" was no more felt by anyone than The African American Museum in Philadelphia. In her chapter titled "Not in My Backyard: The Contested Origins of the African American Museum in Philadelphia," author Andrea Burns delves into the heated debates that surrounded the original plans to build AAMP in a neighborhood called Society Hill. Society Hill is one of the oldest and wealthiest residential neighborhoods in Philadelphia. The location was deemed suitable since its southwest corner was once the old Seventh Ward--historically home to a large African American community.

Upon hearing of the proposition to build AAMP in the neighborhood, many members of Society Hill Civic Association (SHCA) and local residents vehemently opposed the construction by citing violations to neighborhood zoning laws. A second neighborhood organization named "Neighborhood Organized to Help Ensure a Residential Environment," or "NOT-HERE" for short, addressed the major concern (and arguably the primary concern of SHCA) regarding

implications that an African American museum would have on white residents in the area. Gerald William, project manager for the African American Museum in Philadelphia at the time, argued that "SHCA members would be against it [the black museum] even if it were the size of a matchbox."[55] Confirming the racial undertones of the dispute, Mayor Frank Rizzo was quoted in a 1975 *Philadelphia Inquirer* openly stating that "Many are opposed to it because it involves blacks…"[56]

After weeks of heated debate, the African American Museum was forced to move on from their originally planned Seventh Ward location to look elsewhere for acceptance. Before breaking the ground of 7th and Arch Streets, the current location of The African American Museum in Philadelphia, a funeral-like ceremony was held to mourn the unsuccessful attempt to build the museum on Society Hill. Architect Theodore Cam "ignited the original cardboard architectural model of the museum with lighter fluid, and the crowd applauded….Upon being asked whether the ceremonial burning represented a 'monument to racism,' co-founder Clarence Farmer replied 'Call it whatever you like...It will give those (Society Hill) residents something to think about.'"[57]

Emerging Themes: Cross Examinations of Survey and Observational Analysis

1. **The African American Museum in Philadelphia almost consistently existed as an outlier to the observational analysis and survey results of this study.**

   In terms of their staff and board size, means for marketing, recognizability, location, and subject matter diversity, AAMP falls outside of the AAM definition and characteristics of micromuseums. Rather than solely identifying the museum by its size

[55] Burns, Andrea A. *From Storefront to Monument Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2014.66
[56] Ibid. 67
[57] Ibid. 70

(as is the precedent for major associations), the use of the survey and observational methods set the museum on the periphery of micromuseology through the recognition of institutional practice and perception. This distinction can change the means by which small museums are defined by allowing the idea of "mid-size" museums to develop, thus placing museums on more of a spectrum than a binary measurement of numerics.

Further, as a unique member of Philadelphia's African American community, with characteristics that set it apart from its contemporaries, AAMP can play an integral role in building up the relationships between Philadelphia's African American Museums. Rather than reinventing the wheel, AAMP can look towards other small museum collaboratives like Historic Philadelphia and Historic Germantown to forge a network between the city's African American museums.

Chapter VI. Conclusions

The research question for this study was: How can the incorporation of Candlin's characteristics of micromuseums benefit AAAM's assessments to help them better understand their members and provide for them?

After analyzing the two methods of study that this thesis utilized, the researcher concluded upon this answer:

While the AAAM assessment provides parameters for thinking about museums at large, it doesn't give assessors or participants a larger context to consider the operations and external forces that affect small museums. The characteristics of micromuseology supplements some of this information to paint a more practical picture of the circumstances that affect how small museums collectively operate. Through the use of these characteristics, AAAM can cultivate a more commonplace perspective from which small museums can understand themselves and their counterparts in the field.

Furthermore, after analyzing the results of each method of study, the researcher was able to conclude the following results and emerging themes about Philadelphia's African American Museums:

1. The 9 African American Museum participants in this study were founded from the mid-20th century until recently in 2015.
2. Older museums in this study were more likely to have been founded through partnerships and have memberships with related associations.
3. Museums whose modes of governance did not involve board leadership ranked themselves highly in their governance functionality.
4. All but two participant institutions in this study interpret a single subject that falls outside

or is segmented within traditional academic disciplines.

5. Five out of nine participant museums preserve the legacy of a person or significant event that took place on the physical location of the museum.
6. All African American museums in Philadelphia can be considered "politically contentious" in that they represent a history of overcoming injustice towards African American people. Moreover the politicization of African American museums can be further measured based on the variables of time, location, and affiliation.
7. Regarding display methods, three of the museums use in-situ methods of display while six use in-context methods of display.
8. Philadelphia's African American museums (with the exception of The African American Museum in Philadelphia) are located outside of the city's major museum districts.
9. All museums in this study (with the exception of the African American Museum in Philadelphia) are discrete in their recognizability.
10. Word of mouth marketing is the primary method by which Philadelphia's African American micromuseums reach their potential audiences.
11. Most participant museums are primarily volunteer-led with minimal paid positions. Furthermore, the number of entry-level professionals outweigh that of senior professionals.
12. Museums ranged from being all volunteer to having 10+ full time and part-time staff members. Regarding staff experience, after tallying the responses for all museums, for every 1 senior professional identified in the survey, there could be found 4 entry-level professionals.

13. With the exception of AAMP (which has 20+ board members), African American micromuseums range in board leadership from 0 - 10 board members. Board member career backgrounds ranged widely. The most common professions held by board members included:
    a. Healthcare
    b. Entrepreneurs
    c. Community Organizers
14. Regarding their sources of revenue, participants primarily operate through contributions, admission fees, governmental and non-governmental grants, and membership fees. Whereas, participant museums were far less likely to generate revenue through rentals, programs, or sales. Only one institution had an endowment to further support their institutional mission.
15. Regarding participant's feelings towards their sources of strength, participants felt secure in their ability to curate relevant programs/exhibits through the means they have for audiences on whom they can rely to attend. Furthermore, participants did not feel as secure in their ability to be linguistically/handicap accessible, manage their funds, or sustain their museums through the essential realms of governance and funding.
16. The African American Museum in Philadelphia almost consistently existed as an outlier regarding their staff and board size, means for marketing, recognizability, location, and subject matter diversity.

Chapter VII. Limitations

1. As a study of nine African American museums, this paper acknowledges just how different small museums can be when placed alongside each other. At the same time, as a study of *only* nine museums, the ability to draw out emergent themes was limited. If more museums participated in this study, the emergent themes found here could shift and/new themes could be drawn out for further analysis. Since this study focuses more on the usefulness of the different methods of study rather than the implications of each emerging theme for the individual museums, this limitation does not overwhelmingly take away from the overall goal of this project.
2. A contradiction with which this paper grapples is that the data collection for the observational analysis was collected through in-person observations. As an all volunteer organization, the researcher acknowledges that AAAM cannot replicate the observational analysis of this study. While the interior and exterior characteristics were collected through in-person observations for *this* study, the method of study to collect these characteristics can be formatted into a survey so that participants self-select the characteristics that apply to them.
3. Finally, since the observational analysis of this project came from the viewpoint of a visitor, the characteristics of micromuseums that this thesis centered upon primarily investigated matters of perception by potential audiences. To this effect, the characteristics of micromuseums could not answer to all of the parameters of operation outlined by the Association of African American Museums (AAAM). Through further investigation of the shared *operational* practices of small museums, the field of

micromuseology can expand its characteristics beyond the perspective of a highly observant visitor.

Chapter VIII. Recommendations for Future Research

1. The decision to perform an observational analysis of museums without the acknowledgement of museum staff can be a problematic practice depending on the intention of the researcher. Since this thesis did not intend to share exclusive information on the internal practices of museum staff(s), the researcher was comfortable in retaining a degree of anonymity throughout the course of her on-site data collection. If the researcher's intentions for assessment required otherwise, the choice to retain anonymity could have, in many respects, been considered unethical.

2. Regarding the practice of data collection, the use of surveys for this study was a much more expedient and reliable source of collection than that of the observational analysis. To recreate the observational analysis of author Fiona Candlin, the researcher decided to implement the analysis herself rather than questioning the participants to collect the data. The observational analysis was completed after many cancellations that occurred with and without notice from some participants. The researcher also had to reschedule multiple visits to some museums, which lead to time loss for the overall progress of this project. Also, since the goal of this project was to compliment the work produced by AAAM, conducting a study through only survey instruments is the ideal choice for the method of data collection. Following the limitation above, a next step that could follow this study would be to format the Interior & Exterior Characteristics of micromuseums into survey questions or prompts to be answered by participants. This reformatting would save the time of visiting each museum individually and provide the option for more museums to be assessed at once.

3. In this study, the researcher did not specify who should fill out the survey instrument from each participating museum. Without such instruction, the survey-takers came from multiple backgrounds (such as archivists, operational consultants, executive directors, and program managers). The difference in the responsibilities of these positions showed clear influence in their responses to the needs of their institutions. While this does not take away from the credibility of the collected data, the data may have presented more trends if the positions of the survey takers were similar.

   For future consideration, the researcher recommends that the survey-takers should each hold the same (or a similar) position at their respective museum. This will ensure that the perspectives of the survey-takers are similar. Thus, their responses to the survey will come from a similar realm of experience. Since small museums typically have small staffs with only a few positions, the survey would best be taken by the Executive Director of each museum. This is a position that, no matter how small the museum, is typically found across the board. Consistency is important for survey-based data collection, so specificity in the selection of survey-takers can be beneficial for the researcher as he or she analyses their results.

Chapter IX. Implications to the Field

The purpose of collective assessments is to identify emergent themes amongst a collective so that actions can be taken to advance the field as a whole. In order to achieve this, the collective should continuously ruminate on the shared ideals, circumstances, and practices that unite them. Such considerations allow for the collective to adapt to changes in the field that arise through political and socio-economic shifts, as well as the natural ebbs and flows of time and culture.

As it stands, small museums are primarily defined numerically, with little experiential information to drive them closer together as a collective. As this thesis points out, there are in fact ideals, practices, and circumstances that connect small museums through criteria outside of numerics. These characteristics are more conducive in their ability to engage museum professionals, as they validate the unique approaches of small museum professionals and encourage them to share their expertise (regardless of their experience level in the field).

The inclusion of collective assessments for small museums can also enhance the perception and collaboration of small museums and their larger counterparts. As was the case in this study, the African American Museum in Philadelphia has considerably different circumstances and perceptions then all other museums in this study. By outlining these differences, the future relationships that AAMP seeks to initiate with the smaller African American museums in the city can be more informed and attentive to the needs of these institutions.

A third implication that experience based characteristics can have on the field is the pragmatism that this research can in turn posit in the form of applications towards grant funders. Attaining grants, as recognized in Chapter 2. of this paper, is becoming increasingly difficult for

museums without professionalized staffs. This can be a common occurrence in small museums. Further, funders are increasingly interested in supporting the work of collaborative projects. By grounding collaborative projects between small museum in the application of experience based research, the potential impact of these projects would be pragmatic in both their implementation and results. For example, since most of Philadelphia's African American Museums are visited through word of mouth marketing, the proposition to of a collaborative marketing campaign between the city's African American Museums could boost visibility for the museums and increase tourism throughout the city. Such a campaign could further publicize the exhibited works of artists and historians. While there can be further benefits to this example, the potential is there for the experience based characteristics of micromuseums to positively impact the field on both a local and national scale.

Finally, through the application of micromuseology comes the development of Micromuseology as a field. As listed in the limitations of this research, this study explored characteristics of micromuseums through the vantage point of a visitor to each museum. There are more characteristics to be identified if further assessments of small museums are conducted. Since the distinct practices and circumstances of small museums have yet to be thoroughly explored and identified, Museology as a field cannot adequately illustrate the different role that small museums have in society in relationship to larger museums. The qualities are there, as small museums seem to arise so frequently in American society, all that is needed now is the initiative and dedication to draw their links together.

Appendix

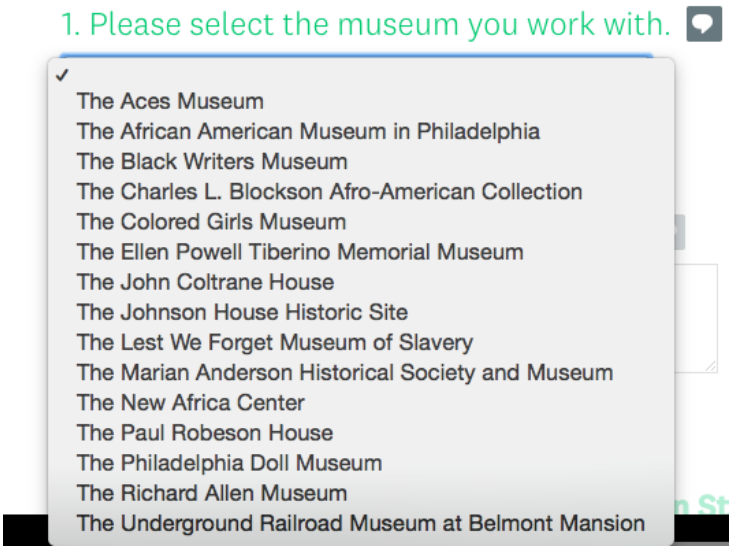
Instrument 1.

An online survey titled: “Needs Assessment Survey for Philadelphia African American Museum” was developed and disseminated via email to participating institutions. This survey sought to collect the same data found in the *Summary of Findings* section of the 2017 National Needs Assessment. Questions 1, 2, 3, 12, & 17 were added to provide additional background information on the individual taking the survey as well as the museum they operate. Below is an exact copy of the online survey:

Needs Assessment Survey for Philadelphia African American Museums

This needs assessment survey examines the operations and values of African American museums in Philadelphia. As defined by the American Alliance of Museums, the goal of a needs assessment is "to better prepare museums to operate in the 21st century with a strong understanding of core museum standards and good practices that support sustainability." Please answer the following questions as accurately and with as much detail as possible.

If you have any questions regarding this survey, please email me at hawallace@uarts.edu. Thank you for participating!



2. What is your position at this museum?

3. If available, what is the museum's **Mission Statement**?

4. What year did the museum open to the public?

5. Select the organizational structure of your museum. (Choose 1 only):

- ◯ 501(c)3, private non-profit
- ◯ Other private non-profit
- ◯ State
- ◯ State University
- ◯ Other (please specify)
- ◯ Dual status (incl. 501(3)c)
- ◯ Municipal
- ◯ 501(c)3 status pending
- ◯ Have not yet applied for 501(c)3 status

6. Please rate the various sources of revenue for the museum.

	not a source of revenue (0%)	minimal (1-10%) of the total revenue	partial (11 - 25%) of the total revenue	substantial (26% -50%) of the total revenue	principal (51% or more) of the total revenue
Admission fees	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Membership fees	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sales	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Programs	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Government	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Grants	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Contributions	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Rentals	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Endowment	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

7. How many full time staff work at the museum?

8. How many part-time staff work at the museum?

9. Among paid staff, how many are:

senior professionals (10 years+ in museums / libraries / archives)

mid-career professionals (5-9 years in museums / libraries / archives)

new / entry-level people (0-4 years in museums / libraries / archives)

10. How many volunteers work at the museum?

11. How many board members does the museum have?

12. Please describe the occupations of your board members.

13. Who is the museum's target audience? (Check **all** that apply)

- [ ] General public
- [ ] Local/county residents
- [ ] School students (K-12)
- [ ] College Students
- [ ] Other (please specify)
- [ ] National/International audience/tourists
- [ ] African Americans
- [ ] Families/Youth
- [ ] Adults

14. Please rate the museum's strengths and weaknesses using a 1 - 5 scale (with 5 as the highest).

	1 (not yet established)	2 (needs improvement)	3 (sustainable)	4 (strong)	5 (very strong and regularly inspected)
Clarity of vision	○	○	○	○	○
Making the most of resources	○	○	○	○	○
Having a creativity of spirit	○	○	○	○	○
A good image in the community	○	○	○	○	○
Ability to attract audiences	○	○	○	○	○
Ability to attract resources	○	○	○	○	○
Well-functioning governance	○	○	○	○	○
Security of property and staff	○	○	○	○	○
Accessibility (physical, linguistic, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○

15. Is your museum a member of any of these organizations? (Check all that apply)

- [ ] American Alliance of Museums (AAM)
- [ ] American Association for State and Local History
- [ ] Association of Academic Museums and Galleries
- [ ] Association of African American Museums
- [ ] Committee for Diversity in Museums
- [ ] International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience
- [ ] International Council of Museums
- [ ] The Links, Inc.
- [ ] Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums
- [ ] Other (please specify)
- [ ] Museum Store Association
- [ ] Museum Council of Greater Philadelphia
- [ ] National Council on Public History
- [ ] Pennsylvania Federation of Museums and Historical Organizations
- [ ] Philadelphia Museum Educators Roundtable
- [ ] Small Museum Committee
- [ ] Visitor Studies Association
- [ ] 100 Black Men, Inc.
- [ ] **Member of NO other association**

16. Are there any other considerations this assessment should make when analyzing the current state of your museum?

17. What is your vision for the future of this museum?

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