The spatial and temporal diffusion of museums in New York City, 1910-2010

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this dissertation is to understand and analyze the museum location decision, defined as where museum founders choose to establish or relocate their institution. The empirical case is the museum population of New York City from 1910-2010. In three substantive chapters, I explore this complex decision process from the organizational-level, the population-level, and the audience-level. In the first chapter, I argue that the museum location decision has evolved over the past century, and has experienced three major paradigm shifts. Out of each era, a new model of the museum location decision has taken hold, resulting in the current organizational landscape. I demonstrate how these eras emerged through historical, comparative case studies of two New York museums, the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

In second chapter, I show that the location decisions illustrated through the histories of the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art are representative of New York’s museum population overall. Using a dataset of all museums that have existed in New York City (and all of those museums’ relocations), I chronicle the aggregated movements of the museum population between 1910 and 2010. I argue that the three eras of the museum location decision interacted with key demographic changes to create the unique distribution we observe today. The insights from these findings indicate that the spatial diffusion of museums in New York is systematically patterned in relation to demographic changes. The final substantive chapter is devoted to exploring the possibility that institutional location impacts audience
composition. I argue that proximity to museums and other kinds of arts institutions is a significant, yet understudied determinant of attendance. The introduced concept of *institutional exposure* suggests that local access to arts institutions has cognitive, behavioral, and interactional consequences. Although directly testing the effect of institutional exposure is beyond the parameters of this dissertation, I show that there is a strong correlation between exposure and attendance. I illustrate the increasingly unequal access to arts between white and African American New Yorkers, which correlates highly with still-unexplained low attendance rates of African Americans. The observed evolution of the museum location decision explains when and how New York institutions adopted and then abandoned each institutionalized practice of museum location. In the Conclusion, I highlight several implications of this work, both of sociological theory and on current cultural policy.
# Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Chapter 1 -- The Museum Location Decision 24

Chapter 2 -- New Yorkers and their Museums 70

Chapter 3 -- The Consequences of the Museum Location Decision 126

Conclusion 158

Bibliography 169
List of Figures

Figure 1 -- Number of museum foundings in New York City

Figure 2. -- Number of museum relocations in New York City

Figure 3. -- Museum locations in 1900, 1950, and 2010

Figure 2.1. -- Elite neighborhoods in Manhattan’s history

Figure 2.2. -- 1910 United States Census

Figure 2.3. -- Museums in 1900

Figure 2.4. -- Museum foundings, 1930-1939

Figure 2.5. -- Upper East Side museums and their founding dates

Figure 2.6. -- Museums that relocated to the Upper East Side, 1940-1980

Figure 2.7. -- Crown Heights African American population in 1910, 1930, 1950, and 1970

Figure 2.8. -- Museums in Washington Heights and Inwood

Figure 2.9. -- Museums added to the Cultural Institutions Group, 1940-1980

Figure 2.10. -- Museum founding events by neighborhood during the era of homogenization and cultural branding

Figure 2.11. -- Relocations of the Whitney, MoMA, New Museum, and SculptureCenter during the era of cultural branding

Figure 2.12. -- Likelihood of museum founding given varying levels of proportion black

Figure 2.13. -- Likelihood of museum founding given varying levels of proportion white

Figure 2.14. -- Likelihood of museum founding given varying levels of clustering

Figure 3.1. -- Average rates of museum exposure, 1910-2010

Figure 3.2. -- Museum exposure and African American neighborhoods in 1910, 1950, and 2010
Figure 3.3. -- New York City Arts Institutions in 2008

Figure 3.4. -- Ratio of white to African American exposure, by institution type

Figure 3.5. -- Odds ratios of high versus low institutional exposure

Figure 3.6. -- Odds ratios of high versus low exposure for high income white tracts

Figure 3.7. -- Odds ratios of high versus low institutional exposure for census tracts with a high proportion of white and African American college graduates

List of Tables

Table 1.1. -- Three eras of the museum population in New York City

Table 1.2. -- Timeline of the three eras of the museum location decision

Table 2.1. -- Characteristics of three eras of the museum location decisions

Table 2.2. -- Model of Museum Founding, 1910-2010

Table 3.1. -- Percentage of US black and white adult population visiting art museums and galleries

Table 3.2. -- 2008 New York City Arts Institutions
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To my husband
Introduction

In 2000, Queens-based artist Jimbo Blachly was open to inspiration. Deep in the halls of the New-York Historical Society, he found it in the form of a century-old topology report. James Reuel Smith wrote the report, *Springs and Wells of Manhattan and the Bronx: New York City at the End of the Nineteenth Century*, a near-obsessive survey of the remaining natural water sources in an increasingly urbanized metropolis. The New-York Historical Society published the work in 1938, and it sat in their library for almost seventy years without incident. Blachly’s art often involves themes of nature and the passage of time, and he was taken by how Smith uncovered the natural world underneath New York’s buildings and sidewalks. Blachly set about to do the same thing. Retracing Smith’s footsteps, he photographed the now unrecognizable natural springs sites, and recreated an alternate future for them through installation sculpture. The final work presents a complete picture of New York at many different points in its trajectory towards urbanization - and conjures images of natural and manmade structures that have been long forgotten.

The historical, nostalgic piece was a fitting selection as the inaugural exhibit in the SculptureCenter’s massive new building in Long Island City, Queens. The SculptureCenter is a New York mainstay; it is the first nonprofit institution solely dedicated to sculpture. It has supported and promoted notable twentieth century sculptors, including Alexander Calder and Isamu Noguchi. The institution’s new Queens location is its fourth building spanning three
boroughs over seventy-four years. If Blachly had used the past sites of the SculptureCenter as his inspiration, he still would have a long, meandering history to follow.

The story of the SculptureCenter begins with another artist. In the mid-1920s, Dorothea Denslow was a young, energetic sculptor teaching adults and children in her local neighborhood of Crown Heights. She drew such a loyal clientele that her students would often follow her back home to her studio (Donahue 1946). As she welcomed more and more students to her home more frequently, she converted her private studio into the “Clay Club”. Denslow’s fans quickly multiplied, and by 1930 they needed more space - in a different location. Denslow moved the Clay Club to a converted stable house, “an odd little brick structure” (Knox 1950, accessed online), on the corner of Fifth Avenue and Eighth Street in Greenwich Village, Manhattan. The area, once lined with the mansions of antebellum elites, was now being taken over and chopped up into studios and apartments by the city’s bohemian community. Amidst artists of all kinds and next door to the Whitney Museum of American Art, Denslow felt that the Clay Club would be right at home in a small, converted stable house.

The Club continued to expand its mission and audience; the first floor was an open-to-the-public exhibition space, and the upper floors housed amateur and professional classes. Here, the organization found its niche as a nonprofit educational center focused on supporting emerging sculptors. In 1948, the Clay Club moved uptown, to another converted carriage house, this time at 167 East 69th Street. It renamed itself the SculptureCenter and shed its bohemian, do-it-yourself mentality. The institution was now located in the heart of the art world - encircled by the galleries of 57th Street and the burgeoning Museum Mile on upper Fifth Avenue.
As time went on, however, the institution again became restless. The new art scene moved away from the steadfastly elite Upper East Side. Mary Ceruti, the museum’s Executive Director, recalls: “It was hard to draw a contemporary art audience up there” (Ogunnaike 2002, accessed online). Once again the SculptureCenter moved, this time to Long Island City, Queens. The move afforded them more space - and lots of it. The organization bought an abandoned trolley repair shop on a quiet, non-residential block of Purves Street. Maya Lin, one of their world-renowned architects, said that “it was a huge move psychologically and physically” (ibid.).

The institution received major blowback for the move. Members were concerned that the trustees had lost their educational mission - would the SculptureCenter turn into a de facto avant-garde, inaccessible gallery? In truth, the SculptureCenter was hardly the first arts institution to identify Long Island City as the place to be. There was already another major sculpture museum, the Isamu Noguchi Sculpture Garden, nearby. The Museum of Modern Art was set to move into longtime Long Island City resident P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center temporarily that same year. And ten years later, the SculptureCenter is still going strong in the Queens neighborhood. This September, they are hosting the Purves Street Block Party for the first time.

If we were to follow Blachly’s lead, we would find that - similar to the many of the natural springs he sought - former traces of the SculptureCenter’s history are long gone. Crown Heights, a middle-class Jewish commuter suburb when Dorothea Denslow opened her home studio, has undergone several successions of residential turnover. It is now home to a large community of Caribbean black immigrants and an increasingly gentrifying population. 4 West Eighth Street, the Clay Club’s stable house, was razed along with the mansion it once serviced.
The block, however, is now one of the most expensive in Manhattan and Greenwich Village is one of the toniest neighborhoods in the five boroughs. The SculptureCenter sold 167 East 69th Street as a private home for $3 million, subsidizing almost all the purchase and renovation costs for the Purves Street building.

The many lives of the SculptureCenter may come as a surprise. We do not often think that a museum could be so footloose. What is even more surprising is that it is far from the only museum to move repeatedly. We will learn that the Whitney Museum of Art, for example, followed an almost identical institutional trajectory. Furthermore, the museums of New York City, despite being incredibly diverse, have a highly patterned diffusion both spatially and temporally.

The charts below show the number of museum foundings and relocations in New York City between 1900 and 2010. Museum foundings and relocations have followed a boom and bust cycle over the past century that are in line with national patterns (Blau 1991). The geographic diffusion of those foundings and relocations is patterned as well. Between 1900 and 2010, museums have grown to be tightly clustered in a few spots of the city, as is evident in the three maps below. In 2010, 38.5% of the entire city’s museums were located in only five neighborhoods (the Upper East Side, the Upper West Side, Midtown, the Wall Street area, and the East Village area). These five neighborhoods constitute 1.57% of the city’s total land area. 92% of museums have at least one other museum within a mile radius, and over half of museums have over twenty museums within that distance. Perhaps the most dramatic indicator of spatial clustering is the fact that 212 of the city’s 295 neighborhoods\footnote{Neighborhood boundaries and names sourced from the New York City Department of City Planning.} do not contain a museum.
Figure 1. Number of museum foundings in New York City

Figure 2. Number of museum relocations in New York City
Figure 3. Museum locations in 1900, 1950, and 2010
This patterning goes against our basic understanding of the American museum. Museums are unique, individual institutions, each with their own colorful, specific history. The chronology of the SculptureCenter, replete with charismatic leaders, carriage house and trolley shop conversions, and the influence of star architects, would lead us to believe that the locations of museums are extremely contingent. There is no way to make sense of when or where founders decide to place their institutions - there are too many happy accidents and strokes of luck. This commonsense response makes the following questions even more worthwhile: how can it be that so many museum founders decided to open shop at the same time? And even more puzzling, why did so many decide to open shop in just a few neighborhoods?

Even our basic knowledge of the purpose and characteristics of the museum itself contradict the observed spatial and temporal patterning. We think of museums as ‘pure’ organizations; they are “sacred” and “untouchable” (Anderson 2004, 1). They operate on a loftier plane than for-profit business; simply stated, these are not customer-oriented institutions. Museum leaders are required to elevate and properly represent the arts and sciences. Their aims are noble and timeless. Museums, in essence, are the organizational manifestation of the mad scientist and crazed artist; any response to the outside world would be considered a ‘sell out’. And it’s true that museums are often led by artistically bent administrators, who are less likely to follow protocol and more likely to make from-the-gut decisions (Cray and Inglis 2011; Cray, Inglis, and Freeman 2007). Yet, we also hold a contradictory assumption: museums are expected to serve the public good. This expectation is a relatively new phenomenon in the organization’s global history. However, American museums have always been attached to some explicit or implicit public service mandate; this mandate is tied to the growth of the nonprofit sector in the
twentieth century, and museums’ absorption into that organizational form. Almost all museums must include an educational mission to qualify for the much-sought-after 501(c)3 tax-exempt status. Finally, we assume that museums are immobile. The spiral of the Guggenheim, the lions of the Art Institute, and glass pyramid of the Louvre are even more recognizable than the art inside these structures. Museum buildings - and the locations upon which these buildings stand - are often considered to be ‘for the long haul’.

Considering these commonly held, yet contradictory assumptions it is possible to imagine alternate spatial and temporal diffusion patterns for New York’s institutions. If museums were solely ‘pure’, it is possible that their diffusion would be less patterned. And if they were strictly educational, we might see more effort to locate institutions evenly across the city’s neighborhoods. Finally, if museums were fixed in place, we might not observe as many relocations (sixty-eight) as have taken place in the last century. In other words, how museums have generated the observed spatial and temporal diffusion is not immediately clear based on our commonsense notions of how they operate.

From everything we know, museums are slow-moving, independent, long-lasting institutions. How can it be that they open and move in concert? In this dissertation, I will set about to understanding how these assumptions have become lodged into our collective consciousness, how they are fundamentally incorrect, and how museums actually end up where they do. This is the subject of the museum location decision.
Three analytical levels of the museum location decision

For the purposes of this dissertation, the focus of study is the museum location decision - that is, where museum founders choose to establish (or move) their institution. I will present analyses of the museum location decision from three perspectives: the organizational-level, the population-level, and the audience-level. The organization-level case studies will give a sense of the individual experiences of the three location eras, and will frame the following chapter analyses, which will address the meso-population processes, and the macro-level outcomes. The museum location decision is a unique object of analysis that successfully links these three levels through one focal point.

The linkage between individual organization behavior and aggregated outcomes has been demonstrated before in the social sciences. New institutionalism is an established field of research in sociology, economics, and political science that asks how norms, conventions, and environments affect the founding (Bigelow and Carroll 1997), structure (Minkoff 1999), efficacy (Vaughan 1996), and survival (Baum and Mezias 1992) of organizations (for a review, see Strang and Sine 2000). The field coalesced in the 1970s and 1980s with the publication of seminal works by Meyer and Rowan (1977), Powell and DiMaggio (1978), and Scott (1983). These scholars addressed how individual organizations are affected by their environments in their structure, governance, and mission. Powell and DiMaggio’s groundbreaking thesis of institutional isomorphism explained why most organizations are so similar to one another: organizational forms emerge, face ambiguity and constraint, become legitimized, and then coalesce into a recognizable population of homogenized institutions. I utilize many of the key
insights offered in this body of research, particularly Powell and DiMaggio’s thesis of institutional isomorphism.

Let’s return to those three fundamental assumptions about museums, but this time through the lens of new institutionalism. First, new institutionalism helps explain how museums can be expected to both follow a pure vision and serve the public good. Museums are like any other organization - they are full of competing influences and constraints. As new institutionalism theory argues, those influences and constraints have evolved along with the growth of the museum field. Museums were once founded as the personal playgrounds of heirs and heiresses; although they had some interest in ‘educating the masses’ it was not taken seriously. Powell and DiMaggio explain how the introduction of external funding sources regulates and ultimately homogenizes a once-diverse population of organizations. In the case of museums, government funding necessitated a mandate to diversify audiences while corporate funders wanted to see an increase in the overall audience size. The introduction of new actors and the rise of isomorphism explains how museums wrestle with competing missions of artistic license and democratic goodwill.

More generally, museums represent a meeting point between nonprofit institutions and for-profit firms. Nonprofit organizations, in general, have proliferated since the mid-20th century (DiMaggio and Anheier 1990). 501(c)3’s are bound to serve some collective good, broadly construed (DiMaggio and Anheier 1990). However, museums also receive much of their funding from corporate and individual sponsors, and their trustees represent private, diverse interests. The museum sits at the juncture of for-profit and charitable organizations, making this particular organizational form a complex, revealing object of analysis.
Defining location as an institutionalized decision helps to explain why forty-four of the museum’s existing today are second or third or fourth locations of the original institution. Many museums have relocated more than once, with El Museo del Barrio topping out at six separate venues. Museum leaders do not take their location decisions lightly. Far from it - the museum location and/or relocation decision is one of the most crucial in most administrators’ eyes (Cray and Inglis 2011). The location decision requires considerable capital; it involves active participation from the administration, board of trustees, and public interests. This means that the location decision is a meaningful, deliberate event which reveals the priorities of an organization. I argue that the location decision both reveals and constitutes the American museums’ formation from individual, sporadic pet projects into professional, legitimized monoliths of culture.

Although this study adds to existing empirical instantiations of institutionalism, the location decision is a novel object of analysis. New institutionalists have seldom looked at how and where institutions decide to locate as a key indicator of this process; location diffusion and other geographic phenomenon have often been left to the domain of economic geographers studying for-profit firms (Porter 2000, Martin and Sunley 2003). By tracing the growth of museums and their clustering in space, this dissertation provides an understanding of how the maturity of organizational populations condition individual organizations’ decision-making. I find that the location decision, similar to the better known organizational characteristics such as governance, mission, etc., is vulnerable to the same coercive, normative and mimetic forces that constrain and conform organizations. However, the analysis does not stop when the museum population becomes homogenized. Instead, I offer an empirical and theoretical contribution to how and when a homogenized population experiences change. While there is a large literature
about how organizational growth and homogenization brings about static populations there is much less written about the kinds and bases of decision-making while fields are more or less matured.

The third level of this analysis assesses the potential implications the museum location decision has on museum audiences. Throughout the dissertation, I make the argument that museums matter for individuals and for neighborhoods. This may run counter to the our common assumption that museums are ‘global’ institutions detached from the rhythms of everyday life. This research demonstrates that the contrary is in fact the case. Museums alter neighborhoods and their inhabitants; the presence of local institutions in one’s life is strongly associated with attendance of those institutions. As evident from prior research, knowledge of and ease within cultural centers corresponds with economic mobility and opportunities (Veblen 1899, Willis 1977, Bourdieu and Passeron 1984).

We will discover that museums have become active players in redefining the urban landscape. Although the museum location decision is made by individual organizations, population-level trends in these decisions have resulted in a segregated museum environment. A few New York neighborhoods contain most of the entire city’s formalized cultural resources. The neighborhoods (and their residents) who receive the windfall of these social, economic, and cultural riches are as positively impacted as the remaining neighborhoods are negatively impacted. In this dissertation, we will unpack how certain neighborhoods became museum clusters over the past century and seek to better understand the consequences of this patterned diffusion.
In addition to these theoretical and analytical payoffs, the study of museums reap concrete, practical rewards as well. Museums, which are not often considered ‘movers and shakers’ of urban policy, have quickly emerged as major players in urban renewal and economic growth. I will explore this point more fully in the Chapter Two, but suffice it to say that museums at as both a barometer and increasingly a bellwether of a neighborhood’s and city’s economic health. Museums are also important as sites of social interaction. Increasingly, public spaces in which individuals can acquire, practice, and hone their artistic appreciation -- and the ability to express it -- are inaccessible to a wide range of potential audiences. Performing arts organizations are often cost-prohibitive, and public schools (and even libraries) have been forced to reduce artistic programming and education. Museums have the opportunity to become instrumental in education, interaction, and outreach in regards to cultural programming. In Chapter Three, I will discuss how museums have grappled with this opportunity over the twentieth century, and the implications their struggles have generated.

I will now provide a brief road map to the substantive chapters of the dissertation. Before moving on to Chapter One, I survey the history of museums leading up to our case of twentieth century New York City.

Chapter one: the museum location decision

In the first chapter, I argue that the museum location decision has evolved over the past century, and has experienced three major paradigm shifts. Out of each era, a new model of the museum location decision has taken hold, resulting in the current organizational landscape.
Before 1940, New York’s museums were still unregulated in structure and governance. Consequently, there was not a clear model of where a museum ‘should’ be; instead museum founders relied on personal networks they were already embedded in to determine location. This era created an idiosyncratic, seemingly unpatterned distribution of institutions. Between 1940 and 1980, the museum field became institutionalized and homogenized. A model of the ideal location - in an elite neighborhood surrounded by other museums - was cemented and many new institutions followed suit. This era marked a period of expansion in the number of museums, yet contraction in the places those museums located. Since 1980, museum founders and leaders have adopted a new location strategy by aligning with public and private actors to re-brand neighborhoods through arts and culture. The current era marks a careful, deliberate geographic expansion of where museums are locating in the city. Taken together, these three models of museum location decision making have generated a highly patterned geographic distribution of the city’s cultural resources.

I demonstrate how these eras emerged through historical, comparative case studies of two New York museums, the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of Art. These institutions were founded as modern art institutions one year apart. Both were spearheaded by elite heiresses. Their mission, locations, and governance have converged and diverged at various moments. How each of these institutions has responded to the changing museum environment is the empirical substance of the chapter.
Chapter two: New Yorkers and their museums

In this chapter, I show that the location decisions illustrated through the histories of the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art are representative of New York’s museum population overall. Using a dataset of all museums that have existed in New York City (and all of those museums’ relocations), I chronicle the aggregated movements of the museum population between 1910 and 2010. I argue that the three eras of the museum location decision interacted with key demographic changes to create the unique distribution we observe today. During the era of personal networks, neighborhoods were still in flux. New Yorkers, and particularly the New York elite, had not decided on a permanent home neighborhood. This ambiguity complemented the idiosyncratic nature of the era’s museum location decision: clusters were established all over the growing city. The following era of homogenization saw the growth of one cluster - Museum Mile - and the stagnation of clusters in neighborhoods undergoing demographic upheaval. I will trace how the growth and settlement of the African American population corresponds with the lack of museum foundings in several neighborhoods. The current era of cultural branding marks a temporal and spatial diffusion of museums. Since the 1980s, museums have moved into new territories to rebrand themselves and their surroundings; they are no longer closely tied to elite mainstays. These efforts are tightly coupled with local economic development and the gentrification of the city as a whole.

Throughout the three eras, I argue that the museum location decision was unintentionally but consistently aligned with neighborhoods that did not contain a strong African American presence, even though the principles of neighborhood attraction to museum leaders changed dramatically over time. In other words, the ideal location decision has evolved, but has always
overlooked predominantly African American areas. This has resulted in a current spatial
distribution of museums in which African Americans have drastically less local institutions than
the rest of the New York City population.

Chapter three: the consequences of the museum location decision

The insights from the previous chapters indicate that the spatial diffusion of museums in
New York is systematically patterned in relation to demography. This chapter is devoted to
exploring the possibility that institutional location impacts audience composition. I argue that
proximity to museums and other kinds of arts institutions is a significant, yet understudied
determinant of attendance. The concept of institutional exposure suggests that local access to arts
institutions has cognitive, behavioral, and interactional consequences. Although directly testing
the effect of institutional exposure is beyond the parameters of this dissertation, I will determine
if inequalities in institutional exposure are correlated with inequalities in arts attendance. I find
increasingly unequal access to arts between white and African American New Yorkers, which
correlates highly with still-unexplained low attendance rates of African Americans. We will see
that this finding is upheld even when accounting for other kinds of arts institutions, and for the
educational attainment and income of African American New Yorkers.

With this road map in mind, I will now devote some attention to setting the stage for the
study. Before trying to understand the museum population in twentieth century New York City, I
will provide some history of this organizational population’s antecedents.
Precursors to the 20th century New York City museum

The storied museums of New York were founded with notable examples that stretch back to the oldest cities. Although there are instances of museum-like collections throughout antiquity, the Greeks invented the word *mousieon*, which was a place of contemplation and study of the Muses of the arts and sciences. This earliest form of the mousieon, which existed through the third century B.C., was more akin to a modern graduate school than the exhibition halls we know today.

The word museum first appeared to describe the great, expansive collection of Lorenzo de’Medici in 15th century Florence. It was later appropriated by 17th century monarchs and aristocracy to denote their private cabinets of curiosities. In 1683, Elias Ashmole bequeathed his cabinet to the University of Oxford. The University made the innovative decision to erect a private building to house and exhibit the collection to the public, to be known as the Ashmolean Museum. With this small act, the modern museum was born.

The organizational form exploded during the Age of Enlightenment; the era brought a newfound belief in accessibility and distribution of scientific and cultural progress. In 1759, the national government founded the British Museum. Its purpose was purely democratic: to educate and entertain all classes of their citizens. The Louvre was opened in 1793, spurred on by the Revolutionary government. It’s aims were similar: to make French culture accessible to its citizens. While these institutions attached the notion of ‘public good’ to art, they were not truly public at the time of their founding. The British Museum had a very limited attendance policy, and attendees were required to apply in advance before entry. Regardless, the democratic, ‘public’ museum model was taking hold and spreading across Europe. The Vatican created a
system of interconnected museums. The Prado was founded in Madrid, the Royal Museums in Brussels, the State Museum in Amsterdam, and more. The model was being exported to colonized nations as well: the Indian Museums in Calcutta, the Argentine Museum of Natural Sciences, and the Batavia Society of Arts and Science were all inspired by the original European institutions.

These grand museums were an experiment in ‘nationalization’, in which previously private or royal collections and buildings were taken over and made public. Consequently, many of these museums were located on imposing, expansive estates that were once off-limits to the general public. Most were housed in former palaces that were once seats of political power, often in city centers. Examples include the Louvre, former palace of Louis XV; Museum Island, a cultural complex in central Berlin was once a residential area and then decreed a district for arts and sciences by the King of Prussia; Museo del Prado was nationalized in 1868 but remained in the once-royal central building. The Rijksmuseum, modeled after the French cultural policy, is an extreme example of this state-sponsored cultural influence. Its original location was inside the Hague, before it was moved to Amsterdam.

The National Gallery of London provides an interesting counterpoint to this trend. The institution was not built up from a royal palace or collection. It was created from the ground up, and consequently the founders had some flexibility in location. They bought a townhouse owned by one of their supporters, at 100 Pall Mall. This address looked onto a busy, central thoroughfare described as “the very gangway of London, where it is alike accessible, and conveniently accessible to all ranks and degrees of men” (Taylor 1999, 36). When the museum grew out of the townhouse, the museum leaders rejected the option of moving Buckingham Place
(now the home of Buckingham Palace) because it would be too removed from most of London’s citizens. They moved to a new building in Trafalgar Square, which was a geographic meeting point between the wealthy west and working class east.

After this initial burst, Europe’s tradition of state-sponsored museum projects intensified during the 20th century. The French national government initiated several topdown policies to create museums that attract a diversity of citizens (Zimmer and Toepler 1999). These have been centralized into France’s Ministry of Cultural Affairs, whose founding mission was to: “make available capital works from humanity, and initially from France, to the greatest possible number of French people”. French policy has increasingly decentralized, cultural policy is filtered throughout the country’s regions, but still carries a strong commitment to nationalism. The European Union has adopted this hands-on philosophy in which national government directly promotes the content and construction of arts and culture. Many of the continent’s most famous museums (including those referenced above) are still owned and operated by national governments. Current policy still suggests that creating a national artistic viewpoint is crucial to patriotism and national identity. In a recent publication, the EU argues that cultural offerings “play an important role in conveying European identity and values…” (European Union 2010) and encourages social cohesion. It seems that Europe’s long history of museum building has settled on an active policy of museum administration and direct cultural patronage.

Of course, the United States does not have a history of monarchs and imperial rulers. There was not a repository of private collections for public institutions to inherit. Furthermore,
while the European model was in the process of being imported stateside, the notion of an American museum was still a shaky concept, made shakier with nonexistent government support. However, entrepreneurial individuals nevertheless brought the museum to America, in myriad forms.

Charles Wilson Peale, an artist and scientist, founded one of the first museums in the United States. Peale’s Cabinet of Curiosities opened in his private home Philadelphia in 1796, later moving the growing collection into a separate building. Peale’s philosophy was decades ahead of America’s conventional thinking at the time; his museum was a precursor to the cultural democracy ideas that later emerged during the 1960s. He strove to attract a diverse audience: “an annual ticket to the museum cost a dollar, and early members included everyone from presidents to congressmen to merchants and skilled laborers” (Hansen 2008). Without state support, his exhibits had to be blockbusters (which featured motion pictures and items from “out West”) because all of his funding was generated through ticket sales.

After Peale’s death, P.T. Barnum, the showman and future circus owner, bought much of the collection. In 1841, he bought an existing multistory building in lower Manhattan, on the busy corner of Broadway and Printing House Row. From 1842 to 1865, he operated Barnum’s American Museum. The museum was a sensation; Barnum created exhibits that synthesized what we now consider to be high and low brow art. Sideshow acts were housed in the same institution as a “Moral Lecture Room” for upper middle class to learn about and agree upon proper decorum. This combination of high and low brow acts was common at the time (Levine 1988), in fact: “the bizarre was collected together with sober specimens with no real order or organization” (Mondello 2008, accessed online). Barnum was determined to draw in as large and
wide a crowd as possible. In addition to offering a wide array of attractions, he kept the museum open 365 days a year, fifteen hours a day. And it worked: “sooner or later, everyone went to Barnum’s – society matrons, children, lawyers on their lunch hours, black porters, Irish day laborers, single women, and tourists…” (Burns 1999, 86). Like others, DiMaggio (1982, 2012) argues that this period of American culture saw less distinction between the elite and mainstream cultural norms than exist today. Peale’s and Barnum’s museum, with an even emphasis on elite education and eye-popping entertainment, epitomize that tension.

America’s answer to the nationalized cultural complexes of Europe was ironically spurred on by an Englishman. In the 1830s, James Smithson, an English scientist, willed his estate to the United States government to establish an institution of science and learning specifically in Washington, DC. This museum was far unlike the Peale’s homespun cabinet or Barnum’s showy spectacles: Smithson’s mission was to support “the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men”. The Smithsonian, with the additional vocal suport of John Quincy Adams, was to be an educational center along the lines of the original museion: a place of learning.

Thus, the earliest incarnation of the Smithsonian was research-oriented. The first building’s design (now known as the “Castle”) was modeled after the medieval cloisters of England’s oldest universities. The Smithsonian’s second secretary, Spencer Fullerton Baird (in office 1878-1887), was the one to initiate a series of museums for public use. Similar to the European model, Baird’s mission of the national museums was to “foster a sense of national identity” (Smithsonian Institution Libraries 1996). Baird expanded the mission and role of the Smithsonian by founding the United States National Museum in 1881. Since then, additional museums of art, history, and the natural sciences have opened. The museum and research
complex is located on the National Mall, set off a wide promenade flanked by the Capitol and the White House. The location carries symbolic weight; similar to Europe’s museums in former political and royal buildings, these new constructions were deliberately centered between the nation’s political powerhouses. Despite its enduring significance, the Smithsonian is notable in its exceptionalism. Direct government ownership or support of museums was not widespread during this period, and did not reach the nation’s other large cities. Instead, the real museum building of the country was left to private individuals.

The Gilded Age (1860s-1890s), which gave birth to the highest concentrations of wealth seen in the country, was a turning point for the American museum (Conn 2000). Not surprisingly, these industrial magnates filled the vacuum of royal wealth and active national policy that existed in Europe. In short order, Gilded Age millionaires constructed an infrastructure of educational, cultural, and charitable institutions. The 1870s saw the founding of the Metropolitan in New York, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Arts, and the Boston Museum of Fine Art (Blau 1991). Unlike Peale and Barnum, these founders did not have to rely on attendance for income; they could dictate the content and mission of these institutions without regard to marketability or popularity. During this period, the Barnum-style museum model disappeared as the high culture model rose to prominence. United States museums were open to the public from their inception (Weil 1997). However, these spaces, including museums in New York, were criticized for their implicit exclusion of the non-elite; the institutions were an instrument of constructing an elite class in the same vein as the European aristocracy.

At the close of the Gilded Age and the turn of the century, New York City contained a handful of museums, including the Metropolitan, the American Museum of Natural History, the
Brooklyn Museum, and the New-York Historical Society. There was no clear guide to founding a museum (though it surely required a fortune), maintain it (again, this was an age before the appearance of grant giving organizations), or locate it. This is the setting upon which the museum population will unfold over twentieth century New York. Gotham is a particularly exciting case study because it contains the highest number of museums of any American city. It has also experienced rapid, profound waves of industrialization, demographic turnover, and urbanization. It could be said that the entire history of America’s culture and people could be seen through the prism of New York’s streets. I will make the case throughout this dissertation that New York City is an extreme example of how museum location decisions play out over an urban environment. However, that ‘extreme-ness’ reveals a complex set of dynamics that have taken place, to a lesser extent or in part, in other American cities and with other forms of the institutions². With this history in mind, we are prepared to analyze the museum location decision through the institutional histories of the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art.

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² This case study strategy is advocated by Stinchcombe (1987).
Chapter one: the museum location decision

We have seen that museums have not been distributed randomly across time and space in New York City. One can quickly identify pockets of museums in certain areas and not others. This distribution is not incidental. It was created by a series of small-scale decisions made by museum leaders and founders. The goal of this chapter is to uncover how museum founders and leaders decide to locate and relocate their institutions.

Three eras in the history of New York’s museums

*Institutions are for the long run.*

Flora Miller Biddle

The diffusion and evolution of New York’s museum population can be divided into three eras. Each era has its own typical museum location decision. As evident from the table on page 27, variation in the museum location decision hinges on two correlated dimensions: museums’ degree of institutionalization, and the maturity of New York City’s museum population.

The process and consequences of organizational institutionalization have enjoyed considerable attention in the field of sociology. The arrival of new institutionalism in the 1970s

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3 Granddaughter of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney and former President of the Whitney Museum of American Art (Biddle 1999, 143).
and 1980s has cemented a renewed interest in the topic (Meyer and Rowan 1977, Scott 1983, Zucker 1977, Powell and DiMaggio 1983). This approach, broadly speaking, posits that organizations are not structured strictly regarding efficiency or rationality. Organizations also are governed by norms, myths, and pressures for legitimacy, as well as internal and external dynamics. This results in populations of organizations that are not necessarily efficient, even though relevant actors may believe them to be.

This theory is temporal: a population of organizations may start out loose and diverse, but will eventually become rigid and homogenized. I will discuss just how this convergence towards institutionalization occurs later. Suffice it to say, the process of institutionalization is key to understanding and explaining the museum location because New York’s (and the rest of the country’s) museum population has emerged from a few, scattershot projects to literally hundreds of formalized institutions over the past century. As this growth began and sustained, museum founders and leaders were faced with the varying constraints laid out by new institutionalist scholars.

Institutionalization helps us understand why organizations become similar; however, we also need to understand how and when organizations become different. The maturity of the city’s museum population explains how and when organizational saturation influenced a shift in the museum location decision. Only these two processes together will account for the diffusion trajectory we observe over the past century.

While we learned in the Introduction that museum institutionalization was a national project, New York’s museums were also operating in a more bounded space: their own city. Community ecologists urge scholars to consider the environment in which a group of
organizations exists and interacts (Freeman and Audia 2006 for a review). One can define an organizational community as a bounded geographic space, or limited set of resources. A subset of community ecological scholars look at how organizational density and saturation - otherwise referred to as colocation and/or agglomeration - have an impact on organizational structure and change. Colocation can intensify inter-organizational interaction, competition, and spillover effects. There is a wide variety of research demonstrating that organizational forms that exhibit agglomerative tendencies (Carroll and Wade 1991, Sorenson and Audia 1990), albeit the subject of these studies are mainly for-profit firms.

New York’s museum population is one of the oldest, and undoubtedly the largest, in the country. It has acquired 218 museums (some of which have since closed) in the past one hundred years. Due to this rapid expansion, inter-organizational dynamics have evolved. Unlike the process of institutionalization, this is city-specific. The organizational community has shifted from a young, sparse environment to an old, dense environment. Individual museums must adapt to this changing environment. We will see just how they adapt later on in the chapter.

Table 1.1. Three eras of the museum population in New York City
With these two dimensions taken together, we can chart the movement of the museum location decision from one era to the next. The location decision is of course vulnerable to accidents of history; and thus these eras are not strict boundaries, but signposts to indicate major paradigm shifts. In no era do all museums follow the typical location decision. I will discuss in Chapter Two the points when past eras blurred and bled into the next; each contains holdouts from the previous location decision. This is in part because museums, as a whole, are often victims of structural inertia (Hannan and Freeman 1977); relocating is a particularly contentious and cumbersome endeavor. With that said, the three eras of the museum location decision nonetheless encapsulate the conventional thinking and cultural zeitgeist of the time. I will demonstrate in the next chapter that these eras are indeed reflected in the locations of the New York City museum population in aggregate. A brief description of each era follows.

The first, the era of personal ties, spans the Gilded Age through 1940. During this period, New York City’s museum environment was still new and unsaturated, and its organizations were far from institutionalized. Initial organizational diversity resulted in a series of seemingly unsystematic location decisions. But a pattern in the location decision emerges when one accounts for a key variable: founder networks. Since opening a museum in this era was still a personal, entrepreneurial enterprise, founders located their networks around the people with whom they associated. Since these networks varied, subsequent location decisions varied as well. These early years result in a virtual toss-up of museum locations around the five boroughs. However, towards the end of the period, a concentration in Manhattan was forming, moving us into the next type of museum location decision.
By mid-century, the museum was coalescing into a distinct organizational form. This period, which I call the era of homogenization, ranges from 1940 through 1980. The New York museum environment gained higher density. As the new institutionalism scholars predicted, museums became homogenized and professionalized during this time. The location decision became similarly convergent; a dizzying number of museums opted to locate in and near elite Manhattan. Quickly, Museum Mile ascended as the prime museum destination.

By 1980, the museum was institutionalized and the growth of the past forty years had created a dense, saturated museum environment. While other empirical research has found that organizational density can lead to museum failure and/or founding stagnation (Baum and Mezias 1992), New York’s museum population swelled during the last decades of the twentieth century. However, with hundreds of museums in existence, there was a newfound need for differentiation. I argue that instead of stagnation, New York’s museum leaders used the location decision as a lever of differentiation and re-branding. This transition was accelerated by a new connection between arts organizations and urban redevelopment. During the era of cultural branding, museums leaders, economic developers, and city officials aligned to brand museums and neighborhoods through deliberate location decisions. This has resulted in an outward diffusion of the museum population, but only in conjunction with development efforts.

There has been little research on the geographic diffusion of nonprofit institutions (exceptions include DeVerteuil 2000, Wolch and Geiger 1983), in spite of increased attention on the organizational form (DiMaggio and Anheier 1990). As we learned in the introduction, museums are unique organizational forms with a distinct set of pressures. This research contributes to existing work in organizational sociology by offering a longitudinal account of
nonprofit emergence, homogenization, \textit{and} differentiation. These processes are exemplified by the three eras of museum location decisions.

The next step is to get a closer look at these eras in action. We can witness a century of location decision-making through the institutional lives of the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art. These museums are exceptionally revealing cases both for their similarities as well as their differences. Although these museums were founded in the same era and focus on roughly the same content, they have converged and diverged in their location and structure at key points. Both institutions have actively responded to the changing environment, although in varied ways. The Whitney Museum of American Art seems to have broken free from the common shackles of structural inertia, and underwent a major relocation during each era. The Museum of Modern Art, on the other hand, has remained in the same neighborhood for its entire institutional life; we will see, however, that it still managed to address the changing demands of the museum population.

The location decisions of these museums act as an entry to a broader discussion of the museum population as a whole (this will be the focus of Chapter Two). The Whitney and the MoMA were selected, similar to the selection of New York City as a case study, based on the logic proposed by Stinchcombe (1987). These institutions are exceptional case studies because they have been active across the three eras and have evolved dramatically in size, administration, and mission. Most museums have not experienced the same number of location decisions and degree of institutional change; however, through tracing the history of these two institutions, I illuminate many of the phenomena other museums faced on a smaller or less frequent basis.
The era of personal ties (1870-1940)

The Gilded Age was a seminal period in the cultural development of America. Museums were being founded in relatively large numbers for the first time in the country. While there was some consensus over the high culture model (DiMaggio 1992), there was still enormous divergence in the internal structure of these new organizations. Zolberg (1981) found that this “pre-professional” (105) era was highly individualistic. Founding and running a museum was an “intimate” (ibid.) task, in which personality and connections were more valued than credentials or experience. Consequently, founders enjoyed latitude in their leadership styles and decision making, less burdened by the bureaucratic pressures placed on their successors.

Entrepreneurs in a new field must rely on these networks even more, because there is no existing blueprint to follow (Romanelli 1991, Aldrich 1979). Granovetter (1985) argues that individuals navigate through even their economic decisions using their personal relationships. Personal ties were often place-based in Gilded Age New York City, as they are today (Lui, King, and Bearman 2010; Saxenian 1994; Gieryn 2000). New York’s museum founders were embedded in networks that were highly associated with certain neighborhoods. The museum location decision was a byproduct of these landed ties. In Chapter Two, I will discuss how the shifting neighborhoods of the city’s elite during this era influenced the population’s location decisions as a whole. In this section, I will demonstrate how the place-based personal networks of the founders of the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art led to their divergent location decisions (one in Greenwich Village, one in Midtown), despite both being founded as modern art museums within one year of each other.
Whitney’s home away from home

...a Village landmark serving a Village audience with Village zest.  

B. H. Friedman

The Whitney Museum of American Art is the byproduct of an heiress’ desire to escape the social claustrophobia of the Upper East Side. Gertrude Vanderbilt was born on January 9, 1875. At the time, her father was the richest man in the country. She was the granddaughter of railroad tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt, who had transformed a small ferry business to a national shipping and freight industry. Her childhood home at 1 57th Street sprawled across an entire city block and contained 137 rooms. The mansion was flanked by the Waldorf-Astoria and the southeast gates of Central Park. In 1897, Gertrude rose to an even loftier social ranking when she married Harry Payne Whitney, son of an old money society family. The newlyweds moved just one door down, to 2 West 57th Street, to a similarly lavish townhouse. Despite her wealth, Gertrude’s social and physical world was stifling her; she wrote in her diary: “just as I had physically moved some fifty feet from my father’s house into my husband’s, so I had moved some fifty feet in feeling, environment, and period…” (Friedman 1978, 160). She felt confined by the Upper East Side and its tight social circles. Restless, Gertrude began to look outside of her neighborhood - towards downtown.

Gertrude became enthralled with the fine arts, particularly sculpture, and she quickly immersed herself in the social world of artists. One of her first tutors, a sculptor named Fraser

4 Friedman 1978, 441.

5 In this chapter, I will refer to Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney as Gertrude to avoid any confusion between the woman and the Whitney Museum of American Art (the Whitney).
introduced her to artist-populated, bohemian Greenwich Village. His studio was located on MacDougal Alley; this street in particular had become a popular location for artists to convert stable houses into studios or residences.

In a measured attempt to leave one social network and enter another - through a location decision - Gertrude moved her sculpture equipment to a studio at 19 MacDougal Alley. She made friends, hired teachers, met secret lovers, and bought art in tight-knit neighborhood. Gertrude embraced the change, as “there was a strong belief that a change in address would bring about a change in identity” (Berman 1990, 81). In just a few years, she became well-known as an artist and art patron in the downtown scene.

But merely embedding herself in the New York art world was not enough. During the 1910’s, Whitney organized that social world. She transformed her private studio into a semipublic salon and exhibition space, the Whitney Studio and its social arm, the Friends of Young Artists. The mission of these initial organizations was to support living, American artists who were being more or less shut out of New York galleries and museums (most notably the Metropolitan Museum of Art). Bringing struggling artists together was achieved easily in the Village, where the principle actors were densely connected, both physically and socially.

By this time, Juliana Force, who was once Whitney’s personal assistant, had become a creative and professional partner. Force was equally involved in the Greenwich Village art world; she was known for scraping together an artist’s rent, connecting potential friends, and throwing amazing parties. As the informal institution began to grow, the need for a public face increased. They opened the Studio Club just a few blocks away, at 147 West Fourth Street, in a four-story brownstone.
This location decision revealed exactly who the ‘public’ was for Gertrude and Force. Their ‘public’ was their artist network: all of whom lived and/or worked in Greenwich Village. The small neighborhood of Greenwich Village was so identified with the New York art scene it inspired this poem by John Reed:

Yet we are free who live in Washington Square,
We dare to think as Uptown wouldn’t dare,
Blazing our nights with arguments uproarious;
What care we for a dull, old world censorious..."6

The locations on Fourth and Eighth Streets were not a convenient address for many New Yorkers that would likely visit the Whitney (remember that Greenwich Village at the time was not a premier or oft-visited location). Tourists, elites, and city officials did not have Greenwich Village on their agendas. But the women’s first priority was always to the artists, and second to the small population of New Yorkers who purchased and publicized contemporary American art. These latter group would be expected to travel to the neighborhood.

Over the next few years, Gertrude and Force continued to expand the organization. By 1929, they decided to transform the organization into the Whitney Museum of American Art. The museum population during the 1920s was growing across the nation (Blau 1991). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, their institutional opposite, sat on a plot of land in Central Park near East 82nd Street. A Museum of French Art and the Museum of the City of New York were recently founded on the Upper East Side. Other notable museums were also located above 14th Street, including the brand new MoMA on Fifty-third Street and Fifth Avenue and the Morgan Library on the corner of Madison Avenue and 36th Street. By converting into a permanent museum, this was the organizational landscape they could enter.

6 Quoted in Chapin 1920, 177.
Instead, their preferred counterparts were the organizational manifestations of the artist networks. These included a few small, up-and-coming galleries that were located in Greenwich Village. These were all showing and trying to sell living American art, and included the Downtown, Stieglitz, Macbeth, and 291 Galleries. The Gallatin Museum of Living Art was founded on the New York University campus in 1927, but did not share a devotion to New York based artists. In terms of mission, Gertrude and Force were more aligned with these small, commercial institutions than the large, established museums, at least during the early days of the Whitney Museum.

Force was to be the first director of the new museum. Peterson (1987) notes that the museum director was less modern-day bureaucrat and more ‘impresario’ before museums were professionalized. Force fit the ‘impresario’ role to a T: she had no formal museum training or art history education; her currency was in networking and persuasion; her goal was to make friends of artists (as opposed to funders). Whitney did not hire any trained museum employees or art historians; instead, working artists were brought on as curators. Force and Whitney’s personal preferences shone through in the deeply personal institution. Even the building itself was a home away from home. The exterior was covered in pink stucco, and, unlike existing museums, the interior was designed similar to a private home. Force’s own apartment was a natural extension of the museum, on the top floor of the building.

With the building ready, the women opened their doors on November 18, 1931. The museum was now a combined structure, taking over the properties at 8, 10, 12, and 14 West Eighth Street. It became a landmark in the Village art scene. James Michener, a writer, remembers walking past the museum every day on his way to lunch from his office. After a little
while, he decided to go in, and was immediately struck by the paintings, which formed his “basic
taste for American art” (Berman 1990, 314).

Although the museum was still a small, relatively loose organization, the expectations of its new status as a museum quickly began to weigh on the founders. Force wrote in a letter: “the
word ‘museum’ has an awesome sound...To the onlooker there is a vast difference between a
picture in a museum (if it is not in the cellar) and a picture in a studio or gallery.” Force became
more conservative with the Museum’s acquisitions, after years of emotionally driven acquisitions. Force’s initial public mission statement for the Museum, upon its founding, reflected a pre-museum mentality: “Ever since museums were invented, contemporary liberal artists have had difficulties in ‘crashing’ the gate...Exactly the contrary practice will be carried on in the Whitney Museum of American Art” (Berman 1990, 278). Force herself had to dampen this initial sentiment; by March of 1930 she publicly retracted the statement and expressed that the new museum would not be as experimental towards young artists. The new institution received solicitations from “dealers, donors, artists, and others eager to push their own interests” (Berman 1990, 282). During the first decade, it transitioned from a private organization to a nonprofit with tax-exempt status (albeit the new board of trustees were all family members).

Their relevant counterparts slowly transformed. Just before the Whitney Museum was founded, Gertrude had offered her entire collection and funds for a wing construction to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Her offer was motivated by her concern for the future maintenance of the institution after her death. The Met rejected the offer; at the time, it did not hold contemporary American art. Of course, Gertrude decided to open her own museum instead, and only a decade later, the Met attempted a dramatic three museum merger with the Whitney and the
By 1941, the MoMA attempted to broker a partnership with the institution. Neither of these, clearly, were successful. Although they were still committed to supporting living artists, the conduit to that goal was now through other museums instead of galleries. Gertrude and Force pushed for acquisitions and coordinated a series of traveling exhibitions at out-of-town museums.

We will see that these changes only increased as time passed. However, despite these early signs of the tensions that museums would face in the next decades, the Whitney remained a personal, quirky institution for years. This was in large part because Gertrude and Force continued their commitment to the downtown network of struggling artists, “many of whom resided within blocks of its doors” (Berman 1990, 282). In fact, the museum remained ‘private’; they did not accept any gifts to the museum until 1949 and had no external trustees during its initial years. This is uncommon for most museums and I argue is meaningfully tied to the museum’s ability to stay in its original location as long as it did. For a while at least, the Whitney Museum remained a “family affair” (Biddle 1999).

Making midtown modern

*Although a private museum in legal terms, the Museum had always been a public institution in terms of its goals and concerns.*

Sam Hunter

The Museum of Modern Art came together differently than the Whitney and yet one can see that the initial location decision of the two museums was driven by a similar factor: personal

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7 Hunter 1997, 32.
ties. While we learned from the last section that the Whitney was a starving artists’ safe haven; the Museum of Modern Art was founded with a more explicitly public mission. Nevertheless, while this institution was founded with democratic goals, its location decision and ultimate success were based on proximity to and resources provided by friends and family. The art of the Whitney and the MoMA are similar, yet the relevant networks (and subsequent location decisions) were miles apart.

In one way, the founding of the MoMA was similar to the Whitney: it was an act of rebellion. In the early 20th century, modern art was largely unknown to the American public and dismissed by the established art world. The Armory Show, put on in 1913, was the first major effort to alter that attitude. The Show sent a shock wave through New York. Even though it only ran for a little less than a month, it made a lasting impression by introducing Americans to expressionism, cubism, and abstraction.

Three women were profoundly yet independently influenced by the Armory Show: Lillie Bliss, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, and Mary Sullivan. Lillie Bliss was already an active collector of contemporary art, and had lent a portion of her collection to the Show. She was the daughter of a prosperous textile merchant, and devoted much of her inheritance to supporting the arts. She lived on Thirty-Seventh Street in Manhattan, and traveled to Europe regularly to learn about the latest movements in painting. In 1921, Bliss, along with others, convinced the Metropolitan Museum of Art to show an exhibit of modern European works. The show was panned by the critics and rejected by the public. For Bliss, it was clear that the Armory Show had not done enough to change public opinion. Bliss and her friend, Abby, began to discuss the possibility of
founding an institution solely dedicated to the genre during an opportunistic meeting while both were traveling in Egypt.

Abigail “Abby” Greene Aldrich was the daughter of Nelson W. Aldrich, Senator of Rhode Island. She was surrounded by art as a child both at home and during tours abroad. Her father collected old masters and sponsored the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act of 1909, which removed the prohibitive taxing of fine art imports. This legislation dramatically increased American’s collecting capabilities (and indirectly provided many of today’s museums with their permanent collections). Abby married John D. Rockefeller, Jr. in 1901. The wedding was front page news because the Rockefellers, similar to Gertrude’s family, were American royalty. ‘Jr.’ was born into one of the richest families in the world; his father was the industrial tycoon and founder of Standard Oil. Abby’s family was a political powerhouse, and she married into a financial one.

By the 1920s, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller (who I will now refer to as Rockefeller) commenced an informal education in contemporary art, through a series of tutors, and quickly accumulated a private collection. In 1929, she converted the top floor of her seven-story townhouse on West 54th Street into a private exhibition space named Topside Gallery. In spite of her family’s distaste for modern art, she populated the gallery with works by Van Gogh, Picasso, and Cezanne, as well as a growing collection of American folk art. Like Bliss, she was disconcerted by the lack of support for modern art. When she and Bliss returned from Egypt, Rockefeller quickly brought Mary Quinn Sullivan into their conversation.

Mary Quinn, a former art teacher in the Midwest and a graduate of the art program at the Pratt Institute, held several leadership positions in creating New York City’s public school art programs. Like Bliss, she traveled abroad to observe Europe’s art education, and was exposed to
early Impressionist and Expressionist art. In 1917, Quinn wed John Sullivan, a prosperous and well-connected New York City lawyer who sat on the Board of Education. During their marriage, she amassed a large and expansive modern art collection.

Similar to Gertrude, all three women supported living artists by purchasing art and providing financial security to those in need. However, they also desired to develop modern art as a field, and create a permanent collection representing it. Consequently, their involvement in living artists was more deliberate, and their purchases more measured than Gertrude and Force’s.

The women had what they needed to found a museum: connections, cultural capital and money (Hunter 1997, 10). Rockefeller’s son, Nelson, who would later become President of the Museum, remembers that his mother, Bliss, and Sullivan were “the perfect combination. The three women among them had all the resources, the tact, and the knowledge of contemporary art that the situation required.” (Hunter 1997, 10). They would become known as the ‘adamantine ladies’. Yet, instead of simply relying upon themselves for know-how (as Gertrude and Force did), Abby, the tacit leader of the endeavor, consulted with art critics and museum directors before founding the museum. She hired and brought in experts from a variety of sectors.

In May 1929, Rockefeller, Bliss, and Sullivan nominated Conger A. Goodyear as chair of the museum founding campaign. Goodyear had a long history in the professional art world, and was recently president of the Albright Gallery in Buffalo, NY. Unlike the Whitney Museum, the new quartet established a board of trustees from the start. They enlisted Josephine Porter Boardman Crane, founder of the prestigious and progressive Dalton School; Frank Crowninshield, editor of Vanity Fair; and Paul J. Sachs, Harvard museum scholar and co-director of the Fogg Art Museum. The circle that these women established was obviously very different
in character than Whitney and Force’s. The adamantine ladies forged a formalized, elite-based network that spanned a variety of professional (but only one social) milieus.

Their newly appointed director was also a far cry from Juliana Force. Alfred Barr, Jr., was a twenty-seven year old prodigy - the youngest tenured professor ever at Wellesley College. The field of modern art and the profession of museum director/curator was still unformed; Barr was at the forefront of shaping the discipline and the profession. A former student of Sach’s innovative ‘museums course’ at Harvard (one of the first of its kind), Barr designed and taught the only course on modern art in American higher education. The multimedia focus of this course would set the foundation for the expansive departments - painting, drawing, film, etc. - at the MoMA.

With these diverse, but connected individuals each offering their opinions, the founders then got to work on their mission for the institution. The charter with the Boards of Regents of the University of the State of New York states that the institution was designed for “establishing and maintaining in the City of New York, a museum of modern art, encouraging and developing the study of modern arts and the application of the such arts to manufacture and practical life, and furnishing popular instruction” (Hunter 1997, 11). It is evident that the seeds of education and scholarly conservation were planted from the outset.

The museum location decision was one of the last pieces of the founding puzzle. There were endless viable location options for the new Museum. As we know from the last section, the geography of modern art at the time was concentrated south of 14th Street, with their closest counterpart - the Gallatin Museum of Living Art - in Washington Square. Other major museums were scattered around the city; the Metropolitan on the Upper East Side and the Brooklyn
Museum on the eastern side of Prospect Park. Eschewing opening in any of these locales, the founders decided to focus on vacant commercial and office space for the new museum in midtown Manhattan. The location decision was not as pre-meditated as their other plans. Just a few months before opening, Barr was still considering over ten locations (Lynes 1973, 49). The matter was eventually placed into the hands of Mary Quinn Sullivan, who turned to Peter Grimm, a friend and former student. Grimm was already tied to the Rockefeller family: he was employed at the real estate firm in charge of all the family’s properties, which at this point spanned the five boroughs. Grimm suggested a suite of offices just a few blocks from the Rockefeller’s residence, at the prestigious Heckscher Building. The location was one of the most desirable in the city. Heckscher, the building’s creator, stated: “whoever will not shop on Fifth Avenue and 57th Street will not shop anywhere” (Horsley, accessed online). When he said this, Heckscher was referring to people like the Rockefellers and the rest of the board - those are the ‘sort’ who would shop on Fifth Avenue and 57th Street. Although the twelfth floor rental suffered from “cramped gallery spaces” of 4,430 square feet (Hunter 1997, 12), Alfred Barr, Jr., the founding director, saw it as ideal: “it is perfectly located…in a well-known landmark” (Bee and Elliott 2004, 26).

The Museum of Modern Art opened on November 7, 1929, just after Black Friday. Though modern art was controversial at the time, the opening show was a blockbuster. It drew in almost 50,000 visitors during its month-long exhibition. It was the largest audience of modern art since the Armory Show (Hunter 1997), and a “mixed bag” (Lynes 1973, 70) of elite and

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8 The Heckscher building was constructed in 1921, and was a close to Whitney’s home at the time. The site of the Heckscher Building was originally owned by the Whitney family, where one of their townhouses once stood.
relatively less elite attendees. Rockefeller and Barr were “delighted” (Lynes 1973, 70) that the first show brought a diverse (from their perspective, at least) audience.

The great success of the first year or two of the Museum compelled the founders to seek larger quarters, and very quickly another museum location decision was underway. A formal building committee was organized. In the wake of the 1929 Crash and the ensuing Depression, the committee focused on potentially adaptable private residences that newly impoverished New Yorkers were looking to unload. Serious consideration was given to a property on Sixty-sixth Street between Park and Madison. However, once again, the ultimate selection came very close to home. In 1932, the museum moved to a property at 11 West 53rd Street owned by Abby’s husband, John, Jr. At the time, West 53rd was a quiet residential block tucked away from the commercial boulevards. As stated earlier, the Rockefeller family had holdings stretching across the city; West 53rd Street was not then the only possibility for a property within the Rockefeller holdings. John Jr. himself had already or would go on to develop the Interchurch Center and International House of New York in Morningside Heights, The Cloisters in Inwood, and major housing developments in every borough. Despite an array of choice, the Museum of Modern Art stayed put in midtown, embedded in the networks that ensured their success.

Their success relied on their elite network to a far greater extent than may be expected. Although the Rockefellers were, at that point, contributing large sums to charitable causes, John Jr. limited his wife’s donations to the Museum. In fact, Goodyear had initially suggested that the Museum purchase the 53rd Street townhouse from the outset, but John resisted, solely agreeing to give the institution a break on the rent (and this concession only because he had been unable to generate income on the property from other potential tenants). Without Jr.’s deep pockets, the
museum had to fundraise in earnest. The board of trustees, of course, were in the line of fire. During this period, the initial founders strove to add a who’s who of New York’s elite to their extended circle, both informally and formally. Frank Crowninshield wrote: “I think it is very important to have individuals like these [elites] in our background...perhaps even on our stationary” (Lynes 1973, 74). Their proximity to these individuals proved to be useful as they acquired a larger board and donor list. We will see in later sections that the MoMA was at the forefront of an emerging trend towards professionalization. While they could still dictate their location decision without much outside influence in the 1930s, this was about the change dramatically for the institutions that followed.

In the era of personal ties, individuals groped their way through the embryonic process of founding a museum. This era’s founders had an adventurous, entrepreneurial spirit (which we saw in Gertrude and Rockefeller), rather than a by-the-book approach. This is simply because there was no book yet. The museum population that these women entered into represented the tail end of the era of personal networks. At this point, the museum population was not dramatically clustered into one location. There were art museums existing across Manhattan and many sections of Brooklyn. They could have located near major museums in Crown Heights (the location of the Brooklyn Museum), the Central Park area (where the Met and the Museum of Natural History were located), or a planned museum complex in Washington Heights (location of the Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Hispanic Society of America, and more). Instead, they represent the era by following personal ties, which reflect the isolated, seemingly idiosyncratic location of the Nicholas Roerich Museum in Morningside Heights and the American Museum of Safety on West 24th Street. I will discuss the era’s museum population as a whole at length in the
next chapter. Suffice it to say, founders were deeply involved in and intimately attached to the organizations they built - the museum location decision was a natural extension of that orientation.

The decision was determined by the networks in which founders wanted to embed their institutions. Two very different women, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney and Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, had the flexibility to generate divergent museum models in this era. Whitney kept the institution almost entirely self-run and self-funded. She built an “unbreachable wall” (Kert 1993, 274) between her art world network in Greenwich Village and her high society world in Midtown. She threw herself into the downtown bohemian community and created a “sort of social service agency” (Larson 1990, accessed online) - in the words of former Whitney Museum director Thomas Armstrong - for New York’s bohemian community. This then transformed into a full-fledged museum, slowly and ad hoc. The result was an institution of and in Greenwich Village. The Whitney would come to be identified by their art as much as by their location.

Rockefeller, on the other hand, envisioned an educational and collecting institution from the start. She brought modern art to her existing connections in midtown. During this era, the nation’s elite had set up a dense social network in Midtown and the Upper East Side. The geographical heart of that network - the Plaza Hotel at 57th Street and Fifth Avenue - was across the street from MoMA’s first location and four blocks from their second. Rockefeller and her fellow founders used their place-based elite network as a jumping off point for their new institution. As her biographer Bernice Kert argues, Abby Rockefeller “had acquired the Rockefeller penchant for building a broad base, bringing other people into her venture” (1993, 274). Their commitment to elite networks explains how a museum that is in name aligned with
contemporary artists and the greater public could open in the wealthiest neighborhood in the country. These contrasting approaches typify the networks-based museum location decisions made in the preprofessional era. The next era brings the Whitney and the MoMA out of an elastic environment and into a much denser and more constraining one.

**The era of homogenization (1940-1980)**

The era of homogenization represents a maturation of New York’s museum population. No longer resembling rebellious, strong-willed children, the museums that survived and the ones that opened were operating in a new reality. On the organization level, the museum form was slowly but surely developing; there was a growing consensus around what a museum should be and how it should be run. At the population level, New York was attracting a number of new institutions; the museum population was entering the insecure, conforming age of adolescence.

This new reality was also marked with the introduction of game-changing characters. Public and corporate grant giving bodies codified their expectations of museum structure, mission, and operation. All of New York’s institutions were confronted with these unfamiliar constraints. I will discuss how these new field entrants and the growth of the museum population contributed to institutional isomorphism of both museum structure and the location decision. A single model of success rose to the top of the population hierarchy. The successful model was a formal, educational museum run by a professionalized director with a large, wealthy board. The location decision was similarly homogenized; during this era, museums located in elite areas (similar to the MoMA), often near their board members. Additionally, new museum founders piggybacked off the successes of existing museums by locating their museums nearby, creating
an endogenous feedback of cluster growth in elite neighborhoods. This was encouraged by birth of a professional community of museum administrators and employees, who increased association and communications during this period. This period, between 1940 and 1980, saw the unfettered growth of Museum Mile and its environs, to the detriment of other parts of the city (I will discuss the aggregate consequences of this era in Chapter Two).

Museums and the rise of the American nonprofit organization

Before explaining how the introduction of state and corporate funding sources redefined New York’s museum population, I will first trace an equally important redefinition: the museum as a government-sanctioned nonprofit institution. Nonprofits emerged in the United States during the Gilded Age (Hall 1982). These charities resembled early instances of high culture institutions; they were constructed to ‘do good’ not just for the public but for the founder’s social status (Arnove 1980, Cookson and Persell 1985). The federal government began to identify nonprofit institutions in the early 20th century. Between 1913 and 1918, Congress passed the first laws to exempt these organizations from federal taxes.

In 1954, a new revenue act encoded the strict, bureaucratic guidelines for nonprofit status that museum founders must adhere to, even today. All nonprofit organizations are categorized under the 501(c) tax code. Within this designation is a mandate to serve the public good, broadly construed. Museums are specifically designated as 501(c)(3); they are categorized to be both educational bodies and promoters of the arts under this code. The 501(c)(3) status is now considered essential for any major museum. It provides major tax breaks to potential corporate and individual donors, and determines eligibility for a number of public funding opportunities.
But the requirements to receive this designation are stringent; they permeate nearly every aspect of an organization and demand a high level of organization and accountability. To put it plainly, it is safe to say that the early days of the Whitney would not be granted 501(c)3 status. Existing institutions, and those that were founded during this period, conformed to the 501(c)3 requirements.

Powell and DiMaggio (1983) argue that the intervention of the state into an organizational field coerces the population to homogenize and bureaucratize. While this was indeed the case, the proliferation of the nonprofit status was not the only homogenizing force during this era.

More people to please

The unparalleled fortunes amassed during the Gilded Age were evaporating. The days of pumping obscene amounts of Gilded Age money into cultural institutions were on the decline. Museum leaders were increasingly at the mercy of external funders. Many museums took on a board, but the corporation and the state were set to emerge as financial lifelines during this era. The museum was now an organization with several sources of external pressure. Each of these sources exacerbated the already-ongoing process of isomorphism.

As demonstrated in the Introduction, the United States government has not been especially friendly to the plight of its cultural institutions. Federal and local agencies had practiced a decidedly hands-off approach in regards to directly supporting the creation and

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9 As I mentioned in the Introduction, friendly tax policies were in effect by this period, but this was the only form of sustained cultural policy. There was a brief hiccup during the New Deal when the federal government directly supported starving artists through WPA commissions, but this program was dismantled unceremoniously during WWII.
administration of arts and culture. Passive tax policies, as described above, were the sole intervention into the sector. It was not until the 1960s that America developed its own explicit cultural policy. This came through the founding of the National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities, which in turn established the grant-giving National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities. These agencies represented a new model of state patronage: provide grants to existing arts organizations based on peer review and expert opinion. The same period also saw the rapid proliferation of state arts councils, which operated similarly to their federal counterpart.

It is no coincidence that federal and state arts agencies were created in the backdrop of the 1960s; the democratization of culture was a national project well underway. Instead of condoning elites’ monopolization over culture, public opinion was leaning towards equal access to and enjoyment of it. Consequently, government support urged arts organizations to appeal to new, diverse audiences, as well as to increase their education and outreach programs (Alexander 1996). Needless to say, the new sources of cash profoundly reshaped the museum population. Strom argues that the state has become the “most important patron of high culture” (2002, 12). Powell and DiMaggio (1978) predict that the intervention of the state coerces organizational fields to homogenize. Peterson (1987) has supported this claim, suggesting that American arts organizations have moved into a bureaucratic, administrative structure due to new funding pressures. The museum location decision has been particularly vulnerable to these pressures.
because public dollars often support capital investment - the purchase of land and the construction or renovation of buildings (Netzer 1978).\\(^{10}\)

Corporate funders became a force to be reckoned with as well (Porter 1981), yet with similar strings attached.\\(^{11}\) For-profit companies want to get a bang for their buck. Corporations are keen to underwrite ‘blockbuster’ shows that, again, are geared towards larger, broader audiences (Alexander 1996). Instead of creating the most esoteric, cutting-edge exhibit or pleasing the tastes of a single benefactor, museums now had to produce content that would appeal to the masses. Museums were expected to be packed to the brim with anyone they could get in the door rather than sparsely populated with just the right kind of people. Following the model of government programming, corporate funders have begun to standardize and bureaucratize their giving. The consequence of these concurrent interventions is an organizational population that cannot survive financially without professionalizing, formalizing, and consequently homogenizing.

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\\(^{10}\) Historical data on museum finances is somewhat piecemeal (Manjarrez et. al. 2008, 90), but there is a consensus that government funding emerged during the 1960s and quickly became an influential force (Zimmer and Toepfer 1999, Cummings 1995). Between the founding of the NEA in 1965 and 1980, its budget grew from $2.5 to $150 million; corresponding state-based and city-based funding increased from proportionately during that time as well (DiMaggio 1983, 61). High status conferrals and matching grants initiatives from government programs have spurred on corporate and private foundation giving during the same period. However, since the 1980s, museums have been increasingly relying on earned income as public funding has decreased beginning with the Reagan administration. A recent sample of New York City nonprofit arts institutions found that large institutions particularly have increased their earned income as public and private funding has declined (Alliance for the Arts 2010). Between 1995 and 2009, total earned income in the sample has more than doubled (from $357 to $841 million) while private and government grants have flattened. In 2009, earned income constituted 53.9% of income, with government funding at 14.1% and private funding at 32.0% (Alliance for the Arts 2010). When disaggregated by borough, Manhattan had the largest share of private contributions and the smallest average share of government funding. Another sample survey, by the Cultural Data Project, found that New York’s nonprofit arts institutions funding sources are divided as follows: 39% earned income, 35% private giving, 17% government funding, and 9% other (Alliance for the Arts 2011). A study conducted by the Institute of Museum and Library Services found that, on a national level, museums generated funding from the following sources in 2006: 43.7% earned, 24.4% private, 12.2% investment, and 19.7% government (Manjarrez et. al. 2008).

\\(^{11}\) Private foundations, in particular the Ford Foundation, also became active agenda-setting grantors.
Clustering

The environment’s increase in the number of institutions has its own ecological effects. During the period of homogenization, the museum field was becoming dense and competition was growing. Seventy-two founders located or relocated their institution during this forty year period, versus thirty-eight during the previous forty. An increase in the rate of organizational founding often coincides with geographic clustering. The phenomenon of organizational clustering has been well-documented in other fields, mainly for-profit ones (Bennett, Graham, and Bratton 1999; Gordon and McCann 2000; Porter 1998).

As more experts were hired and more paperwork was generated, the ‘fundable’ museum model came into sharp focus. Museums had to adapt to this model or lose out on significant opportunities (Useem and Kutner 1986). During this era, museums and their locations are more similar than unique. This process was only accelerated by the ecological phenomenon of organizational clustering. This homogenization will be reflected through founding and relocation patterns of the entire population in Chapter Two. But first, we will see how the Whitney Museum of American Art was affected by this era.

Another significant force of homogenization is the professionalization of museum employees (DiMaggio 1991). As has been found in other industries, employees of new organizational forms strive to define and bound their work. This is the process of professionalization. During the era of homogenization, museum curators and directors created the museum professional. Museum employees became more likely to make the same decisions, since they were trained by the same education programs. The professionalized population also became its own network and association.
The Whitney comes of age

By the 1940s, the Whitney was alive, but bleeding. After Whitney’s death in 1942, the Museum was left to her children. The institution was guarded from outsiders for as long as possible; the “tiny, family board” (Biddle 1999) lasted for longer than it probably should have (Larson 1990); the Whitney was in a financial crisis. Although Gertrude’s generation left money to the next, it was not enough to solely support what was becoming a complex, long-lived institution.

The Whitney was also responding to the changing environment by shifting its mission and orientation. Even in the first decade of the Museum’s founding (and in large part due to the museum’s efforts), American modern art was becoming accepted; once-starving artists were getting gallery shows, and traditional museums were incorporating key pieces into their collections. In a way, the Whitney created the seeds of its own destruction. It would have to become more like a museum, and less like an artist-promoting studio club, to rationalize its continued existence.

The 1950s saw the next generation of Whitney leaders (led by Gertrude’s daughter, Flora Whitney Miller) wrestle with unforeseen financial pressures. As the Museum continued its “inevitable” growth (Biddle 1999, 97), the board of trustees finally allowed non-family members. This dramatically changed the seat of institutional power. The additional members brought in much needed cash, but also demanded a say in how the institution grew, who it hired, and what it exhibited. Miller, then president, knew that the introduction of external board members would remove the original personal orientation of the institution, she “agreed that the Museum could become a truly public institution...only by expanding the board. But what did
truly public mean? Supported by the public certainly, in proportion to its accessibility and accountability to that public” (Biddle 1999, 108). The board itself began to institutionalize: Flora Miller Biddle, who at the time was a board member, remembered: “trustees’ meeting were different now. We had agendas, we set dates, we tried to be more formal” (Biddle 1999, 109).

One of the main topics of board meeting conversations was a possible relocation. Despite barely being in the black, the trustees were adamant about expanding. Another museum location decision was underway. This relocation would change the scope and mission of the institution from an ad hoc artists’ haven to an esteemed, collecting behemoth. The Whitney’s original plan was to find temporary quarters in order to expand and renovate the Eighth Street building. The search for a short-term space was a nonstarter, mainly due to lack of finances. After much hand-wringing, the leaders decided to accept a favor that appeared from a familiar face. In 1949, the Museum of Modern Art offered the Whitney a property adjacent to it, facing West 54th Street. This generous offer was initiated through an intimate network tie. The chair of MoMA’s board was John Hay Whitney, cousin and friend to Gertrude. The Whitney accepted the offer in 1949, but sat on the actual relocation, camping out in Greenwich Village for another eight years.

Finally, after enough time had passed to persuade leaders to feel that “uptown seemed to be the place to be” (Biddle 1999, 78), they relocated to West 54th Street. This was a dramatic move away from the Greenwich Village artists’ network they held so dear. The Whitney’s new neighbors would be wealthy Fifth Avenue residents and a new slate of profitable, commercial art galleries. This move, in effect, traded in one landed network (informal, socializing artists) for

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13 This offer came after a fumbled attempt to absorb the Whitney into the MoMA. The effort, spearheaded by Juliana Force, was abandoned because the MoMA would not accept the Whitney’s collection as is.
another (formal art galleries and their wealthy clients); this was not only a new location, but a new internal identity for the institution.

The move had a significant effect on the Museum’s external identity as well. In their first year, their attendance quadrupled (Biddle 1999, 97). They became associated with the MoMA, losing some independence and gaining some of their policies. Trustees and directors became even more cautious and selective in their acquisitions for the collection. They agreed to accept gifts and donations from external individual donors, the state, and corporate sponsors. The Whitney became aware of their competition with other museums for these funds, the MoMA in particular. Biddle said that with these changes came “a dissemination of authority” (1999, 97). The days of Gertrude and Force calling the shots were over, replaced by a large, diverse set of interlocutors. Their new geography was in lockstep with their new governance structure.

These bedfellows lasted for nine years. During that period, other museums were gathering on the Upper East Side. The entire population was institutionalizing and mimicking, similar to the process the Whitney was undergoing. By the mid-1960’s, the MoMA was ready to have their space back, and the Whitney was eager to get out from under their shadow. Again, the museum leaders were faced with a location decision. They quickly decided not to move back to their original space on Eighth Street. They also vetoed the notion of a permanent location in midtown. Instead, their eyes were looking northward. The board agreed upon a location on the Upper East Side. 57th Street was becoming a gallery scene, but the site (on the corner of Madison Avenue and 75th Street) was more conveniently adjacent to the heart of the most elite
As a result of the increased cost of the land purchase and original construction, the Whitney further institutionalized, adopting museum policies that are now standard. They began charging for admission for the first time. More board members were added. Citywide marketing campaigns were approved. As Powell and DiMaggio (1978) predicted, these moves reflect a mixture of coercive, normative, and mimetic isomorphism. Coercive pressures were brought on by the endless crossings of T’s and dottings of I’s that came with government and corporate grant giving. In order for the Whitney to even be eligible for these forms of support, they were ‘forced’ to operate in an accountable, professional way. Mimetic pressures are part and parcel with their geographic proximity to and relationship with the MoMA. The Whitney trustees knew that the MoMA was their competition - and that the Whitney was losing that competition (Berman 1990). In light of their economic precariousness, the Whitney chose to emulate their more legitimized peer, both in location and administration. Finally, the role of normative pressures were strong, not only for the Whitney, but for the entire museum population. Museum directors and curators were well into the professionalization process. The American Association of Museums was growing, directors were increasingly mobile since WWII (Meyer 1979), and the top museum directors were so connected that by this point one expert likened the profession to “a kind of freemasonry” (Meyer 1979, 231). The days of Juliana Force and her kind were over (she, incidentally, was ousted from power during this period). From all fronts, the onslaught of institutional isomorphism was coming to the Whitney.

14 Coincidentally, Abby and John Rockefeller had followed the elite clustering on the Upper East Side and were now located at 740 Park Avenue, just a few blocks from the Whitney’s new location.
The Whitney’s new location and new governance did have its advantages. As a result (many would argue), attendance at the new location increased exponentially, and the Whitney joined the ranks of the major public museums in New York and the dozen or so museums already operating on the Upper East Side. These included: the Frick Collection, the Goethe-Institut, the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, and more which I discuss in the next chapter.

Flora Miller Biddle, Whitney’s granddaughter and new president of the board, fully embraced a scholarly mission in line with her new neighbors: “the sheer number of artists and new galleries in New York made our former mission hopeless to fulfill. We couldn’t possibly show all emerging artists…All in all, the Whitney’s top priority was now to show the very finest of American art…” (Biddle 1999, 191). During this era, the Whitney Museum of American Art transformed from an informal, artist-driven advocacy organization to an institutionalized, donor-friendly institution. The museum’s location decision was a key driver and reflection of this change.

While the MoMA stayed in its original location, it also underwent an institutionalization process (albeit, not to the extent of the Whitney Museum). Goodyear, the museum’s first president, argues that as the institution’s public expanded; the number of “special constituencies” it needed to please increased. So too did the complexity and size of the institution (Hunter 1999, 33). They began to accept a significant amount of public and corporate grants. Goodyear recalls: “receiving it [grants], however, implied greater public accountability for the Museum’s programs…” (Lynes 1973, 33). Despite this additional pressure, public and corporate giving
continued at the MoMA, and as the 1970s and 1980s wore on, the museum became increasingly oriented towards attracting more and more attendees.

We can see that by the mid-twentieth century, there was a clear push towards similarity over difference for the museum population. As a result of the homogenization of internal organizational decision making, museums founded in this era were more likely to join the growing museum population in elite Manhattan. The Whitney took the more dramatic step of relocating into it.

The intra-organizational homogenization was exacerbated by population-level dynamics. Museums were growing in numbers, becoming a field of their own. And the benefits of grouping geographically were only increasing. Prior research has shown that geographic clustering drives and is driven by institutional homogenization. The advantages of clustering for museums, specifically, include: the possibility of sharing or sponging attendees, staff, reputation, and donors (Owen-Smith and Powell 2004). The result is a map (which I will show in Chapter Two) of the newly concentrated distribution of museums, which occurred in elite Manhattan for the reasons previously laid out.

The irony is that the era of homogenization took place alongside the advent of government patronage and ‘cultural democracy’ politics. Unlike programming and marketing decisions, the museum location decision was not vulnerable to democratization pressures. If the era of homogenization were to continue, we would observe an unsustainable level of saturation in the elite sections of Manhattan. Instead, as will be discussed in the next section, the role of museums in urban life transformed significantly over the following decades.
The era of cultural branding (1980s-present)

The question of what the economy can do for the arts has been reversed to what the arts can do for the economy.  

By 1980, New York’s museum population was more saturated than any other city in the country. There were eighty-nine museums within the five boroughs. 53% of these were in Manhattan, and 56% of those were located in the single neighborhood of Upper East Side. As we saw in the last era, the museum population had matured and homogenized. It is possible that the process of homogenization could have continued, but a new trend of location decisions was about to take hold. During this era, we will witness the deliberate, state-sponsored transformation of the museum field from a constellation of nonprofit institutions into a major force of urban economic development -- and museums’ emergence as a key player in the ‘creative economy’. I will argue that the political, economic, and organizational changes of this era have also reconstructed the museum location decision. In Chapter Two, we will see that this resulted in a controlled diffusion of museums to new areas of New York City, including the outer boroughs. In addition to an upsurge of support for capital projects, museums are using their location decisions to brand and re-brand their institutional identity. With such a large museum population, a single

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15 Hendon, Shanahan, and Macdonald 1984, 297.
institution must look for new ways to differentiate itself from the rest of the pack, and
demonstrate its own ‘anchoring’ abilities. Thus, cultural branding is a symbiotic process between
the institution and community: both leech a desired reputation from the other, meeting
somewhere in the middle.

This sea change has occurred in concert with political and economic urban actors who
have named arts organizations as a new lever of renewal and revitalization. In 1983, the New
Jersey and New York Port Authority published a landmark study estimating the ‘economic
impact’ of the cultural sector on the region (Stern and Seifert 2008). The ripple effect of the study
quickly moved through arts institutions, economic development organizations, and government
agencies. Through the findings of economic impact reports, arts organizations could now
justify receiving larger public earmarks (as well as funding from agencies not specifically
designated to support culture), and municipal bodies could align with local economic developers
in mutually beneficial goals. These efforts were spurred on by the bullish 1990s. A surge of
major building projects has followed; between 1985 and 2002, seventy-one large-scale museums
or art centers have been founded across the country (Strom 2002, 3). In New York City, one
hundred museums of all sizes were founded.

This attention has only intensified as city leaders have begun to brand their cities to
appeal to two key demographics: tourists and the creative class (Hannigan 1998, Eisinger 2000).

16 There are important precursors to this form of economic development, including culture-based renewal
projects by Robert Moses and the revitalization of SoHo as an artists district (Zukin 1987). I will discuss
these instances in detail in Chapter Two. However, I argue that it was not until the 1980s that these efforts
came widespread and systematic.

17 The validity of arts-based economic impact reports are debated. EIR’s use a ‘multiplier effect’, which
assumes that every attendee of an institution will spend a far greater sum on the city in general.
Tourism has always been a major source of revenue for urban America, New York especially. Recently, urban tourism has enchanted policymakers: cities are creating amenities not for their residents, but for their visitors (Judd 1999). These policies are tied intimately to cultural projects. The reinvestment, for example, in Times Square and the midtown theater district, has dramatically changed the face of the once-seedy, adult oriented neighborhood, which is now a family friendly destination. In the NYC Department of Cultural Affair’s 2008 Annual Report, it is clear that municipal policy has negotiated and encouraged these transformations, and triumphs the city’s arts as “a central element” of the city which “strengthen[s] our communities” and “contribute[s] to the spiritual and economic health” of New York. Mayor Michael Bloomberg (who took office in 2002) has been especially supportive of arts-based revitalization.

Along with tourists, cities, which suffered from an exodus of the middle class mid-century, are aiming to attract high skill and high income professionals. Similar to building an infrastructure of tourist-friendly pockets within an urban center, urban elites are attempting to install institutional amenities that are favored by young, urban professionals. This demographic - with a special emphasis on those engaged in creative and hi-tech professions - has been termed the ‘creative class’ (Florida 2002, 2005). Florida became the voice of this movement, encouraging the fostering of ‘creative cities’ through the development of cultural and lifestyle amenities. This has resulted in cities allocating huge sums of money to develop live-work neighborhoods rife with arts and cultural organizations. According to Florida’s theory, the end-goal of attracting and sustaining the creative class is a more prosperous, modern, and happy city for all of its residents.
Taken together, there is a new conception of the transformative power a major arts institution can exert on its surrounding community. Thomas Krens’ work as President of the Guggenheim Foundation could be the most extreme example of this approach. He tested the rebranding capacity of a major arts institution by founding an extension museum in the off-the-grid, manufacturing city of Bilbao, Spain. The museum was an enormous success, resuscitating the economic prowess of the city, and even the surrounding region. The “Bilbao effect” was born (Minutillo 2008). City leaders and arts administrators now had ‘proof’ that it was possible to revitalize an entire city with one landmark institution.

The linkage between cultural institutions and economic development has changed the symbolic and physical map of where museums should locate. In the new decision model, museum location is now key to developing an institutional identity. Concurrently, neighborhoods are welcoming these institutions with open arms - encouraged by policymakers and private developers. These simultaneous efforts have resulted in a geographic spread of New York’s museum population. However, this diffusion is only to certain, ‘acceptable’ areas. We will see in the following sections what the characteristics of an ‘acceptable’ neighborhood are. In this section, I will convey how the Whitney Museum and the MoMA confronted this new era. Both institutions use geography to jumpstart the image of their now aged institutions. They expand into new neighborhoods to reinvigorate their reputation as current, relevant, and - for lack of a better word - cool.
The ‘cultural corridor’

At P.S. 1 no one wears a tie...at MoMA they wear cuff links.

Tom Finkelpearl, former Deputy Director of P.S. 1

In 1971, while the MoMA was already a citywide landmark, a small, scrappy arts organization formed in relative obscurity. The organization, the Institute for Art and Urban Resources, was founded by Alanna Heiss, a former music student. Heiss was deeply embedded in the underground arts scene of 1970s New York City, advocating for her struggling-artist friends and colleagues. Similar to Whitney and Rockefeller before her, she was unsatisfied with the scant recognition museums and galleries were giving the younger generation. In its early form, the Institute was more a social service than collecting institution. Heiss was a proponent of the alternative space movement: she reclaimed abandoned properties and repurposed them into work-live and exhibition spaces. Heiss attacked the city with a broad sweep; the Coney Island Sculpture Museum, 10 Bleecker Street, the Idea Warehouse in TriBeCa, and the Clocktower Gallery in lower Manhattan were all products of her efforts.

Ironically, the Institute did not have its own space. That changed in 1976, when Heiss took over an abandoned school building that had been shut down by the Department of Education in 1963 on the corner of 21st Street and 46th Avenue in Long Island City, Queens. The building was, and is, massive; it’s size and distinctive red brick Romanesque revival architecture make it a visual and symbolic neighborhood landmark. Heiss sectioned the floor space into twenty-four subsidized studios. She renamed her organization Project Studios One, or P.S. 1. The

18 Goldstein 2008, accessed online.
organization’s name is a clever reference to the building’s past life, but also a sign of the arts organization’s future educational role in the community.

Locating a massive arts institution in Long Island City was not an obvious choice. While there were artists living in the community, the neighborhood did not have the density of SoHo, the Lower East Side, or many spots in Brooklyn. There was not an existing presence of arts organizations. P.S. 1 was hoped to be the spark of more to come. And come it did. The new building and its early success brought novel attention to the area. By 1980, the era of cultural branding had taken hold and Long Island City was a target. A cover article in New York Magazine named it “The Next Neighborhood” (Keating 1980). The article contested that P.S. 1 gave Long Island City’s then-sprawling, unorganized artist community “legitimacy” (ibid., 22), and that it acted as a “key catalyst” (ibid., 24) to attract additional artist and luxury oriented organizations. There were plans to build a three-block $67 million Queens Performing Arts Center, which would anchor a projected arts district. City government and private developers were commandeering the project; one developer said that area “was like an oil field” (ibid., 20).

Twenty years later, this master re-branding plan has been slow in coming. While P.S. 1 grew to become a significant force in the contemporary art world, it did not spawn an ‘authentic’ artist community. Instead, the bohemian energy went to North Williamsburg and DUMBO, Brooklyn. However, Long Island City quietly, but meaningfully grew a small institutional infrastructure. The Fisher Landau Center, the Isamu Noguchi Museum, and Socrates Sculpture Park were founded in the orbit of the converted schoolhouse. These institutions were doing well, but more or less under the radar. P.S. 1 itself had a cutting-edge, respected reputation, but was struggling internally and living “hand to mouth” (Goldstein 2008, accessed online).
high density of the local artists and corresponding lifestyle amenities (targeted restaurants, cafes, etc.), this museum cluster did not capture the attention of greater New York City.

Across the East River, the Museum of Modern art celebrated its seventy-first birthday in 2000. While the longevity of the institution was something to celebrate, there was some blemishes on the once pioneering reputation of the Museum. Although it was oriented towards modern and contemporary art, some felt that it was too scholarly, too safe, and falling out of touch with the times. As we saw in the previous section, the effects of institutionalism have taken their toll; the MoMA was not built to be as flexible and responsive as it might have wanted. A breath of fresh air was needed. In 2000, the MoMA became partner institutions with P.S. 1 - now named MoMA PS1. The union brought financial security, a new audience and donor base, and a world-class reputation to the impoverished Long Island City organization. In the blink of an eye, P.S. 1 rebranded itself into an august New York City museum. Midtown MoMA benefited from the partnership merger as well: they received a healthy dose of ‘street cred’, as well as additional square feet to exhibit and test out more experimental, less MoMA-certified works.

What is perhaps most surprising about the partnership, however, is how important geography was to the decision. According to both institutions’ press releases, one of their major goals was to “extend the reach of both institutions”. Glenn Lowry, the director of the midtown MoMA, was vocal about how the partnership would redefine the city’s cultural landscape: “P.S. 1 appealed to him because of Long Island City’s proximity to the Modern without being in Manhattan…Mr. Lowry said, ‘We are creating a cultural corridor...’” (Vogel 1999, accessed online). At a professional conference, Lowry pushed the point even further by calling the outer boroughs “the centers of New York” (Center for an Urban Future 2006, accessed online).
Lowry’s moves represent a careful, delicate dance between development, government, and museum interests, and how they have come together during this era. In Chapter Two, I will further explore this dance, and how it has affected the locations of dozens of the city’s museums.

MoMA PS1 was signified as a major step ahead in the stop-and-start process of transforming Long Island City from a quiet, working-class manufacturing neighborhood to a buzzy, creative class arts district. Today, the neighborhood’s economic development corporation lists seventeen major arts organizations. A few of them have banded together in joint development and outreach efforts, anchored by MoMA PS1 (the Long Island Cultural Alliance). A number of smaller galleries have opened in the past decade as well. 2011 saw the first annual Long Island City arts festival: no less than 52 organizations are participating in the eight-day event. In 2000, the New York Times argued that the neighborhood, after thirty years of false starts, has finally “come into its own” (Vandam 2010, accessed online) and a local research center argues that the MoMA stamp of approval “stepped up the pace of development” in Long Island City (Center for an Urban Future, accessed online). In one fell swoop, the Museum of Modern Art re-branded itself, a struggling outer-borough arts organization, and an on-the-brink neighborhood.

The big move…back

After unsuccessful attempts to expand their 32,000 square foot building on Madison Avenue, the Whitney Museum’s board began to entertain relocation discussions in the mid-2000s. The notion was hotly debated, and it took years until they finally agreed to relocate. Despite this internal tumult, in 2010 the board unanimously decided that it was time to move.
The chosen location -- the downtown, trendy, revitalized Meatpacking District - was a vast departure from their current home.

One of the reasons the move was so contentious was because, after almost five decades on the Upper East Side, the museum was highly attached to its neighborhood. This was the case even for the board members. Leonard Lauder, a powerful trustee and the institution’s most generous patron, was one of the staunchest holdouts; he could not imagine the Whitney being anywhere else. After consenting to the move, he explained his initial reticence: “It would be unfair for someone like me who grew up near the Whitney to believe it should stay there” (Vogel 2010, accessed online). The Whitney would have to say goodbye to its proximity to donors (many who are lifetime residents like Lauder) and to Museum Mile. There was also uncertainty about how this would change the museum’s attendance base. Lauder wondered, “I have no doubt that they can build the museum, but once the surge is over, will they be able to create a new viewership that can sustain it?” (Vogel 2010, accessed online). Lauder is personally donating the funds to hold onto the original location, just in case.

While Lauder doesn’t want the museum to change, the other Whitney leaders hope that this move will do exactly that. Through their new location, the Museum is reorienting their image, function, and audience. This is in large part through their new association with the Meatpacking District. Until the 1960s, the neighborhood, which runs between 14th Street and Gansevoort Street north-south, and from Hudson Street to the river east-west, was literally a meatpacking commercial zone, bustling with slaughterhouses and food preparation businesses. As shipping waned on the Manhattan waterfront, the neighborhood suffered and fell into a state of decay. In the 1970s, nightlife establishments started to open in the area, catering towards the
gay and BDSM communities. The ‘sprucing up’ started in the 1990s. Fashionable boutiques -
which wanted to get in on the edgy vibe of the neighborhood - popped up. Galleries started to
creep south from neighboring Chelsea. The turnover of the neighborhood was rapid and intense.
Today, it is home to some of the city’s most expensive and desirable restaurants, hotels, and
nightclubs. The neighborhood, however, does not have any museums.

To fit into this community, the Whitney needed an internal and external makeover. The
groundbreaking ceremony was closer to a young, urban loft party than a staid trustee soiree.
Director Adam Weinberg speculates that the museum could become a nighttime destination, “a
gathering place for the community and a place where people can do things in the evening other
than eat and drink...And we’re talking about having very late hours sometimes during the week
because people are out much later in that neighborhood” (Swanson 2011, accessed online).
Commentators interpret this move to be a strategic rebranding for the institution: the New York
Times opines that the museum, similar to the MoMA, is “trying hard to show off a younger,
hipper side” (Murphy 2011, accessed online).

Local observers argue that the addition of the Whitney to the Meatpacking District will
act as a “capstone” to two decades of concentrated renewal (WestView News 2012, accessed
online). There is already talk of additional amenities, which were once decidedly not downtown,
to make the move as well. For example, owners of the hallowed Four Seasons Restaurant, are
considering an outpost near the museum site (Smith and Karni 2012).

City government has played an active role in ensuring this relocation. In Chapter Two, I
will map out exactly how these actors have intervened on the museum location decision at the
population level. Suffice it to say that this has indeed taken hold of the Whitney. In 2009, the
New York City Economic Development Corporation inked a deal with the museum to substantially subsidize their investment in the property. The Whitney would pay only half of the site’s appraised value -- $18 million -- and the city would dedicate $55 million to the building construction. The agreement is in line with previous public development projects in the neighborhood. The Meatpacking District has now “been spruced up and made safe for a major cultural brand” (Davidson 2011) and the Whitney Museum is expected to act as that “anchor” (Whitney Director Adam Weinberg in Swanson 2011) for additional development and branding. City intervention had already proven to be successful in the neighborhood through the high profile conversion of an abandoned elevated railway into an urban park named the High Line. Mayor Bloomberg budgeted $50 million for this quality-of-life project in 2004. The site of the new Whitney is located at the terminus of this park. By geographically linking with the High Line and the Meatpacking District, the Whitney Museum of American Art has fully shed its rebellious, informal start, and is now the crowned formal arts institution of the new New York.

The last thirty years have marked a major shift in how museums interact with their home cities. Museums are now active players in development efforts, strategically redefining themselves and their surroundings with the location decision. The Whitney and the MoMA moved into neighborhoods unlike the Upper East Side or Midtown. However, both Long Island City and the Meatpacking District were in the process of urban revitalization. They were ‘acceptable’ neighborhoods for museums because both were well into that transformation. In Long Island City, P.S. 1 had helped foster a suitable environment for what would become MoMA PS1; in the Meatpacking District, commercial and government forces were jointly driven
to re-brand the neighborhood. The MoMA and the Whitney were able to enter into these environments, sop up some of the remaining rough edges of the neighborhood, and further catalyze its redevelopment. Both of these neighborhoods now have major art museums attached to their identities. While these are clearly bringing smaller organizations and businesses to their areas, we will have to see if they are able to attract other museums as well. Or, it is possible that to further differentiate new museum leaders will cast their eyes even further afield.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that the way museum leaders decide on their locations is patterned over time. This pattern can be roughly divided into three eras (please see the figure below for a summary of key points covered in the chapter). From the Gilded Age to the 1940s, museums were personal pet projects; the location decision was an outcome of existing embeddedness in networks. In the middle of the century, the museum field became institutionalized and homogenized. The ideal museum model emerged, along with an ideal location (elite Manhattan). In the 1980s, cultural branding came into play; museums became strategic in their location decisions, pushing the envelope of where they could set up shop. This also allowed institutions to differentiate in a saturating market. The Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art provided illustrative case studies as to how long-lived institutions navigated through these periods; in Chapter Two I will argue that they are representative of population-level trends. Overall, transformations of the museum location decision help us understand the current spatial distribution of museums.
Table 1.2. Timeline of the three eras of the museum location decision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Era of personal ties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>1860s: Gilded Age begins</td>
<td>1860s-90s: major museums founded including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, American Museum of Natural History, and the Brooklyn Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1880</td>
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<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>1929: Museum of Modern Art founded in Midtown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1957: Whitney relocates to Midtown</td>
<td>1950s: corporate giving begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>1976: P.S. 1 locates in Long Island City</td>
<td>1980s: rise of economic impact reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td></td>
<td>1990s: growth in number of NYC museums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2000: MoMA and P.S. 1 partner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2010: Whitney announces relocation to Meatpacking District</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, there are still questions to be answered. While a portion of the diffusion of museums can be attributed to organization- and field-level dynamics, it is also clear that these museums do not open in empty space. These institutions interact with the residents, businesses, and communities they decide (or do not decide) to locate in. We can notice, even from the current distribution of museums displayed in the Introduction, that there are certain clusters that exist, but have not grown to the extent of Museum Mile, such as Crown Heights, Brooklyn and Flushing, Queens. Under what circumstances were these areas’ institutions founded? What was the composition of these communities at the time of museum foundings? Were they ever considered to become the ‘next’ Museum Mile? What stagnated their growth? Along with examining the museum population en masse, we need to consider a so-far missing, but extremely important piece of the puzzle: New Yorkers.
Chapter 2: New Yorkers and their museums

Individually, museums are fine institutions, dedicated to the high values of preservation, education and truth; collectively, their growth in numbers points to the imaginative death of this country.

Robert Hewison

The previous chapter explained how increasing institutional pressures and the growth of the museum population altered the museum location decisions over time. I used the institutional life courses of the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art to identify three eras, each with a different location decision paradigm. In this chapter, I will make the argument that the location decisions of the Whitney and the MoMA reflect population-level trends, and examine how those trends resulted in the spatial distribution we observe today. I will also introduce the changing demographic composition of New York as a mitigating factor to explain the diffusion and (at times) contraction of museum placement. While the organization-level of founder decisions are key to understanding how museums have converged in their decision making, we need to emplace those decisions in the evolving city of New York to make sense of why some neighborhoods benefited from a museum boom and others did not.
The figure below summarizes the location decision model, prevailing demographic trend, and subsequent museum distribution of each era. The era of personal ties was concurrent with the rapid succession and shifting of both the immigrant and elite population. Because neighborhoods were not yet solidified and founders tended to make personal location decisions, the large-scale geographic distributions of museums created an unsystematic series of potential clusters around the city. During the era of homogenization, residential segregation was cemented and founder decisions homogenized. Consequently, even though the rate of foundings increased, there was an overall contraction in their geographic spread. Founders during this era preferred the elite enclave of the Upper East Side. Other clusters developed during the previous era stagnated. The final era is characterized by a calculated diffusion of museums. This can be explained by the simultaneous rise of gentrification and founders’ increasing desire to differentiate their institutions through the location decision. Before elaborating on these eras, I will briefly introduce the two datasets utilized throughout the chapter.

Table 2.1. Characteristics of three eras of the museum location decisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Era</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Museum Location Decision</th>
<th>Demographic Trend</th>
<th>Geographic Distribution of Museums</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Ties</td>
<td>pre-1940</td>
<td>personally motivated</td>
<td>shifting elite and minority neighborhoods</td>
<td>&quot;toss-up&quot;: seeds of potential museum clusters around the city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homogenization</td>
<td>1940-1980</td>
<td>isomorphic</td>
<td>residential segregation, white flight</td>
<td>&quot;contraction&quot;: museums cluster on the Upper East Side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Branding</td>
<td>1980-today</td>
<td>differentiation</td>
<td>gentrification</td>
<td>&quot;controlled spread&quot;: geographic diffusion to gentrified neighborhoods</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both the demographic trends and location decision of each era should be considered fluid guidelines. Not every museum followed the location pattern of each era, and New York’s demographic changes are extremely complex and fast-paced. I use these rough abstractions to characterize the paradigm of each era.
As this table indicates, demographic change plays a decisive factor in how the museum location decision unfolded over New York’s neighborhoods, even though it is an unconscious factor in the minds of museum leaders. By demographic change, I mean the increased proportion of minority, and particularly African Americans, in New York neighborhoods. While demographics were salient during the era of personal ties, I argue that they were increasingly influential as the proportion of African Americans increased and became residentially segregated during the era of homogenization and on through the era of cultural branding. I argue that the interaction of changing decision paradigms and demographic transformations result in the specific large-scale diffusion patterns of each era. In short, the previous chapter made the case that museum location decisions are a dynamic product of population-level forces. This chapter explains why individual neighborhoods were included or excluded from those paradigmatic location decisions.

This argument motivates a number of empirical hypotheses, each of which I will explore through observed data between 1910 and 2010. This chapter will unfold as follows. First, I will demonstrate how the case studies of the Whitney and the MoMA are reflective of broader dynamics by chronicling the changing spatial distribution of the museum population through the three location decision eras. At key points, I will validate the relationship between the museum location and demographic trends by proposing and ultimately rejecting alternative explanations, including the primacy of clustering theory and the contention that diffusion is solely tied to tourism geography. Of course, these alternate explanations influence the location decisions, but at each juncture, we will find, through observed empirics, that historical and current museum
diffusion cannot be explained without considering the residential patterns of New Yorkers, and particularly African Americans. I will further test the relationship between the location decision and demography by concluding the chapter with an event history analysis of museum foundings and relocations.

Data Sources

Museums

Constructing a dataset of New York City’s museums requires an operational definition. A museum is, in the broadest terms, an institution whose primary purpose is for the public to view an exhibition of some collection.\(^{20}\) These collections can be of artistic, scientific, historical, or cultural objects; or plants, and/or animals.\(^{21}\) This basic definition can be translated into a series of operational components, or keywords: museum, arts institution, zoo, botanical garden, exhibition, collection, and aquarium. I used these keywords as a search heuristic in a database, in this case the New York Times historical archive, 1851-2010. This approach to building databases has been tested and utilized (Earl et. al. 2004, Koopmans and Rucht 1999, DeRouen, Bercovitch, and Pospieszna 2011).

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\(^{20}\) The International Council of Museums currently defines the museum as: “a nonprofit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, researches, communicates, and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment” (ICOM 2007).

\(^{21}\) It may appear that living museums follow a different location logic than other museum forms. However, these institutions are similarly clustered with other museum forms (though more frequently in parkland than not). An example of this phenomenon is the collection of institutions, including a botanical garden, in Snug Harbor, Staten Island.
I read the description of each institution match, and included any matches that adhered to the original definition.\textsuperscript{22} This required dismissing any “exhibition” matches that were put on by commercial galleries, theaters, or performing arts institutions. I also excluded collections and exhibition matches that were part of traveling or temporary shows, such as World’s Fairs. I cross-referenced remaining matches with current and historical directories from ReferenceUSA, American Alliance of Museums (previously American Association of Museums), and the Alliance for the Arts. I collected founding and closing dates and prior locations from the museum’s own records and publications, as well as an independent search through local historical newspaper coverage provided by the Columbia University Libraries (but again beginning with the New York \textit{Times}). I geocoded this dataset using ArcGIS. This resulted in a set of 281 founding events; 57 of these were relocations.

\textit{United States Census}

The second source is the United States Census. I extracted demographic data at the tract-level, beginning in 1910\textsuperscript{23} through the most recent 2010 Census. Both the geographic unit of analysis (the census tract boundaries) and the data content has changed over the past century. However, the US Census has consistently collected the basic racial composition of each tract.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{22} I did not include instances of the dime museum model. These were explicitly referred to as ‘dime museums’ and were thus distinguished from their high culture counterparts. Furthermore, the dime museum faded out by the early 1900s in New York.

\textsuperscript{23} This is the first year data was collected at the tract level.

\textsuperscript{24} Unless otherwise cited, all demographic data and figures are based on my analysis of the US Census data.
The era of personal ties

During the era of personal ties, both the city of New York and its museum population were unformed. The relationship between the museum location decision and demographic trends was just as shaky. Please recall that in the last chapter, both the Whitney and the MoMA were founded modern art institutions in reaction to the establishment, yet in contrasting locations; I will argue that this discrepancy was typical until the early 1930s. Museum founders are most likely to locate institutions in places to which they have some personal connection; since most founders were white elites, we expect and observe that no museums were founded in minority neighborhoods during this period. We also predict, and observe, that the shifting locations of elite neighborhoods spread out the early distribution of museums. As the era goes on, both of these populations begin to take shape, staking their ownership of certain neighborhoods and forsaking others. The initial scattering of institutions becomes increasingly organized.

New York dipped in gold

*In Boston they ask, how much does he know?  In New York, how much is he worth?  In Philadelphia, who were his parents?*

Mark Twain

In 1825, New York could hardly be called a world-class city. There was no police force, no fire department, no sewage system. Less than two hundred thousand souls\(^{25}\) - most of which were recent immigrants - lived on the island sliver. Over the next fifty years, these figures changed at a meteoric rate; by 1870, the population approached one million. The rate of

\(^{25}\) One can compare this figure to major cities at the time. London contained almost one million residents in 1801. Paris contained just under 800,000 residents in 1831.
commercial growth was also unprecedented; New York emerged as the shipping and trade hub of the country. The manufacturing boom triggered a tidal wave of immigration, at first from Ireland and Germany and then increasingly from southern and eastern Europe. Immigrants settled into dense downtown tenement districts, close to the factories and ports. The small group of men who owned those factories and ports would come to constitute the richest class the country had ever witnessed.

The Gilded Age (1860s-1890s), as coined by Mark Twain, seemed to be just that - dipped in gold. The country’s elite was far wealthier and more celebrated than ever before. Despite amassing their fortunes all over the country, an astonishing number of these tycoons chose to live in one city: New York (Reitano 2006). In the 1850s, elites lived below Fourteenth Street, occupying large town-homes overlooking Washington Square Park and Lafayette Place. A few decades later, they moved northward to Union Square. Gilded Age magnates pushed society even further uptown. They built mega-mansions, instead of row-houses, on Fifth Avenue mainly between 23rd and 57th Street, with some stretching up into what is now called the Upper East Side (New York Times 1926). Please refer to the figure below to trace the succession pattern of elite New Yorkers. In addition to constructing elaborate homes along Fifth Avenue, the Gilded Age elite channeled their money into the city itself through cultural institutions. Madison Square Garden, Carnegie Hall, the Brooklyn Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, the New York Public Library, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art were all opened during this period. New York was becoming the center of the country - in just a few decades it had “assumed a cultural dominance…that equaled its role in finance and industry” (Burns 1999, 300).
The vision the Gilded Age elites displayed through their creation of these institutions was as jaw-dropping as the poverty they willfully ignored. By the late nineteenth century, thousands of white ethnic immigrants were pouring into the city. The population of their enclaves in the Lower East Side, the Bowery, Five Points, etc., exploded. At the time, the Lower East Side was the most densely populated area in the world (Sanders 1980). Although, it could be said that the

26 These locations and time periods were collected from various sources (Pope 1928, New York Times 1908, Rand 1924).
African American population of New York faced more social and economic challenges than the immigrant population. African Americans were once settled in the Five Points neighborhood in lower Manhattan, but by the mid 19th century the population was displaced by European immigrant communities (Halle 2003). The extremely low proportion of black New Yorkers - in 1900, the black population comprised less than two percent of the population (Buns 1999) - is a consequence of the deadly drafts riots of 1863. White New Yorkers assaulted the African American population for ‘causing’ the Civil War. After this terrifying episode, African Americans decamped to outlying cities, and established the communities of Fort Greene and Flatbush, Brooklyn, and Jamaica, Queens. By 1910, enough African American and West Indian immigrants had migrated back into Manhattan to form populations in the Tenderloin (midtown center on West 40th Street), Hell’s Kitchen, and Harlem (please see the figure below for geographic concentrations of foreign born and African American New Yorkers). Although the seeds of historically African American and immigrant neighborhoods were planted, nineteenth century New Yorkers were on the move.
The pre-twentieth century museum population was similarly shifting and inchoate. However, it is possible to identify the beginnings of museum forms still in existence today (please see the map below for the locations and founding dates of existing museums in 1900). Learned societies, which opened permanent exhibitions and shared their activities with the public, sprang up early on (such as the New-York Historical Society and the Stuyvesant
Institute). New York’s first public-private museum collaboration took place during the Gilded Age. We will see that this unique partnership, in which the municipal government provides and pays for land upon which a private museum can be built and administered, is the basis for the city’s powerful Cultural Institutions Group. Both of the institutions that received property from the city were traditional in their orientation: the American Museum of Natural History and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (the Metropolitan had originally been located on West 14th Street). Both of these museums were located on the newly planted Central Park, which at the time was far out of the town and surrounded by subsistence farmers. The first encyclopedic museum was founded not in Manhattan, but in the neighboring city of Brooklyn. The Brooklyn Museum opened on the corner of Henry and Cranberry Streets in 1887. Only a few years after the Museum’s opening, the founders abandoned its original location to construct a mammoth Beaux-arts building at the northeastern edge of Prospect Park in the Crown Heights neighborhood. The area was in the midst of becoming a small museum cluster: the Brooklyn Botanical Garden and the Prospect Park Zoo were opened in the same park. The Brooklyn Children’s Museum (the city’s first of its kind) was to open just a few blocks away in 1899, spurred on by the success of its neighbors. Pratt Institute, with its own public library and exhibition space, was founded by the philanthropic oil magnate, Charles Pratt. He located the institution in Clinton Hill where he had established roots, and near his former business (which was based in Greenpoint). We can see that the transient character of the elite left behind a legacy of institutions that were once located in

27 Museum founders were able to place their museums virtually all over Manhattan - before it was fully populated - because of the Grid Plan of 1811 (Sennett 1994).

28 The Brooklyn Museums origins date back to 1823, as it grew out of the Brooklyn Institute for Arts and Sciences.
place-based networks. Despite these institutions, we observe, as predicted, that none were founded in immigrant or minority neighborhoods of the era.

The Gilded Age was a period of rapid residential succession and displacement. Elite, immigrant, and minority populations located and relocated within generations. Many of these institutions were founded near elite areas (Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, Crown Heights in Brooklyn), but still outside of the urban core downtown. Since much of Manhattan and the outer boroughs were yet to be urbanized, founders could locate institutions based on their personal preferences to an even greater extent than the following generation of founders. This era planted the seeds of potential museum clusters, which include: Crown Heights, Brooklyn; Battery Park, Manhattan; and Central Park, Manhattan (see map below).

The twentieth-century city

Although it may seem impossible for the city’s population to experience more growth and change than it did in the last fifty years, one of the most defining moments in New York’s history was about to take place at the turn of the century. The outer boroughs, originally dozens of independent cities, were incorporated in 1898. The city catapulted in size and population (at the time of incorporation, New York City’s five boroughs had a combined population of 3.4 million, Reitano 2006). Manhattan in particular was bursting at the seams. Much of the island was urbanized at this point; in 1910, Manhattan reached its highest ever population of 2.32 million. Brooklyn was swelling as well. At the time of incorporation, it was the third largest city in the country. By 1920, it would become the most populous borough. As New York’s population
spread out in the five boroughs, the museum location was now a more constrained decision than ever before. The vast expanses of un-urbanized space were vanishing by the minute.

During this urbanization, one of the most beautiful failures of New York City was rising from the street, one expensive stone at a time. In 1907, Archer M. Huntington, heir to the Central Pacific Railroad fortune, commissioned the construction of several grand beaux-arts style buildings bounded within one city block. He believed that this complex would house the twentieth century’s great cultural institutions. He named his creation Audubon Terrace, after the painter. For his location decision, the city was his oyster. Huntington’s wealth (he founded over a dozen museums across the country during his lifetime) ensured that he could build nearly anywhere. His ultimate choice may come as a surprise. Huntington perched the Terrace on a
block bounded by 155th and 156th Streets and Broadway and Riverside Drive. The surrounding area, now known as Washington Heights, was underdeveloped farmland.

At first glance, this location decision seems to defy the era’s tenets of personal ties. Huntington was an established heir with a scholarly, worldly bent. Why did he opt for his neighbors to be farmers and goats rather than financiers and mansions? But by the second look, it seems that Huntington did seek proximity to financiers and mansions, albeit in his unique way. As we know, the city’s elite had been moving further and further north since the 1850s. Huntington witnessed the steady migration from Washington Square to Union Square to Fifth Avenue and assumed that the elite and their cultural institutions would soon catch up to him at Broadway at 155th Street (Gray 1987).

The Terrace showed promise at first. Huntington attracted a wide, respectable range of institutions through underwriting the property and building construction. They included the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Hispanic Society of America, the Museum of the American Indian, the American Geographical Society, and the American Numismatic Society. We will see in the next era that Audubon Terrace did not become a bustling cultural or museum district - in fact, it could be considered a failure of (literally) monumental proportions. Today, all but the Hispanic Society of America have relocated.

This era was a time when individual men and women had the money and institutional flexibility to make gambles like Audubon Terrace. Following in the large footsteps of their Gilded Age predecessors, founders early in the era had the same quirky, individualistic tendencies. Similar to Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, A. E. Gallatin opened a museum of contemporary European artwork on New York University’s Greenwich Village campus (f. 1927).
An institution solely dedicated to the work of Russian artist and mystic Nicholas Roerich was founded in an apartment building on the corner of 103rd Street and Riverside Drive (in the Morningside Heights neighborhood of Manhattan) in 1929. The Museum of Safety was founded just outside Madison Square Park, which was a burgeoning hotel district at the time (Patterson 1998). John Pierpont Morgan, Jr. converted his father’s private collection into a public library and museum (The Morgan Library and Museum f. 1924) a few blocks from Grand Central Station. These institutions all varied in size, mission, and content. These, like Audubon Terrace, Pratt Institute, the Whitney, and the MoMA were the personal, even fanciful projects of the era of personal ties.

Moving towards the Upper East Side

The final decade of the era of personal networks was a time of transition. In the 1930s, the tide started to turn for the museum location decision. Elite New York was consolidating on the Upper East Side, and it began to feel that this would be their permanent home. As the elite were settling in, other New Yorkers were moving up and out. New York was redefined by the extensive, interconnected subway system (the first line opened to the public in 1904). While the city was outfitted with an elevated rail system already, the subway’s efficiency was revolutionary. Now, the working class could move out of the urban core. They quickly established residential neighborhoods in northern Manhattan and the outer boroughs (Burns 1999). Although this was a boon to the population, housing market discrimination was blatant;

This institution explored the history of construction and manufacturing safety (and danger) in the United States.
these practices funneled blacks, Jews, and other minorities into small pockets of the newly expanded city.

By the last decade of the era, the Roaring Twenties and the Harlem Renaissance\textsuperscript{30} had given way to the Great Depression. What was once a hopeful time for minority-white relations was diminished by the overcrowding and decline of Harlem, the first majority African American neighborhood in the city (which, incidentally, received no museums during its cultural flourishing). The first ‘modern’ race riots - in which African Americans expressed outrage against racism - took place in 1935 and 1943 (Reitano 2006). This shifted the tone of race relations in the city, profoundly. Residential segregation was cemented; we will see that this was only compounded during the mid-twentieth century.

Consequently, by the 1930s, the elite population became more or less entrenched on the Upper East Side and grew uneasy of any form of racial integration. At this point, the museum location decision was both personally motivated and a population-level. By this, I mean that locating on the Upper East Side embedded institutions in a proximal network of the richest New Yorkers \textit{and} a growing museum cluster. A series of museums were founded on the Upper East Side during this transformative decade. The Frick Collection was founded in 1935. It was and still is located at 1 East 70th Street. Two years later, wealthy collector Jules Bache left his

\textsuperscript{30}Between 1900 and 1920, the African American community blossomed. The community was centered in Harlem, formerly a predominantly Jewish and Italian residential community. African Americans gained access to the area through Philip Payton, a real estate agent who would become known as the “Father of Harlem” (Dobbins 2012). Payton ‘scared’ the original ethnic white residents into vacating by renting neighboring, empty units to African Americans. This quickly tipped the scales, and Harlem became the first neighborhood that was majority black in New York. Despite exorbitant rents, the community flourished. African American art, music, and culture came alive and exploded onto the city. The Harlem Renaissance was in full swing during the 1920s, and Harlem became an entertainment and nightlife capitol for the entire city. The Harlem Renaissance seemed to be a turning point for the black community: it was a “rare moment of acceptance and admiration...Among whites, it forced a reassessment of black stereotypes” (Reitano 2006, 136).
paintings and his home to be converted into a museum, at 815 Fifth Avenue. The Bache Art Museum at 63rd Street would only survive for seven years; the collection was then donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Museum of the City of New York, originally located at 88th and East End (Gracie Mansion), moved to its current location at 1120 Fifth Avenue (at 103rd Street) in 1936.

The map below shows us a museum population in flux. During the 1930s, there was still a ‘random’ feeling to museum foundings, with events occurring in four of the five boroughs; however, it is equally apparent that museums are converging on the Upper East Side. The growing attraction of the Upper East Side masks possible, alternative futures for the museum population. If institutional clustering was a deciding factor, then we could have witnessed additional museum foundings in Crown Heights, which was once cultivated as a cultural center overlooking a park, very similar to Fifth Avenue. A similar case could be made for the cluster of museums at Audubon Terrace. We will see, in the next section, how demographic changes stagnated the growth of potential clusters like Crown Heights and Audubon Terrace.

Overall, the museum population of the era of personal networks created a toss-up effect; there were a series of potential museums clusters dotted across the city. I argued that institutions were founded in a variety of areas with differing levels of development (ranging from congested midtown to rural Washington Heights farmland). Although the African American population was small and the immigrant populations moved during the era, founders did not choose to emplace their institutions in African American or immigrant neighborhoods during this era.
Figure 2.4. Museum foundings, 1930-1939
The era of homogenization

*I never can pass by the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art in New York without thinking of it not as a gallery of living portraits but as a cemetery of tax-deductible wealth.*

Lewis H. Lapham

The era of homogenization marks the geographic contraction of both New York’s elites and their museums. As argued in Chapter 1, this is not a coincidence. During this era, the location decision homogenized and the elite concentrated - these trends dovetailed into a virtual run towards the Upper East Side (we saw this phenomenon in the case of the Whitney Museum). Over the next forty years, the stretch of Fifth Avenue facing Central Park would become the most recognizable museum cluster in the world. The rest of the city was undergoing major demographic upheaval. White flight and a second wave of the Great Migration created a deeply segregated city. The neighborhoods containing some of the original ‘toss-up’ museum clusters underwent major demographic turnovers. I argue that this era marks an increase in the pertinence of racial demography on museum founding locations. If this relationship is correct, we will expect a stagnation of once promising clusters when their surrounding demographics changed. I will demonstrate that this stagnation occurred even during the introduction and implementation of cultural democracy policies, with evidence from differing but related trajectories of three clusters located Crown Heights, Audubon Terrace, and Flushing-Meadows.
The birth of Museum Mile

Unlike the past century, Manhattan elites did not seem to be moving anywhere. Instead of expanding northward, or outward in any direction, they put down roots on upper Fifth Avenue. Many of the Gilded Age mansions were torn down and replaced by large apartment buildings to accommodate for the influx of residents joining the wealthiest blocks of New York City. Park Avenue (two avenues east of Fifth) was developing its own sterling reputation. After decades of derision, the median-ed avenue was now teeming with luxury apartments\(^\text{31}\) and becoming a ‘status’ address. By this period, the Upper East Side had become the established destination for the wealthiest, most influential, and most connected members of New York society. In an interview for the New York Times, one wealthy Upper East Sider said: “Personally...I consider anything below 57th Street out of town” (Corry 1974). It was also clear that the elite could not progress northward as they had before: East Harlem and Harlem were now densely populated immigrant and African American communities. The Upper East Side, now bounded between Fifth Avenue and Park Avenue and 57th Street and 96th Street, was the permanent home of the elite. The days of succession and speculation were over. Between 1900 and 1939, about one-fifth of museums were founded on or relocated to the Upper East Side (with most of these events occurring in the 1930s); during the era of homogenization, that number increased to one-third. This made Upper East Side the neighborhood with the highest number of museum founding events in all of New York City.

\(^{31}\) This newfound interest was caused by the covering of the noisy, polluting elevated rail line.
No fewer than ten additional institutions chose to locate or relocate on or near Fifth Avenue between 59th and 110th Streets during this period (and this is in addition to those already operating in the area). Even more were opened in the orbit of Museum Mile, particularly along the southern edge of Central Park and the East 60s. Some institutions relocated to Museum Mile (please see the map below). As we know from Chapter One, the Whitney moved to its spot on Madison Avenue (W2) from the MoMA property on West 54th Street (W1). The Guggenheim followed the same trajectory, settling into its iconic building on Fifth Avenue and 88th Street (G2) from 24 East 54th Street (G1). The National Academy of Design (N1, N2) and the Jewish Museum also converged on Museum Mile (J1, J2). Finally, the Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Design also relocated from Astor Place (C1) to 91st Street (C2).
The Cooper-Hewitt relocation exemplifies the hopes many museum leaders held for Fifth Avenue. The Cooper-Hewitt Museum of Design was originally founded within Cooper Union, the progressive tuition-free educational center located on once-elite Astor Place. The Museum was built from the collection of Peter Cooper’s two granddaughters, who had both acquired hundreds of pieces through travel. During this era, the museum, like many others (remember the
Whitney), faced financial hardship. Cooper Union, also in a bind, kicked the Museum out of Astor Place building. For about five years, the fate of the institution was unknown. Then, a legitimizing, powerful force entered. The Smithsonian took ownership of the Museum and its collection, with aims to establish its first branch museum outside of Washington, DC.\textsuperscript{32}

With this bump in status, the location decision was made infinitely easier. The new Cooper-Hewitt took over the former Carnegie mansion on Fifth Avenue and 91st St. At this point, the mansion was owned by the philanthropic Carnegie Foundation, and the move, for both parties, was not personal so much as strategic. The new location set the bar for a new standard: “the Smithsonian...hopes that its snazzy Fifth Avenue address will expand the crowds” (Richard 1969) and that new location marks a “vastly more conspicuous presence on the New York cultural scene” (Goldberger 1976, 71). For the Carnegie Foundation, the new tenant would ensure that the historic home was well maintained (it had fallen into some disrepair under its current tenants, the Columbia University School of Social Work), and would likely be bought by the Smithsonian in the future.

Very few of the relocated or original institutions could be considered a ‘natural fit’ for upper Fifth Avenue. None of the heritage museums, which include institutions honoring Jewish, Ukrainian, Hispanic, Japanese, and Austrian culture were embedded in their respective communities on the Upper East Side.\textsuperscript{33} Perhaps only the Goethe-Institut could claim home turf considering its proximity to Yorkville, a historic Germantown. The art museums that opened

\textsuperscript{32} The Smithsonian also partnered with the Museum of the American Indian (formerly located in Audubon Terrace) in 1990. The museum relocated to the historic Customs House on Bowling Green (near Wall Street) in 1994.

\textsuperscript{33} It should be noted that Fifth Avenue does hold symbolic value to the city writ large. The Avenue hosts major cultural events, such as the well-know St. Patrick’s Day and Puerto Rican Day Parades. These major events also began to take place on Fifth Avenue during the 1950s.
were somewhat near the gallery district on 57th Street, while the actual artists were still living and working downtown and increasingly in the outer boroughs. In short, these museum location decisions were not about content. As described in the first chapter, this was mandated due to other reasons, including increased standardization, professionalization, and consequently institutional isomorphism. I will argue in the next section that the dominance of the Upper East Side was accelerated through the stagnation of alternate museum clusters, whose surrounding neighborhoods experienced dramatic residential transformations.

The promise fades...

In this section, I will test the increasingly close relationship between the museum location decision and demographic change by examining the trajectories of three very different museum clusters created during the era of personal ties, as well as one created during the era of homogenization. We have already seen the fabulous fate of one personal ties era cluster: the Upper East Side. By demonstrating the contrasting destiny of the others, I will make the link between cluster stagnation and African American presence, as well as show that the alternative explanation of tourist dependency does not hold. The argument here is not that museum founders willfully excluded black neighborhoods from receiving local institutions, but that in every location decision era, museum founders have been most attracted to areas that do not contain African Americans, for varying reasons. Before looking more closely at these cases, I will survey the relevant demographic transformations that took place during the mid-twentieth century.

The rate of population growth in New York had slowed relative to the mass immigration of the late nineteenth century, but there was still remarkable demographic churning between 1940 and 1980. Although the Upper East Side kept its status as a desirable neighborhood
throughout the era, New York on the whole was on the outs. After WWII, white middle class families left the city en masse. Anyone who could afford a home loan (heavily subsidized by the government) got out of the urban core. The city that was left behind after the white and middle-class flight was deeply divided. City policy only encouraged housing discrimination. A block was considered “black” based on the presence of only one African American family. Redlining was in full force (Massey and Denton 1990). In conjunction with housing policies, manufacturing jobs - the bedrock of the working class - were leaving the urban core. These developments took their toll; the population of New York City declined for the first time in recorded census history in 1960.

Post WWII saw another Great Migration of African Americans out of the South. In 1940, there were less than 500,000 black New Yorkers. By 1960, there were over one million. Bedford-Stuyvesant became the most populous black neighborhood across all five boroughs. The community became so large that it spilled over into historically ethnic white areas, such as Crown Heights, Bushwick, East Flatbush, and Bronzeville (Burns 1999, 504).

Crown Heights was one of the original museum clusters created during the Gilded Age. We saw that the encyclopedic Brooklyn Museum, a children’s museum, botanical gardens, and a zoo were all founded there during the era of personal networks. During that time, the neighborhood was akin to the Upper East Side. Through the 1920s, upper class white New Yorkers lived on the shady, wide boulevards overlooking Prospect Park (Krase 1982). Centrally located in growing Brooklyn, but with direct access to downtown and midtown Manhattan, it seemed that this museum cluster could have developed into Museum Mile’s little sister. However, it’s growth ground to a halt during the era of homogenization. Between 1940 and
1980, no new museums were opened in the area. This coincided with a dramatic residential turnover of the neighborhood before and after WWII. During the 1940s, middle-class Jewish families started to move into the area. By 1950, they composed about half of the nearly all-white community. African Americans and West Indian immigrants began to join them as well. By the 1960s, African Americans were a sizable part of the community. Throughout these demographic transitions, the original museum cluster stayed put. None of these initial institutions decamped to follow the Upper East Side building frenzy. But, additional museums did not choose to open their doors in the community either. The geographic clustering towards the Upper East Side meant that the usually inevitable process of organizational clustering was not possible.

Audubon Terrace, Huntington’s great experiment, is another tale of stagnation. While the planned cultural complex showed some promise during the 1910s and 1920s, it never acquired the pull the founder was hoping to generate. The surrounding neighborhood, Washington Heights, was still relatively undeveloped when Huntington laid the cornerstone. During the era of personal ties, the community was primarily composed of a small number of Irish immigrants, and then European Jews before WWII. The neighborhood underwent rapid demographic transformations during the mid-twentieth century. During the 1950s and 1960s, a growing Greek
population settled in the area. By the 1980s and 1990s, Dominican immigrants began flocking to Washington Heights, and through 1980s the community was majority Hispanic/Latino. Again, similar to Crown Heights, this museum cluster (which includes the nearby Cloisters and the Morris-Jumel Mansion) stagnated. Instead of a major cultural institution, like the Met or the MoMA moving into Audubon Terrace, Boricua College inhabited the Beaux-arts buildings in 1974. The figure below displays the founding and relocation dates of the museums in Washington Heights and Inwood, as well as the proportion of nonwhite residents in 1910 (left) and 1980 (right); darker gray indicates a greater proportion of nonwhite residents.
State involvement: cultural democracy in an era of homogenization

One of the contradictions of the era of homogenization is that it took place during the cultural democracy project. As I detailed in Chapter One, cultural democracy policies focused on
making institutions more accessible and attractive to the nation’s diverse population. In New York, we would expect to see a corresponding interest in creating more populist institutions. However, since I argue that the museum location decision is a result of homogenizing institutional forces and demographic turnover, any attempts to democratize the museum population through the location decision will not override the attraction of the Upper East Side. This resulted in a draw: simultaneously, museums leaders showed a real interest in attracting minority audiences but in aggregate located their institutions as far as possible from them.

The intervention of the state in museum founding originated, not surprisingly, during the Gilded Age with the construction of the American Museum of Natural History (NYC DCA website). Under this framework, city government allows museums to operate on public property, while the museum remains a private institution. This partnership worked well for American Museum of Natural History, and was applied to four other early institutions: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences, the New York Botanical Garden, and the Bronx Zoo. This was not a systematic policy, however, and it took eighty years - until 1962 - for the city to create an independent Office of Cultural Affairs (these programs used to be run out of the parks department). In the 1960s, like many other newly formed cultural agencies around the country, the Office got to work with a democratizing imperative. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Office brings this public-private partnership to a specific group of museums. In 1976, the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG) was formed, uniting these museums and creating the highest status designation for a city-funded arts institution. The mission of the CIG during this era was decidedly democratizing, even in regards to geography. In their own words:

The number of CIG members increased dramatically in the 1960s and 1970s, as the City recognized that its increasingly diverse population required a diverse and dynamic pool
of institutions to serve it. Primarily located in the outer boroughs and/or focused on traditionally underserved constituencies... ³⁴

The map below illustrates the location of institutions that were granted CIG status during the era of homogenization.

Figure 2.9. Museums added to the Cultural Institutions Group, 1940-1980

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³⁴ NYC Department of Cultural Affairs website.
One of the Office of Cultural Affairs’ major projects was reviving the dormant buildings used during the 1964 World’s Fair; these institutions were among those who received Cultural Institutions Group status during the era. The small cluster of museums in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park warrant further attention. The cluster is the inadvertent legacy of one of New York’s most powerful men: Robert Moses. Moses, the city’s Parks Commissioner and planning czar, strived to redefine the city. His love of the automobile created thousands of miles of parkways and freeways, cutting through the city and especially the outer boroughs. In a stroke of vision similar to Huntington, Moses imagined the future of the city not to be in Manhattan, but in its geographic center - Flushing Meadows, Queens. Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, a green space encircled by Moses’ parkways, was the site of the 1939-1940 and 1964-1965 World’s Fairs and the original headquarters of the United Nations (Burns 1999).

In 1939, the neighborhoods surrounding the park were white, middle class suburban communities. During the era of homogenization, Flushing became increasingly diverse and now boasts the second largest Chinese American population in the city. Corona, the neighborhood to the park’s immediate west, went through demographic shifts as well. By mid-twentieth century, the neighborhood was primarily composed of African Americans and Italian immigrants. The African American community, in particular, became known across the country as home to Louis Armstrong, Malcolm X, Ella Fitzgerald, and more (Krebs 1971; Queens Alive, accessed online).

The infrastructure created during the world’s fairs left a series of buildings equipped to house major cultural institutions. However, many of the fair’s buildings were demolished or abandoned after the 1964-1965 Fair. Instead of museum founders appropriating these grand structures, as they were doing on Museum Mile, they stayed empty or were torn down. The
Queens Art Museum was founded in one of the surviving structures, but not until 1972; the Queens Hall of Science was founded in an adjacent building in 1986. Today, the grand New York State Pavilion, one of the last remaining structures, sits in decay. Flushing Meadows-Corona Park is a museum cluster that was single-handedly supported by cultural democracy policies. Despite the infrastructure for a museum cluster that could rival the Upper East Side or Audubon Terrace during its heyday, many of the promising buildings were abandoned.\textsuperscript{35}

The democratization of culture was not only a top down endeavor. Museums celebrating minority populations were a long time coming. Both of the minority museums that opened during this era, El Museo del Barrio and the Studio Museum of Harlem, have much different founding stories than most of the institutions we have seen thus far. These museums were founded by community-based artists and activists. The Studio Museum was first conceived by a Harlem social worker, who then brought on a diverse board of trustees to develop an institution that could “be a ground where the black and white art worlds really meet” (Glueck 1968, accessed online). The institution opened in 1968 on Fifth Avenue...and 125th Street. Although this could have been seen as an extension of Museum Mile, the location was not received as such a symbol. The New York Times wrote: “the Studio Museum won’t exactly upstage the Met or the Gugg...it shares its second-floor space near 125th Street with a sweatshop where women run up garments for the downtown rag trade” (Glueck 1968, accessed online).

\textsuperscript{35} However, there is some hope for museum growth in the area since the founding of the original cluster. Since then, three small historic houses have opened to the public nearby: the Louis Armstrong House Museum (f. 1986), the Volker Orth Museum (f. 1993), and the Howard Lewis Latimer Historic House (f. 1988). While this does show promise for future growth, it should also be noted that no museums have relocated to or constructed new buildings in the area to date.
Just one year later, a group of artists, educators, and activists decided to found a museum promoting Latino arts and culture. El Museo del Barrio was relocated frequently in its early days, operating out of small storefronts and closed schoolhouses in East Harlem. The organization was small, but formalized quickly. After just three years, it received nonprofit filing status, and by 1974, El Museo received its first grant from the city’s Office of Cultural Affairs. In 1977, El Museo received its biggest bump in space, recognition, and legitimacy. Like many other institutions, it moved into a large building on Fifth Avenue at 104th Street. Upon moving into this building, El Museo also became a member of the desirable Cultural Institutions Group.

Overall, these institutions did not spark their own clusters. The Studio Museum remained the only museum in Harlem until 1981. El Museo del Barrio opted to join Museum Mile. The introduction of state-sponsored democratic policies and minority-based institutions offered some resistance to the overwhelming growth of the Upper East Side, but not enough to reverse the trend to homogenize the museum location decision.

The midtown tourist trap?

One explanation for the stagnation of these museum clusters is that they are off-the-beaten path for tourists. Museums rely on out-of-towners for most of their attendance, and it could be argued that locating in the urban core is far preferable than outside of it. If tourism were the main driver of institutional placement, then we would expect to see most museums gravitate to existing tourist hotspots of midtown and downtown Manhattan. However, this is not the case during this era - midtown and downtown did not receive a large share of institutions during this era.
Midtown is a particularly interesting case due to the Herculean efforts of the Rockefeller family to develop this area as the cultural as well as economic center of Manhattan. As we know from the previous chapter, Abby Rockefeller had already founded the Museum of Modern Art squarely in Midtown. During the mid-century, her son, Nelson Rockefeller, took control of the Museum. He also dipped his toes into myriad other cultural and civic developments within the area, including the relocation of the United Nations from its original home in Flushing-Meadows Park to a plot of land along the East River between 42nd and 48th Streets. He and his associates developed Rockefeller Center into a business, entertainment, and tourist attraction.

What may be forgotten now is that Nelson and his brothers also tried to develop a museum cluster in central midtown - within and around Rockefeller Center. Two now-shuttered museums were founded at the site: the Museum of Primitive Art (1957-1976) and the Permanent Exhibition of Decorative Arts and Crafts (1934-1945). The Museum of Science and Industry ping pong-ed around various midtown locations, including Rockefeller Center, during its existence from 1935 to 1949. These museums were not minor institutions. The New York Museum of Science and Industry was the only museum of its kind in the city during its tenure; while in Rockefeller Center, it was supported by the prestigious Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations (Kaempffert 1936). Its museum opening featured appearances by Albert Einstein and Amelia Earhart.

What is puzzling is that more museums were not founded in midtown during this period, because by this point it was the major tourist destination of the city. Even more puzzling is that three of the five museums that were founded there did not survive. If the tourist-driven theory is correct, not only would museums be rushing to join the hustle and bustle, but they would thrive
once established. Midtown was home to the Broadway theater district, the Chrysler Building, the Empire State Building, Grand Central Terminal and Pennsylvania Station, Bloomingdales, and Macy’s. There was more foot traffic on Midtown’s blocks than the Upper East Side’s.

Downtown Manhattan, another tourist favorite (with the attractions of Wall Street, the Statue of Liberty, and Ellis Island), experienced the same museum paucity. The New York Aquarium sought more space and relocated to Coney Island. Only three museums, the Trinity Church Museum, Federal National Hall Memorial, and the New York City Fire Museum (since relocated) were founded in the area. The lack of museum development in these high-tourism areas suggests that the theory that museums locate based on tourist traffic is insufficient in explaining the spatial diffusion of museums during this period.

State involvement: urban renewal

During the era of homogenization, city government makes its first steps into arts-based urban renewal. Towards the end of the era of homogenization, the development of SoHo as an artists district will pave the way for many of the policies that dominate the era of cultural branding. This was separate from, and in some ways ran counter to the city’s cultural democracy policies.

Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia demolished a densely inhabited micro-neighborhood in the name of culture. The cast of players is familiar by now. John D. Rockefeller III, Abby’s son, spearheaded the campaign. Moses, then chair of the “Slum Clearance Committee” partnered with John D., III to develop a complex of performing arts schools and institutions similar in scope to Audubon Terrace. However, the property they were building on was not farmland; it was a large
public housing project densely inhabited by Latino poor and working class families. The idea was radical at the time: create a cultural center to promote and justify displacement and urban renewal. At the time, renewal was mainly through the creation of public works projects - parks, bridges, expressways, and ‘tower-in-the-park’ affordable housing. The application of the urban renewal mission to an arts institution was a pioneering linkage.

Around the same time, the political and economic elite of the city were joining forces with starving artists in perhaps the most influential example of urban renewal to date. In her seminal book, Zukin (1982) chronicles how a patch of land just south of Greenwich Village transformed from an abandoned manufacturing ghost town into a thriving, desirable residential neighborhood. SoHo, as it would come to be called, represents the first wave of artist-led urban renewal. This took hold in New York City, and elsewhere in the country. Loft living ushered in a transformation of New York’s neighborhoods and coincided with a new era of cultural branding.

The increase in the number of museums founded at the tail end of this period, after SoHo had been fully colonized by artists and successful galleries, gives us a hint of the relationship between museums and gentrification that is to come. During this era, SoHo was on the verge of becoming an alternative cluster to Museum Mile. Several new institutions, including the New Museum for Contemporary Art, the Anthology Film Archives, the and Drawing Center founded quarters in the area. We will see the fate of this potential cluster in the next era.

During the era of homogenization, the homogenized museum location decision interacted with elite consolidation on the Upper East Side to create the largest museum cluster in the world. Many of the clusters founded during the era of personal ties saw their neighborhoods transform around them. On the whole, founders avoided these stagnating clusters in adherence to new,
external pressures. This era was a key moment in the diffusion of museums, one in which the location of the city’s institutions could have been more equally distributed than we observe today.

**The era of cultural branding**

*There is not a neighborhood in the city anymore that is beyond reach.*

Daniel Doctoroff, former Deputy Mayor of New York City

At the beginning of this new era, the city was in trouble. The 1950s and 1960s middle-class flight ravaged civic life. The jobs that African Americans had migrated to the city for were leaving just as they arrived. The 1970s saw the creation of an “urban underclass” (Wilson 1987, Massey and Denton 1993) as impoverished black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers were pushed into extremely segregated ‘ghettos’. There was a national increase in crime, graffiti, race riots, and drug use in urban cores; cities were getting a bad name. In short, New York was no longer New York - the entertainment, cultural, and creative capitol of the world.

Consequently, the city was desperate to attract people back into its streets, apartments, and businesses. The 1980s, as explained in the last chapter, saw the dissemination of urban renewal and gentrification. Many of these campaigns were connected to artists and arts institutions. Greenberg (2008) explains how key political and economic actors transformed the 1970s image and fiscal crisis into an unlikely branding opportunity. We saw the city’s first foray

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36 Center for an Urban Future 2006.
into this with the redevelopment of SoHo into an artists district. A few years later, culture-based
development saw another milestone. The publication of the 1983 economic impact report of the
newly christened ‘arts industry’ by the Cultural Assistance Center (now the Alliance for the Arts)
and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey redefined the mission of arts institutions.
They were now agents of urban change and prosperity. The explicit goal of these economic
impact reports, which have become standard, are to “change the way people think about the
arts” (Alliance for the Arts 1993). The 1970s and 1980s also saw the transition of power from
manufacturing interests to financial and real estate interests. The new way to make money in
New York was through property owning and selling. This transition, coupled with the bullish
1980s, resulted in a spread of gentrification practices. The museum was about to become integral
to this paradigm shift.

I argue that even though museum founders sought differentiation in their new location
decisions, the demography of neighborhoods (and particularly the proportion of African
Americans) continues to affect just where that location decision takes place. If this is the case,
we will expect to see that museums choose to open in new neighborhoods with less museums,
but are on the trajectory to becoming or are already fully gentrified. I argue that this is the new
path museums have taken in the millennial city.

The museum boom

After a short-term recession in the early 1990s, economic growth during the Clinton
administration increased founding rates exponentially (Lanier, Matsui, and Knight 1991). In the
‘90s alone, thirty museums were founded in the city. The influx of museums saw the rise of niche
institutions. These small-scale museums include the Toy Museum of New York City (f. 1999 in Brooklyn Heights), Museum of the American Piano (f. 1999 in downtown Manhattan), the Skyscraper Museum (f. 2000 near Wall Street), and the City Reliquary (f. 2006 in Williamsburg). Such congestion prompted a new museum location decision model.

The new model took the museum out of the Upper East Side. Out of 134 founding or relocation events during this period, only seven took place on the hallowed stretch of Fifth Avenue (please see the map below). The Upper East Side location was no longer a ticket to grants, recognition, and high attendance. En masse, this resulted in a dramatic geographic diffusion of museums. Manhattan was still king, but the outer boroughs increased significantly as well: Long Island City/Astoria and North/South Williamsburg all saw museum activity. And the museums that opened in Manhattan were extending to new areas, particularly those without a large museum presence prior. These new spots include East/Central Harlem, Chelsea, and the Lower East Side. Although it is clear that there was a geographic diffusion, it is also clear that this diffusion was controlled and deliberate. In the next section, I will introduce the additional actors who had a hand in this diffusion.

The virtuous cycle

After the success of SoHo and Lincoln Center, the late twentieth century saw the full-fledged incorporation of the arts into development initiatives. Two mayors, Rudy Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg, took up the cause with full force. Giuliani integrated cultural development into his quality of life initiatives. He converted Times Square into a family- and name-brand-friendly tourist haven by revitalizing the area’s theater district. Bloomberg, a lifelong collector, underwrote high profile arts campaigns to attract tourists and additional revenue, most notably
The Gates in Central Park. However, Giuliani and Bloomberg are merely the public face of a far more systemic transformation. Increasingly, the state (at both the local and federal levels) is an active player in the creation of cultural institutions and the support of gentrification. SoHo, as we know, was one of the world’s first experiments in state-sponsored urban repurposing. Unbeknownst to any of these actors, they had set into motion an engine of gentrification that would be the major driver of urban change during the second half of the twentieth century.

Figure 2.10. Museum founding events by neighborhood during the era of homogenization (left) and cultural branding (right)
Since New York was one of the first cities to gentrify, it already has a long history of succession and renewal. During the first wave of gentrification, which took place throughout the 1950’s, 60’s, and 70’s, individual working and middle class white homeowners would slowly move into a minority neighborhood, fix up their properties, and attract middle class amenities (Hackworth 2002, Lees 2003). Many of these pioneers were artists. The state and corporate developers facilitated and capitalized on gentrification only after it was initiated by individuals. This early form took place in SoHo, Brooklyn Heights, and other neighborhoods close to the downtown core. By the 1980s and 1990s, a partnership between state and corporate actors reversed the order of this process. This “assertive” (Lees 2003, 2487) involvement is due to a number of factors. City governments were getting less support from the national level, and mayors had to rely increasingly on tax revenue to fund their programs. This created an incentive for cities to build up their middle and professional classes. The federal government was also increasingly offering incentives and guarantees for both private and public interests to pursue major redevelopment projects. Urban corporations, increasingly shifting toward FIRE (Financial, Insurance and Real Estate), capitalized on these new policy developments. Taken together, a new city-level public-private partnership emerged - with an aim to redevelop the city for the middle and professional classes.

In the second wave of gentrification, the state and/or corporation is the pioneer. By the 1990s, “it is simply accepted as axiomatic that city government should become more direct players in real estate” (Hackworth 2002, 821). Instead of following individuals, they funneled them into specifically targeted areas, such as what occurred in Bedford-Stuyvesant in the 1990s (Hall 2000). These waves of gentrification have seen the focus pushed further out from the urban
core of downtown Manhattan to the Bronx, Queens, and central Brooklyn. This time, artists are not considered desirable newcomers; arts institutions are. This transition to an “entrepreneurial” city government (Hall and Hubbard 1996) was key in aligning arts institutions, public interests, and corporate developers. A museum placement in a gentrifying neighborhood is a newly attainable carrot for developers and city government. This is because of the mutually beneficial rebranding described in Chapter 1: museums can differentiate and redefine their image through joining a new wave neighborhood, while at the same time that neighborhood can become even more established and attractive to the professional class.

Neighborhoods we have become familiar with have experienced these successive waves of gentrification. The impact of state intervention on Long Island City is evident. From Chapter 1, we recall that Long Island City experienced a wave of artist-based gentrification in the 1970s and 1980s - individual artists priced out of SoHo began to set up live-work studios in the area. This form of artist-led gentrification was taking place in other parts of the city as well, including the Lower East Side and Tribeca (Hackworth and Smith 2001). Alanna Heiss gave these unorganized artists a landmark at Project Studios One (now MoMA PS1). Corporate developers caught a whiff of this succession and were ready to pounce. However, as we learned, Long Island City did not become the ‘next’ neighborhood as some hoped it would be. During the mid-1980s, gentrification efforts stalled. It was only until the state’s involvement in the 1990s and 2000s that eventually re-sparked the area’s renewal. During the 1990s, city government became actively supportive (through tax abatements, favorable commission appointments, etc.) of Queens West, a major mixed-use luxury development that had been stalled during the 1980s. Once the state greased the wheels, Long Island City started to heat up. By 2002, the MoMA had partnered with
PS1, capping the conversion of the neighborhood into an area ‘deserving of’ a major museum. With the addition of the MoMA brand, Long Island City is poised for even more development: “there is a growing consensus that MoMA’s arrival in the neighborhood has brought vastly increased public attention and, some say, stepped up the pace of development” (Center for an Urban Future 2006, 14). We saw in the previous chapter that it helped to coalesce an under-the-radar museum population into a highly visible cultural destination.

This has taken place across the city. The Whitney Museum’s move to the Meatpacking District is not the tale of a sole museum pioneering into the a still gritty area, but in fact a calculated final move of the Bloomberg administration, real estate developers, and the Whitney to locate a major institution amidst an already installed landscape of luxury hotels, residences, galleries, and parks. At a conference in 2006, Daniel Doctoroff, then Deputy Mayor of the Bloomberg administration, explained the city’s involvement in the High Line Park, which is adjacent to the future Whitney site. Please keep in mind that Doctoroff has made these comments years before the Whitney decided to relocate to the area.

Let me give you an example of a neighborhood where I think what you’re creating is a truly virtuous cycle, and that’s West Chelsea, where four years ago, when we came into office, literally we were one step away from the city tearing down the High Line....We decided that investing in a park in that community was a great investment. Now, how did we define investment? We defined it in terms of creating a stronger community – one in which we thought the High Line itself would be a spur to economic development, which would ultimately generate tax revenues, which, in effect, would enable us to invest in the kinds of institutions that simply reinforce this notion of it as this great, sort of artistic, cultural and residential community. So, in fact, that’s exactly what’s happened. We’re spending $150 million to create this park. We have, now, about 20 major development projects underway along the High Line or in the High Line district, a number of which are now calling themselves the “High Line Building” or the “High Line something, something.” And, in fact, what we’re also doing at the same time is: we’re beginning to invest in cultural institutions, like Dia [Chelsea museum and art center located]...So, what you’ve got is: a great investment in the park, which leads to investment in the surrounding area, which generates revenues, which enables us to invest in cultural
institutions, which just continues sort of that virtuous circle. And, so, all these things really are related.\textsuperscript{37}

Clearly, the Whitney has entered a process well underway; one that is coordinated and controlled by government interests. This partnership is in line with other major relocations, including the SculptureCenter (as illustrated in the Introduction) and the New Museum. The map below shows the new locations of these institutions.

SoHo was the original neighborhood to experience arts-based gentrification (as described in the previous section). SoHo quickly transformed from a former light-manufacturing ghost town, into an isolated artists’ community, into “the world’s greatest shopping mall” (Duetsch 1994). Museums, like the Museum for African Art and the failed Guggenheim Soho branch, invaded this neighborhood after it had been colonized by artists and their galleries. However, since the location has become highly commercial, the branding cache has faded. Relocations have reflected this new reality. The New Museum moved from SoHo to an original construction in the once gritty Bowery neighborhood. The New York \textit{Times} commented that although the new location” is only a few blocks from its current 30,000-square-foot home...in neighborhood terms, it is a world away” (Pogrebin 2002, accessed online). The New Museum’s branding efforts explicitly take advantage of the area’s reputation: they quote their architects as saying “The Bowery was very gritty when we first visited it...We were a bit shocked, but we were also impressed that a fine art museum wanted to be there. In the end, the Bowery and the New Museum have a lot in common...” (New Museum website). The case of SoHo demonstrates that museum founders during this era are not simply following the geographic seats of new wealth. If that were the case, then the cluster in SoHo would have thrived. Museum founders are instead

\textsuperscript{37} Center for an Urban Future 2006.
opting to insert themselves into neighborhoods balancing between their ‘old’ and ‘new’ faces. However, with the introduction of a major museum, it is a sure sign that the Bowery, like SoHo before it, will continue to shift to its new face.

Figure 2.11. Relocations of the Whitney, MoMA, New Museum, and SculptureCenter during the era of cultural branding

One of the most interesting cases during this era is the Museum for African Art. This museum’s series of rapid relocations in the past thirty years display signs of both the homogenizing forces (i.e. normative isomorphism) of the era of homogenization as well as the
pioneering, but strategic location decisions of the era of cultural branding. The Museum for African Art was founded in 1984 in temporary quarters on the Upper East Side. In 1993, it followed the SoHo wave and located on lower Broadway, next door to the New Museum’s original location (Sewell 2007). Less than ten years later, the Museum was again on the move. Leaders ultimately wanted a “better” location in Manhattan (Roth 2002). In 2000, the trustees bought a plot of land on Fifth Avenue and 110th Street, at the northeastern corner of Central Park. Before the museum could move into the new location, they would have to construct the building from scratch. Unabashedly, the museum followed the location strategy of the Museum of Modern Art. Three months after the MoMA partnered with PS1, it set up temporary quarters just four blocks from the Long Island City outpost. A representative of the Museum for African Art admits that the MoMA’s attachment to the neighborhood played a key role in the decision: “MoMA definitely started the trend towards Queens, but now it’s on the radar of the art community. When MoMA opened a huge amount of people attended, and that’s encouraging” (Roth 2002, accessed online).

In another emulating move, the Museum for African Art integrated condominiums into their new construction on 110th Street. Like MoMA’s midtown renovation during the same era, this is the apex of the joined forces of museum building and economic development. The developers in charge of the condominium project were well aware of the transformative potential the Museum for African Art could have on its surroundings. The Museum for African Art is moving into a location that has just recently begun to gentrify and transition; unlike the Meatpacking District and other examples I’ve discussed, the area is still predominantly populated by people of color.
The Museum’s leaders characterize the existing demography as a benefit. President Elsie McCabe Thompson, says: “the building, accessible to Fifth Ave., East Harlem, and Central Harlem, does that [bridges cultures]. I want local children to grow up in this museum. I want people who don’t come to museums to come here” (Sheftell 2011). The Museum’s architect argues that the institution is not a harbinger of gentrification, but will be designed as a community-friendly organization that passively witnesses the community turn over: “Fortunately, this museum is not a stimulus on development, but a reflection of Harlem’s transformation as it evolves racially and economically” (Sheftell 2011).

The real estate developers the Museum is partnering with have a contrasting mindset. One of the developers on the project, Josh Eisenberg, says that the institution “could do for this section of Harlem what the Standard Hotel did for the Meatpacking District” (Sheftell 2011). The condominiums on upper floors of the museum building will be the most expensive in all of Harlem, at over $1265 per square foot. With a rooftop pool, children’s playroom, and fitness center, the developers are clearly competing with luxury developments further south. Eisenberg makes this point directly by arguing that “110th St. is not that far uptown anymore” (Sheftell 2011). Another developer on the project echoes this sentiment: “We looked at this project as extremely special because of its location and museum. It’s still a push to get people to come up here, but we believe there is great value...I think 110th St. is the new 72nd St.” (Sheftell 2011). We can contrast this framing with the dismissive reaction to the founding of the Studio Museum in Harlem on 125th and Fifth Avenue in 1968. Clearly, times have changed. The Museum of African Art could be a sign of an even more pioneering location decision model in the future.
Fred Wherry (2011), for example, explains how local community stakeholders are now actively using the arts to rebrand their own neighborhoods in struggling areas of Philadelphia.

During this era, although museums diffused geographically at an unprecedented rate, they moved into a select subset of gentrified neighborhoods. Their diffusion was carefully controlled by a constellation of public and private interests. The new alignment of corporate development, museum, and city government interests in identifying these neighborhoods and locating museums in them is the defining mark of the era of cultural branding. Next, I will introduce additional analysis to test further the relationship between the museum founding decision and neighborhood demography.

**Testing the significance of demography over time**

Thus far, I argued that demographic composition acts as a mediating variable in the museum location decision. This was especially the case during the eras of homogenization and cultural branding. During the era of homogenization, residential segregation took hold of the city, and museums were far more likely to be located in white, wealthy areas than minority ones. This is also the case for the era of cultural branding - however, many of these white, wealthy areas were recently gentrified as opposed to elite strongholds such as the Upper East Side. For much of the twentieth century, demographic turnover - particularly when white neighborhoods became minority neighborhoods - stagnated the potential growth of a museum cluster. We saw this happen in Washington Heights, Manhattan, Flushing Meadows, Queens, and Crown Heights, Brooklyn.
If this association is valid, we would expect that racial composition would be a significant variable in the century’s founding rates. In this next section, I will use event history analysis to model founding rates to determine if demographic composition is indeed a significant mediator of museum placement. Event history modeling is used in the social sciences to understand how much time passes until a given unit experiences an event in question, given that unit is ‘at risk’ of experiencing the event (Isaac and Griffin 1989). This additional analysis should be considered as a supplemental, corroborating component to the historical analysis.

**Unit of analysis**

The data sources for the event history analysis are the same as those used in the first section of the chapter: the United States Census (1910-2010) and the original dataset of the New York City museum population (limited to events between 1910 and 2010). Event history requires a unit of analysis that holds constant geographic boundaries over time. Likely options for a unit of analysis include neighborhoods and census tracts. Upon inspection, both of these prove detrimental to analysis. Many neighborhoods, such as Fort Greene and Harlem, have been named as such during the entire analysis period. However, most neighborhoods have changed names (i.e. we can look to the development of “SoHo” as a neighborhood for a clear example) and boundaries during the analysis period. Applying today’s neighborhood definitions to the population of one hundred years ago is problematic. The census tract is the next logical option. Unfortunately, these boundaries have also changed over the twentieth century, particularly between 1910 and 1960. Furthermore, although tract boundaries do fall along the street grid, they
are arbitrarily drawn and do not adhere to meaningful divisions between neighborhoods, demographics, etc.

The most logical and least problematic unit of analysis is the street block. The street block is smaller than both the neighborhood and the census tract. It is relevant to lived experience (Kusenbach 2008) and does not divide the city anachronistically. All street blocks in New York City were derived from the city street grid map, available through the Department of City Planning. There are 37,639 blocks in the city.

**Dependent variable**

The outcome variable predicted in this model is museum founding in a given block in a given year. Simply put, the model predicts the instantaneous probability that a block will experience a museum founding in a year given that it has not already experienced a founding. This variable is binary, as a founding either occurs or does not occur, and the model is fitted using logistic regression in the discrete time event history framework (Allison 1982, 1984). The appropriate model is of repeated events because the same block can experience multiple museums in different years, which occurred nineteen times during the analysis period. Data points from the dependent variable are not independent. In fact, I argue that spatial proximity between museums (and thus, between blocks) plays a role in attracting additional museums. Due to this, I have generated a distribution of museum locations.

**Independent variables**
As revealed in Chapter One, there are a number of factors influencing museum founding and movement locations. In this section, I will describe the independent variables included in the event history model that represent these influences.\textsuperscript{38}

**Proportion White, Proportion Black, Proportion Other.** These parameters are based on counts of each racial group divided by the total residents in each tract. Of course, the meaning and categorization of ‘black’ and ‘white’ has evolved and been debated over the eleven census periods under analysis. Racial and ethnic categorization has, on the whole, become increasingly specific and complex. While there were four racial groups in 1910, today are over fifty-seven. For this project, white refers to only non-Hispanic, single-race white residents. Black refers to non-Hispanic, African American or native, single-race residents. Proportion Other totals the remaining residents per census tract. Please refer to Table 2. Census data at the tract level was joined with the corresponding street block using ArcGIS.

**Clustering.** This variable totals the number of nearby museums existing at each census year, for each block. Nearby is defined as any museum within a one-mile radius of the block’s centerpoint. As should be expected, clustering increases over time, both because the number of museums overall increases and because museums have tended to cluster in space. Because of availability of census data beginning in 1910, there is a left censoring of 31 cases. These are museums that were opened before 1910. However, we take these cases as the initial population of organizations beginning in 1910, and they are included in the clustering variables.

\textsuperscript{38} Population density is an additional variable in the analysis. This is a basic measure of the number of residents per square mile.
Results

Table 2.2. Model of Museum Founding, 1910-2010

|                          | Estimate | Std. Error | z value | Pr(>|z|) |
|--------------------------|----------|------------|---------|----------|
| (Intercept)              | -11.0400 | 0.3846     | -28.716 | < 2e-16 *** |
| Year                     | 0.0140   | 0.0069     | 2.01    | 0.044393 * |
| Population Density       | 0.0000   | 0.0000     | 3.599   | 0.000319 *** |
| Proportion Black         | 1.5740   | 1.4190     | 1.109   | 0.2672 |
| Proportion White         | -0.0713  | 0.5004     | -0.142  | 0.8867 |
| Clustering               | 0.3243   | 0.0383     | 8.459   | < 2e-16 *** |
| Proportion Black * Clustering | -0.2525 | 0.1133     | -2.228  | 0.025863 * |
| Proportion White * Clustering | -0.0371 | 0.0385     | -0.963  | 0.3356 |
| Proportion Black * Year  | -0.0257  | 0.0196     | -1.311  | 0.1900 |
| Proportion White * Year  | 0.0032   | 0.0089     | 0.358   | 0.7202 |
| Clustering * Year        | -0.0017  | 0.0003     | -6.115  | 9.65e-10 *** |

The above table reports the event history model. Please note that the parameters are extremely small because of the event of museum founding is rare given the number of New York City blocks. However, these results demonstrate that there is a significant pattern to museum placement. First, we notice that as time passes (Year), the likelihood of museum founding increases. This is concordant with the growth rate of museum foundings previously discussed. Clustering has an even stronger positive effect. As is evidenced through the interaction terms, the
influence of clustering is mediated by the racial composition of the given block. The positive effect of clustering is more drastically decreased in black areas, compared to white areas. This supports the hypothesis that predominantly Black/African American areas have less local museums. We can also see that the effect of clustering also decreases at we move through the analysis period. This may indicate that clustering tends to act as a spark point, but eventually areas reach an organizational density that cannot sustain additional museums. We found this to be the case during the era of cultural branding.

The following figures break down the race and clustering parameters. The first figure displays the probability of a block experiencing a museum founding, if the block in question has varying proportions of Black residents. Each line denotes a different proportion of Black residents in the census tract. As proportion black increases, the slope direction reverses; increased proportion black corresponds to a lower probability of experiencing a museum founding. The higher intercepts for higher proportion black result from low proportions of black residents before 1940. Other variables were controlled: density set to mean, and cluster set to zero. The second figure displays the same probability, but for different levels of proportion white. It is clear that the overall pattern is reversed for white residents. The positive slope direction remains constant and slightly increases as proportion white increases. Again, other parameters were controlled. The final figure illustrates the relationship between clustering and time of risk to museum founding. Each line refers to a different level of clustering (i.e. the number of nearby museums). We can interpret this figure to mean that the presence of nearby institutions brought in additional museum foundings to the area for much of the analysis period. However, towards the end - the era of cultural branding - that trend reverses. It becomes more
likely for blocks without neighboring museums to receive an institution. This reflects the diffusion to gentrified neighborhoods in downtown Manhattan and the outer boroughs.

These results indicate that the distribution of New York’s population has a significant effect on the geographic spread of the city’s museums. Areas that are predominantly African American are less likely to receive institutions, areas that are predominantly white are more likely.

Figure 2.12. Likelihood of museum founding given varying levels of proportion black
Figure 2.13. Likelihood of museum founding given varying levels of proportion white

![Graph showing likelihood of museum founding given varying levels of proportion white.]

Proportion White

Time from Risk

Black=Baseline, Green=.25, Yellow=.5, Red=.75

Figure 2.14. Likelihood of museum founding given varying levels of clustering

![Graph showing likelihood of museum founding given varying levels of clustering.]

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that each era is characterized by a prevailing demographic trend. These demographic trends, when coupled with the era’s museum location decision, explain the uneven diffusion of New York’s museums over time and space. The first era was characterized by personal location decisions. This interacted with oft-shifting demographics to create a virtual toss up of museum locations. Since founders did not know where the city’s increasingly diverse constituencies would end up, they made what today seems to be a series of idiosyncratic location decisions. By the 1940s, racial and ethnic groups were clearly divided along neighborhood boundaries. As founders homogenized their decisions, they often chose to locate in one of the only neighborhoods that remained steadfastly white and elite: the Upper East Side. Today’s era of cultural branding ushered in the rise of gentrification and a new need for museum differentiation. Through the combined efforts of city government, corporate developers,
and museums founders, institutions diffused to recently gentrified neighborhoods beyond the Upper East Side.

I concluded the chapter with a statistical analysis of the significant impact of African American presence on the likelihood of museum founding. Although this relationship was determined to be valid, I do not argue that museum founders willfully avoided African American (or minority) neighborhoods. Instead, during every museum location decision, founders were attracted to neighborhoods whose characteristics - elite, gentrifying, etc., - ensured that they did not contain high proportions of African Americans. This result motivates an examination of how this spatial diffusion may have an impact on varying use of museums by New Yorkers. I will turn to this task in the next chapter.

Chapter three: the consequences of the museum location decision

*That which, perhaps, hears more nonsense than anything in the world, is a picture in a museum.*

Edmond Goncourt

The dramatic intra-city relocations we observed in the last chapter is a testament to how important surrounding neighborhoods are to museums, even though they are often considered to be global institutions. While I have explored what these founding and relocation decisions mean to museum leaders, urban developers, and government officials, this project has not yet considered how these decisions impact potential museum-goers. The enduring association
between the museum location decision and demographic turnover suggests that this question warrants further investigation.

This chapter is devoted to exploring why individuals attend arts institutions, and if there is a connection between the aggregate spatial distribution of museums and audience composition. I begin this exploration with a survey of arts audience research for each era of the museum location decision. We will learn that museums, not surprisingly, have engaged with their real and potential audiences in vastly different ways over the twentieth century. Despite the introduction targeted marketing and outreach, audience composition has remained stratified throughout the three eras. One of the most persistent cleavages is African American attendance - African Americans are less likely to attend museums than the rest of the population, even when controlling for other demographic characteristics.

I will discuss the efforts museum leaders and policymakers have taken, at various points, to mitigate unequal attendance, which include lowering costs, addressing varying socialization experiences, and altering exhibition content. I argue that since policy interventions addressing these alternative theories of participation have not resulted in corresponding changes in audience composition, institutional exposure may be a hidden driver of attendance. Institutional exposure encapsulates the cognitive, practical, and interactional benefits associated with proximity to museums and other forms of arts institutions; the concept suggests that there is a relationship

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39 Since there is a relatively small number of attendance and participation studies that only focus on museums, I include research on all forms of arts institutions. Museums are the most commonly attended ‘high culture’ arts institution, but the patterns of stratification found in museums tend to reflect other patterns in arts institutions and vice versa.

40 Attendance patterns at arts institutions cannot be conflated with cultural engagement overall. Attendance at these public institutions can be interpreted as an example of conspicuous consumption, along the lines of Veblen (1922). Studies have found that while these public acts of arts engagement are highly stratified, rates of engagement in private spaces converge (Tepper and Gao 2007, Conwill 2001).
between local proximity to arts institutions and increased attendance. I explore the possible connection between institutional exposure and attendance by tracing the varied rates of institutional exposure over time between the most likely and unlikely museum attendees, white and African American New Yorkers respectively. I find that African American exposure levels have plateau-ed in the past fifty years, while museum exposure for white New Yorkers has skyrocketed.

I conclude the chapter with a test of whether the inequalities found in museum exposure are characteristic of other forms of arts institutions, including arts galleries, theaters, and arts instruction organizations. I find that they are, even when accounting for African American income and education, which further supports the plausibility of institutional exposure theory. Although these results are suggestive, they point to one of the ways non-economic attributes perpetuate class inequality. Before presenting the data analysis, I will summarize existing research on museum audiences, how they are stratified, and how museums have addressed this stratification.

The era of personal ties: by us, for us

During the Gilded Age, founders built inwardly oriented institutions in the locations of their choosing. Museums and other major arts institutions were seen as sanctuaries created by and in many cases for the elite. These founders reclassified elite’s cultural trappings through the deliberate promotion of a small number of arts forms (i.e. ballet, classical music, Old Masters, etc., see Khan 2012) in formal arts institutions. In his case study of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Paul DiMaggio (1987, 2012) demonstrates how blueblood trustees intentionally cultivated
a homogenous clientele. As DiMaggio recounts, when the Museum of Fine Arts was first founded in 1870, founders prioritized education programs and exhibited a mixture of (what is now considered to be) high and lowbrow art; keep in mind that at this time immigrant and working class populations were as likely to attend the opera as they were vaudeville (Levine 2012). During the 1890s, this orientation shifted rapidly and dramatically. The museum’s leaders turned their focus towards connoisseurship and collecting, with the support of a small number of Brahmin families. By 1907, the institution that once prioritized education now instructed its docents not to explain its art to visitors. The Museum moved from Copley Square to the exclusive Fens neighborhood - its neighbors were now exactly the kind of elite Bostonians with which they identified and associated (DiMaggio 2012). Attendance at the new building flagged over the next decades, despite enormous population growth of the city at large. This was fine with the trustees, who were “displeased” by large crowds (DiMaggio 2012, 434). Through these efforts, the Museum of Fine Arts became “closed to all save the initiated” (DiMaggio 2012, 434). Zolberg (1980) found this to be the case for museums across the country.

As we know from previous chapters, New York’s institutions were created with an orientation towards founder networks. These personal ties, as we saw in the case of the Museum of Modern Art, were often urban elites. Through constricting and defining the content of ‘high culture’, museum founders generated an elite-driven arts audience and excluded much of the country.

Inaccessible or un-relatable content has been considered a barrier to arts institution attendance. Scholars have found that minority Americans are more likely to attend arts institutions to celebrate their heritage than their Euro-American counterparts (Ostrower 2005).
these findings held during the era of personal ties, then minority populations would be extremely unlikely to attend museums - which were exclusively run and curated by white Americans. Even major cultural movements, such as the Harlem Renaissance, were not reflected in museum content at the time. Consequently, during the era of personal networks, audiences for museums and other high culture institutions were circumscribed narrowly and definitively.

The era of homogenization: the democratization project begins

The mid-twentieth century brings a sea change for museum founders, funders, and audiences. The introduction of external funders’ oversight as well as government-sponsored democratization policies motivated the need to better understand who was inside these august institutions (Peterson 1986). A prevailing research question was: is democratization successful? There was an initial wave of optimism (Toffler 1965 in DiMaggio and Useem 1978) regarding this question. A 1973 study by the National Research Center for the Arts showed enormous rates of attendance: over half of Americans were museum-goers. This finding would indicate that democratization had reversed the audience narrowing of the previous era. However, subsequent research did not replicate this high rate.

DiMaggio and Useem (1978) and DiMaggio, Useem, and Brown (1977), in a review of hundreds of unpublished audience surveys of a variety of arts institutions, found that the entrenched inequalities set up during the previous era were still present throughout the 1960s and 1970s.\(^{41}\) Overall, only about one-fifth of Americans were attending museums. Individuals with low-status occupations, less education, and racial minorities were still significantly

\(^{41}\) The National Research Center for the Arts result is now thought to be inflated.
underrepresented in all arts audiences (DiMaggio and Useem 1978). New York-specific surveys mirrored countrywide statistics, the National Research Center for the Arts found that black New Yorkers comprised only 3-4% of high culture audiences, while at the time (in 1970) they composed 16% of the city’s total population. Arts institutions attendees were a startlingly homogenous group: white, older, highly educated, wealthy, professional, and urban. Essentially, the same individuals courted during the era of personal ties. And even this population was shrinking. The traditional arts institution audience base - white middle and upper classes - was fleeing cities in record numbers; “white flight” dominated much of 1950s and 1960s. The American Association of Museums issued a statement in 1972 comparing the inner-city museum to a “beached whale” (American Association of Museums 1972, 6) left without an audience base. This sentiment clearly reveals the tension between old guard elitism and new democratization outreach.

Although established institutions were not immediately successful in the democratization project (and there are many indications that democratization was not high on the priority list), there were some bright spots for potential minority audiences. The era did see the birth of culturally specific museums, some of which were targeted towards underrepresented populations (Luby 2011). During the 1960s and 1970s, these museums (recall the foundings of El Museo del Barrio and the Studio Museum in Harlem) offered people of color content that reflected and celebrated their heritage, which had been absent from formal arts institutions. However, it should be noted that in order to survive these institutions still had to adhere to a homogenizing set of constraints created during the era of homogenization, including the need for validation in the white-dominated funding and art worlds. To this day, one of the great ironies of culturally
specific museums is that many are - in raw numbers - primarily attended by non-minority visitors (Farrell and Medveda 2010).

Culturally specific institutions were one path towards audience expansion, but traditional museums still had work to do. Since museum leaders were interested in diversifying their audience, they attempted to understand the barriers to attendance. A common barrier discussed was a lack of socialization to and familiarity with art and arts institutions (DiMaggio and Useem 1978). Pierre Bourdieu developed a theoretical framework to explain how individuals become socialized into the arts (and culture, more generally) using data from his native France. Bourdieu argues that cultural capital is an individual’s knowledge of and ease with high-status culture (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, 1989). He argues that family background and early educational experiences determine one’s cultural preferences through the development of habitus, or a seemingly ‘natural’ disposition. Applying and amending cultural capital in the American context has motivated a wide range of studies in which arts institution attendance is both the cause and consequence of high cultural capital (Lamont and Lareau 1988, Robinson and Garnier 1985, DiMaggio and Mohr 1985, Lamont and Fournier 1992). A body of empirical research confirms the hunch that early life experiences play a role in predicting adult arts attendance (i.e. Bergonzi and Smith 1996), although the French case did not map cleanly onto the American one. There was a growing suspicion that other mechanisms brought people to arts institutions, and that cultural boundaries were more porous than ever before (Ostrower 1998). By the end of the era of homogenization, external accountability and democratization had profoundly changed arts institutions, but not their audiences. Although it was clear that audience inequality was important, it was not yet clear exactly what caused it.
The era of cultural branding: studies in populism

*It is* a really radical change in how people use museums now...I have friends who think this is the end of civilization, but a lot more people are going to be in the presence of art.

John Elderfield

The attention paid to audience composition continued through the era of cultural branding. This time, the museum audience really had broadened. Data from the 1982 and 1992 NEA-funded Survey for Public Participation of the Arts shows that museum attendance has received a 4.6% bump to 26.7% during the first decade of cultural branding (Robinson 1993). By 2002, this figure had topped out at 26.5% (Nichols 2003). The growth of the museum audience is dramatic enough that the United States has surpassed Europe’s attendance rates for the first time (Dobrzyniski 1999). This development inspired Paul DiMaggio to proclaim that art museums are “the great arts institutions success story of the last 20 years” (Dobrzyniski 1999, accessed online).

These promising numbers elide the question of diversification. The same studies report that audiences may be bigger but they are not more diverse - non-Hispanic whites, particularly those who are educated and wealthy - are the most populous arts attendees by far (Nichols 2003). Minorities, of all races and ethnicities, constituted only 9% of the museum audience in 2010 (Farrell and Medvedeva 2010). African Americans show worrying signs of nonattendance: this group had the lowest museum visit rate of all race/ethnicities in a recent report (Farrell and Medveda 2010); other studies have supported this disparity (Robinson et. al.1986, DiMaggio and

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42 Tompkins 2012, 63.
Ostrower 1990, Kaplan and Talbot 1988). Data from the 1993 General Social Survey found that on a national level, 42.1% of White Americans attend museums, in comparison with 26.7% of Black Americans (Tepper 1998); a more recent national study supports this result (Williams and Keen 2009). The table below displays nationally representative data for African Americans and white Americans at three points in the era of cultural branding.

Table 3.1. Percentage of US black and white adult population visiting art museums and galleries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Museums have been more committed than ever to close the attendance gap. Directors are striving to develop a modern (read: young, diverse, urban) audience, and they have identified new content as the key. During the Gilded Age, we saw that museum leaders altered their content to narrow their audience; today, the same principle is reversed. Popular and even ‘lowbrow’ blockbusters (Alexander 1996) are making waves in the museum world.

The Brooklyn Museum has been one of the most eager New York institutions in this populism effort. Their eye-catching 2004 entrance renovation signaled a newfound welcoming of local, diverse visitors. Shortly thereafter, Director Arnold Lehman set the ambitious goal of tripling their attendance rates over the next decade (Pogrebin 2010). The Museum’s strategies to broaden their public have focused on generating populist programs, the most visible of which is their First Saturdays program (sponsored by Target). These weekend, nighttime events have been

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enormously successful; thousands stream into the museum for live music and dancing, complete with a cash bar. The institution has also posted record numbers to their mainstream exhibitions, including art from the movie “Star Wars” and celebrity photography by Annie Leibowitz. The Museum will exhibit the winning work of the Bravo network reality series, “Work of Art: The Next Great Artist”.

These splashy moves have attracted criticism from both inside and outside of the Museum. One trustee promptly resigned when the Bravo deal was struck. Maxwell L. Anderson, the current director of the Dallas Museum of Art, commented: “You may get people in the door for a motorcycle show or a ‘Star Wars’ show, but they don’t return, and there is no residual value from their visits” (Pogrebin 2010, accessed online).

Looking at the facts, overall attendance has not increased. Far from it, the Museum audience is now on the decline (Pogrebin 2010). Gains in audience diversity and the increase in local attendees can be largely attributed to these relatively isolated populist experiments (primarily the First Saturdays events). The Museum does not track the subsequent visits of the First Saturdays crowd, but it’s leaders realize this is the ultimate barometer of populist success. Director Arthur Lehman says that “if that environment could be replicated...on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, then I could easily retire and say we’ve succeeded”” (Pogrebin 2010, accessed online).
The Brooklyn Museum represents moves made by museum directors around the world to adopt mainstream, inclusive programs. However, the mixed reactions to the Brooklyn Museum’s policies reveals that there is little consensus amongst leaders over how they should define their real or imagined audiences. Even though museums are stretching their arms to new territories, some argue that their “master narrative” is still elite oriented (David 1999). During the era of cultural branding, we witnessed an overall bump in attendance at museums, and even some signs of democratization through specific, ‘non-museum-like’ programming. However, representative surveys demonstrate that while the audiences are getting bigger, at most institutions they are not getting more diverse. After a century of arts institutions, programs, and exhibitions, the core schisms in attendance are still the same as they always were.

Barriers to arts participation

A great department store, easily reached, open at all hours, is more like a good museum of art than any of the museums we have yet established.

John Cotton Dana

Two simple observations emerge from this review of audience studies: (1) audiences are consistently stratified, and (2) there is little consensus over exactly why. During the review, I touched on two of the most commonly cited explanations for attendance: socialization (or, cultural capital) and content. These related barriers have been expounded upon by arts experts

44 Supporters of populist programming include Jeffrey Deitch, the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art’s director (Johnson 2012), and Nicholas Serota, at the helm of the newly relocated Tate Modern (Tompkins 2012). Even Thomas Campbell, the newly installed director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is attempting to broaden the museum’s audience by making their entire collection available online. He argues that “in maintaining its standards, the Met had too often failed to reach out to less knowledgeable visitors.” (Kennedy 2011).
and intervened on by arts educators and policymakers, and in many cases partially account for the observed inequality in arts participation. Cultural capital is able to explain audience stratification across a wide range of dimensions, but presupposes a rigid class structure and knowledge-based status hierarchy not suited to the American case (Ostrower 1990). Content is the go-to explanation for most museum leaders and many policymakers. However, we have seen that even the most dramatic program initiatives have not created a sustainable cohort of regular museum-goers. Consumer cost is another commonly invoked barrier, although we have seen that mainstream cultural entertainment (such as a movie or concert ticket) is often more expensive than museum entrance fee. Furthermore, museums are actively addressing the cost barrier. A recent study found that two-thirds of New York’s nonprofit arts organizations visits were free of charge for the attendees (Alliance for the Arts 2011).

Most vitally, these theories do not explain the consistent racial inequalities in attendance. Across every era, race has been a predictor of arts institution attendance; increasingly, African Americans have emerged as the least likely arts attendees (DiMaggio and Ostrower 1990). Based on the 1985 NEA Survey of Public Participation of the Arts (SPPA), Schuster (1991) found that whites were twice as likely to attend an art museum or art gallery than African Americans; other minority groups were not as drastically different. These findings have been demonstrated to hold despite increases in income or education (Puckrein 1991, Edwards 1981). The following quote sums up the matter:

When moderately affluent, moderately well educated, European American Jane Q. American wakes up on a Sunday morning and tries to decide what to do with her family, there is roughly a fifty-fifty chance that some kind of museum will be on her list of possibilities. When moderately affluent, moderately well educated, African American Jane Q. American wakes up on a Sunday morning and tries to decide what to do with her
family, there is considerably less than a fifty-fifty chance that some kind of museum will be on her list of possibilities.\footnote{Falk 1990.}

These confounding results have showed little signs of change. However, race is almost never offered as an independent determinant of overall cultural participation. This is because studies report that African Americans and other minorities participate frequently in the arts - just not at formal arts institutions (Grams 2010, Jackson 2002, Conwill 2001). It is obviously not a disparity in cultural engagement between races, but of cultural institution attendance.

I suggest that stratification along racial lines is an indicator of an often-ignored, yet significant barrier to attendance: geographic proximity. The location of and differential proximity to museums and other arts institutions pops up frequently in audience composition debates - for both the respondents and arts leaders. Jun, Kyle, and O’Leary (2008) found that access, time, and cost were the most significant attendance barriers (also see Tian, Crompton, and Witt 1996). All three of these reasons are directly related to geographic proximity. They also argue that the place of residence is determinant, particularly in the case of the urban/suburban divide. Schuster (1991) also found that the barrier ‘too far to go’ was the second most common response (behind ‘not enough time’). The most recent SPPA found that proximity to location was a major barrier: 58.8% of respondents report they are hindered by a lack of facilities, 52.2% report that existing facilities are inconveniently located, and 65.7% report that they have a lack of time to attend these facilities (National Endowment for the Arts 2009).

New Yorkers find proximity to be an obstacle as well. In a recent study, the locations of arts events are reported to be a “significant obstacle”: more than 60% of residents say that they would attend arts institutions more frequently (or at all) if they were more conveniently located
Despite these findings, location (admittedly, a tricky issue) is not on policymakers’ agendas.

This absence is ironic because museum leaders also talk about location as a major determinant of attendance. We learned in previous chapters that location is already key to current branding efforts. In fact, when asked about the future of the much-debated Brooklyn Museum, art aficionados invoked its location as one of its biggest advantages and obstacles. Philippe de Montebello, former director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, said: “I don't know of any museum so marginalized by its locality and demographic change [of Brooklyn].” He, like many other New York museum leaders, is of two minds regarding location; de Montebello both suggests to market locally: “Promotion would stress: ‘You don’t have to go to Manhattan to see one of the world’s great collections...’”, while also cautioning that “great museums are not just for the people who live within 20 miles...” (Pogrebin 2010). In Chapter 1, I argued that both the Whitney and MoMA redefined themselves through location changes, and an explicit implication of their new locations was redefining their local audience base into a fresh, desirable demographic. When compared to the Brooklyn Museum, it seems that both institutions that have relocated and those that have stayed put are wrestling with issues of how to make sense of their locations and their attendees. For researchers and policymakers, the importance of location and proximity is undisputed, but no clear link has been made between location and attendance.

**Institutional Exposure**

I propose that there is a link between location decisions and attendance that has not been fully developed by scholars. Geographic proximity, or institutional exposure, to museums (and
other arts institutions) is a hidden determinant of attendance. At this point, institutional exposure
is an concept that may motivate future research. I will not directly test the impact of institutional
exposure on attendance in the scope of this dissertation. However, I will present a series of
quantitative analyses that suggest a plausible correlation between exposure and attendance.
Before reporting these analyses, I will further develop the idea of institutional exposure.

The concept of institutional exposure does not denote physical proximity alone: it
represents a social mechanism of how individuals learn about, become socialized into, and
interact with available formal arts organizations. At its most basic level, exposure enables easy
and spontaneous attendance. The reader may recall James Michener, the Greenwich Village
resident who passed by the Whitney Museum during his daily commute. Michener would stop in
frequently - because it was so convenient; after these repeated visits he found that the Whitney
shaped his appreciation for American art. Institutional exposure also implies a cognitive benefit.
If one has museums within one’s local neighborhood, arts and culture implicitly becomes a part
of daily life. One passes by advertisements to the museum on the way to work or the local park.
Individuals may be more likely to ‘feel’ that these places are part of the rhythms of daily life.
Third, it is also more likely that other parts of one’s life, including social networks and other
daily organizations, will be connected to the institution, further facilitating engagement. Across a
variety of studies, spatial proximity has been shown to encourage information diffusion,
interaction, and social influence (Strang and Soule 1998, Stern and Seifert 2000, Liu, King and
Bearman 2010, Hedstrom 1994). Participation at a neighborhood institution, and particularly one
that is invested in the community, can provide an outlet for information exchange and civic

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46 This is due to a lack of historical or current representative attendance data for New York City museums.
engagement, similar to a community center (Jackson 2000). Finally, exposure captures the interactive nature of institution attendance. Physical presence at museums and other arts institutions confers an experience that cannot be replicated elsewhere. Attendance affords skill building, gaining ‘ease’ in looking and appreciating art and culture, as well as opportunities for specific forms of interaction and interlocutors.

Although I have focused on museums in the previous chapters, institutional exposure applies to a broader range of arts institutions. Unlike a grocery store or daycare center, cultural literacy in today’s society requires a wide range of environments. Recent work has demonstrated that knowledge and ease across a spectrum of cultural contexts – not only highbrow forms – is now required to be socially ‘skilled’ (Fridman and Ollivier 2002, Ollivier 2008).

The consequences of institutional exposure help to explain the pervasive, persistent character of racial inequality in urban America. It has been demonstrated that the economy alone does not drive the reproduction of inequality. Cultural differences, either explicit or implicit, have long been considered to not just reflect, but produce socioeconomic cleavages (Veblen 1899, Willis 1977, Bourdieu and Passeron 1984). The outward expressions of ‘personal’ taste and style emplace individuals into a systematic matrix of race, class, potential, etc. (Bryson 1996, Goldberg 2011, Lamont and Lareau 1988, Dowd 1992, Ferguson 2004, Marsden et. al. 1982, Katz-Gerro 2002, DiMaggio and Ostrower 1990). In short, cultural tastes are not ‘natural’; they are constructed and protected, both at the individual and group level (Mark 2003).

These tastes contribute to the creation of social identities and meaning. On a structural level, artistic and cultural tastes (an interactional ease in appreciating and practicing them) can influence job market outcomes (Brown 1995) and social mobility more generally (Parkin 1979,
Kalmijn and Kraaykamp 1996). For example, Kasinitiz et. al. (2009) found, in a survey of diverse, second-generation New Yorkers, that attending museums and libraries was positively associated with educational attainment and political engagement. Individuals with a shared ‘culture’ tend to associate with each other (Byrne 1971), such cultural inequality also reproduces patterns of segregation. I will expand on potential implications in the conclusion of the dissertation. Suffice it to say, understanding how people are exposed to and engage in cultural pursuits is central to understanding inequality.

Thus, institutional exposure hypothesizes that local access to arts institutions will increase residents’ attendance to those institutions because (a) it is simply more convenient; (b) proximity to arts institutions cognitively suggests that they are a familiar, daily institution; and (c) it is more likely that institutions are woven into residents’ existing social fabric. Museum location decisions, over time and in aggregate, have generated variations in institutional exposure across New York City. These variations will be the focus of the remainder of the chapter. For there to be a link between institutional exposure and arts attendance, we would first have to observe a correlation between them. In the following sections, I will present findings demonstrating a strong relationship.

**Measuring institutional exposure**

I operationalize institutional exposure by totaling the number of local institutions per census tract. There are several components of this statement to unpack. I measure the number of local institutions because, as argued earlier, one must have access to more than one institution to reap the benefits of exposure. However, I do not make any absolute arguments concerning the
minimum number of institutions required to be living in an ‘exposed’ community; any
differentiation is relative to the exposure of other New Yorkers at the same point. A census tract’s
‘total’ includes any institutions within a one mile radius of the tract’s center-point.\(^47\) This is an
eexample of a radial network buffer, commonly deployed in built environment research (Sallis et.
al. 2009, Handy et. al. 2002, Leslie et. al. 2007).\(^48\) I employ the historical museums dataset
previously introduced in Chapter Two; later on, I introduce a cross-sectional dataset of additional
forms of arts institutions - galleries, theaters, etc., - to determine if and how museum exposure
compares with arts institutions exposure, more generally.

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47 The one mile radius is a robust measure. The same analysis has been conducted using a half-mile radial
buffer, and a neighborhood adjacency measure (in which the total number of museums within one’s own
and adjacent neighborhoods are totaled); these analyses were consistent with the presented findings.

48 This analysis was also conducted with a one-mile network buffer (Oliver et. al. 2007). The network
buffer traces the one mile path along roads and walkways instead of a continuous circle, which is the
technique used in the radial buffer. The comparison to the network buffer produced no significant
differences in findings.

49 Census tract identified as African American or white changed along with demographic turnover of each
era. African American tracts were those that contained more than 10% African Americans between
1910-1940, 50% between 1950-1970, and 75% between 1980-2010. White census tracts contained over
50% white residents between 1910-1970 and over 75% between 1980-2010.

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A century of museum exposure

The chart below reports the exposure level of African American and white census tracts
between 1910 and 2010.\(^49\) Museum exposure for white neighborhoods has exponentially
increased while exposure for African American communities has stagnated and even declined
during the era of cultural branding. By 2010, predominantly white areas contained more than five
times the number of local museums than black areas. The historical dynamics of museum
exposure have roots in critical shifts of the museum location decision, as well as concurrent demographic transformations.

Figure 3.1. Average rates of museum exposure, 1910-2010

![Bar graph showing average rates of museum exposure, 1910-2010.]

Until the 1940s, the museum location decision was motivated by personal ties. This idiosyncratic location distribution occurred alongside rapid relocations of New York’s elite, immigrant, and black populations. These dual dynamics resulted in unsystematic and changing exposure levels for white and African American residents. The 1910 map below illustrates the fact that African American communities were relatively nearby the few museum clusters in existence at the time. Census tracts outlined in black were over 10% African American (the entire city was less than 5% African American at the time); the fill color is shaded according to the

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50 Please note that exposure levels for 1930 are not included due to incomplete Census data.
level of exposure. The chart above reflects this proximity; tracts with an African American population were more exposed to museums than predominantly white ones. This was the case from 1910 to 1930.

The seeming randomness of the previous era gives way to a steady pattern over the following decades. The era of homogenization marks a turning point: white areas begin to gain exposure, while African American exposure plateaus. In 1950, African Americans reach their peak rate of exposure, due to the sudden post-WWII migration of Blacks into northern cities, and a simultaneous ‘white flight’. The map below shows that the now-familiar African American strongholds of Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Jamaica, etc., are coming into existence -- just as the Upper East Side is emerging as the ideal museum location. By 1960, African American census tracts’ exposure rate had dropped. White tracts, on the other hand, were on the road to a steady increase that will continue through present day.

During the era of cultural branding, white neighborhoods received all the exposure gains. Majority black census tracts experienced no gains in exposure.\textsuperscript{51} This is despite the fact that African Americans compose around one quarter of the population during this period. The map below shows that African American neighborhoods - now quite large - have been pushed away from the urban core. Even the African American population in Harlem is concentrated above 125th Street. After one hundred years of museum growth, white neighborhoods have about ten times the exposure they started out with, and African American neighborhoods have almost exactly the same rate.

\textsuperscript{51} Other minority neighborhoods have exposure levels that are in between white and black rates. In 2010, those census tracts with predominantly Asian or Hispanic residents had an average of two local museums; this figure is slightly higher than African American tracts and lower than predominantly white ones.
In short, white New Yorkers have gained the lion’s share of local museums, while most of the institutions that have opened over the past century have been inconveniently located to stratification. Other arts institutions must be included to determine if there is a similar stratification in institutional (not only museum) exposure; if museum exposure is an aberration, then institutional exposure is not a likely explanation. I collected cross-sectional data from 2008 of three additional types of arts institutions in New York City: theaters, galleries, and arts instruction organizations.\textsuperscript{52} This supplementary dataset is from ReferenceUSA, a private

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\textsuperscript{52} Live theaters are venues in which original performances are held. These include primarily playhouses and performing arts centers (i.e. Lincoln Center). Arts instruction organizations accounts for all organizations offering dramatic, vocal, or musical education. Other institutions include outdoor historical sites and monuments and arts advocacy organizations that are open to the public. These were relatively rare, however, and consequently were not included.
clearinghouse for national business information. Although this dataset is cross-sectional, additional longitudinal data collected (but not presented) shows that the recent museum boom is representative of galleries, theaters, and art instruction organizations. These organizational forms have also exploded in numbers. DiMaggio and Useem (1978) also found that there has been an overall increase in the number of arts institutions in the United States since the 1960s.

Table 3.2. 2008 New York City Arts Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museums</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galleries</td>
<td>1371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theaters</td>
<td>369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2549</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These three forms are different from each other, and, perhaps most importantly, different from museums. All museums in the 2008 dataset are nonprofits, but the other forms include for profit businesses. Since there are significant ecological differences between these organizations, I

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53 The company compiles data from public tax records, and then conducts telephone surveys to verify and update information. Reference USA enables data searches based on the North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS). This search resulted in 3185 organizations in New York City. A following internet-based search of the organizations was conducted to eliminate any records that were clearly not museums, galleries, arts instruction, or theaters. This resulted in a final dataset of 2549 institutions. This dataset set was then geocoded with the ArcGIS software.

54 Data collected between 1998 and 2008 show exponential growth of each institution type.

55 Although it is obvious that these institutions exist in space, it is less clear how these varied institutions interact (or do not) with their local neighborhoods. This is particularly important when considering audience composition; often, the most numerous visitors are not New Yorkers, but tourists. It has been said that tourist-friendly institutions, such as major arts centers, exist in a ‘bubble’ detached from the daily life of New York City (for research on tourist bubbles, please see Judd 1999). Despite the ubiquity of tourism, arts institutions of all types are locally relevant for myriad reasons. Very few arts institutions are ‘major’, in the sense that they are regular stops for tourists. While the Metropolitan Museum of Art or Lincoln Center get much of the attention, the city is actually composed of hundreds of small, community based arts organizations. These are the most numerous by far, and they rely on local employees, organizational neighbors, and clients. Jackson and Herranz (2002) found that arts organizations of all shapes and sizes are deeply embedded in community dynamics and processes.
do not argue that the location decisions of these disparate institutions have followed the same evolution of museums; I only hypothesize that these organizations have a similar ultimate spatial distribution in regards to demography. How and why each type of organization has located where it has would be the topic of a separate project, although work has been done to this end (Szantos 2004).

Figure 3.3. New York City Arts Institutions in 2008
The twenty-first century city

Since the following results are based on data collection in 2008, I will take a moment here to discuss recent developments in New York’s arts institutions and demography since 2000. Over the past decade, galleries, theaters, and art schools - similar to museums - were founded at a seemingly unstoppable rate. In 2008 New York, like the rest of the country, was at the peak of the housing market bubble. The bull-market wealth circulated through the city and founders felt New York could and would continue to sustain thousands of arts organizations. As previously discussed, Long Island City has long been primed for an arts explosion, and received a large number of non-museum arts institutions in the new millennium. Williamsburg, Brooklyn is a full-fledged gallery district that is primed to rival Chelsea and 57th Street in Manhattan. Giuliani and Bloomberg’s makeover of the Theater District prompted a spate of new theaters in midtown and around the city. After September 11th, downtown (Battery City) was revitalized through a number of landmark cultural organizations.

The residential population was growing as well. In the 2000 Census, New York topped eight million. In 2008, there were almost 8.2 million New Yorkers. While much has been made of recent gentrification, New York City is still extremely diverse, yet hyper-segregated (Beveridge and Weber 2004). In fact, it is the third most segregated city in the country for non-Hispanic African Americans (Beveridge and Weber 2004). Chin (2005) demonstrates that hyper-segregation can occur even block-by-block and building-by-building. Although the black population is declining56, the city contains a handful of large African American communities. Harlem is still an international center of black culture, although only 17% of the city’s black

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56 In 1990, the city was 29.6% black, in 2000 it was 26.9%, and in 2010 it was 25.5%.
population lives in Manhattan. Bedford-Stuyvesant, Bushwick, and Crown Heights are majority African American. African American residents live in many neighborhoods of the Bronx, co-residing with the city’s Hispanic population. East Queens hosts one of the most populous black neighborhoods, Jamaica, as well as middle-class black areas of St. Albans, Laurelton, and Cambria Heights. Queens is home to such a strong population of middle-class blacks (including black immigrants) that they out-earn the white population in Queens (Roberts 2006).

The compounding character of institutional exposure

With this frame of reference, I now turn to the measurement of institutional exposure in 2008. It is clear from the previous section that white residents have far more museums located conveniently to their homes than black residents. If this is also the case for other forms of arts institutions, then institutional exposure will be highly correlated with current attendance rates. The figure below reports the ratio of white to black exposure for each type of arts institution.

While it seemed possible that other forms of arts institutions could mediate inequalities in museum exposure (and thus minimize its potential influence on arts attendance), it is clear that museums are representative of a broader pattern. In fact, museums are one of the most equally distributed institutions. Instructional institutions are the only form that is more evenly distributed across the city than museums. These organizations are local institutions, often serving only those within their immediate area. Their ecological behavior is far different from the clustering we previously witnessed; instruction organizations display the highest tendency to spread out across space, with each capturing their own local market (see Small 2010 for an analogue). Galleries

57 The 2008 museums dataset is matched with 2010 Census data.
and theaters operate under a different logic (these organizations can be more readily compared to the for-profit firms (Saxenian 1994). Galleries are concentrated in predominantly white, affluent areas. They are the most spatially clustered institutions of the four types. This may run counter to commonsense thinking regarding pioneering galleries as the precursors to gentrification. It is true that they often play this role; however, in aggregate, most galleries are in established gallery neighborhoods, surrounded by wealthy, white residents. This is ironic with respect to issues of access since galleries are the only institution that regularly offer free viewings of art.

Theaters behave similarly, although are not as abundant or mobile (galleries owners can relocate with relative ease since they require little building infrastructure in comparison to museums or theaters). The table below reports the ratio of exposure for predominantly white versus African American census tracts in 2008. This table shows us that there are almost fifteen times more local galleries in white versus African American neighborhoods. Theaters have almost the same ratio of stratification.

Figure 3.4. Ratio of white to African American exposure, by institution type
African Americans are less likely to participate in the arts. If institutional exposure holds, it would predict that black New Yorkers, regardless of their socioeconomic status, have less exposure to arts institutions than other racial groups in the city (but particularly white New Yorkers). If there is a clear correlation between inequalities in institutional exposure and inequalities in attendance, then it is possible that seemingly race-based differences in attendance are masking the mechanism of institutional exposure.

In the next section, I introduce income and educational attainment as possible intervening variables. The figure below reports an odds-ratio analysis of the data. In the graph below, the x-axis indicates the varying proportion of African American residents.\textsuperscript{58} The y-axis displays the odds ratios of high versus low institutional exposure. Each line represents a different income level. This figure reports that income\textsuperscript{59} mediates the relationship between race and institutional exposure, but only to a certain extent. There are extreme exposure disparities for tracts with low proportions of African American residents. Low income African Americans (living with relatively few other low income African Americans) are extremely likely to be living in a high institutional exposure area (over twenty to one odds). Where are communities with large numbers of whites, small numbers of low income African Americans, and a thriving local art scene? There are a surprisingly large amount of these neighborhoods - they are communities that have been bitten by the arts-based development bug. These include Chelsea, the Lower East Side, and Williamsburg, all of which are gallery districts.

\textsuperscript{58} High, medium, low proportion for racial composition, exposure, and income are based on quartiles (low < 25th percentile, medium is between 25th and 75th percentiles, and high is above the 75th percentile. 

\textsuperscript{59} Quantified as median household income per census tract.
As we move into tracts with a higher proportion Black, the odds of high exposure begin to converge and diminish rapidly. These results tell us that in places with a relatively high African American population, income does not mediate institutional exposure in the way that we would expect (i.e. increased income is not associated with increased exposure). In fact, in the areas with the highest Black proportion, there is almost no difference in odds across the three income levels. It is almost equally unlikely that those census tracts will have high (versus low) institutional exposure (it is unlikely because the odds ratios dip below one).

These findings bear out in when surveying exposure at the neighborhood level. African American middle to upper middle class neighborhoods do not have high institutional exposure. Examples of this include Laurelton, Cambria Heights, and St. Albans; these three adjacent

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60 The three income levels are: less than $30,000, between $30,000 and $56,410, and over $56,410.
Communities are located in southeast Queens. Combined, they contain less than five arts institutions. These are suburban locales that are each almost entirely middle class African American. While one could argue that there is a lack of arts institutions because these communities are far removed from the urban core, we can compare this exposure to similarly off-the-beaten path white communities: for example, the white middle class neighborhoods of Sheepshead Bay and Bensonhurst in southern Brooklyn have dozens of local arts organizations.

The low odds of institutional exposure for high-earning African Americans seems unique, but it is possible this finding is accordant with white residents’s experience. The figure below displays the odds ratios of high versus low institutional exposure for high-income whites. Clearly, the trend is reversed between these two groups. It is unlikely for areas with a low proportion of high-income White residents to have institutional exposure. The odds quickly increase as the proportion of high-earning white residents increases. This comparison indicates that there is indeed a penalty of residential segregation for Blacks that is not mediated by income.

Figure 3.6. Odds ratios of high versus low exposure for high income white tracts
Another possible explanation for this disparity is that institutional exposure is more strongly associated with educational attainment rather than income. Education is a strong predictor of formal arts engagement (DiMaggio and Useem 1978). I conducted the same odds ratios analyses for the proportion college educated, by race. The figures below report the odds ratios of high versus low institutional exposure for census tracts with the highest proportions of African American and white college graduates. The results are the same, and even more dramatic for white college graduates. In census tracts with a high proportion white and a high proportion of white BAs, high institutional exposure is about thirteen times more likely than low exposure. For their African American counterparts, it is less likely to have high exposure than low exposure.

Figure 3.7. Odds ratios of high versus low institutional exposure for census tracts with a high proportion of white (left) and African American (right) college graduates

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61 These figures were calculated based on the number of college graduates by racial category divided by the number of adults within that racial category. These continuous variables were categories in the same method: low (less than the 25th percentile), medium (25th to 75th percentile), and high (above 75th percentile).

62 This corresponds to higher than .373 for Black/African American residents and higher than .477 for White residents.
Inequality in exposure between white and African American New Yorkers holds even when accounting for socioeconomic status. Areas with the highest proportion of white college graduates increased the rate of institutional exposure, while that rate was almost the polar opposite for areas with a high proportion of black college graduates. The same discrepancy was found for high-earning white and black neighborhoods. Areas with a concentration of white, educated, wealthy residents are also very likely to enjoy a concentration of arts institutions. Areas with a concentration of black, educated, wealthy residents do not enjoy the same exposure rate. These preliminary results indicate that a behavioral link between institutional exposure and arts institution attendance is worth exploring.

“The constant penalty”

The historical origins of institutional exposure are tied to when and how American cities became segregated. There is a large body of work identifying the causes and consequences of residential segregation (for a review, see Charles 2003). All American cities are cut up along racial lines, most dramatically for African Americans (Darden 2007, Quillian 1999, Jargowsky 1997). While prejudice and discriminatory housing practices affect all people of color, Hispanics and Asians are far less isolated than their Black counterparts. Conversely, Asians and (to a lesser extent) Hispanics do move out of ethnic enclaves and into predominantly white areas (Charles 2003).

Massey and Denton’s (1993) seminal study of African Americans’ residential segregation has a long-term “multidimensional” character that is unique in its effects (Farley and Frey 1994).
Massey and Denton term this the “constant penalty”. These communities lack the basic organizations of everyday life, such as banks, grocery stores, and dry cleaners (Small and McDermott 2005). Massey and Denton demonstrate that all African Americans, regardless of their class, are constrained by residential discriminatory practices. This finding is supported by Farley et. al.’s landmark study (1978) that found whites are the most likely to prefer all-white neighborhoods, while African Americans desire to live in integrated neighborhoods. Institutional exposure suggests that arts organizations, of all kinds, are embedded in this geographically sensitive system.

The presented analysis demonstrates that there is a strong correlation between the inequalities found in institutional exposure and those found in arts attendance. I argue that institutional exposure may be the hidden driver of what seem to be race-based inequalities in arts participation. The era of homogenization heralded in two compounding phenomena: the spatial concentration and isolation of New York’s African American population; and the movement of museums to white, elite areas. The dramatic inequality in institutional exposure has occurred throughout and in spite of democratization policies introduced during the era of homogenization, and the current shift towards populist programming. Until arts institutions leaders realize that location consideration needs to be part of outreach efforts, institutional exposure will continue to be part of the constant penalty.
Conclusion

Any organization that stays still is going to die.
Armand Bartos, Jr., former Chair of the SculptureCenter

In a single sentence, Bartos has characterized one hundred years of history. Over a century, we have witnessed the births, struggles, and deaths of hundreds of New York City’s museums. We have seen how the collective expectations and individual governance of museums have changed over this period. The story of Bartos’ institution, the SculptureCenter, began with a charismatic sculptor whose students didn’t want to leave her Brooklyn studio, and moved into a bohemian-friendly carriage house in downtown Manhattan, and then another one in the straight-laced Upper East Side, and now the SculptureCenter lives on in a multimillion dollar Queens exhibition space. The people, art, and ideas that have populated these spaces are too numerous to recount - but clearly, Jimbo Blachly would find wellsprings of history if he were to retrace the institution’s many steps through the city. Retracing these steps, in essence, has been the task of this dissertation. I have uncovered the changing spatial distribution of New York’s museums at various points in the city’s history. We have seen the museum decisionmaking, structure, and location has been conditioned on population-level dynamics including population maturity and
the introduction of external pressures. It has simultaneously interacted with changing residential patterns to generate systematic disparities in local museum access.

The museum location decision

The object of study in this dissertation was the museum location decision. I approached the analysis of the museum location decision from three points of view: the dynamics shaping founder decisions at the organizational level, the large-scale consequences of those decisions at the population level, and how the museum location may affect usage at the audience level.

In Chapter One, I illustrated three eras of the museum location decision through the winding, intersecting institutional paths of the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art. Both of these institutions were founded in response to existing museums’ rejection of contemporary painting. Both were founded just after the 1929 stock market crash, with still-liquid Gilded Age inheritances. These institutions were created towards the close of the era of personal ties. During this era, which roughly spans the Gilded Age to WWII, the museum population was still in its “infancy” (Dana 1914). The conventions and norms of museum making were still being written. Consequently, the museum location decision was a personal one. Museum founders embedded their pet projects in the communities they knew and wanted to be a part of. This resulted in a seemingly random distribution of museums across the five boroughs.

By the mid-twentieth century, the museum population of New York was growing and the museum - as an organizational form - was coming into adolescence. Similar to an insecure teenager, new and existing institutions conformed to what they saw to be successful. These were
the professionalized, elite institutions that dotted Fifth Avenue in the blueblood Upper East Side neighborhood. This created the era of homogenization, in which the number of museums grew and yet the range of museum locations shrank. This locational and structural homogenization was the result of increased organizational density (causing competition for legitimacy), the introduction of state and corporate funding sources, and rise of the professionalized museum administrator. Taken together, this era was witness to the development of the greatest museum cluster in the world: Museum Mile.

The current era is one of cultural branding. Similar to other organizations that have taken part of the redevelopment and gentrification of American cities, New York museums are now using their location decisions not to make the ‘safe’ Museum Mile decision, but to differentiate themselves from each other. Museums are now opting to rebrand themselves through locating and relocating in new, ‘up-and-coming’ neighborhoods. This spatial diffusion has occurred as a result of and in tandem with the geographic saturation of the Upper East Side museum population.

In Chapter Two, I analyzed how the museum location decision, en masse, interacted with residential turnover in New York City. The three eras of the museum location decision transpired in very different New York. In the era of personal networks, the city’s population, like its museums, were still inchoate and shifting. I argued that during this era, the elites were on the move, retrenching further and further north until finally settling on the Upper East Side. Their movements, coupled with the idiosyncratic location decisions at the time, left behind a “toss-up” of museum clusters, some of which would blossom and some of which would stagnate. The following era would determine the life and death of these “toss-ups”. During the era of
homogenization, the museum location decision interacted with dramatic residential changes in such a way that African American neighborhoods were extremely unlikely to receive new museums. The exponential growth of Museum Mile coincided with the stagnation of several potential museum clusters that were located in areas experiencing demographic transition. This all changed during the era of cultural branding. The introduction of economic development agents facilitated partnerships between restless museums and gentrified neighborhoods. I argue that while this has resulted in an overall spread of the city’s museum population, that spread has been carefully controlled to only include areas that are primed for luxury redevelopment.

In Chapter Three, I explored how the aggregated museum location decision generated systematic racial disparities of institutional exposure. Institutional exposure encompasses the cognitive and interactive advantages of geographic proximity to museums, as well as other kinds of arts and culture institutions. I argued that there is a possible link between geographic proximity to museums and subsequent attendance. I furthered the plausibility of this link in two ways. First, I demonstrated that historical patterns of institutional exposure map onto the historical and current low rates of African American arts institution attendance. Second, I demonstrated that museum exposure is not an aberration from, but in fact reflective of a larger pattern of institutional exposure. I supported this claim by comparing exposure rates for white and African American New Yorkers to galleries, arts instruction organizations, and theaters.

Lessons from the museum location decision
This research makes contributions to a number of scholarly and policy-based debates. In this section, I will highlight three lessons that came out of this project. This is not an exhaustive list, but points of departure to stimulate further discussion.

Institutional innovation occurs in geographically saturated populations

This dissertation is rooted in the intellectual tradition of new institutionalism. New institutionalists identified multilevel factors that lead populations of organizations to homogenize. These factors include higher founding rates, the intervention of the state, increased pressures for legitimacy, and the creation of associated professions. As we saw, all of these factors came to bear on the New York museum population. However, as its own leading scholars have admitted (Strang and Sine 2000, for a notable exception see Leblebici et. al. 1991), new institutionalism does not give equal attention to how these homogenized institutions then evolve and innovate. In other words, we have a rough series of explanations for how they become the same, but how do they then change? The theory of isomorphism ends when the population is institutionalized.

I offer a theoretical and empirical contribution to this lacuna. I found that maturity of the museum population led to geographic saturation which in turn led to innovation. Since museum leaders were making similar museum location decisions - on Upper East Side - during the era of homogenization, this location came to lose it capacity to distinguish. Although institutions that continue to be founded in or move to the area gained legitimacy and spillover effects, they lost an individual identity. The introduction of a new actor (economic developers) combined with
geographic saturation on the Upper East Side prompted the museum population, which had been behaving based on isomorphism, to innovate their museum location decision. The location decision was now a way to stand out, as opposed to conform. The spatial distribution was radically altered during this period (the era of cultural branding).

The observed evolution of the museum location decision explained when and how New York institutions adopted and then abandoned an institutionalized practice. The nature of the location decision during this era (in which museum leaders can accomplish the same goals in wildly different, yet similarly transitioning neighborhoods) is a unique example of how organizations can maintain a similar decisionmaking strategy while appearing to diversify. In short, this project offers an empirical case explaining how institutions can change while remaining the same.

*Museums are a key to the new urban economy*

The second-half of the twentieth century marked the transition of urban areas from manufacturing to service industries (Sassen 2001). More recently, cities have become luxury- and tourism oriented (Judd 1999); tourism is now the world’s third largest industry and tourism and entertainment is New York’s second largest (Clark 2004). The museum, along with other major art centers, plays a key role in this new orientation. This change is in line with a broader transformation in the role of cities. Instead of being centers of production, cities are increasingly centers of consumption; people visit and live in cities to entertain themselves instead of to support themselves (Clark et. al. 2002). Cultural amenities are driving the development and
attraction of cities more than ever before (Clark et. al. 2002). New York’s second largest industry is tourism and entertainment (Clark 2004).

The positioning of museums in the urban economy is not a New York phenomenon; it is occurring all over the world. As discussed briefly in chapter two, museums are becoming franchised institutions. Paul Krens’ efforts at the Guggenheim may be the most visible example of this effort; most recently, the Guggenheim Foundation announced that it will open a branch museum in Abu Dhabi. The Louvre is even getting in on the action; it will open satellite museums in Abu Dhabi and northern France later this year. The strategic location decisions of museums in this decade and the near future is aligned closely with which neighborhoods, cities, and regions will ascend to the world stage.

*American cities operate under a two-tiered cultural system*

The consequences of residential segregation, which run the gamut of social outcomes, have been well documented (Massey and Denton 1993). African Americans continue to live in a spatially isolated social system that is in the same city and yet detached from institutions of power. Museums - as well as galleries, arts instruction organizations, and theaters - are institutions of cultural power. The consequence of this spatial inequality, I argue, is that American cities exist in a two-tiered cultural system: one which is legitimized through profitable, visible formal institutions, and one which is undercounted and dismissed in informal, multipurpose organizations.

Ethnographic research has demonstrated that African Americans, and some other minorities, engage in cultural pursuits almost exclusively at church, school, or at home (Jackson
They do not attend formalized arts-specific institutions to engage in culture. Even middle and upper class African Americans in Chicago do not exhibit their collections at galleries or museums, but instead in their apartments (Grams 2010). This trend is occurring even while American cultural boundaries are purportedly more porous. Contemporary Americans, unlike Bourdieu’s rigid class system in France, can acquire cultural capital later in life. Contemporary American cultural capital, as suggested earlier, requires a diverse, omnivorous knowledge base. Furthermore, increasingly, it is not only what you know, but how you show what you know: an ease of interaction amongst those with cultural capital can be far more rewarding than simply knowing a list of artists or composers (Khan 2011).

One of the ways to learn how to interact in diverse settings of the culturally capital-ed is by attending formal institutions like museums. However, if the current spatial distribution of arts institutions continue, there will be no in-person meeting point to acquire cultural capital in this unique setting. Even as whites are becoming increasingly omnivorous, they continue to practice the ‘differentiating ritual’ (DiMaggio 2012) of attending segregated arts institutions. The result could be cultural apartheid that only further exacerbates the growing economic inequality in American society.

The twenty-first century museum

*The museum is becoming something else, and we don’t know what it is yet...*

Chris Decon, Director of the Tate Modern

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63 Tompkins 2012.
Like they have at every point in the museum’s institutional existence, some experts are hailing the present as the dawn of a new museum model (Anderson 2004). More than ever before (people say), museums are shaking off their cobwebs and attempting to ingratiate themselves into the daily lives of the populace. Museums are attempting to create audiences of the future, which reflect the diversity, responsiveness, and technological demands of contemporary society.

The most visible form of these efforts is the digital collection. Museums have gone viral. Google has introduced a new program that allows users to virtually tour the world’s great collections. Even Thomas Campbell, current director of the venerable Met, feels that the future of the museum is not in a building: “the museum’s next frontier [will] be less physical than philosophical and virtual: a change in the Met’s tone and public face, making it a more open and understandable museum, largely by thoroughly rethinking the way it uses technology” (Kennedy 2011). Another popular strategy is to make the museum space more entertainment-focused. We saw this strategy enacted through the Brooklyn Museum’s First Saturday programs; Target has developed a series of partnerships of this nature with museums across the country, including the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco and the Chicago Children’s Museum.

When the dust settles, these new, exciting initiatives will be recognized as another swing on a long-lived pendulum dictating how the museum should fit into American civic life. In the future, digital campaigns may be criticized for two obvious reasons: they elide the systematic inequalities in online access, and undervalue the in-person experience of museum attendance. Creating an entertainment-like atmosphere in a museum may succeed in getting people in the door, but not learning about the contents on the walls. And even after these issues are raised,
museum leaders will continue to engage in ‘redefining’ initiatives because the museum is in a constant state of redefinition.

As long as it has existed in America, the museum has been expected to be many things to many different people. It should teach, collect, preserve, inspire, entertain, judge, and more. It should be a place of comfort and enjoyment to the poorest and richest individuals in our society. It should explain the most abstract and impenetrable cultural concepts, while maintaining their hallowed auras.

Of course, almost no institution can serve all of these purposes simultaneously. How museums - as a population - have swung back and forth on the pendulum between these missions has determined where they are located, who attends them, and who funds them. Which way will the pendulum swing next? It seems that the museum population is moving towards two opposing goals: to develop themselves as landmarks of luxury, redeveloped neighborhoods, and to increase and diversify attendance through populist programming and marketing. These goals, I argue, are at odds. It’s likely that these forces will cancel each other out in the end. Museum directors will create programs that will attract a wide range of people, but they will be located in neighborhoods that make it impossible for those people to attend museums with ease or regularity.

When he was running the Newark Museum in the 1910s and 1920s, John Cotton Dana expressed the mixed emotions so many leaders have:
Probably no more useless public institution, useless relatively to its cost, was ever devised than that popular ideal, the classical building of a museum of art, filled with rare and costly objects.\textsuperscript{64}

This quote, written by a man who devoted his life’s work to museum administration, encapsulates the chasm between the museum’s idealized potential and realized accomplishments. The most unique, compelling attribute of the American museum is that everyone can attend it; museums are the most fabulous, jaw-dropping places that are explicitly inclusive. But, when we look at historical and current attendance rates, this has never really been the case. If the museum continues to live in an increasingly inaccessible world, it’s potential as a uniting force will be squandered. And yet the museum’s promise must not be undervalued. As the United States grows increasingly polarized - economically, politically, and socially - the institution has the capacity to become more central to American democracy than ever before.

\textsuperscript{64} Quoted in Meyer 1979, 39.
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