



LONGITUDINAL CASE STUDY

Overview of the Family Learning in Interactive Galleries (FLING) Research Project
In late 2007, the Institute for Museum and Library Services awarded a research grant to a collaboration of three southeastern US art museums, the Frist Center for the Visual Arts (the fiscal agent for the grant), the High Museum of Art, and the Speed Art Museum, working together with Audience Focus Inc., and the Institute for Learning Innovation to better understand how interactive learning spaces in the museums affect family experience in the museum and in the larger realm of family learning. All three regional museums currently have designated spaces for interactive intergenerational learning.

The first phase of this project is devoted to planning two separate research studies (January –December 2008). The second phase of the project will be devoted to implementing those studies (January 2009 – April 2010) and the third phase of the project will be devoted to analyzing the data and developing a tool-kit resource so practitioners can access the study results and instruments (January 2010 – September 2011).

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Longitudinal Case Study for Family Learning in Interactive Galleries (LCS-FLING)

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Longitudinal Case Study for Family Learning in Interactive Galleries (LCS-FLING) Why are we conducting this research?

Context

“Families are the main context of learning for most people. Learning within the family is usually more lasting and influential than any other. Family life provides a foundation and context for all learning.”

Riches Beyond Price: Making the Most of Family Learning, NIACE, 1995

Museums can be powerful places for family learning. They offer unique contexts in which families may spend quality time talking and drawing upon individual and collective memories to make sense of the world around them (Ash, 2003; Crowley, 2001; Crowley & Callanan, 2001). As the number of families visiting museums increases, however, the field needs more research on the family learning experience (Ellenbogen, Luke & Dierking, 2004). We believe it is critical for museums to better understand the nature of family audiences and the museum’s role in facilitating quality intergenerational learning.

Much of what is known about family learning in museums comes from studies conducted in science centers and children’s museums (Ash, 2003; Borun & Dritsas, 1996; Borun et al., 1998; Crowley et al., 2001; Ellenbogen, Luke & Dierking, 2004). There is little research focused on families in art museums, despite the fact that more than 90% of art museums nationwide offer specialized programming for families (Wetterlund & Sayre, 2003). Increasing numbers of art museums are targeting families through interactive experiences. Many such programs are family-based events in galleries, designed to encourage parents and children to engage with works of art together. Recently, however, many art museums are developing dedicated spaces for families. Examples of such family galleries can be seen at the Speed Art Museum (Art Sparks Interactive Gallery), Frist Center for the Visual Arts (Martin ArtQuest Gallery), High Museum of Art (Greene Family Learning Gallery) Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA Lab), J. Paul Getty Museum (Family Room), Art Institute of Chicago (Kraft Education Center), and many more sites across the country. Many other art museums are in the process of creating such spaces, intended to offer parents and children a place to explore, engage, and interact with each other around art (Adams & Luke, 2005).

As much as these family galleries in art museums are being heralded for their rich learning opportunities, however, little is known about what families actually learn in these settings or how the art museum experience connects with a family’s larger context of learning together.

Prior Studies

A handful of unpublished evaluation studies have been conducted in art museums around this topic. For instance, Luke and Stein (2005) interviewed and observed both first-time and repeat families visiting the Cincinnati Art Museum’s

Education Center. They found that families, especially parents, could identify a range of outcomes from their experience, including: looking thoughtfully and carefully at works of art; developing new interests related to art, and talking with each other about issues and ideas related to art. Similarly, Adams & Stein (2004) examined the nature of family learning at the LACMA Lab, Los Angeles County Museum of Art's family gallery. They found that families most appreciated highly physical experiences, as well as ones that related to their prior experience and interests. These studies hint at the educational potential of family galleries in art museums, but remain specific to individual places. At this point, the art museum field critically needs comprehensive, systematic research across multiple art museums, designed to provide vital understanding of how such family galleries facilitate and support family learning.

In June 2005, the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, convened the first U.S. symposium focused specifically on family-oriented interactive spaces in art and history museums. More than 160 museum educators, designers, researchers, architects, and consultants gathered at the Getty for 2-days of discussion focused on several key issues:



- How can interactive spaces best respond to the needs of family audiences?
- What is the role of the object in such spaces, and how should works of art be used and interpreted?
- How do the values and philosophies of art museum professionals shape the spaces that we create for families (Adams & Luke, 2005)?

What emerged from these discussions was the realization that despite the increasing number of family-oriented, interactive spaces in museums, there is no clear agreement on learning expectations for these galleries. Furthermore, there is almost no research to document their impact on intergenerational learning. The closing address issued a clear call for comprehensive research to address these questions. (www.getty.edu/education/symposium).

Our research consortium received funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to conduct this research. The partners in this consortium are as follows:

- Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville, TN (The fiscal agent for the grant)
- Speed Art Museum, Louisville, KY
- High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA
- Audience Focus Inc, Annapolis, MD (PI for Longitudinal Case Study)
- Institute for Learning Innovation, Edgewater, MD (PI for Motivation, Use, Value Large Scale Study)

Benefit to the Field

This research project is a direct response to that call. By examining ways in which family-oriented interactive spaces in art museums foster intergenerational learning, the research will build collective understanding in the field and will provide practitioners with research-based theory on which to base their programs. Typically, museum research is almost wholly museum-centric, collected only at the museum. Little or no data is collected on how the museum visit fits into the ongoing context of family learning. This Longitudinal Case Study adds that richer layer of understanding.

What is the focus of the LCS-FLING?

The Longitudinal Case Study for the FLING research collaborative seeks rich and nuanced information about families in art museums through the following research questions:

1. Who are the families who use interactive spaces in art museums?
2. How do families use interactive spaces in art museums?
3. What is the value of interactive spaces in art museums for families?
4. How does the value of interactive spaces in art museums intersect with and support frequent-visiting family's core values?

LCS-FLING Design Overview

The Longitudinal Case Study-FLING uses ethnographic tools and strategies to better understand how families learn in interactive art spaces, how those experiences enhance their overall museum visit, and how the museum experience contributes, in general, to family learning. Six families at each of the three museum partner sites (total of 18 families) will be subjects for the case studies. The FLING research assistant at each museum will be a participant observer within their six families, conducting semi-structured interviews, accompanying families of visits to the art museum and other family learning destinations of the family's choice, and bringing all six families together three times for member checks, during the 12 months of data collection. FLING research assistants will complete extensive field notes, the principal investigator and her team of researchers will regularly review all field notes to assure quality in the data as well as and ethical integrity in relationship with the case-study families. Data will be subjected to layers of content analysis, looking for patterns in symbols and rituals within and across families.

Recruitment of the Sample

The sampling system will be "stratified judgmental" (Fetterman, 1998) in that each partner museum will rely on their judgment to select the most appropriate families, based on the following criteria. Each partner museum will identify six (6) families at each site. Our goal is to end with six (6) families but the minimum

number per museum we hope to end up with is four (4) families for a total of twelve (12) families minimum.



Each museum will recruit 6 families (to assure a minimum final sample size of 4 per museum) who are known to them as frequent visitors to the interactive space (approximately 3 times visiting in the past year). Families can be museum members or not. Each museum will use their best judgment to select families that are representative of the types of families who frequent the interactive space.

Museum staff will approach prospective families and invite them to participate in the study. At that time the family will be given an information sheet, describing the purpose of the study, timeline and requirements of subjects (See attached draft of the informed consent). Several informal discussions may occur between museum staff and the prospective families until the family decides to join the study. The ability for at least one parent/guardian and one child in the 5-10 age range to attend the first meeting at the partner museum is an important criteria for inclusion in the study.

This ensures that we get families that already have a background with the interactive gallery space and with the partner art museum, enabling us to measure outcomes/benefits right away. Plus these families will be more dedicated to the research study and less likely to drop out of the study.

Equitable Selection

No special or at-risk populations will be recruited intentionally. Families where the mother is pregnant at the start of the study will most probably not be interested as a new baby is likely to impede the family's involvement in the study. However, it is possible that a mother may become pregnant during the study but pregnancy is in no way a subject under study in this research or in any way a condition for participating.

It is also possible that a member of a participating family may have special needs. Again, this study in no way seeks to recruit special needs participants but we will not rule out a family if that is the case. Since participating families will be representative of typical frequent family museum visitors, prior research suggests that they will likely be middle to upper middle class thus having the financial ability to provide their own transportation to and from the sites, well educated, accustomed to making frequent family outings, and know how to navigate cultural institutions to get their needs met.

Requirements for Participating Families

When recruited for the study, families will agree to the following:

- Attend a winter 2009 (January/February) “kick-off” meeting at their partner art museum, where all participating families will gather, meet each other, meet the museum staff involved in this study, and meet the principal investigator and her team. Families will also participate in a group art-making activity (described in more detail below).
- Visit the partner art museum and interactive gallery 3x during the data collection year (January - December 2009) with the art museum researcher accompanying them as a participant observer. If families desire, the researcher can accompany the family to and/or from the museum visit but this is not required. Otherwise the museum researcher will arrange a place and time to meet and greet the family upon their arrival at the museum. These visits can take place anytime during the data collection year and are scheduled at the family’s convenience.
- Visit 3 other sites that, in the family’s perception, are similar in quality and benefit to that of the art museum experience, with the art museum researcher accompanying them as a participant observer. (Additional sites could include but are not limited to: science center, children’s museum, nature center, zoo, aquarium, historic house or site, municipal/state/national parks, sports event.) These visits are to occur sometime during the data collection year. If families desire, the researcher can accompany the family to and/or from these additional site visits otherwise the researcher will meet the family at an appointed time and place at these sites.
- Attend a final member-check meeting at the partner museum, where all participating families come together with museum research staff and principal investigator and team to review data collected and reflect on interpretations of the findings (TBA December 2009).
- Meet (face-to-face and/or via phone) with museum researcher for periodic interviews and informal conversations (both logistical and reflective in content).
- Maintain email correspondence with museum researcher for logistical and reflective issues.

Keep a family “scrapbook” of family outings, including but not limited to photographs, brochures, drawings, and writing. The project will provide the families will all scrapbook materials needed.

Compensation for Families

Each participating family will be given a family membership from the participating museum. If a participating family is already a member then, the partner museum will renew the family’s membership when it comes due. Families will receive a scrapbook/journal along with some art supplies, which they will keep after the study ends. Researchers will periodically photograph and/or photocopy some pages from the journal as agreed to between the family and the researcher.

At each formal meeting (beginning and final) families will be offered refreshments or meals as appropriate. All materials needed for those meetings will be provided to families from the project funds.

Risk to Subjects

Risk to the participating families is minimal to non-existent. The purpose and progression of the study will be transparent to all subjects at every stage with frequent formal and informal member checks. Families can opt out of the study at any time with no hardship to themselves. Families can adjust the various requirements of the study (i.e., visits to museums and other sites) to meet their particular needs and schedules. The purposes of the study are fully revealed to the subjects and they will be in total control of their participation in this study.

What is usually a fairly private family experience, the museum and like-site visits will be less private with the presence of the participant observer but families will have complete control over when and how much they wish to share with the researcher. They can opt out of the study at any time with no consequence to themselves.

Confidentiality and Anonymity



Every attempt will be made to assure participating families with anonymity to the degree that each family is comfortable. Researchers will assign alternative names to participants for note-taking and reporting use. The participating family will know their alternative name so when they review versions of the report of findings they will be able to identify themselves but no other participating family. Families will always have the right to request that certain information not be part of the report of findings if they feel that it would be a breach of personal privacy. Because the purpose and process of this study are completely transparent to participants there will be frequent formal and informal discussions between researchers and families to assure their complete comfort with how they are represented in this study.

Benefits to Subjects

Participation in this study has the potential to be of great benefit to the families. It will be a shared learning experience where, together, they can explore their interests, learn more about each other, engage in reflective thinking about their own learning, and create memories together.

Cost to Subjects

Participating families will have to cover the cost of their transportation to and from the partner museum and the other three sites of their choice, as well as any admission costs for the family members to the additional sites if required of that site. (The museum researcher will always pay her own way.) These costs are not

deemed prohibitive as we are accompanying families on outings that they currently already go on. We are not asking them to do more than they currently do as a family. Also, families can select alternative sites that do not have admission costs. Scrapbook/journals will be provided by the project as well as any materials, such as markers, glue, tape, and color pencils, needed to complete that scrapbook.

Who collects the case study data?

The project provides funds for a research assistant at each partner museum. These assistants have already been selected and have been in a general data collection training process for several months. The contact information for the research assistants are as follows:

Sofia Broman
High Museum of Art
Coordinator of Visitor Evaluation
1280 Peachtree Street, N.E.
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2035 South 3rd St
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Phone: 502-634-2722
Fax: 502-634-9242
Email: gkelly@speedmuseum.org

Data Collection Methods

Participant Observation with accompanying field notes; some portions may be audio-recorded with family knowledge and specific permission at each incident.
Semi-structured interviews

Open-ended/informal interviews/conversations (face-to-face and telephone); email correspondence

Projective techniques: including viewing photographs of places visited to prompt discussion (photographs may be taken by family members and/or museum researcher, rank order of experiences such as preferences for family outings or family proverbs, cognitive mapping (PMM), and recounting of family stories; keeping of a family "scrapbook" with keepsakes and photographs of family outings (will include suggestions for what to include in the scrapbook).

Analysis of Data

Analysis of the data will consist of a content analysis looking for trends and patterns in such themes as social interaction, teaching and learning behaviors, orienting, visiting, leave-taking, and reflecting rituals, folk/family language, connections and scaffolding across visits and other family learning events. Themes will both emerge from the data and be linked to themes that have consistently emerged from the literature in this area.

Data Collection Sites

Data will be collected in three (3) southeastern US cities: Nashville, TN; Atlanta, GA; and Louisville, KY. We know that data will be collected at the three (3) partner museum sites (Frist Center for the Visual Arts, Nashville, TN; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; and the Speed Art Museum, Louisville, KY). Other data collection sites will depend on where the families in the sample elect to visit.

Timeline

December 2008

Recruit families for participating in longitudinal case study

January – February 2009

Schedule initial family meetings at each partner site

January 2009 – April 2010

Data Collection; initial interviews, museum and like-site accompanied visits, follow-up interviews

January – May, 2010

Final participant meetings at each partner site

June 2010 – September 2011 – analysis of data, compilation of results

Description of Tasks

Preliminary contact by Research Assistants

(November 2008 – January 2009)

Work with other museum education staff to identify between 10 and 20 possible families. Rank families according to order they will be contacted. Contact each family on the list and describe process & commitment; provide copy of informed consent newsletter (without page for signed consent) for families to read as they consider participation. Once family indicates interest and clear desire to

participate, contact the next family on the list. Once research assistant has six committed families then no other families will be contacted.

Initial Kick-Off Meeting at Each Partner Museum

Attending:

Required: FLING research assistant at each participating museum; Marianna Adams (PI) & Jeanine Ancelet (Senior Associate)

Optional: Jessica Luke & Angie Ong (PI & Associate for large-scale study), Partner museum project manager and other museum staff as desired (e.g., museum director and/or head of education department to welcome families)

Tentative Agenda:

1. Meal/refreshment; welcoming and informal conversation
2. Introductions of staff and participating families
3. Review informed consent document, discuss any final details, sign document and give copy to family
4. Family Story Activity

All families have stories that become part of what identifies the family as a unit. These are the stories we tell over and over with the family gathers together, such as for holidays or important family events. The stories might be about an ancestor or can be about current/living family members. They might tales of heroism and courage, about struggle to overcome adversity or obstacles, or they might be humorous, whimsical, even silly. But, for some reason, these stories become part of the family fabric as they are told and retold, adapted and revised over multiple telling.

Each family group will create a family “map” around the center term “our favorite family stories” and brief identify the various stories that are part of that family unit.



Families will look at art in the museum that is about keeping important stories alive and vital. This can include but not limited to African story stools and staffs, historical and mythological painting, religious objects. Each museum will identify the appropriate objects in their collections/exhibitions.

Families will revisit their map of stories and select one of them as the subject of the art-making activity. Families will be asked to design and/or create an object that fulfills one or more of the following criteria:

- Assist family members in remembering details of the story
- Enhances or illustrates an important point of the story

The partner museum will provide families with a range of simple art-making materials such as but not limited to drawing paper, colored paper, markers & pencils, tape, staplers, glue, tag board, scissors, magazine photos, art postcards.

Once the object is designed or created, families will share their stories (if they desire) with the other participating families and show their object. The museum researcher will photograph the object and the initial family story map.

5. Museum researchers will distribute family “scrapbook” journals and supplies. We discuss how these can be used by families and the degree to which researchers would like access (to photocopy or photograph) certain pages, if the family agrees.

Initial Semi-Structured Interview

Museum researcher will conduct a semi-structured interview with the family (preferably face-to-face at a site determined by the participating family but could be via telephone if this is a hardship on the family. If conducted via telephone, the interview can be conducted with a parent/guardian. If the family has the capacity it can be conducted through speaker phone with children and other family members.). This interview should take place within 6-8 weeks after the initial meeting and before the first accompanied visit to the art museum or other site determined by the family.

Interview Protocol:

- Describe who is in your family circle. (Show diagram of concentric circles) This inner circle includes the people you consider to be your core family, those people who live together. In the next circle add your close extended family, people who are very close to the family and frequently interact with the family in meaningful ways. In the third outer circle add names of people who are close to the family but perhaps not as involved for any reason but you still consider part of your family circle. Note that “family” includes relationships by birth, marriage, and close kinship/friendship. (Researcher makes a “map” as family describes and checks in with family that she is illustrating the family circles correctly. Place each person’s first name or family nick-name in the proper circle with approximate age of each person. In outer circles, indicate the relationship(s) of that person to the core family members.)
- When did you first start going to the art museum? What prompted that first decision to go? What do you remember about that first visit? What did you do, see? Who was with you on that visit? How did you (adults and children) talk about that first visit?
- When did you start going to the art museum so frequently (3 or more times a year)? What prompted you to become a frequent visitor to that museum? Who typically goes with you to your visits to the art museum? What is most valuable about the museum experience, to you as a family?
- Talk about the relationship of the art museum interactive space with the rest of the art museum? Would you go to the museum with your family if that space



did not exist? Explain why/why? What does the interactive space offer you, as a family?

- What other sorts of family outings do you do together than you consider similar in quality to the art museum visits? Not necessarily similar in content or activities but in the feelings you, as a family get from the visit, such as comfort, enjoyment, and learning value. How frequently do you do that?
- I enjoyed hearing your story at the initial meeting of all the families at the museum. (Discuss the story and the object created enough to bring the family's attention



to the story and refresh their memory.) Tell me a bit more about that story. Why do you think it's a story that keeps getting retold? Does it say anything about what you value as a family? If yes, tell me about that.

Adults/parents in a family seem to always have favorite proverbs/sayings that represent qualities valued by that family. As children get older, they sometimes come up with their own sayings. For example (researcher gives an example from her family) this was something my mom/dad always said when...and we valued...in my family a lot. Can you think of any sayings like this? (Give family members time to think and discuss this. If they are able to identify a few sayings in this interview then follow with these questions. If they cannot think of any sayings at that point, skip to the last set of questions.) How does that saying reflect a quality or characteristic that you value as a family? What "lesson" if there is a lesson do you hope your children learn by hearing this statement? Is that value represented anywhere here on your initial family story map from the first meeting? (Show the map.) If yes, show me where and tell me a bit more about that. Here is a page for your scrapbook where you can collect other family sayings and proverbs that are important to you as a family, in terms of reinforcing the qualities and characteristics you value.

Accompanied visits to Partner Museum and Like-Sites

Museum researchers can accompany families to and from museum (3) and like-site (3) visits – like-sites will be chosen by each participating family.

Phone conversation prior to or during travel to the site: How do families make the decision to visit that site that day? Who tends to make the decision? Whose idea was it? Who is accompanying the family on this visit? Who is not with the family today but usually accompanies the group and/or who is new or relatively new to the family group/outing? What is the new person(s)' relationship to the family?

As family arrives at site: What is the mood of the family? Who is excited, anticipating a good time? Who isn't? What was the context of the trip to the site? What happened on the way to the site? How was the traffic, weather, other factors? What do/did they talk about on the way to the site? What rituals, if any,

were employed by the family? Who initiated them? How did other family members react?

During site visit:

- Observation - What does the family see and do and in what order? (Reconstructing a type of family reflection for each family visit) How do they decide what to do in what order? Who decides? How do they move through the museum? Do they stay together, split-up, both? How/why do they decide to spit-up if they do? When do they reunite? (If a family group splits, museum researcher will use best judgment as to which group to stay with – try to stay with the group that is engaged in some learning activity, i.e., not go with spur group that goes to the bathroom, shop, or café. A rule of thumb is to stay with the dominant parent.)

How do family members (and any others in the group that day) interact with each other? What do they do? Do they interact with each other or



with the objects and activities on their visit? Do they interact with people outside of the family such as museum staff or other visitors? What draws and holds their attention? Who initiates conversation at each point? What do they say to each other? What is the relationship of their conversation to where

they are, what they are doing and seeing? What teaching/instructional role(s) is/are played by the adults with children and/or children with children?

- Timing & Tracking – Researcher notes what time family enters the museum, where the family goes in the museum, how much time they spend in each gallery/space, and what objects or other features they are drawn and held by the most (noted on a floor plan of the museum).
- Leave-taking – Who or what determines when it's time to leave? What rituals, if any are employed in leave-taking? How to other family members react to leave-taking?

(Museum researcher takes photos – as allowed by museum – of family at the museum; family is encouraged to indicate photos of themselves in the museum that they would like to put in their scrapbooks; family members can request researcher to take certain photographs, if allowed by museum.)

Follow-Up Interviews

Conduct between 6-8 interview/conversations with families about the accompanied visits (6 interview/conversations) and any other

During travel from site or phone conversation shortly after visit: What did family members talk about on the trip home? (unrelated to visit and related) Who asked questions related to the visit and what did they ask? Did they describe or recount what they did? If yes, how? If museum researcher missed some part of the visit, ask family describe what happened during that part. Did anyone in the family make a connection between this visit and another visit to the same place, to another site, and/or to something else the family experienced? If yes, describe. Have you done or made anything, individually or as a family that, in your mind, is linked to something about this visit? If yes, describe? Have you added anything to the scrapbook since the last time we talked/met? If yes, tell me about what you did. Who initiated it? Who did it?

If the family goes to another like-site or to the art museum outside of the 6 accompanied visits, museum researcher conducts face-to-face (preferable) or telephone interview with family up to 5 days after the unaccompanied visit. Tell me why you decided to visit that site. Who initiated the idea/who decided? What did you see and do at the visit? What do you remember most about the visit? What did your family gain from that visit? What was the value of that visit? Did you add anything to the scrapbook about that visit? If yes, tell me about that. If changes are made to the scrapbook, ask families to bring it with them on their next visit together so you can see it, photograph and/or photocopy any salient parts of it – with the family's permission each time.

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