

The Pennsylvania State University
The Graduate School
College of the Arts and Architecture

**PARENTS AND CHILDREN IN THE ART MUSEUM:
VIEWING CONVERSATIONS AND BEHAVIORS**

A Thesis in
Art Education
by
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

August 2010

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ABSTRACT

The museum is a dynamic place for families, not only for interactions between families and the exhibited art works, but also for interactions between parents and their children. Moreover, the museum provides a rich learning environment for families. This study focuses on naturally occurring learning experiences between children and parents, and looks at their behaviors and conversations in order to investigate how they share their museum learning experiences. Through observation of three families in the Palmer Museum of Art at the Pennsylvania State University and interviews with the parents, I examine how parents and children in each family group interact with each other, what kinds of topics they share, what difficulties the parents experience being in an art museum with children, and what significance the art museum has for them as a learning space. Based on this research, I discuss the importance of the role of parents as facilitators and the implications of my findings for improving the family experience in the museum and for the field of museum studies.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Study

In mid-December of 2008, schools in Korea closed for winter vacation. Regardless of the cold weather, there were lots of parent-child group audiences visiting the Contemporary Art Museum in Gwacheon, Korea. They might have had many different reasons to come to the museum, such as for the children's vacation homework, the mother's or father's interest in the exhibition, the children's interest in the exhibition, the parents' desire to provide their children with a learning opportunity or with an artistic experience, or following somebody's recommendation of a particular exhibit.

When working at the museum, I used to like to visit the various galleries in the museum after finishing my lunch at the employees' cafeteria. I had thirty precious minutes to enjoy my break and to observe audiences. One Saturday, generally a day off, I came to the museum to finish some work. After eating lunch, I went to the Round Gallery to both take a break and observe audiences. That particular day, more families than usual had come to enjoy the museum.

At the Round Gallery there were three parent-child groups appreciating the art pieces. Most of the parents looked like they were in their mid-to late thirties, and their children ranged in age between five and ten. I observed dramatic differences among them in the ways they viewed the art and behaved in general. One pair of parents did not say anything to their children and just let them view the pieces of art by themselves, merely following the children throughout the exhibit. In front of some art

pieces, they tried to explain the art to their children, but before long stopped doing that. Explaining the art seemed to be difficult for them. The children asked a lot of questions, and the parents had a hard time answering them. Soon, the children began to look bored, so they started to run zigzag through the Round Gallery, narrowly avoiding the sculptures exhibited there. Although the parents yelled at them to stop running in the gallery, the children ignored their parents' words and kept running. I was a little nervous they might fall down or harm the art pieces. I tried to ask one of the children to stop running, when at the same moment a gallery guard approached the children and restrained them. After their children had been reprimanded by the guard, the parents hurried outside with their children in embarrassment. The second family I observed seemed to be completely oblivious to the noise around them. The parents slowly walked step-in-step with their children, and actively communicated with them. They looked really interested in appreciating the art pieces, as they read the panels and explained to their children how to read and enjoy the art. They asked the kids several questions in front of a Niki de Saint Phalle sculpture. They circled around the sculpture, and the parents looked like they thoughtfully explained the sculpture to their children so they could learn more deeply. As one of the children imitated the sculpture's pose, the Round Gallery echoed with their merry laughter. The third group I observed approached the museum visit in an entirely different way. These parents were deliberately teaching their children. In front of each piece of art, the mother ordered the children to read the difficult exhibition panel aloud. They looked very bored and did not want to read. Moreover, this family did not have any natural conversations, but rather, the children just passively followed their mother's orders and steps.

As museum educator, finding these differences between the three groups' learning behaviors-such as their viewing behaviors and conversations-was a crucial motivator for me to promote museum education for families. Having observed those three family groups, I came to realize how important the parents' style of learning behavior with their young children in an informal learning space is.

Family groups in the museum are described as “a major audience and unique learning group of mixed ages and backgrounds bound together by a complex shared system of past experiences, beliefs, and values” (Ellenbogen, Luke, & Dierking, 2004, p. S49). That is, both parents and children develop and share their personal meaning-making through connecting their backgrounds of “prior knowledge, culture, and the particular social occasion” (Hein, 1998, p. 147).

In the museum, family groups have access to authentic objects and special opportunities for enhancing learning which are not easily available in the children's school settings (Hein, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999). Moreover, families usually regard educational activities, such as visiting a museum, during their leisure time as fun and not necessarily as formal learning (Falk & Dierking, 1992).

This study was conducted in an informal learning place, an art museum, in order to focus on naturally occurring learning behaviors of parents and their children and the conversations between them. Child-parent activities in a museum can be recorded in a variety of ways. Focusing on conversation can help understand and reconstruct their relationships in an intimate and profound manner (Ash & Wells, 2006; Crowley, Callanan, Jipson, Galo, Topping, & Shrager, 2001; Palmquist & Crowley, 2007). Such museum conversations often turn out to be complex talks. This can depend on the children's and parents' reactions to the exhibited objects and the

atmosphere of an exhibit, but also on the connection between prior family experiences and present experiences and the parents' and children's prior knowledge and newly acquired information (Falk & Dierking, 2000). However, children's and parents' learning behavior has different outcomes depending on their expectations and interests in the museum. Through their learning behaviors, family members not only absorb educational influences from the museum but also influence each other. My research looks at how parents encourage their children to engage in the art they are viewing and how they cultivate the children's artistic thinking through their activities, conversations, and their own viewing attitudes.

Especially in an informal learning space, family conversation and viewing behavior are significant tools with which parents and children challenge each other to participate in the museum activity in a more dynamic way and, as a result not only get more deeply connected to the exhibition but also have opportunities for building reciprocal relationships.

Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

Parents consider the museum an important place for constructing social and personal interaction. In fact, in recent times families have constituted the majority of visitors in museums, with children's museums, aquariums, zoos, and science centers as their most preferred exhibit spaces (Ellenbogen, Luke, & Dierking, 2004; Falk & Dierking, 1992; Hein, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999). But regardless of the increasing interest in museum learning, researchers found that families with young children are still very rare audiences at art museums, especially contemporary art museums (Falk & Dierking, 1992, 2000). The reason is that parents-who play the

most important role in bringing their children to the art museum—often have difficulties relating to contemporary art pieces. They tend to think that they would need a museum expert in order to properly interact with the art exhibitions; otherwise it would be too difficult to understand the art's intended messages and to relay them to their children. As a consequence, parents who have a hard time interacting with the esoteric and abstract concepts often found in art museums, and particularly in contemporary art museums, and who are uncertain how to communicate their meanings to their children, tend to avoid those kinds of settings (Falk & Dierking, 2000).

Constructivist theory has shifted the focus in museum education from knowledge-centered to experienced-centered. It emphasizes the value of visitors' experiences and activities, such as individualizing the messages of the exhibition in the personal context. Visitors' meaning-making of their experiences in interaction with the art process is the most essential element of museum education (Falk & Dierking, 2000). This change of focus in museum education means that visitors are no longer passive and just standing and viewing to learn and memorize knowledge relating to the objects in the museum

However, in reality, most parents are not aware of this shift. They tend to be convinced that they should obtain information about the art and need expert knowledge of art in order to be able to interact with their children more actively and effectively. If parents are used to the more traditional knowledge-based approach, they are more likely to provide their children with knowledge-based education rather than experienced-based education. Parents think that if they teach their children the way they were taught, they will give them a successful experience.

According to Falk and Dierking (2000) many people who have positive associations with museum visits in their lives can relate those to interactive experiences with their parents during childhood. Children who have meaning-making experiences in a museum will probably return to museums to provide the benefits of such experiences to their children when they themselves become adults. For adults to resume museum learning, above all for life-long learning, their initial museum experiences as children are crucial. Such early experiences shape the role that the parents play in their children's museum learning processes: facilitating and encouraging their children to have meaning-making experiences versus pouring tons of information and knowledge into them.

The study will focus on the following key questions: (1) What are the parents' and children's learning behaviors? (2) What difficulties and challenges do parents experience during their visit at the art museum with their children? (3) What are the different types of family learning behaviors that we can observe/identify?

This study provides an opportunity to investigate these questions by shedding light on family behavior in the museum and pointing to issues related to family visits that are easily overlooked by museum personnel, teachers, and parents. Answering these questions will be a step forward toward improving museum education for families and museum educators.

Study Limitations

At the core of the study stands a non-participant observation. During the observation, I did not want to create any interference with the participants' viewing and learning. However, since they were aware of my presence as a researcher as I

stood at the back of the room, or followed them discreetly around taking notes, I cannot completely rule out any unintended influence on their viewing activities.

Since this research study had only female participants, that is, only mothers and daughters but no fathers or sons, it would be difficult to generalize the results to a general population. It should be noted that the study was not designed with a gender preference in mind, so the selective response might be either coincidental, or a reflection on the role of mothers in educating children about art. A specific gender focus might be a good theme for other studies.

Moreover, learning at the museum is an on-going and complex process that requires long-term observations in order to be most meaningful. Yet, this study involves only a one-time observation, and it might be difficult to generalize findings from the participants' short experiences in the museum to wider educational experiences in the rest of their lives.

Significance of Study and Summary

In this study I focus on the concept of family education in the art museum which represents a fundamental educational environment for young children, with the family being viewed as a special natural learning unit. The field of family museum learning research currently reflects a more specific focus on science and children's museums, but lacks meaningful investigations of art museums. Through my research, I intend to fill this gap by shedding more light on the art museum as a learning setting. This study will offer an opportunity to understand the various characteristics of family learning by exploring the meaning of the experience of parents and children engaging in museum art together, and observing the parents' and children's interaction with art

and with each other. It will suggest significant new steps toward further development and improvement of the informal learning environment in the art museum. Moreover, by providing a deeper understanding of effective conversations and viewing behaviors, this study hopes to contribute to the de-mystification and appreciation of the art museum as a creative learning space for parents and their children. Finally, I will suggest that parents carefully consider improving and facilitating meaningful experiences for children in the art museum as a learning place.

To develop and support its arguments, this thesis is organized into the following chapters. Chapter II identifies the significance and purpose of family museum learning and addresses the necessary elements for active family learning through review of the literatures. This chapter also explores influences on family interaction in the museum and focuses on the importance of both conversations and viewing behaviors within the family. Chapter III discusses the methodological framework of my research and describes how the research data was organized and analyzed. Chapter IV presents the results of this study and describes the art museum experience of three families. It looks at each case in detail to analyze each family group's characteristics of viewing behavior and conversations within the theoretical framework. Based on these results I will discuss the similarities and differences in learning behaviors in an art museum. Chapter V is based on these results. I will discuss the similarities and differences in learning behaviors in an art museum in terms of viewing style, motivations and expectations, prior knowledge and experience, and museum environment. Chapter VI provides a brief summary of the inquiry and makes recommendations regarding the role of parents in facilitating their child's learning in the museum and suggestions for future family museum research.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In this study, I analyzed family learning in the museum as an informal and interactive place for learning, based on established theories on museum learning and family learning. First, I analyzed three different existing museum learning theories. Second, I examined the importance of family interaction for learning in the museum. In this section, I focused on two concepts of family learning: conversations and learning behaviors of family members. Third, I addressed motivations, prior knowledge and experience, and the environment, and examined how these elements influence family learning.

Museum Theories

Museums have clear educational goals and strive to enhance the value of their visitors' experience by focusing on the process of museum learning (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hein, 1998; Leinhardt & Knutson, 2004). Museum learning has been heavily influenced by constructivist theory over the last decades, as a number of new museum learning and educational theories have emerged. The American Association of Museums (AAM, 2001) stated that the emergence of these theories reflected that "the flexibility to integrate a variety of learning styles and learning theories is as important as the specifics of audience, content, and vehicle of delivery in providing access to all learning" (AAM, 2001, unnumbered, quoted in Black, 2005, p. 128).

Constructivist theory provides a new paradigm in learning: The concept of

learner-centered learning, which replaces teacher-centered education. While the old approach emphasized learning based on objectivistic epistemology, the new theory focuses on learner constructs. In other words, it helps the learner to reconstruct knowledge and information with interpretations of his/her own experience through dynamic social interactions (Hein, 1998).

Museum learning, according to the constructivist approach, seeks learner-centered learning, which provides self-directed learning in physical and psychological settings. At the same time, this learning emphasizes the significance of conversation and interaction among learners and facilitators, who encourage and motivate learners to build meaningful experiences (Hein, 1998). The constructivist learning process refers to the meaning-making process and focuses on multiple interpretations of viewer learning, in order to enable the learner to gain new experiences and knowledge (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Hein, 1998; Roberts, 1997).

I introduce and discuss three leading theories on how visitors learn in museums which are associated with constructivism: the museum learning theories by Roberts (1997), Hein (1998), and the Contextual Model of Learning (CML) by Falk and Dierking (1992, 2000).

The first theory about learning in a museum proposed by Roberts (1997) presents five significant features of learning in the museum: learning as entertainment, empowerment, experience, ethics, and narrative endeavor. Roberts suggested that the entertainment aspect in learning has not been fully understood. She emphasized that the value of entertainment needs to be added to an effective definition of museum learning, taking it beyond the conventional theory of learning which involves a narrow focus on knowledge-based and scholarship-based learning processes. As for

empowerment, Roberts explained that the museum should enhance and stimulate the self-efficacy of individuals who visit the museum. Social and historical context makes it easier for visitors to approach museum objects and interpret their meaning. The experience component means that individuals focus on the relationship between the art and themselves, rather than on acquiring knowledge about the particular artworks. As a result, the museum as a place for appreciation, for viewers' findings and responses or reactions to objects, is included in this part of museum learning. Roberts also examines the ethical issue of the museums' interpretation and selection of objects for appreciation by the viewer. Finally, Roberts' term "narrative endeavor" reflects the holistic experience of visitors when they visit a museum as an act of negotiating the stories given by the museum for meaning-making (1997, p. 147). It is a method and model for understanding the museum experience.

According to Roberts, all these key factors influence the viewer's process of meaning-making of the museum experience. Thus, the museum is an attractive and dynamic place for generating narratives through social interaction among visitors or through interaction with art pieces. In her research, she emphasized above all personal meaning-making in the museum. In sum, her approach to learning in the museum suggests strategies for museums to be less authoritative and help viewers construct their own meaningful narrative. However, if the museum provides a narrative which overemphasizes the learning side, the viewer's personal narrative is diminished. In that case, viewers receive a conventional ready-made meaning from the museum.

The second theory that will be discussed here was proposed by Hein (1998). Hein's learning theory was built on the ideas of John Dewey who believed that learning is based on physical and mental experiences and that learning must be an

active process for the learner to be able to construct meaning. Hein organized two theories, the learning theory and the theory of knowledge. He asserted that the theory of knowledge focuses on the subject to be taught, and, in contrast, the learning theory focuses on the qualities of the learner.

Using the theory of knowledge and the learning theory as cross-coordinates, he classified museum education into four domains: didactic/ expository, stimulus-response, discovery, and constructivist learning. Didactic/expository education is focused on the teaching of content. Such contents are already determined and structured, and teaching targets are clearly specified. Learning is planned and expects pre-determined responses or interpretations from learners in the museum environment. The domain of stimulus-response education is similar to didactic/expository education, but focuses on teaching methods rather than on teaching content. Stimulus-response education as a method gives priority to structure over learning contents. It is for educators who promote standardized learning. The domain of discovery learning offers the most dynamic approach to learning, emphasizing discoveries by hands-on and minds-on learners. This theory focuses on challenging learners, stimulating them more, and providing an environment in which they can achieve the goal of finding their own experience. The fourth domain of constructivist learning provides more diverse methods and views than discovery learning. Hein emphasizes that people's knowledge is constructed not only independently but also through interactions with others. Such interactions then lead to the emergence of an interpretation of a higher dimension. Thus, according to Hein, knowledge is constructed through individual and social processes in the museum.

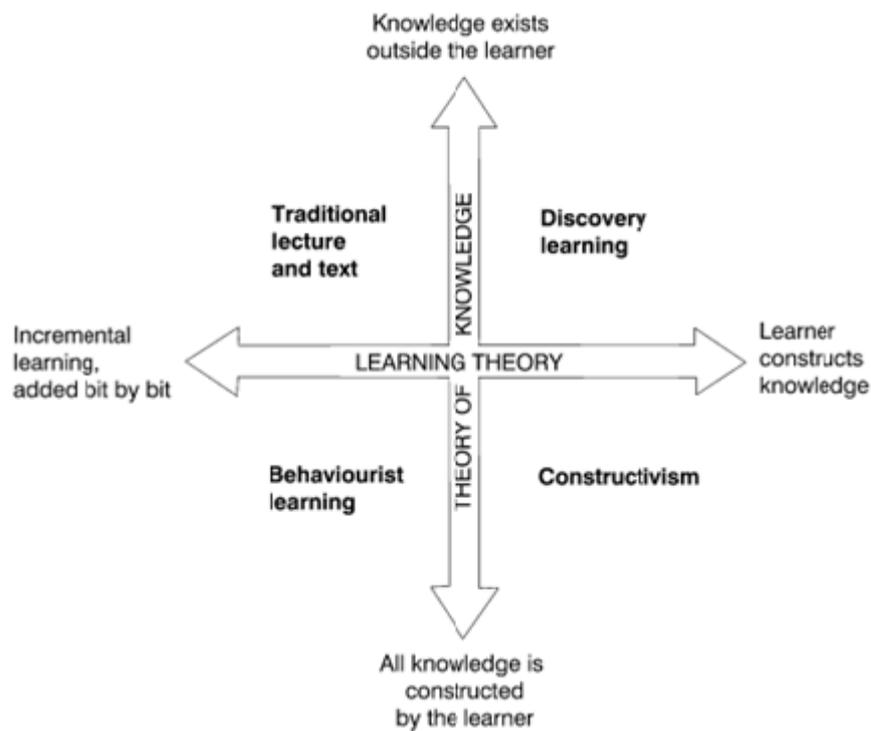


Figure 1. Hein's Museum Learning Theories Model (1998, p. 25)

Hein explained four distinct types of museum learning theories which he portrayed as intersected by his own two theories. This forces us to think about the four types of learning as existing so independently and in contrast to each other that they cannot interact or overlap.

The third museum learning theory examined here was spearheaded by Falk and Dierking (1992, 2000). They stress the interaction between contextual models in museum learning. In 1992, they created the so-called Interactive Experience Model with three contexts, the personal, the socio-cultural, and the physical. Falk and Dierking (2000) later added a fourth element to this model: "influencing learning over time" (p. 11). Their model is also based on Dewey's constructivism and Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory.

In the personal context, visitors arrive at the museum bringing their specific expectations and motivations of what the museum should offer. These expectations and motivations affect visitors in how they appreciate, experience, and enjoy art while they are in the museum. This personal context is related to the visitors' prior knowledge and experience; using their personal understanding, they individualize the messages of the exhibit and have emotional reactions and judgments which are compatible with their prior experiences. The socio-cultural context refers to the fact that the museum is a space for communication not only with the exhibited objects but also with others. Most visitors are part of a social group, such as friends, family, or student groups, and come to the museum as members of such a group. Even if they come alone, they still interact with other visitors directly and indirectly in the museum. All kinds of social interactions during the visit, such as conversations or viewing art together, reinforce the relationship between the visitors and the exhibitions. In a sense, these interactions contribute to an experience which helps visitors reach new perceptions and new understanding of each other's opinions and ideas in a more active way. Finally, in the physical context, visitors are not only influenced by the exhibited objects but also strongly affected by the very physical environment of the museum, such as the atmosphere of the architecture, the displays, and the exhibitions, as well as the cafeteria, bathrooms, and gift store. Falk and Dierking also revealed that visitors desire to touch the objects in order to have a physical interaction with the exhibit and create their own path of viewing, and they also approach the art objects in a narrative way.

Thus, museum learning is accomplished during the visit, and is interwoven in an active process through each visitor's different personal context, socio-cultural

context, and physical context. These three contextual components of the museum experience are not just a one-time experience but over time continue to create and to mold the visitors' learning experience.

Each of the above theories of learning can be used to assist meaning-making for viewers. Considering the informal setting of the museum as a learning space, museum learning should be regarded as the making of meaning by individuals during their visit, and the very situation as artistic experience. According to these leading theories, the museum acts as a medium between art and viewers as well as between viewers and other viewers in diverse ways. This forms the background for the emphasis on the educational significance of museums. The importance of these theories lies in their approaches to understanding the subjective situation of each viewer and how each viewer can reconstruct his or her visit as a meaningful experience that can carry over into larger personal worlds.

The Importance of Family Interaction for Learning in the Museum

That the family is the “first, primary, and most persistent” educational institution for children has been widely recognized in the field of education (Goldman, 2006, p. 56). A family is usually defined as a multi-generational social group of people. Naturally, a variety of unique aspects of education can be achieved within the family setting, which is characterized by sharing and negotiating different experiences, beliefs, and values (Ellenbogen, Luke, & Dierking, 2004; Hein, 1998).

Since family groups are a major category of museum visitors, they are an important subject in museum studies. Researchers of family learning state that family groups who visit the museum have their own distinct agendas, motivations, and values

that differ from those of other types of social groups (Crowley & Callanan, 1998; Falk & Dierking, 1992, 2000; Leinhardt & Knutson, 2004).

When McManus (1987) conducted a study on the effectiveness of the interaction between parents and children based on social context in the Natural History Museum in London, she observed that family groups' viewing satisfaction was much higher and conversations were longer than those of other types of social groups. According to Falk and Dierking (1992), parents considered museum visits as valuable in terms of strengthening the bond between their children and themselves. Their idea of learning in the museum is that of learning together and sharing experiences, that is, having meaningful social interactions.

Most scholars recognize that learning in a museum as a place for social interaction is based on Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory. He emphasized the importance of inter-subjectivity between adult and child, or a child and a more knowledgeable peer, for helping to develop the child's mental processes (Vygotsky, 1978). Similar to the significance of inter-subjectivity between children and such scaffolding adults, Crowley and Callanan (1998) found that children who were guided by adults had more opportunities for deep thinking and experiencing compared to those who participated alone. They stressed the parents' role in encouraging the development of the children's exploring ability, along with teaching their children and interpreting the circumstances for the children. Likewise, Crowley, Callanan, Jipson, Galco, Topping, and Shrager (2001) stated that the children's exploration of the exhibition was more profound when they were with a parent than when done alone or with their peers.

Diamond (1986) stated that family members learn more through social

interaction than through interaction with the exhibited objects. She found that most of the interaction between family members focuses on the exhibited objects as a medium for teaching. According to her, teaching behavior is one of the standards of natural social interaction. She pointed out that both parents and children benefit from such interaction, with children naturally sharing their discoveries with the parents, and parents teaching and guiding the children through their teaching behavior. Diamond (1999) asserted that the museum is a place in which the viewers' social experience and reciprocal teaching occurs.

Hilke (1988) also showed the reciprocal teaching that goes on between children and parents. He studied family groups' expectations and strategies concerning learning from the exhibited objects. He found that family members understood much of the information about the objects through interaction with each other. He described the family members' behavior as co-operative, with parents and children naturally exchanging information and sharing facts.

However, in regard to the development of children's learning, most of the researchers who study family learning in the museum focused on the role of the parents as teachers, helping their children acquire knowledge about and from the exhibited objects in the museum (Callanan & Braswell, 2006; Callanan & Valle, 2007; Crowley, Callanan, Jipson, Galco, Topping, & Shrager, 2001).

Otaka (2007), on the other hand, stated that family learning is not a one-sided interaction, and that children not only learn from their parents but also from their siblings, and moreover, that parents are also influenced by their children. She asserted that the concept of the structure of education changes from "adults teach children" to "adults are co-learners with children" (p. 269). Thus the museum is an important place

in which family members actively influence each other's responses and reactions to the objects and the intended messages of the museum through their interactions and cooperation (Crowley & Callanan, 1998; Hein, 1998).

As we can see from these disparate arguments, researchers come to different conclusions regarding the value and limits of the family members' interactive roles, inviting us to critically re-evaluate the concept of learning and the roles of family members in the museum.

Studies by Diamond (1999) and Hilke (1988) shifted the focus onto the context of museum. Because the museum is an informal learning place, there are no obligations to know and study something, just as the museum has no evaluations and tests of the newly acquired knowledge. Since there is no pressure to obtain knowledge, the museum represents an effortless interactive environment for parents and children. Moreover, the museum lets viewers define and find their interests spontaneously, with no risk of failure. Most children, as Hein (1998) found, engage in "fantasy play, carry out investigations, and generally interact with objects" at the museum and do not feel any pressure to perform (p. 142). They focus on their own interests rather than considering the exhibition curator's intent.

Lord (2007) asserted that this type of learning experience is one of the most attractive features for museum visitors, and he stated that the freedom associated with it helped visitors have a "creative and rewarding experience" (p. 14).

In a similar vein, Falk and Dierking (2000) defined this type of learning as "free-choice learning," suggesting that this was the most common type of learning. They describe the learning experience of people who engage in the museum as "self-directed, voluntary, and guided by individuals' needs and interests" (p. 10). They also

invoke the principle that “we choose not only what we will learn, but also where, when, and with whom we will learn” (p. 10). It means that throughout our entire lives choice always accompanies effective learning.

Most researchers who focused on the different types of influence on family learning in the museum emphasized the interactions and relationships between family members. Since naturally occurring interaction between parents and children is such a key element of museum learning, my study aims to shed further light on such family interaction in the museum by dividing it into two concepts—learning behaviors and conversations.

Learning Behaviors

The learning behaviors of families in different types of exhibitions, such as the traditional exhibition style or the hands-on style, have been investigated by a number of researchers. Their studies serve as a basis for the definition of the characteristics of family learning behaviors.

Regarding the question of who is the leader in the museum, Miller (2001) found that in the interaction between adult and child, it is the adult who leads more frequently rather than having an equal position. Hilke (1989), however, concluded in his research in London’s Natural History Museum (which included both traditional-style and hands-on style exhibitions) on naturally occurring learning behaviors that children led more than parents. Parents typically suggested to their children to choose an exhibit according to their (the children’s) interests, and would then follow their children’s lead and explore with them. Dierking and Falk (1992), however, found that most parents in hands-on exhibits were focused on how to care for and follow their

children, and did not much engage in the exhibition itself. Depending on the museum style, the outcome of children's and parents' learning behavior was different. But in most of the museums, children shared their museum experience with parents freely and playfully. Just as these children's active viewing behavior influenced and stimulated the parents' viewing behaviors, parents' reactions were also either passive or active in accordance with their children's behaviors. These arguments suggest that learning in the museum does not just happen following the parents' lead, but that at times, depending on the circumstances, the children lead, or both parent and children lead in equal measure.

In a different approach, Wu (2007) described two different types of learning behaviors when families visit the museum. One is participation in a family program (such as attending a gallery talk or a workshop), and the other is independent family viewing. Dierking (1987) studied those independent family visitors in greater detail. She divided the family visitors into two different learning styles-independent and collaborative. Families of the collaborative learning style tend to come together and stay together during their viewing. Parents often choose and show the exhibited objects to their children, direct their viewing, and ask object-related questions. Independent learning style families tend to split up, even when the children are young, and do not have as much interaction. These families meet only occasionally to check in on each other and to share their individual experiences.

In addition, Dierking (1987) found that learning occurred for both types of families. The children of collaborative learning families not only learn the exhibition contents, but also get to know the museum as a great place to visit with family members. In the same way, children from independent learning families also learn

about the exhibition contents, and moreover discover the museum as a fun place, in which each viewer learns through a different process, and both adults and children acquire knowledge. She stated that not all learning stems directly from the social learning context of the family. Children do learn from the behavior that their parents model, but most parents are not experts, and children learn to view their parents as assistant educators as well as learners themselves.

Falk and Dierking (1992) organized museum behavior patterns of family visitors as follows: (1) The first type of family visitors concentrate on “do the museum” in order to learn something new (p. 45). They are likely to read labels and look at graphics. Moreover, if available, they also participate in offered activities. (2) Other families prefer to view the exhibited objects rather than read the text. They read museum materials only if, after interacting with their children, they do not understand the exhibition or parts thereof. They prefer the “exhibit watch” to the acquisition of knowledge (p. 44). (3) Others again prefer to spend more time with social activities such as eating food at the cafeteria, shopping at the museum store, or even going to the restroom, rather than appreciating art pieces or participating in family programs. According to Falk and Dierking’s (2000) family visitor study, most families who visited Lawrence Hall of Science in San Francisco spent an average of two hours in the Exploratorium, but spent a third of their available time outside. They tended to prefer personal and social activities that were not directly related to the exhibition.

In each of the different types of family learning behavior family members influence each other’s learning. Whether they plan their visit ahead or not, whether they are independent or cooperative, whether they prioritize learning or fun, scholars are convinced that the museum is an excellent place for learning for families.

Conversations

Leinhardt and Knutson (2004) described conversation as a unique tool of human expression of “appreciation, analytic responses, and meta-level commentary on the responses or behaviors of others” (p. 81). They emphasized that people involved in conversation might be making merely a simple utterance or having an extended exchange. Through these interactions people not only solve complex issues but also create activities.

Many studies approach museum learning through the constructivist and socio-cultural point of view, regarding conversation as a scaffolding tool for teaching and learning that helps expose viewers to new ideas and attitudes about art (Falk & Dierking, 1992, 2000; Hein, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999; Leinhardt & Knutson, 2004). Hence, conversation between parents and children is an important vehicle of interaction. Parents in particular encourage and guide their children, helping them to connect their new experience to prior knowledge or to advanced abstract principles (Crowley, Callanan, Jipson, Galco, Topping, & Shrager, 2001)

Leinhardt and Knutson (2004) characterized family conversation in museums as “personal synthesis, analysis, synthesis, and explanation” (pp. 87-97). Through those processes, they can employ various types of conversations to show their understanding of exhibition concepts (Leinhardt & Knutson, 2004). Dierking (1987) and Valle and Callanan (2006) also pointed out that parents who wanted to help and support their children’s learning in the museum usually used questions, indications, and analogy. Moreover they said these processes helped families unravel vague and abstract concepts. Through their conversations, parents helped their children understand the concepts of the exhibition, influenced their long-term memories and

enhanced their children's learning.

Family groups who are focused on the visual objects seem to have conversations relating to prior experiences. Also, family groups share more experiences and have more conversations than other types of groups. According to Falk's research transcript of conversations between children and parents, they broaden their experience by sharing not only their social context, but also their personal and physical context (Falk & Dierking, 2000).

There are also studies that emphasize the parents' educational background as an influence on the family conversation. In family relationships, family members tend to focus on helping their least knowledgeable member by explaining objects or concepts of the exhibition through conversation (Leinhardt & Knutson, 2004). Hein (1998) described the difference between families with higher-level educational background and those with lower-level educational background as the former having more active and frequent conversations than the latter. Moreover, according to Fienberg and Leinhardt (2002), in a family in which at least one participant has special knowledge related to art and provides extended explanations and encourages the family to take in the exhibit on a more sophisticated level, this family group is more likely to understand even advanced museum concepts than one who does not have an expert participant.

However, in the case of family groups, most museum visitors do not have an art expert among them. Moreover, in families whose motivation is more focused on the aspect of acquiring knowledge or information during their museum visit, adults usually experience more problems when they conduct conversations with their children in terms of what to say and how to say it (Otaka, 2007). For those cases, the

museum should recognize how problematic a conversation can be for inexperienced visitors and could consider providing materials to help facilitate these groups' conversations. It is already true that when parents have art-related conversations with their children, most parents depend on the museum environment such as labels, brochures, and texts, so museums would be well-advised to incorporate child-friendly information in the materials they offer (Falk & Dierking, 1992; Leinhardt & Knutson, 2004).

To add another dimension, children's perspectives and wishes to understand their experience are often different from those of the adults. However, it is usually the adults who invite the children into the conversation through an adult's view point, assuming that children's behaviors and thoughts are similar to theirs. Especially young children usually cannot understand complex or abstract conversations, so when adults carry out conversations and interact with children; they need to be aware of the children's cognitive level and overall developmental stage (Greene & Malcolm, 2005).

Family conversations in museums have multiple functions, from accessing and drawing out collaborations to describing the characteristics of the exhibition, to connecting to and sharing the family's prior social and personal experiences. In addition, the museum is a space for creating distinct conversational experiences by diverse family groups. As each group's identity is different, their characteristics, viewpoints, and interests in conversation are also different. Through family conversations, both parents and children not only help each other learn the concepts of the exhibition in a more effortless manner but also re-create and re-organize their unique family history.

Influences on Family Learning

Family Motivation

People visit a museum with different kinds and levels of motivations and expectations that can affect learning. A number of existing research studies have focused on visitors' expectations of and motivations for learning in the museum (Falk & Dierking, 1992, 2000; Karp, 1992; Leinhardt & Knutson, 2004). Falk and Dierking (2000) stated that the museum is an open and free-choice learning place, which offers flexible and diverse learning contents to audiences with different personal and social motivations.

Regarding personal motivation, Falk and Dierking (2000) stated that learning in the museum is “self-motivated, emotionally satisfying, and very personally rewarding” so when people are “in supporting environments, engaged in meaningful activities, and freed from anxiety, fear and other negative mental states,” they are highly motivated (p. 15). Karp (1992) also stated about personal motivation that “museum goers usually come to exhibitions with expectations about what they will find in museums; often they are disappointed at not finding their expectations realized or infuriated at seeing what they had hoped would be omitted” (p. 22). Thus, most museum visitors come to museums with their distinctive motivations, expectations and their own ideas of what the museum experience should be like.

However, museum visitors who come to the museum as part of a social group exert considerable effort to shape their social motivations more explicitly. Family groups as a distinct audience have special motives for and expectations of their museum visit that are different from those of other visitors, such as gaining new knowledge and having fun. Falk and Dierking (2000) confirmed this when they stated

that the family museum experience is based on social context, and that when family groups visit a museum they expect to enjoy their leisure time and to learn new information at the same time. They also pointed out that parents wish to offer their children the opportunity to both learn and play and be entertained in a comfortable and safe environment.

Falk and Dierking (2000) held that the museum's primary function for families is as a learning source. In their view, because family groups expect learning from a museum, their educational outcomes are higher than those of any other types of audiences.

However, according to Wolins (1989), the museum's significance for families' motivations lie in its function as a space of leisure, rather than one for the deliberate acquisition of knowledge. She further asserted that for young children in particular the museum should be first and foremost considered a place of entertainment. If it is a fun and appealing place for them in which they enjoy spending time, their meaning-making will be deeper, and they will be able to gain greater understanding of what they experience there. She emphasized the important role of parents in providing such opportunities for their children at an early age. Out of such entertaining and fun experiences in the museum can come relaxed and effective learning.

However, motivations can change. Leinhardt and Knutson (2004) divided motivation into two types: entrance and tour motivation. A visitor's entrance motivation directly and indirectly depends on what the visitor has learned and experienced prior to the museum visit. And these prior experiences influence a visitor's stance toward the exhibition before the museum visit. In contrast, tour motivation emerges when the visitor is at the museum. This type of motivation is

more changeable and flexible than entrance motivation, as it increases or decreases depending on what and how the visitor sees, reads, interacts, and communicates with the exhibition. Moreover, this motivation has a strong influence on how an individual constructs meaning-making.

Also expectations and motivations influence families' attitudes on viewing and learning. As their motivations and expectations increase, so does learning; however, if they are not motivated, then learning is difficult. Thus, as family motivation directly influences what is learned during a museum visit (Falk, Moussouri, & Coulson, 1998), a deeper understanding of family motivation could contribute to a better design of effective museum learning for families.

Museum Learning Environment

The museum is a special and complex learning environment for presenting objects and materials from diverse fields, genres, and cultures (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999). Hooper-Greenhill stated that the environment of an exhibition is not simply the exhibited objects but also that which creates dynamic and diverse interactions among the objects, the viewer, and the curator. Through these interactions, viewers have a continuous conversation with the exhibited object and experience meaningful learning. Falk and Dierking (2000) stated that this learning results when a person communicates with socially mediated environments such as the exhibition and the catalogue, film, program, audiotape, or the Internet. These learning environments serve as tools for mediating between what the viewer understands and how he or she interprets the exhibited objects and the curator's intention. From this perspective, within each museum environment, with its unique space, colors, displays, and objects,

visitors have to either directly or indirectly construct and find their personal meaning.

Certain museum learning environments guide the viewers' experience.

According to Serota (2000), labels provide basic information to viewers about the artist, the size, the materials used, year of creation, and the overall concept of the exhibition. Other visual and verbal images, such as a leaflet, a brochure, or a catalogue, are portable publications and convenient to consult during the visitors' communication with the objects. These important tools of interpretation enable viewers to participate in more active and diverse ways.

What is more, the museum learning environment not only helps viewers in the visual and verbal area but also in the tactile area. Museum visitors not only read the label and the catalogue description regarding an exhibited object, but they also have something to touch (hands-on exhibition) and feel. When viewers are in the museum, both types of learning environments allow for multiple visual and tactile experiences. However, art museums provide precious little opportunity for tactile experiences, and too often these kinds of hands-on and sensual experiences can be focused at children's museums or science centers. When art museums do offer hands-on activities, these are usually limited to a children's gallery, which only reinforces the notion that the regular exhibits are to be enjoyed usually visually (or occasionally audio-visually).

Moreover, learning environments also affect viewers in an emotional sense. The emotions can be both positive (pleasure, happiness) and negative (nervousness, fear, anxiety), and are shaped through communication with the learning environments in the museum (Moer, de Mette, & Elias, 2008). The exhibition helps a creative viewer compose his or her personal narrative through interaction with three-dimensional objects (Lord, 2007). Unlike the two-dimensional visual images of television, the

Internet, and print, the real visual images in a museum help us see and thus feel about the objects in a new way. This emotional connection depends on the objects' size, style, color, and display.

Martin, Falk, and Balling (1981) addressed the “environmental effects” that are the novelty of an informal learning environment, and how that environment can affect exploration of the exhibition (p. 301). They investigated children’s learning behavior, with children who had no background information about the museum objects. When these children encountered huge three-dimensional objects they experienced an extremely novel situation, a factor that enhances learning.

When visitors get to communicate with their learning environments through touching, smelling, looking, listening, and reading, they feel included in the exhibition and build a relationship with the exhibition.

Prior Knowledge and Experience

When people encounter a new situation, they explain and interpret this situation within the context of their past experience and knowledge. In the same way, people learn through a constant process of relating prior experiences and knowledge to the present as well as to their interests, motivations, and expectations. This learning process facilitates meaning making and is always an individual one. Throughout life, one never stops searching for meaning (Falk, 2009; Falk & Dierking, 2000).

In regard to the family group, Otaka (2007), Falk and Dierking (2000), Leinhardt and Knutson (2004), and Lord (2007) studied the conversations and behaviors of visitors in the museum and found that parents conveyed not only their prior knowledge and experiences but also the family history to their children, and

shared these experiences and memories in order to help all family members develop an understanding of the new situation. Those scholars reinforce the idea of the parents' role as facilitators and supporters, as well as the parents' tendency to view children as naïve and as having limited background knowledge and experience.

However, Lagattuta and Wellman (2001) showed that children older than three also connect new events to prior knowledge and experience and interpret them through their own thoughts and emotions. Moreover, they demonstrated that children older than five are able to connect new experiences with past emotions, which influences them in the present event. That is, they express and explain their negative or positive feelings depending on their experiences in the past. They also showed that children's prior experiences and knowledge are highly connected with their emotions. This means that children use their past information differently from what parents expect, so when the parents invite them to remember and talk about prior events, particularly negative events, they should keep in mind the children's current and past emotions. According to Falk (2009), every memory is attached to an emotion. Those emotional elements come from each individual's own experience of seeing, hearing, tasting, and touching. The emotion arises in people's memory when they receive stimuli related to past experiences. That is, when they encounter a similar meaningful experience, a particular part of the brain is activated, arousing the previous emotion. What is more, brain studies show that people remember pleasant experiences better than unpleasant ones. Thus, the accompanying emotion plays a significant role in determining whether an experience is meaningful or not.

Moreover, when a museum provides the opportunity for true communication between objects and visitors, the visitors experience their stay as a memorable event.

If they have a positive and meaningful experience in the museum, it will remain a long-term pleasant memory and provide motivation for visiting the museum again in the future (Falk, 2009). These prior conditions affect all individuals in the museum as they help construct cumulative and incremental growth in the visitors' personal experiences and understanding.

Conclusion

The shift of perspectives from an object-centered to a learner-centered model in accordance with constructivist theory brings back to life a broader definition of education that values experiences and activities and makes a new approach to museum education possible.

This means a change of focus in museum education from the bottom, that is, a shift from programs to visitors. Visitors are no longer viewed as passive by-standers waiting to be filled with knowledge emanating from the objects in the exhibits. It has become clear that they prefer to play an active role in education and to create meaning selectively and voluntarily throughout the entire experience, from the decision to go to the museum to their own way of viewing art in the museum.

Family groups are unique audiences when they visit the museum, compared to other social groups. Each family group has its own dynamic and diverse expectations and experiences because all families represent a combination of several generations, differ in ethnicity, gender constellation, and size, and have their own combination of personally and socially shared experiences and knowledge.

As 'enjoying leisure time' has grown as one of the reasons why museum visitors go to the museum, family groups have grown into a significant population in

the museum, where they expect to enjoy entertainment effects at the same time as they expect the more traditional educational effects. With the increasing number of families in the museum, the role of family learning in the museum has also emerged as an important factor in museum education.

In this study I focused on family groups as active learners, based on two categories: museum learning and family learning. My investigation of museum learning focused on the constructivist theories by educational experts such as Roberts, Hein, Falk, and Dierking as a foundation for shedding light on visitors' meaningful educational experiences. Through these theories I found that the above idea of museum education is influenced by the situational theory of learning which regards learning as being dependent on a specific situation, or, in other words, by constructivism rather than the conventional theory of teaching and learning where a de-contextualized system of knowledge is taught in an isolated learning situation to produce and expect certain outcomes.

In the section on family learning, I presented the following three questions for examination: Why do families go to the museum? What do they do there? And what do they learn from their visit? A thorough review of the existing literature showed that a variety of family motivations and interactions positively influence children's learning in a museum by helping them make social and personal meaning.

However, most of existing research explored different kinds of museum settings, such as natural history museums, science centers, and hands-on exhibitions, rather than art museums. Accordingly, they focused on the development of the children's scientific thinking and literary skills. Since the environment of these studies is so different, it would be inappropriate to generalize findings from the scientific museum

experience to the art museum experience. In addition, museum research requires long-term observations in order to be more revealing and valid, but most studies are one-time or short-term observations, which might further limit the generalization of their findings to family's broader learning experiences.

In conclusion, I found that learning is a key for families who visit museums. Many museums are already positioning themselves as multi-faceted places that offer a special combination of obtaining new information, connecting with prior knowledge, and sharing social activities for learning. Museums that recognize this reality and adopt new and meaningful approaches to family learning are most successful in attracting family audiences and in providing them with individual artistic and educational experiences. Researchers, educators, and curators alike can play important roles in this rejuvenating process, and are encouraged to expand on the ideas and conclusions offered in this study.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

For this research I explored how family members interacted with each other through conversations and viewing behaviors in order to identify what kinds of learning experiences they had at the museum. The research process included observations and interviews of each family group based on the following research questions.

- What are the parents' and children's learning behaviors?
- What difficulties and challenges do parents experience during their visit at the art museum with their children?
- What are the different types of family learning behaviors that can be identified?

Participants of this Study

The subjects of this qualitative study were parents and their children. I observed five families in this case study, but was able to only use the results of three of these observations. Each family group was to have a minimum of two and a maximum of six family members, and to consist of at least one parent and one child under ten years old.

I followed The Pennsylvania State University's guidelines for research with human subjects through the Office of Research Protections (ORP). I tried to recruit the family groups personally, since my research place, the Palmer Museum at The Pennsylvania State University, is a famous informal learning space that attracts

teacher-student groups from Kindergarten through University rather than family groups, and it would have been too time-intensive for me to wait to meet and recruit family groups who were naturally coming to the museum. Thus I personally recruited each family group before the beginning of the study. First, I asked friends who had a child in the appropriate age range. But since I did not find all five family groups that way, in a second step, I asked my friends to introduce me to friends of theirs who had a child and gave them a letter to pass on to those parents (Appendix C). After personally contacting suitable family groups, I provided the informed consent form and explained this study to the parents and asked them whether they were willing to participate in the family observations and parents interviews (Appendix D).

Through this process, I found five family groups who were interested in this research. I conducted research with all five groups, but two of the groups turned out to be inappropriate subjects for this case study for several reasons, such as extreme shortness of their visit or very limited conversations and interactions between family members.

Thus, this study presents the results of research with three appropriate family groups. The first group was made up of the mother and a nine-year-old daughter, the second group was a mother and a five-year-old daughter, and the third group was a mother and a three-year-old daughter. Their participation was completely voluntary and no compensation was paid.

Data Gathering and Procedures

The data gathering process consisted of a non-participant observation of each family group who visited the Palmer Museum and a subsequent personal interview

with the parent. I observed and interviewed the three family groups in May of 2010.

The Palmer Museum of Art at The Pennsylvania State University was a suitable research site for observing family conversations and viewing behaviors. This museum has eleven galleries, consisting of permanent exhibitions that display the museum's own collections of artifacts, and special exhibitions which show art on loan from other galleries or artworks from the permanent collection arranged according to a special theme. This study specially focuses on contemporary art to see how parents and children interact with art that the parent feels is difficult or hard to understand, which adds another dimension to their role as facilitators. Thus research focuses on contemporary art displayed in the museum's permanent galleries, the Pincus Gallery of Contemporary Art and the Snowiss Gallery of American Art, as well as in the temporary exhibit of Lesley Dill's solo show. These art galleries cover a variety of art types, such as drawings, photos, paintings, and sculptures.

The temporary gallery exhibited 'I Heard a Voice: The Art of Lesley Dill,' featuring American contemporary artist Lesley Dill's art works from January 24th to May 25th, 2010. Her art represents "human form, sensory experience, language, and their interactions" (Palmer Museum, 2010a, p. 2). She created her art using various materials such as paper, bronze, thread, hair, fabrics, and wire to make human forms. She reflects in her work both the ephemeral and the spiritual from "Buddhist mediation and Jungian thoughts on Eastern philosophy" (Palmer Museum, 2010b, Label Description).

In the permanent galleries the art varies from representational to abstract to optical art by renowned artists like Alexander Calder, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Roy Lichtenstein, Henry Moore, and Claes Oldenburg (Palmer Museum, 2009).

The observations collected information about the interactions between the family members through their conversations and viewing behaviors based on the family observation questions (Appendix A) as recorded on tape and video. For recording conversations and viewing behaviors, I attached a small video camera to each parent's neck in order to record voices and track their movements. This way I was better able to see what kinds of art they were viewing and how the parents were interacting with their children. I also recorded the whole scene with my own video camera from a distance, as to not bother their viewing.

After finishing the observations, the study involved a longer interview with the parents related to each family's museum visit that would help me understand their museum learning experience. At the same time, I also collected the surveys parents had completed prior to their visit with some basic background information and art-related family experiences for getting to know and understand each family and its respective culture. The interview was conducted with the parents at a proper space and time that made the parents feel comfortable during their interview. These interviews were semi-structured (Appendix B), which means that I prepared several initial questions and encouraged each family to relay to me in-depth stories of their unique experience and how they made meaning of their museum visit. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. All the interviews were recorded using a voice recorder.

The entire process for each family took around one and a half to two hours, and it took me approximately three weeks to complete all observations and interviews with the three family groups. After completely finishing the three family group observations and the parent interviews, I transcribed the video and audio tapes

chronologically. Moreover I classified the labels with family identification in alphabetical order.

Table 1. Labels for Audiotape and Videotape Transcripts of Family Observations

Family	Labels for Transcripts of Observation
Family 1	A1
Family 2	B1
Family 3	C1

Table 2. Labels for Audiotape Transcripts of Interviews with Parents

Family	Labels for Transcripts of Interview
Family 1	A2,A3
Family 2	B2
Family 3	C2

Data Analysis

In regard to the data from the observations, I focused on the interactions between parent¹ and child². For the in-depth analysis of their behaviors, I created four different categories of factors that affect family museum learning-viewing styles, expectations/motivations, prior knowledge and experience, and museum environment. To frame my interpretations of each family group's museum experience, I based my

¹ According to Coontz (1992) families come in a variety of types, with the notion of the nuclear family widely expanded in recent years. The definition of family and parents has changed so that "divorced parents, couples raising children out of wedlock, two-earner families, and same-sex couples, families with no spouse in the labor force, blended families, and empty-nest families" all have to be considered as types of families, without any one model being superior to the other (p. 183). However, in this research, the participants happened to be only mothers, from traditional mother-and-father families, so there were no other types of families to consider.

² Since my participating family groups were quite homogenous, each consisting of a mother and a daughter, I was not able to investigate interactions between siblings and between parents.

work on the review of the literature in Chapter II. The significance of using the four categories listed in Table 3 is that it enhances the quality and depths of interpretation due to the fact that not only each one of them works by itself, but also that these categories interact with each other. Sometimes they overlap, are flexible, or are unclear to separate from each other, but using them enabled me to examine each family's museum experience in even greater detail.

Table 3: Data Analysis of Participant Observations

Type of family interaction	Parent-Child	
Learning behavior	Conversation	Viewing behavior
Family learning	Viewing Style	
	Expectations/Motivations	
	Prior Knowledge/Experience	
	Museum Environment	

When I analyzed the three family groups based on these family learning concepts, I altered the names of the participants in order to keep all information confidential. After analyzing each family group and synthesizing the data gathered from the three groups in depth, I compared the different family groups to find out differences and similarities between their conversations and viewing behaviors in the art museum and drew conclusions that helped me answer my research questions.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

Introduction

In this chapter, I will describe the museum experience of three different family groups at the Palmer Museum. With each family's individual profile and background in mind, I will examine how they experience the art museum. First, I will focus on their viewing behaviors and communications, and will describe the characteristics of each family's learning behavior. Second, based on the data of their learning behavior, I will discuss the similarities and differences between the family groups in order to understand in more depth future family experiences in art museums.

Case 1: Sujung's Family

Sujung is a Ph. D. candidate in Art Education at Penn State and has lived in the United States with her nine-year-old daughter Junhee since 2008. Her husband currently lives in South Korea for work, so for the duration of her studies she lives separately from her husband. She is interested in museums, but hardly has time to visit any with her child due to their living circumstances. However, when she lived in Korea, her family used to enjoy going to museums together, and in the United States, they usually visit museums when her husband comes for a visit. Last year, when her husband was here, they went to New York City and visited the Metropolitan Museum and the Guggenheim Museum together. Her family thinks that art is a part of life, and they like to be surrounded by art, but when the art is in a huge museum, they tend to feel distanced from it.

The daughter, Junhee, likes to make art and spends a lot of time drawing and painting and then displaying and decorating walls, doors, and her entire room with her art. In Junhee's room, there is a big doll house which she made herself and with which she likes to play with her friends.

I researched this family's museum visit on May 6th, and interviewed the mother two times, on May 9th and 27th, at her house.

Viewing Style

1. <Right outside the temporary gallery>

(Mother is holding her child's hand and they enter the gallery.)

M: What do you want to see?

C: (Pointing to a corner where a movie is being shown, portraying artist Lesley Dill's life story.) There!

M: Do you want to see that? OK. Let's go. (A1, p. 1)



Figure 2. *Word Messengers* by Lesley Dill, From Google image

2. <In front of *Word Messengers* by Lesley Dill>

C: (Child pulls her mother's hand.) Follow me.

M: I'm coming.

(Child is standing in front of *Ecstasy* which is located in the right corner of the gallery.)

M: Do you like that?

C: Yeah. (A1, p. 4)

When this family was in the museum they showed a collaborative learning style, such as taking each other's hands and staying and viewing together. The parent asked the child first what she wanted to see and tried to encourage her to ask object-related questions to take her from passive viewing to active engagement. During their viewing, I observed child-led scenes, such as the child pulling her mother's hand and calling her mother when she discovered art pieces she liked, and then the parent agreeing with the child's opinion and following her lead.

According to the mother, the role of the parent in the museum is to be a "friend" to the child. During the interview she said, "I should have conversations with my daughter for sharing her experience and emotions just like a friend, especially when she is interested in a particular art piece" (A2, p. 3).

The museum is a space where a visitor's self motivation, interest, and intention flow together. In this case, a combination of child-centered learning and free-choice learning occurred, in an atmosphere where the parent helped the child express her deep feelings and thoughts more freely.

Expectations and Motivations

Child Interest and Narrative



Figure 3. *Rush* by Lesley Dill, From Google image

3. <In front of *Rush* by Lesley Dill>

Rush was installed on one of the big walls in the gallery. The artist tried to represent people's thoughts through various shapes of human figures in black color. In the corner of the wall, there was a sitting man looking like he was full of anguish. The artist did not express any specific facial expressions of the figure, but rather provided merely a silhouette. Tiny human figures were spreading from the sitting man's back and covered the entire wall.

(Mother and daughter are standing in front of the sitting man's figure and holding hands.)

M: Look at that. (Pointing)

C: I am scared.

M: Look at that in detail. There are people in there. (Brings her child and gets close to the art.)

C: Where?

(Mother tries to look at the object from further away, but the child is pulling her mother's hand and wants to get close to see.)

C: What is this? (Pointing to the form of a human figure.)

M: Why do you think people are coming out from his back? (Again, trying to get her child to see the art from a distance.) People are going from here to there... (Pointing.)

C: (Getting close to see.) No, they are not coming out. They are going into his back.

M: Ah...Are they? Do you think they are going into his back or coming out of his back?

(Mother is getting close to her child.)

C: Hmm...They are coming into his back.

M: Why?

C: Hmm.

M: I think they are coming out. But do you think they are coming in?

C: Actually, coming out.

M: But now I think they are coming in.

C: Coming out.

M: Why do you think that?

C: Because their heads are heading towards the outside.

M: Ah, the direction of their heads? Why are their heads coming out? (Bringing her child and looking from a distance.)

C: Because they are family.

M: Family?

C: Oh, no. Never mind. (A1, p. 3)

When the child saw this art piece, at first she said the people were going into his back, but she changed her opinion after her mother said that people were coming out of his back. It seems that the child changed her opinion, reflecting her mother's impression. At the same time, however, her mother also changed her opinion after hearing from her child, stating now that people were going into his back. The child did not change her opinion back, and explained to her mother why she thought that people were coming out of his back: the people's heads were heading to the outside. Moreover, she explained that the formation of people represented a family. But when her mother tried to understand this idea and to further communicate about it, her daughter wanted to stop talking about it, so that the dialogue did not continue, at least not at the museum.

Almost three weeks after their museum visit, on May 27th, I interviewed the mother again and asked about the child's opinion about this object and her statement about family and the meaning of it all. As I did not get permission from the Office of Research Protections to interview the child herself, I asked the mother instead of asking the child directly. So she tried to ask her child again about this object, and this is how she explained her daughter's opinion to me: "When she heard my opinion about people coming out, she agreed. But deep down, she was still convinced that people were going in. What she meant by 'family' is that these people are actually the sitting man's family. And the reason why the people are going into his back is that these are memories that are coming into him. The meaning of memory is enjoyment with his family members because the sitting man had an accident. He lost his memory, but after getting treatment the memory is coming back, and she thinks the art piece is the expression of the moment when the memory is returning. Moreover, the guy and

the memory-of-family figures are colored black, and she thought, black means death because she has seen people wear black clothes at funerals on television many times. But fortunately the guy is sitting and posed as if in deep thought so she thought he is alive and that means that he is able to remember something, and that something is the memory of his family ” (A3, p. 1).

Upon my request, she asked her child about the specific art piece which they had seen three weeks earlier, and I found that the child had created a huge narrative around it. I am not sure whether this narrative was made during the short moment in the museum and she had kept it in her mind or whether she made it up at any time after her visit. But the surprising thing is that she still remembered that particular piece of art in detail and had created a new narrative with her own words, including her own understanding of the meaning of death.

Children absorb the meaning of death over time and naturally. When they are young, they believe that death is reversible through magical power or that it is just a temporary sleeping condition. However, as they are getting older, usually around age seven, or if they directly experience death in their lives, such as the death of a pet or a family member, they begin to realize that death is the final stage of human life, and people can never return from it (Weber & Fournier, 1985; Speece & Brent, 1984). Junhee was not only scared, but her mother also found out after talking with her a few weeks later upon my request that she felt lonely in response to this work, because she thought that the color of the people was an expression of death.

However, I asked the mother why her child did not want to tell this narrative at that moment and instead only gave an impatient answer and decided to accept the mother’s opinion rather than assert her own. Her mother explained to me later that her

daughter said she felt tired of telling her story to the mother, and, moreover, she likes to keep her thoughts to herself and does not like to restrain her imagination because of others. When her mother asked lots of inquisitive questions, such as, “what do you feel and why, how does the art look like, do you like it.” (A3, p. 2), she felt disturbed and did not want to give specific answers.

All children of course are different, so parents need to know how much they should inquire and press for answers, and when to back off and give their child some space. When they notice that their child seems to hesitate to talk about his or her own opinion, parents need to stop imposing and give them some time to pursue and enjoy their own ideas and feelings.

We also talked about her daughter’s narrative about the art and where it might have originated: “My daughter grew up at her grandparents’ house and moved back to our house at five years old. I worried about having a communication problem. So I started to make up and tell her stories around an hour before she was going to bed, every night for three years, when she was five, six, and seven. Usually the story’s main character was my daughter. The stories were a mix of different stories that I had read when I was young, such as traditional fairy tales from all around the world. I not only made up a story but also invited my daughter to participate in its creation. It would go like this: ‘Junhee is picking up an umbrella from the road. And when Junhee opens it, the umbrella starts to fly (the original story from Flying Carpet)’. ‘Where do you want to go?’ I would ask my daughter. Then she would answer: ‘Eunsoo’s (her favorite friend) house.’ Then I would continue making up the story with the input she gave me. It was created together” (A3, pp. 2-3). She also added that her daughter had really enjoyed that special creative time, and when she got older, in her free time

started to write poems and novels and to draw manga. The mother believed that all of this creativity stemmed from her good experiences during her early childhood period.

According to Bruner (1986), a narrative is based on personal history and interactions, and reflects imagined and narrated events or topics through the passage of time. The narrative is a language that conveys an individual's historical and cultural experience. Through constructing their own narratives and conveying them to others, people build up self-esteem and learn to understand their own lives and those of others.



Figure 4. *The Word Queen of Poetry* by Lesley Dill, From Google image

Prior Knowledge and Experience

4. <In front of *The Word Queen of Poetry* by Lesley Dill>

The Word Queen of Poetry is a wire-and-steel life-sized human figure, representing a Victorian-style dress consisting of a corseted top, swelling sleeves, a high collar, and full skirt. The wire dress is decorated with small and big words, like embroidery.

(The child is bending down to see the words in the dress and the mother is standing behind the child and watching her action.)

M: Do you like it?

C: Yeah.

M: Why do you like it?

C: Hmm...Because I like *Alice in Wonderland*, and it is similar to the queen in the story.

M: Oh, don't touch! It looks interesting. Does the queen in the story look like this?

C: But she [the art object] needs a head.

M: Does she need a head?

C: Yeah. (A1, p. 4)

When the child was viewing this art, it reminded her of one of her favorite Disney animation movies, *Alice in Wonderland*, which she had seen several times with her mother when she was seven years old.

In order to understand art more deeply, a process of interpretation is necessary. This interpretation process is constituted of communication between the art works and the visitor's prior experience and knowledge (Hooper-Greenhill, 1999). The child here connected her prior experience to the present experience and compared the art piece on display to the queen of the story she knew, commenting on her own interpretation, i.e., the similarity of the dress style and the difference of the absent head.

Emotional Reaction

5. <In front of *Ghost Hole Girl #2* by Lesley Dill>

Ghost Hole Girl #2 has a long vertical line art work, and in the center of the art, there is a half-abstract human figure. Around the human figure, there are lots of small and large holes. The color is toned-down beige and brown.

(Child is standing on the left side of the art, and mother is standing centrally in front of the art, at a little distance from her child.)

M: Isn't it interesting? What is this, let me see. (Reading the label aloud) *Ghost Hole Girl*. What about this? Do you like it?

C: I liked it before you read the title, but now I am getting scared. 'Cause it's a ghost.

M: Why did you like it when you first saw it?

C: Because it looks comfortable.

M: Comfortable? What about it looks comfortable to you?

C: The holes. (A1, p. 5)

Emotion is an internal state; through using language and explaining our emotions we can express our internal landscape. As this emotion vocabulary is developed, it helps us explain everything from the most basic instincts such as happiness and sadness to more complicated and specific feelings to others (Fellows, 2009; Goleman, 1995).

In this case, the emotion of fear was expressed by the daughter not after seeing the art but after hearing the title. At first, she felt comfortable and liked it, but when she heard the title, her emotions changed abruptly.

We can see both parent and child expressing their feelings during the museum

experience. Their emotions are affected by not only the art works, but also by the type of display, titles, and the atmosphere of the museum.

6. <In front of *Voice* by Lesley Dill>

Voice is a human figure hanging upside down from the ceiling. However, the artist created a hybrid organism by mixing a human body and leaves rather than making an actual human figure. She used legs for the lower half of its body, but represented the upper body as a tree with leaves. And these leaves are hanging down to the floor like hair, or as if pouring out of the body.

(When the daughter discovers this piece, she pulls her mother's hand and heads to the art work)

M: How do you feel?

C: Scared.

M: Me too. That guy looks tired because he is hanging by his feet. Why do you feel scared?

C: Because.....there is only half a body. (A1, p. 2)

The child has never seen anything like this—an artificial hybrid being with the characteristics of human and plant. This awareness of difference and novelty might have made her feel uncomfortable and scared.

7. <In front of *White Threaded Poem Girl* by Lesley Dill>

This art piece is similar in length and size to *Ghost Hole Girl #2* and installed

right next to it. This art work also has a half-abstract human figure in the center, made out of white threads. The body part is bound by threads, but between the body and background, the threads form a ladder.

(After finishing viewing *Ghost Hole Girl # 2*, the child moves to *White Threaded Poem Girl*, with the mother following her.)

M: What is that? Do you like it?

C: It looks creepy. It looks like a zombie, because a zombie is covered with threads on its body. And this man has threads in his body.

M: So you don't like it?

C: Yes, I don't like it. And it is creepy because he is naked. (A1, p. 5)

When the daughter saw the threads hanging down and forming a human figure, she immediately expressed her association with the image of a 'zombie' of which she was really afraid and which she has hated since she saw one in a movie.

When I interviewed the mother, I learned that her child was really scared after visiting the museum. Sujung said, "When it was time to go to bed, she remembered the hanging, upside down man and felt scared, as if that man might come out from under her bed. So I said to her, it is created by the artist's imagination, and not real. The next day, she looked okay but I think she is still afraid of it. She doesn't want to talk about it" (A2, pp.3-4).

According to Bamber (1979), fear is a reflection of learning, and it occurs when a stimulus is related to a special space or event that the child has feared before. In this case, Junhee's reaction to the art was one of fear, which resulted from her seeing the

art object, which in itself looked scary to her, and associating it with a scary object from her imagination. When she received the stimulus from the environment, it reminded her of something she knew and together these combined images were now not easily removed from her inner eye.

Parents and adults understand that children may experience fear in unfamiliar spaces or during new events, and that they cannot escape such exposure or protect their child completely from such fears. It is important for the parents to acknowledge their child's fear. But they can also use gentle laughter and jokes to imply that these are not things to be feared, explain the subject of fear to the child, reassure them that it does not exist in reality, and create a narrative for the child on how to overcome their fear (Bamber, 1979).

Museum Environment

8. <In the gift shop>

(In the gallery)

C: Mom. I want to go downstairs.

M: OK. What do you want to do now? Do you want to stop viewing? Or do you want to see other people's art works?

C: I want to go to the gift store. (A1, p. 5)

(In the gift shop)

(As the child arrives at the gift shop, she is trying to play with the Magnetic Shadow which is displayed on a shelf.)

C: Mom, look at this! (Going to the next shelf and trying to touch the other products.)

Wow, Mom, look at this! Could I buy this?

M: Hmm. Yeah, but not the expensive one. (A1, p. 5)

The museum provides various environments to its visitors. As museum visitors' expectations and demands have increased, the role and function of the museum also has developed. The museum space plays not only an educational role but also an entertainment role, which allows visitors to enjoy their leisure time at a cafeteria, a restaurant, a gift shop, or a recreational hall (Kotler, Kotler, & Kotler, 2008). One of the most significant spaces for enjoying entertainment is the gift shop. In the Palmer Museum, the gift shop is located right by the entrance, making it easy for people to notice its existence. Children, who have noted the existence of the gift store before entering the exhibits, might remember it when they get bored during their viewing, and their expectation can change quickly from wanting to see art to wanting to explore the shop (Falk & Dierking, 2000).

This happened with Junhee, when she reached the end of her interest and attention in the exhibit and started mentioning the gift store to her mother. After finishing viewing the temporary exhibition, she decided to go downstairs and see the gift shop as quickly as possible, instead of viewing the other exhibitions.

In fact, she was much more interested in the gift store than the gallery. She stayed longer (12:28) in the store than in the gallery (10:12). She mainly played with the displayed products, asked her mother to buy one, and after purchasing what she wanted, was ready to leave. Falk and Dierking (2000) said children relished the experience of seeing their favorite art pieces in the store and of buying something at the gift shop.

Her mother said that the reason why Junhee likes the gift store was that, "She likes products. When she went to the Metropolitan Museum in New York, she was

quickly tired of viewing the exhibited objects. She insisted on stopping and wanted to leave the museum. But after finding a museum store, she looked awakened. I observed her when she was in the museum store, and I think that she saw one of the masterpieces which she had just experienced in the gallery as a design motif on diaries, cups, and umbrellas. She loves to see stuff like that. Moreover, she was able to purchase and own what she had liked in the gallery. So I think, that's why she was more enthusiastic to see it" (A2, p.5).

The products in a museum gift shop are souvenirs, publications, stationery, and often toys, related to the museum. Parts of these products have creative designs which are based on the museum's art objects, and in addition the shop offers art and craft products which use images from different countries' traditions and cultures (Wallace, 2006).

Moreover, when I observed the daughter in the store, it seemed that she felt free to touch and play with the products because nobody disturbed or regulated her actions. This museum has no hands-on objects for visitors, so children need to suppress their desire to touch the art. But when they go to the gift shop, they are free to touch the objects, which are artistic or similar to the real art. This is a reason for the gift shop being a learning space for inspiring interest in the arts and providing motivation for the child to return.

According to Falk and Dierking (1992), visitors do not distinguish between the experiences they had at the gift shop and the ones they had in the exhibits when they evaluate the quality of their overall visit. Thus Falk and Dierking stated that both the experiences of seeing the art objects in the exhibits and buying souvenirs in the gift shop are significant factors that together constitute the visitors' museum experience.

Especially when visitors buy items that are connected to the exhibited objects, their purchases make it possible for them to recollect their museum experience at a later time. Falk and Dierking explained that this consumer behavior plays an important role in the museum experience: By helping visitors recollect positive memories with help of such souvenirs, the museum provides learning opportunities not only in the exhibits but also in the gift shop as an extension of the exhibition. Thus, the gift shop can be regarded as another special learning space where images of different cultures, heritages, and traditions as well as of the museum's own characteristics can be acquired, giving visitors the opportunity for positive long-term memories about their museum experiences.

Summary

Through interviews with and observations of this family, I found that both mother and child had complicated assessments of this exhibition. Their visit had negative and positive effects.

In terms of positive effects, it was obvious that the art works caught the child's eyes because they were unfamiliar to her and nothing she would see in her daily life. I found that she was particularly interested in some of the art pieces that reminded her of objects she knew, and she tried to compare her present experience with prior experiences.

However, both mother and daughter also had strong negative emotions, especially when they encountered the grotesque sculptures in the museum that made the child imagine zombies and ghosts. Not quite able to distinguish between reality and imagination, the daughter had trouble understanding the art itself. And as some of

the art pieces have continued to shock her in her daily life, her mother concluded that those objects had been inappropriate for her child. Another conclusion than an outsider might reach is that perhaps it had been inappropriate for the child to watch movies with zombies, or other scary figures on TV. It seems that often parents are much more restricting with what they want a child to see in an art museum than with what they allow the child to see on TV or in video games.

The thing that concerned the mother most was that her child developed a long-lasting fear after seeing some of the shocking art pieces. She concluded that the role of the parents is to carefully select the art museum and the particular exhibit before taking their children. She usually checks the exhibition information online or visits alone to find out what is inappropriate or appropriate before visiting together. She had already checked this exhibition before, and although she had thought that it might be a little bit inappropriate for her child, she had not foreseen such negative effects. Again, as an outside observer, I had to wonder whether she is usually as careful about selecting TV shows and video games for her daughter.

A museum visit always gives unintentional experiences to the visitors. In this case, it created not only positive but also negative experiences, or combined both aspects. But the role of the parent as a facilitator is to use these ambivalent aspects well and to transform them into another meaning-making experience for their child. They also need to keep in mind that those experiences do not end in the museum, but rather parents need to continue the conversation after visiting the museum in order to create truly meaningful experiences.

Case 2: Karen's Family

Karen lives with her parents and her two daughters, five-year-old Nancy and ten-year-old Katie. She is very busy working as a restaurant manager during the week.

She does not have much experience visiting museums, but her two daughters have experienced several field trips with their daycare center and elementary school within the past few years. Last year, her two daughters and her parents went to the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, DC, which was their first family museum visit. Karen was not able to go with them because of work. This is the first time that she and her daughter could go to the museum together.

Karen indicated that they are not very familiar with art, especially museum art, but that her two daughters like to draw and paint. Most of their art is made in school. When they bring their art home, they usually hang their drawings and paintings on the wall.

Karen and her younger daughter participated in this research on May 21st, and I interviewed the mother on May 24th at a coffee shop.

Viewing Style



Figure 5. *Wonderstruck* by Lesley Dill, From Google image

1. <In front of the temporary gallery>

The mother is heading towards *Punch* and the child is heading towards *Wonderstruck*. *Punch* was located in the left corner of the museum where the artist's autobiography movie showed. *Wonderstruck* was installed in the opposite direction from *Punch*. When visitors enter the gallery, *Wonderstruck* stands out right away, however, *Punch* is installed in the movie space, so it does not stand out like *Wonderstruck*. The child naturally headed to *Wonderstruck* first, as it was so much easier accessible than *Punch*.

Punch is a photography which expresses a person's arm punching another person's cheek with its fist, while *Wonderstruck* is a white bust with a big star on the head.

(In front of *Punch*.)

M: Oh, look at this! (Child is coming to mother after hearing her voice.)

Look here! (Pointing.) Somebody punches him.

C: What?

M: It looks like he punches him. It is an arm, right?

(Child is ignoring her mother's response and going to see *Wonderstruck*. Mother is still appreciating *Punch* for a while. When the mother notices that her child is not with her, she goes to find her. But the daughter is already in front of *Wonderstruck*.)

C: (Sees mother.) Come here!

(As mother is coming to her, she points to *Wonderstruck*.) Look at this! (B1, pp. 1-2)

2. <During visiting in the temporary gallery>

C: Come, come, come on. (Child wants to show *Rise* to her mother, standing in front of it.)

M: Coming, coming. (Mother is looking at art pieces on the way to her daughter.)

Look at that guy! (She is pointing to *Ghost Hole Girl* but the child seems not interested in the mother's interest.)

C: Yes. (She answers impatiently from in front of *Rise*.)

M: Look at this one. (Mother is going to *Inwardness* but her child is still in front of *Rise*.)

C: Mom, just come back. (Child is getting angry.)

M: Coming. (Going to child.) (B1, p. 4)

Karen's daughter had visited this museum several times before with her daycare center. However, Karen had not visited the museum for a long time. I often found that her daughter seemed as if she was already used to the museum space and to what the art museum is all about. But for the mother, this museum was new to her, and it seemed that her expectations were much higher than the daughter's. She expressed this novel experience in the interview, "It was really nice. I was so excited. And I liked all the things" (B2, p. 5).

When she viewed the exhibitions she was so excited that she led her child where she wanted to go rather than decide together or ask the child's opinion. However, her daughter also wanted to lead according to her own interests, so I often saw the daughter calling and waiting for the mother so they could see an object together.

This family exhibited two different types of viewing styles-independent and

collaborative-and each person had different expectations. But I frequently noticed that both of them had expectations that were so dominant that they led to conflict. If the child had been older, I assume the family would have been more comfortable with her independent viewing style, but since she was too young to move around and view the art independently, she could not do what she wanted and became frustrated. She went to her mother when she was called but since her mother's interest did not match her own, her reaction was often half-hearted. At other times she did not even look properly at what the mother pointed out and moved on to other art works, did not answer her mother's questions, or, if she did not like her mother's attitudes became angry. Their different viewing styles and interests certainly created some discord between the two of them, and it seemed like the mother would not or could not overcome the tension through effective communication.

Expectations and Motivations

Role of Parent

(Education)



Figure 6. *Vessel* by Karen Karnes, Photograph taken by author at Palmer Museum

3. <In front of *Vessel* by Karen Karnes, 1996>

In the corner of the Snowiss Gallery, a permanent gallery, a blue vessel is exhibited, covered by a glass case. The child is in front of *Vessel* and viewing it, while the mother is viewing another painting at the opposite end of the room. When she recognizes that her child is looking at *Vessel* for a long time, she joins her and stands behind her.

M: What's the name of that? (Getting closer to the object and finding the label.)

C: (Reading label.) V, E...and S...

M: What's that say? What's the first name?

(When child notices that the mother is coming to her, she stops reading and heads to the other wall.) Look at this! (Mother starts urging her child to read the label.)

C: Mommy, look at this! (Child is pointing to the front of the statue.)

M: You know that name. (She is still in front of *Vessel*.) (B1, p. 13)

The mother clearly wanted to get her child to know the information about and the messages of the art works. During the interview, she often said that looking at the labels was helpful to her, and allowed her to explain the art to her daughter more easily. "I sometimes don't know what I am looking at because I'm not an art person, so the labels were helpful. I think my daughter was helped, too" (B2, p. 9).

Based on this idea, she usually asked her daughter who had made the art, what the name of the art piece was, and what materials it was made of, but her daughter did not show much interest in this knowledge. During the observation, when her mother got close to her and encouraged her to find the information, or tried to teach her, she

usually escaped.

Vallance (1995) claimed that labels, texts, and brochures limit people's experience in the museum. This is because they put limits on the visitors' own interpretations and force the curator's or educator's opinions on them rather than encouraging the visitors to form their own opinions.

However, according to Falk and Dierking (1992), reading the labels is an active experience for visitors rather than a passive one, because it happens depending on the visitors' free choice. Moreover the label, as a mediator, helps visitors to interpret the art works and to satisfy their curiosities. In addition, novice visitors or visitors who do not know how to access or to interpret the works of art find it useful to use labels.

But labels are not appropriate for all visitors, especially for children. If a child cannot read, they are obviously useless, and for a child who can, the information on the label will be most likely be above their head. Thus labels in museums usually make children, as well as many adults, lose interest, and push them to look for additional challenges. Labels often include elements that are difficult to understand for readers, especially if they are beginning readers. Abstract and vague language, sophisticated vocabulary, and dense concepts, just to name a few of the contributing factors, all turn labels into demanding media that might be too much to handle for many visitors (Hein, 1998; Bitgood, 2002). According to Bitgood (2002), in order for educational labels to provide interpretive message for the visitors, creators of the labels need to pay careful attention to both communication style and the aspect of motivation.

Labels play a significant role in communicating and interacting with the artist's message, which makes it even more important that the museum succeeds in utilizing

labels to increase the motivation of readers and enables communication between them and the art. Serrell (1996) stated that museums write labels at twelfth-grade level of reading and comprehending, which poses problems for younger children, non-English speakers, and less educated viewers. In the case of young children or children who are not proficient readers, Halbertsma (2000) asserted that considering the cognitive differences between children and adults, parents or care-givers who visit with children need to explain difficult words or concepts to make the labels' text accessible for children. This creates another task for parents who bring younger children into the museum, who might find it challenging to communicate the difficult content of labels to their children and to motivate them to stay interested.

4. <In front of *Wounded Deer* by Lesley Dill >

M: Look! A *Wounded Deer*... (She is reading a poem which is written on the label.)

Do you want to hear a poem?

C: Yes!

M: (Mother is reading the whole poem.) I don't understand that part.

C: Me neither.

M: (Giggles.) It's Emily Dickinson. I don't understand it. (B1, p. 7)

In the temporary exhibition each of the labels had a poem written on it on which the artist Dill's art works were based. This art piece *Wounded Deer* was based on Emily Dickinson's poem *Wounded Deer*.

Of the three observed families, this family was the only one who mentioned the poem to the child. During the interview I learned that the mother's reason for reading

the poem to the child was her attempt to keep her attention; however, the mother admitted that this did not work well. She wanted to provide the information about Emily Dickinson to her child, because she had heard her name before and knew that she was a famous American poet. But the poem was really too hard for both her and her child, so while she read it aloud, she could not convey exactly to the child the poet's intention or how to connect the poem to the art. Rather than discussing some of the themes or words of the poem and how they perhaps related to the art, the mother just concluded that the poem was too hard to understand and did not try to engage her daughter in conversation about the poem. This gave me another insight into the style of communication between mother and daughter, which was not very effective.

In the museum, the mother was offering her child an object-centered education, such as giving the information about the artist's name, the bibliography, the label text, the material the art was made of, or the year it was made. She told me that she was "interested in seeing everything, not just a few specific objects" (B2, p. 5), and wanted to show her child everything in the museum rather than pick something specific to look at.

(Controversial Art)



Figure 7. *Bacchante and Infant Faun* by Frederick William MacMonnies, Photograph taken by author at Palmer Museum

5. <In front of *Bacchante and Infant Faun* by Frederick William

MacMonnies, 1894>

C: Look at her.

M: Oh, she is holding a baby.

C: Look at the back, look at the back (She is giggling and pointing to the woman's bottom.)

M: (Half-heartedly.) Yeah, yeah, yeah.

C: A butt! There is a butt!

M: Yeah, look at that picture. (Pointing.) (B1, pp. 22-23)

On the way downstairs, the daughter discovered a nude sculpture. The sculpture was made from bronze and represented a realistic female body holding a naked baby. She got so excited when she saw the woman's bottom and focused on it for a while, and then wanted to share her interest with her mother. But the mother just answered shortly, "yeah." The mother's reaction was half-hearted, and I found that she abruptly wanted to change the topic so she pointed to another painting. I asked her in the interview about her feelings and thoughts at that time, and she said about her daughter: "She has an active imagination; she has more imagination than I do. But sometimes I can't say, 'well, what does this butt look like, or what do you think about this,' and talk about this kind of issue when she is appreciating art" (B2, p. 5). She also said, "I just kind of ignored her. I just kind of acted like this is not a big deal, or, 'who cares, it's just a butt'" (B2, p. 5). Overall, I noticed that the mother was uncomfortable seeing a nude sculpture and talking about nudity with her young child.

According to Short (1988), in the primary curriculum, adults, especially

teachers, neglect to deal with controversial issues with children due to “the primary ideology” which means that preschool teachers consider the child innocent and free from malice. According to this view adults have the responsibility to protect children from the harsh and dangerous reality (p. 11). But by doing so, teachers avoid or hide from issues that children might be thinking about or struggling with anyhow. This is true not only for teachers but for other adults, such as parents and care-takers, too.

A contemporary art museum in particular is an integrative space that displays diverse issues and cultures, and does not usually shy away from controversial images and messages. Thus, it might be difficult to avoid the fact that children will encounter controversial and uncensored art. While parents have different tolerance levels, many of them will find it problematic, or even morally unacceptable, to expose their children to art that depicts or represents violence, homosexual love, or gender and sexual issues in general. This is not only a problem for families. According to Wightman (1995), undergraduate students who encountered sexually explicit photographic imagery in the classroom found these images shocking. That means, adults also feel uncomfortable with and shocked by this kind of art.

Depending on the teacher’s, parent’s, or care-taker’s expectations for children viewers, their reaction to the controversial art differs. According to Jeffers and Parth (1996), depending on the teacher’s expectations, for some, this type of art serves the pedagogical goal to try to “confront, question, explore and act (p. 27).” But others consider this art as harmful to students and do not encourage those kinds of confrontations. Jeffers and Parth asserted that teachers need to encourage their high school students to confront and explore this issue of controversial art and that this art should receive some attention in art education curricula. Wightman (1995) also stated

that teachers have to ensure that those controversial works are legitimized and to include this legitimization in the conversation. He said that through the discussing process this kind of art becomes relevant rather than unspeakable and hidden. By doing so, the art educator engages in an act of taming.

These scholars recommended that adults face these issues, and facilitate students through appropriate conversations. I recommend that adults should consider a child's development, background, and age, and find their own facilitating style. Jeffers and Parth (1996) concluded that the issues of controversial art and censorship has no right or wrong answers; what is crucial to consider though is that both children and parents should have sufficient preparation, so that they can carefully explore and confront those issue together rather than blindly meet the unspeakable, shameful, or hidden.

6. <In front of *Rise* by Lesley Dill>



Figure 8. *Rise* by Lesley Dill, From Google image

C: What is this made of?

M: I don't know.

C: Hmm.

M: I don't have a clue. (She is touching.)

Some type of *papier-mâché* material maybe.

That might be. It doesn't even have paper on it.

C: It looks soft but it's hard. (Child is also touching.)

M: Yes, it looks soft. I like this one. (B1, p. 5)

During the museum visit, I frequently found that the child wanted to touch the art pieces. Especially with installations or sculptures which are open to the viewer, she got swept away by her impulse and touched them. At first, the mother imposed sanctions on her, but after some time passed and she had gotten used to the museum atmosphere and environment, she also started to touch the art. When the child asked her mother what this particular art piece was made out of and the mother could not answer exactly, both of them started touching it and explored the material through the sense of touch. As a neutral observer I found myself once again confronted with the dilemma whether I should intervene or not, but decided that this is ultimately the museum personnel's responsibility as I did not want to compromise the neutrality of my position.

7. <In front of *Wounded Deer* by Lesley Dill>

M: Look at this one.

(Reading label.) A *Wounded Deer*.

Do you want to hear a poem?

C: Yes! (Child is touching the art.)

Guard: (Coming over to mother.) You should not touch the art.

M: Oh, I'm sorry.

(To her daughter.) Don't touch anything, OK? (B1, p. 7)

Wounded Deer represented a kneeling man whose legs were torn off, and from where they were torn off, red hair was spread on the floor to express the wound and the blood. When the child was appreciating this art, she kept touching the red hair and the mother did not restrain her child. The museum guard saw the daughter's touching, came to them, and cautioned the mother not to touch the art. After that happened, the mother told her child in a serious manner that she should not touch the art pieces anymore. When I interviewed her, I asked her about touching the art in the museum, and she said the following: "I think she was just interested in that funky one and I wanted to touch it too. If I would have known that was a museum where you're not supposed to touch anything then I would have just told her 'no.' She wanted to feel the things on the back of the person" (B2, p. 7).

At first, the mother did not mind her daughter touching the art, and even did it herself, but after she was reprimanded by the guard, she did not touch anymore. She said, "It doesn't say anything like 'don't touch anything in the museum.' I mean, I know a little bit about museum etiquette, or whatever, but she didn't know that" (B2, p. 7). I realized that Karen could not educate her child about museum etiquette because she did not much know about it. After being educated by the guard, she realized that their behavior was problematic and did not let her child touch the art again.

There are lots of people who are not familiar with museum etiquette, and especially the touching dilemma. Especially when adults bring children, they should remind them about the touching problem, but if they themselves are not sure about the proper behavior, touching will occur very frequently. Karen told me that she could not find any notification about this, and she simply thought it was acceptable to touch a little bit, and she looked liked she felt upset in retrospect. Dean (1998) asserted about the touching problem in museums that prohibit touching creates an uncomfortable feeling in visitors, because such a prohibition constrains one of the most basic needs in human learning.

Especially the sense of touch creates a basic sensory experience which allows us to feel pleasure or pain through our bodies. This sensory perception also stimulates imagination in people. Through the tactile sense, we can notice characteristics that we cannot find through audition and vision, and thus discover new connections between subject and object. Especially children, who have a lot of curiosity about the world around them, learn the characteristics of a material or object through the tactile sense. When a child cannot feel with his/her skin, and only sees the material, then he/she cannot realize what the material's texture is (Lee, Jang, Jung, & Um, 2008).

In order to stimulate the visitors' perception and help them understand the information, vision should not be the only sense employed in a museum exhibit, but rather, it should be combined with other senses. When all senses interact, we can get more actively engaged in and understand more about the exhibited objects. This, of course, is especially true for children.

The no-touch policy poses a considerable problem for museums and their visitors, except for hands-on museums. Generally, traditional-style museums cannot

fulfill the visitors' demands or curiosity, which diminishes the opportunity for communication between the objects and viewers.

Major art museums, such as the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum, and the Brooklyn Museum in New York City offer studio art making programs for school museum tours or family groups, where young children can attempt to make similar art activities using similar media to those they saw or will see at the exhibit. All these hands-on activities are for educational effects, and the children who participate in these programs actively interpret and understand the art they encounter at the museum (Otaka, 2007).

In another review, Adams, Moreno, Polk, and Buck (2003) critiqued the art museum's strict 'no touch' environment compared to other types of museums, and suggested that museums provide small tactile activities, such as games, props, or touch baskets in the exhibits. They also suggested the development of new physical spaces, such as a children's gallery, with pieces from the museum's permanent collections, and also to encourage artists to create art works at the children's level. Such innovations in terms of child-appropriate space and activities would not only solve the touching problem, but also create more opportunities to get physically interactive with the art.

Prior Knowledge and Experience

8. <Returning to the research gallery>

M: We'll go there, (where her daughter wanted to go) after we're done here, ok?

(Child is following mother and whining to her.)

(Mother is trying to get her attention.) Hey, look at that mountain. (Pointing.)

C: What is this? (While mother is looking at the painting, she is looking at a sculpture.)

M: Looks like a mountain, right?

(Daughter is coming to the mother and asks her to carry her.)

C: Mommy, carry me.

M: You want to me carry you?

C: Yeah.

M: Come here. (Carrying her on one arm.)

C: I want to show you something in that room. (B1, pp. 12-15)

As the two got close to the gallery that the daughter had visited on one of her school trips, she wanted to show her mother what she had seen there, even though it was not a gallery I had selected for research. During the viewing, she had mentioned many times that she wanted to go to the gallery and show her mother the art pieces which she had seen before. This study focused on contemporary art to see how parents and children interact with art that the parent feels is difficult or hard to understand, which adds another dimension to their role as facilitators. In contrast, the gallery that Nancy chose exhibited Renaissance and Baroque/Rococo art which is much more accessible. I explained to the mother that this type of art was outside of my research area and that I preferred for them to stay out of galleries other than the ones that were designated for the study, so that my results would not get compromised.

After the child realized she could not go there, she abruptly lost interest in the museum. The mother tried to give her more attention, but the child's reaction was to be irritable and teasing. After I had observed this scene for a while, I suggested to the mother to go and see the back gallery to follow her daughter's wish.

When the child heard my suggestion, she got motivated again to view more art and began to lead her mother to the gallery.

9. <In the Gallery where she wanted to go>



Figure 9. *Trimming the Christmas Tree* by Louis Lang, Photograph taken by author at Palmer Museum

The child wants to go to the gallery she has visited before with her school. This gallery is located in the remotest part of the museum and usually exhibits art in the style of Impressionism, Baroque, and Rococo. The child enters the gallery first and the mother follows her. As the mother is coming to the child, she runs across the floor and points to her favorite art piece. Her favorite art work is a small-sized painting, *Trimming the Christmas Tree*, by Louis Lang, 1865, in which two dressed-up girls are decorating a big Christmas tree located in the center of the living room.

M: You like that one?

C: Yes.

M: Why?

C: It's Christmas.

M: It's Christmas time? I see, that is a reason. (Sees a Christmas tree in the painting.)

That's why you wanted to take me back here?

(Child is moving to another corner to find another favorite to show her mother, but the mother is still in front of *Trimming the Christmas Tree*.)

C: Yes!! Mommy. Show you another one. (She runs when she finds *Forest Scene* by William Trost Richards, 1868, and points to it.) And this!

M: (Mother is following her.) You like that one? That's pretty, isn't it?

C: It's pretty woods. (B1, pp. 19-20.)

Finally, the child entered the gallery of her own choice, and showed the mother what she had wanted to show her. Everyone has stored their own memories. These memories reflect the past, and influence the present. The child did not keep her memories inside but wanted to bring them outside and share them with her mother, and communicate about them. She remembered where her favorite art pieces hung, and found them easily. She was mostly leading, and her search for the art pieces she remembered from her last visit almost felt like a game of hide-and-seek. During the interview, Karen expressed her surprise at her child's good memory, which she had never seen before.

Upon reflection, I realized that the adult, that is the mother and I, had initially disregarded the child's demand for free choice by not allowing her to visit the gallery she wanted to see. As I stepped in to prevent them from entering another gallery that the child wanted to share with the mother, I broke out of my role as a neutral observer

whose main role was to watch their naturally occurring learning behaviors. As I set those limits and controlled their behaviors, the child began to act irritated about this limitation, and her mother became embarrassed about her child's behavior and her own inadequacy to facilitate effectively. According to Hein (1998), the kind of case study that I have been conducting cannot collect research data which measures one hundred percent naturally occurring behaviors with no interruptions by the observer. It seems that compromises like the one I made at times must be made in order to accommodate research participants. This can have positive as well as negative results. In this case, while my intervention disrupted their viewing, and I failed to get the required 'pure' data, I also learned something important in the process. Once I decided to be flexible and let the child do the leading, even if it meant moving past the designated research area, I watched her autonomy emerge and observed lively and positive reactions. More than any book or theory, this very concrete example helped me realize the significance of free-choice learning and how it encourages and influences the child's interests and engagement, and ultimately, learning.

Museum Environment

Museum Display

10. <In front of *Flinstone, New Hampshire* by John Fredrick, 1850>

This pastoral painting showed a peaceful farm in realistic style, with a herd of cows and horses feeding on grass. This idyllic landscape painting is hanging on the wall at an adult's chest level.

M: Look at those cows.

C: I can't see it. (Painting is hanging too high above the child's eye level for her to see.)

M: Over here. (Pointing.) Don't touch it!

C: I want to see horsy.

M: Do you want to see a horsy and cows?

C: Yes.

(Mother is holding the child up.) (B1, p. 20)

I witnessed this scene several times, with the mother holding up her child to show the art to her, because the art pieces were hung too high on the wall for the child to see. After the mother started carrying her, she finally showed more interest. This is obviously not only a problem for children, but also for visitors using wheelchairs. Museums ought to consider the viewer's eye level and install art and labels at a height which is accessible to all visitors (AAM, 1995). Especially labels and signs need to be placed with more consideration for the optimal viewing zone of both standing and seated viewers. Because these consist of text, the Museum's Label Study recommended installation at a height of between 48 and 54 inches from the ground. The study claims that this is also appropriate for older visitors and low-vision visitors (AAM, 1995). But the problem is that this height range of 48 to 54 inches is still too high for young children. The question arises whether art museums are really accessible to all visitors, or whether they are only for adults?

While a number of studies assert that the museum is an important informal learning space for children, in reality we often find limits to how child-friendly a museum is and how hard it tries to accommodate children. Objects that are exhibited

or arranged too high on the wall for children to see, labels that are too difficult to read, or too much light reflecting on exhibition cases are some of the barriers for children that compromise their enjoyment of the museum (Falk & Dierking, 1992). Much room for improvement remains.

Summary

Karen has not had many opportunities to go to a museum because of her busy life-style, so this exhibit was interesting and fun for her. During the interview, she mentioned the art piece that she saw first, *Punch*, many times and told me it was the most memorable art piece in this experience. But she did not know about her daughter's opinions about this exhibit because after visiting the museum they did not have a conversation or activity related to their visit. She did notice that her daughter talked to her sister about this museum and a little about Dill's metal dress, but she did not participate in their conversation.

Overall, this mother had a hard time facilitating her child's museum visit, and keeping her interested and getting her attention. She tried to connect the art with her child's interests, such as with the dress, but she actually did not know how to do it and she thought it did not work well. "I don't know how to facilitate children. But I just tried saying something like, 'Oh, look at that,' and sound excited. Like I tried to act like I was interested in it to make her interested in it. But it worked for just the first few minutes" (B2, p. 4).

Their conversation was limited because when the mother facilitated her child's visit, she was only using information about the art or the factors of the art that can be seen from the outside, instead of focusing on the inside, or the message, of the art, so

they were never able to get into a deeper conversation about the art.

Moreover, I found that this family had conflicting roles and expectations. The first conflict was that the mother wanted to see what she liked while her daughter also insisted on seeing what she liked. During their visit, they viewed art pieces separately, and did not share many art-related conversations.

The second conflict was their different roles, because the daughter was a frequent visitor in this museum but the mother was a novice. So during the observation, I found that her daughter wanted to show her and lead her through the exhibition, but the mother thought that as a mother she was to lead and show her daughter everything in the exhibit. Because of these different roles, they did not have much communication, and moreover her daughter got angry when the mother did not listen and take her opinion seriously.

These complicated leading patterns led to conflict during their viewing, and contributed to the daughter's feeling tired and bored. Karen told me in the end: "If I asked her to do this again next week, and say 'we are going to the museum again,' she definitely would be like, 'I don't want to go.' I think, she would be more interested in it if she had been able to do some works of art. That would be a good experience for her, like a child making a picture at the museum, that type of thing" (B2, p. 6). Karen believed that the reason why her child felt bored was that she only experienced viewing art rather than other, more hands-on, activities.

In order to create a meaningful museum experience for children, the museum environment certainly plays a significant role. But the most important thing is the parents' role as facilitators. Karen's daughter looked very excited when they entered the museum, because she was coming to the museum with her mother for the first

time. After some time passed, the daughter realized that her and her mother's expectations were different, and when the mother pushed the educational aspect on her, she felt bored and wanted to escape the museum. I found that this parent played the role of teacher in trying to pass information to her child and focusing on her child's acquisition of knowledge about the art works in the museum, reflecting the concept of supporting a child's learning from a learner-constructed knowledge viewpoint. One of the tools of acquired knowledge in the museum is obviously reading the label. According to Falk and Dierking (1992), the more naïve and new to the experience visitors are, the more time they tend to spend reading the labels. Moreover, they try to view all of the exhibited objects and read all the labels in order to learn-something I definitely observed with Karen. Still, at times, especially when she herself was allowed to make decisions, the daughter seemed quite engaged with the art and seemed excited about it.

Free-choice learning is the most important type of learning in the museum. When children have the opportunity to be autonomous, they engage in the museum and are self-directed by their own needs and interests. It means that throughout this experience, children not only have fun but also do effective learning. Moreover, parents should encourage child-led and child-centered rather than parent-centered and parent-led behaviors. If a child feels autonomous and in charge of his/her own museum exploration, he or she will be much more interested and have a more meaningful experience. Parents should play the role of supporters and helpers, in order to grant their children a pleasant experience. In addition, when the child feels bored or tired, the parent can suggest a game, such as a pictorial puzzle or word games that connect with the art to help reawaken the children's interest.

Case 3: Emily's Family

Emily lives with her three-year-old fraternal twins, Erika and Jorge, and with her husband. She is a university professor of Human Development and Family Studies, with special expertise in adolescent development.

Her children like to do art activities, and the parents encourage them to do whatever they want with art supplies and to be creative, but do not provide coloring books as they view those as confining the children's creativity. Their house and the parents' offices are decorated with their children's paintings and drawings. When Emily displays the children's art, her most significant consideration is to hang it at their eye level, so she puts those creations up low on the walls so they can view them all together.

This family is pretty familiar with 'children's art' because their children attend a preschool that emphasizes art education, and Erika and Jorge create art every day; but 'high art' or 'real art' is not so familiar to this family. They do not frequently visit museums, and when they go, they usually go to a hands-on museum like a children's museum or a science museum.

Emily and her daughter participated in this research on May 18th, and I interviewed Emily on May 20th at her office.

Viewing Style

1. <In front of *Dress of Inwardness* by Lesley Dill>



Figure 10. *Dress of Inwardness* by Lesley Dill, From Google image

This art work is a human-size sculpture that is located in the middle part of the gallery hall, representing a woman wearing a white dress. The artist made the dress out of thin plates of bronze and, on the arm; there are incomprehensible letters which are made out of metal.

(In front of the temporary gallery)

M: Yeah, this is the same exhibit we came here to see with poppy and mammon.

(These are the names the children use for their grandparents.) Do you remember it at all? (Going to the left side of the middle part of the exhibit.)

(She gets down on her knees in front of *Dress of Inwardness* and takes her child's hand.) Do you know what it is made out of?

C: What?

M: While we look at it, think about what it is made out of.

C: Paper. (Child is trying to touch the sculpture.)

M: Don't touch it, don't touch it.

(She is making eye contact with her child.) I would guess paper too, but it is actually made out of metal. And there is a metal letter on the arm.

Doesn't it look like paper, though? I thought paper, too. It's got letters on it. (Pointing.)

C: Metal?

M: Metal letters, yeah.

C: Is it made out of...looks like paint... and metal?

M: I think it must be painted, yeah. But not for touching.

C: Is it white paint?

(As child wants to move and see another art piece, mother is also standing up. Child takes the mother by the hand and leads her to *Rise*.) (C1, p. 2)

When I observed this family, I found two viewing patterns. The first one is that the mother was holding the child's hand and followed where her child led her, and the second one is that when she had a conversation with her child, she would kneel down and talk at the child's level.

During their visit, I could not observe any examples of a parent-centered viewing style. The entire viewing was child-centered, and the parent's role was closer to a supporter or a helper than to that of a teacher or educator. She described her perspective on education in the museum: "I definitely think that our visit was very child-led, which is, I try not to be like 'ok, let's go see this,' but to let her lead" (C2, p. 5). So in the museum, I found that because the mother tried to support the child's experience to be more comfortable and playful, this family stayed a long time in the museum: 43 minutes, which was longer than any other family.

I also observed that when the daughter tried to have a conversation with her

mother, the mom would kneel beside her daughter, holding her hand, and talking to her while maintaining eye contact. When I asked Emily about this behavior, she explained: “When I kneel like that, I mean, I just think their view is so different from our view. Because when you think about being in a crowded room for instance, we all kind of see each other’s faces, but the kids can only see knees and bellies, so I think it is like that in a museum too...When you get down, you can see on their eye level. So I also like to talk to her and hear her like this and let her know that I am interested in what she has to say. If I am just up here saying it, it is different from when I get down and look straight at her to tell her things” (C1, p. 5). Clearly, the mother considered the child’s eye level not only in their conversation but also when viewing the art, so if the art piece was huge or hung high she brought her child far away and helped her child see the entire piece.

Expectations and Motivations

Boring



Figure 11. *Jeff Davies* by Jerome Paul Witkin, Photograph taken by author at Palmer Museum

2. <In front of *Jeff Davies* by Jerome Paul Witkin in 1980>

This art work is installed in the center of the right side of the Snowiss Gallery, and the artist expressed a man realistically who has big potbelly. The man looks very common to our eyes, just like someone we might see around, in a white T-shirt and with a bushy beard.

(As the child sees this art work, she is holding the mother's hand and brings her to sit on a chair which is located in front of the art work.)

M: Do you want to play *I Spy*? Do you want to?

I Spy with my little eyes....something that rhymes with jelly.

C: Melly.

M: Do you see Melly?

C: No. Ends with E and starts with J?

M: It doesn't start with J. (Child is looking around.) Look around. What do you see?

C: That. (Pointing.)

M: What is that?

C: Man.

M: What do you see on him? Rhymes with jelly. Starts with B.

C: Bubububu... (Sitting on the chair.) Boat.

M: I was looking at his belly.

C: Belly.

M: Yeah. (C1, p. 9)

The child was starting to get bored as time passed. When the mother recognized

that the child was bored, she tried to start an *I Spy* game to arouse her interest. She said to me in the interview, “As time passed, she wasn’t really focusing on the museum so much, she was more interested in sitting, so that’s why I was trying other things like, you know, doing ‘I spy’ in the museum” (C2, p. 5).

I Spy is a guessing game that families play for developing and influencing children’s vocabulary. It has a lot of different versions, but mother and daughter here used a rhyming version, in which one person says a word and based on this the other person has to produce a similar rhyme (Wikipedia, 2010).

This game helped the child not only to learn new words but also to get back her concentration. Moreover it was kind of a picture puzzle, so it made the child get more interested in the pictures and feel more playful about them. Erika has a very acute sense for language, but she is only three years old, so she sometimes used the wrong word. But her mother did not want to interrupt her child’s interest and showed great flexibility and patience.

Role of Parent

(Education)

3. <In front of *Private Lives* by Roy De Forest, 1981>

M: I think that’s a person. (Both of them are getting closer to the art piece.)

C: It has a tail.

M: Where is the tail?

C: That! (Pointing.)

M: This?

C: Yes.

M: But that's the person's leg. (Mother brings her child to a wooden chair and raises her leg to put it on the chair. Child is watching the mother's action, standing beside her.) OK. You just look at her leg sideways. Do you see that? Look like this, sweetheart. If you are standing next to mama, and my leg is like this. See? Is that a tail? (Both mother and child sit down on the chair and look at the art piece again.) Do I have a tail?

C: No. Do I have a tail?

M: (Giggles.) Do you have a tail?

C: Yeah.

M: You do? What do you think?

C: I think I do.

M: Yes, you have one, right? Right here. (Pointing to child's pony tail.) I pull your tail. (Playing with her child's pony tail.)

C: That is a pony tail.

M: Yeah, is that a tail?

C: No. (Shaking her head.) (C1, pp. 21-22)

The child obviously did not understand the three-dimensional portrayal of a figure in a two-dimensional art piece, such as the painting of a person who stands sideways. She thought the overlapped person's leg was a tail, and the mother had to explain why it was not. The mother immediately showed her an example and helped her daughter understand the figure.

Because of the process of the mother's explanations, the child completely understood the concept, and even went a step further to play on the word 'tail,'

making her mother laugh with her clever wit.

(Temptation to Touch)

4. <In front of *Chinese Statue*>

M: This is a statue... (Reading the label.) From China.

C: Why is it in a big...uh...big container?

M: Because they don't want people to touch it. Do you think if it wasn't in a container it would be tempting?

C: (Nodding.) (C1, p. 1)

5. <In front of *Private Lives* by Roy De Forest, 1981>

M: Don't touch, don't touch, sweetheart.

C: Wet?

M: Not going to be wet. (Mother is coming to child and sits down beside her.) But you can't touch the art other people have made. Cause you want to save it for other people who want to see it too.

C: And you?

M: It could be hurt when you touch it.

C: Wash it?

M: It is very hard to wash paintings. If people touched it a lot, it could get dirty or break.

How many dogs do you see in this picture? (C1, pp. 19-20.)

The child often asked her mother why some art works were in containers and

others were outside and why touching the art was not allowed. When she was asked, the mother explained the reasons, using easy words, in order to help satisfy her daughter's curiosity. For example, she explained that these objects were not only for us but for all visitors to enjoy, and if many people touched them then they would become dirty and break easily. She added that if the objects broke or got dirty, it would be difficult to clean them, and other visitors could not see them anymore, so we need to protect them. Because the mother let the child know the reasons, the child easily understood the museum etiquette, and no longer tried to touch the art.

Children usually have a lot of curiosity in the museum and are eager to learn, so they like to touch and interact with the exhibited objects even more than adults. Moreover, children are novices to the museum environment and have not been yet socialized in the museum like most adults have been, and they experience lots of stimulating novel factors and a strong impetus to touch (Falk & Dierking, 1992). In such cases, the adults who are much more familiar with museum environments than the child need to provide appropriate education for their children and teach them restraint.

Modeling

(Taking a Picture)

6. <In front of *Going Home* by Eleanor Antin, 2004>

C: I want to take a picture.

M: Do you want to take a picture through it?

C: I want to take a picture of that one.

C: This one. (She is going to stand in front of *Going Home*. Mother follows child and

they sit down on a chair.)

M: We can't take a picture in the museum. (But she is pulling out her cell phone camera from her pocket and pretends to take a photo; then shows the screen to her daughter and they view it together.) See? (They are looking at the cell phone screen.) (C1, pp. 25-26)

While at the museum, the child seemed to be curious about the research camera and voice recorder which were attached to her mother's clothes and neck for research purposes. I noticed that she asked several times about my camera and voice recorder and wanted to touch it and work with it. Also she was interested in me, specifically my behavior, holding a camera and following their tracks while keeping a little distance. She recognized me, and watched me several times and asked her mother how I take photos and what the camera is. According to her mother, the daughter was going through a phase in which she showed a lot of interest in technology, such as cameras and cell phones. After they were back home, the mother tried to encourage her to tell her brother and father about the museum, but mostly she told them about the camera around the mother's neck rather than the art works.

After they had finished their museum visit, her mother handed me back the camera which had been attached to her neck, which I had asked her to wear before starting my observation to record the research. We checked the photos in the camera together to make sure they were coming out alright. The child saw our conversations and behaviors, and then following us, she also wanted to take pictures. So she brought her mother back to the gallery and stood in front of *Going Home* and wanted to have a picture taken. Because the mother assumed that the museum did not allow taking

photos, she only pretended to snap a picture. Actually, the Palmer Museum of Art does permit non-flash photographs of art works in its permanent exhibits, however, not in temporary exhibits. As we were in a permanent gallery at this time, it would have been possible to take non-flash photos, which I actually did for research purposes. While I was aware of that rule, as a non participant-observer, I determined that I did not want to intrude into their conversation. The mother might have thought that I have special permission for taking pictures, or just thought it was easier to ban photography altogether for her child rather than having to explain the difference between permanent and temporary exhibits and the different rules to a three-year-old. For a short time, they enjoyed taking pretend photos and viewing the camera screen. My behavior had aroused another interest in the child, and she reflected it and applied it to her viewing behaviors.

Falk and Dierking (1992) stated that this is “learning by observation or ‘modeling’” (p. 49). When a family visits a museum, we can commonly find that the family observes other visitors’ behaviors, and if they notice it is appropriate for them, then they follow their example. As a part of social interaction, modeling, according to Falk and Dierking, is one of the learning patterns in a museum.

Prior knowledge and Experience

7. <In front of *Rise* by Lesley Dill>

C: It looks like he’s waiting for his hair cut.

M: (Kneeling and holding the child’s hand.) Does it look like waiting for a hair cut? I can see that. Like he has a cape on? Like when you see Julie? What do you think the fabric behind it is?

C: I think it is hair. (Pointing to fabric.)

M: That's the hair? (C1, p. 3)

Rise is a red human figure which sits in front of the center of a big wall, with long strips of red fabric spread out from that figure like rays of sunshine. It was located in the center of the hall, so it attracts many visitors. When the child saw this installation, she immediately brought her mother to see it.

The child said that the long red fabric reminded her of a hair salon where she had gone often with her mother to get her hair cut by Julie, her hair dresser. She thought that the spread fabric looked like hair, which reminded her of her prior experiences in a hair salon. Here is another concrete example of how children make sense of the art by connecting it to their past experiences, and to things that are familiar to them.

Imagination

8. <In front of *Buildings, Trees, and Path* by Elmer Bischoff>

This painting was a half-abstract landscape with lots of blue and green color. The artist seemed to be expressing trees, a house, and a river, but the boundaries are so blurred and vague, that it is hard to see what the artist actually represented.

(Mother and child are sitting in front of *Buildings, Trees, and Path*. Mother is stroking the child's hair.)

C: Rhymes with cloat.

M: Something that rhymes with cloat?

C: Yeah, and it's over there. (Pointing.)

M: Do you see a boat?

C: Yeah, it is there. (Pointing.)

M: Oh, I don't see the boat. Where is the boat?

C: Behind those trees.(Pointing.)

M: Does that look like a boat to you? (Mother is trying to make eye contact with her child.) Oh, that's interesting. I thought I saw just houses, but that's great that you saw a boat.

Do you see water that the boat's in?

C: It's beside...it's going to...(Pointing.) It's going on that stream. (Pointing as if following the stream.)

M: On the stream? (Mother is also pointing as if following the stream.)

C: Yeah.

M: Oh, the blue one on the top is the one?

C: That's the stream behind that grass. (C1, p. 12)

The daughter saw a boat and a stream in the picture which were actually not depicted. However, her mother did not say that these objects did not exist and facilitated the flow of her daughter's imagination.

Greene (1995) said for imagination to come into play, people need to naturally see the arts. Typically, when we are in a museum, we view art the way a tourist automatically seeks information first. We do not really go with the flow or engage with the art. Greene asserted that a teacher needs to engage the student in the art, needs to "balance between helping learners to pay heed—to attend to shapes, patterns,

sounds, rhythms, figures of speech, and lines—and helping liberate them to achieve particular works as meaningful” (p. 124).

Vygotsky (1978) said that imagination is an ability of the subconscious which is constructed by the society and culture surrounding us. This concept also applies to a child’s imagination. A child also forms his or her imagination based on complicated physical experiences that were shaped in the context of the social environment around the child. In the context of Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development, when a child has increased complicated interactions with adults, the child’s imagination is more developed.

People experience a variety of unexpected or expected events, happening all around them. By listening, seeing, or touching, people are able to remember these events for a long time. When they encounter similar events or circumstances later on, they can recall the memory of this prior experience and knowledge, and based on these, people can create entire new worlds in their imagination (Falk, 2009; Heo, 1999).

Summary

The museum learning style in this family was clearly child-centered, with the child leading and the mother following. However, the mother did not just follow her child in a passive parent role. For effective child learning, the mother insisted that it was important to follow the child’s interest: “I try to take more of back seat and let her lead and answer questions and maybe ask her follow-up questions, but I try to not dictate what we look at, or what we do” (C2, p. 8).

During the viewing, the mother was a helpful facilitator, by listening carefully

and explaining what the child wanted to know. Moreover, throughout their entire visit at the museum, whenever they had a conversation, the mother would kneel down and hold her child's hand while maintaining steady eye contact. Being able to actively lead and enjoying the mother's full attention and their lively conversations, the child stayed in the museum longer than any other of my young research participants. When the child did get bored occasionally, the mother found creative ways of engaging her again, such as through the *I Spy* game or counting numbers, which helped reawaken the daughter's interest and motivation. During the viewing, I was impressed how they applied play to their visit, and in the end felt confident that the child would not form a bias of the museum as a boring space.

I learned from the interview that this museum visit was an interesting experience for both child and mother, and that they liked both the temporary and the permanent exhibitions. The mother thought that especially the temporary exhibition was good for the child, because she thought it was an attractive space and used interesting materials. Given the daughter's age, the art with letters as a theme was particularly appealing to her. Like other families, this family also faced the problem of the temptation to touch, but again, the mother did a very effective job in explaining the dilemma to her daughter in child-appropriate terms and thus taught her proper museum etiquette.

Chapter V

DISCUSSIONS

Through my observation of the viewing behaviors and conversations of three family groups, I determined and analyzed the characteristics of each family's learning behavior in the art museum. I found that their learning behaviors, both as individuals and as groups, reflected various combinations of personal and social contexts, with the families having different backgrounds and family stories and also each child and parent having different expectations and personal life stories. Moreover, each of the observed children was a different age and had different language abilities, and the parents' style and degree of facilitation varied depending on these individual features.

I chose the format of a case study in order to understand in-depth individual, group, and organizational behaviors in the art museum. For the purpose of this study, I found it more beneficial and valuable to investigate a small sample in great depth than a larger sample superficially. However, as my neutral observer status has been somewhat compromised during my research, and the size of the sample ultimately was even smaller than I had intended it to be (I was not able to use two out of the five groups that I had started out with), the results can not be easily generalized to a wider population (Gerring, 2007). Yet, in contrast to a controlled experiment or large quantitative study, the strength of my case study lies in the fact that I was able to be flexible, ask naturally occurring research questions, and build relationships of trust with my participants that I believe helped elicit honest and detailed answers to my questions (Merriam, 2009). Choosing a case study for this research, and working with three diverse families, I set out to understand the various phenomena and social and

personal contexts that are at play in family museum education. While generalizations to a wider population might not be possible, I was still able to learn important lessons from this kind of in-depth qualitative research that will further our understanding of museum education.

Viewing style

Each family to some degree displayed learning patterns that can be called child-centered and free-choice, but only the learning styles of Sujung's and Emily's families can be truly considered child-centered, child-lead, and cooperative. During their museum visit, both these mothers would hold their child's hand and view and discuss the art work together with the child. Especially Emily was very aware of providing her daughter a child-centered experience, always considering her child's eye level, and kneeling and making eye contact with her during every conversation.

Karen's family, in contrast, did some collaborative learning but mostly had an independent learning style. Mother and daughter had different expectations and interests, and often viewed the art works separately. Their viewing pattern was not only independent, but at times even conflicting because of their different expectations. Karen wanted to be the facilitator and took a parent-centered approach to viewing the art, but her child also expected to lead and follow her own interests. As her daughter was not allowed much autonomy, she got bored and tired quickly and, moreover, expressed anger at her mother.

The different effects of these learning styles on the children became very clear during my observation. When the viewing style was child-centered, the child actively talked with the parent and showed more interest; however, when it was parent-

centered, the child had no free-choice opportunities, and felt bored and fatigued quickly.

In terms of effective facilitation, Sujung and Emily said that they followed the child's opinion first and that being a supporter was their most important role as a mother. Sujung went as far as to say that when her family was in the museum, she wanted to be a friend to her child rather than a mother and a teacher. I found that underlying their behavior was an attitude that respected the child's opinion and autonomy. In contrast, Karen thought that the parent's role should be one of educator, and she wanted her child to have an opportunity to take in the information about the works of art; however, when she tried to provide the information, the child seemed to escape from her mother, physically or mentally. In sum, the mothers' facilitating styles differed greatly depending on their perception of the role of the parent in the museum.

However, it has to be also taken into consideration that the three groups had different socio-economic backgrounds and levels of education, which is quite likely to have had an effect on how the mothers facilitated their child's experience in the museum. Sujung and Emily are both highly educated, middle-class women, with training in art education and psychology respectively. Karen, in contrast, would probably be considered to be a member of the lower middle class. She is a single mom, working full-time to support her family, and depending on her parents for child care after school. According to Shreve (1987), single parents have so many responsibilities that it might be hard for them to free themselves from the daily burdens and duties and spend much time with their children. Thus, some single parents, because of their busy life, do not have much time to have interactions or lengthy conversations with their children, which might diminish their educational influences on them. On the

other hand, some single parents carry out a very strict education in an effort to overcompensate for the single parenting which they might perceive as putting their children at a disadvantage (Mulroy, 1988; Gershoff, Aber, Raver, & Lennon, 2007).

Moreover, according to Leyendecker, Harwood, Comparini, and Yalcinkaya (1993), as a mother's socio-economic status is higher, her parenting style impacts her child more positively, as she is more likely to cooperate with the child and to relate to her child more comfortably. In contrast, as the mother's social status is lower, she tends to control more and has more tensions with her child.

In the same way, the educational status also affects a mother's parenting. As the mother's educational status is higher, she tends to have a more intimate and autonomous parenting style; however, as the mother's educational status is lower, she is more likely to regulate more and to be more authoritarian (Maccoby, 1980).

Emily is an expert in adolescent development; Sujung is an expert in art education; and Karen is a restaurant manager, with no professional training related to the arts, education, or child development. Both Emily and Sujung indisputably had their own philosophy of education and knew how to share their favorite art with their child, including how to ask art-related questions and how to give lots of autonomy to their child. Karen, on the other hand, usually viewed the art without any educational strategy, just following her own instincts, and did not have a lot of conversation and interaction with her daughter compared with the other groups.

Expectations and motivations

I observed great differences in the parents' expectations and motivations, depending on how frequently they visited the museum, with or without children, and

on their knowledge of visual arts. Both Sujung and Emily had visited different types of museums with their children several times, but for Karen this was the first time in a museum with her daughter. Moreover, Sujung was an expert in art education, and Emily was also quite familiar with visual art. Karen was neither very knowledgeable about the art nor was she very interested in art in her daily life, and due to her busy work schedule did not have many opportunities to experience art with her child. She was content with entrusting her child's daycare center with her daughter's art education. Yet, when she was in the museum she showed a lot of enthusiasm for the exhibited objects and wanted to share her excitement with her daughter, which contributed even more to the daughter's alienation, since she would have preferred to follow her own interests.

Each of the mothers had different levels of experience and knowledge, and thus their expectations of the museum visit varied as well. I was able to gain insight into their expectations by observing and analyzing their viewing behaviors and conversations.

Sujung and Emily's expectations were flexible and changed depending on their child's behaviors and conversations. Sujung was interested in the child's emotions and sensory experience, and she pursued such questions as: "How do you feel when you see this?" Emily's behavior was based on child development theory, as she focused on her child's learning patterns and attitudes and they often had conversations about the notion of numbers, objects, materials, and shapes. In contrast, Karen was focused on her own expectations and interests, and her behavior did not change much because of her daughter's expectations. Rather, her family ended up viewing many art works separately, because neither mother nor daughter showed much flexibility.

Sujung and Emily's expectations at the museum focused more on providing their children with a meaningful experience and creating a learning opportunity about what a museum is and what various kinds of art there are, rather than on viewing their favorite art pieces. As a result, they concentrated on facilitation and communication. On the other hand, Karen was primarily interested in seeing her own favorite art and in providing her daughter a traditional educational opportunity based on the choices she as a mother and teacher made.

The children's expectations were to see the art works and to experience the museum environment. Interestingly, I noticed that all three children were attracted to similar art works. All of them, for example, liked the female sculpture which wore a dress, and in general they all preferred more expressive and realistic art or more 'child-like' art similar to their own creations. When they noticed these kinds of art objects, they would bring their mother to see them.

Housen (1992, 2002) constructed a theory on the stages of an individual's aesthetic development for evaluating museum visitors' behaviors and museum programs. In order to examine both children's and adults' aesthetic reactions, she used the Aesthetic Development Interview (ADI) designed to draw out viewer's thoughts and feelings about visual art. She identified the following stages in aesthetic development: the accountive stage, the constructive stage, the classifying stage, the interpretive stage, and the re-creative stage. Stage 1, accountive, occurs when viewers create a narrative based on their observations. In this stage, viewers do not see the works of art itself, but rather focus on what they know or what they like. In stage 2, constructive, viewers build a framework with their own perceptions and values. If the viewers do not see the art work they expected to see, they ignore it or judge it as weird.

Stage 3, classifying, occurs when viewers see a particular art work and consider its historical origin, style, location, and period and explain the art work from an analytical and critical stance similar to an art historian. In stage 4, interpretive, the viewers' perception and feeling become more important to their analytical and critical skills. They explore the art and appreciate and interpret it, allowing for the development of new insights that might lead them to re-interpret the piece of art and replace their old interpretation. By stage 5, re-creative, viewers have developed a flexible viewing stance. They consider art as a friend, and have a mix of specific and complicated reactions as a result of their personal experience and universal knowledge.

According to museum education research, based on Housen's stages of aesthetic development, most of children are in stage 1, and most adults are in stage 2 or 3. This helps us understand that large numbers of viewers are at a novice stage as museum visitors and art appreciators, and that aesthetic development and growth is not necessarily related to the viewer's age. Through this sequential stage process, viewers develop their thoughts and perceptions of their museum experience and of appreciating art (Housen, 1992, 2002). Moreover, as a museum decides to provide art works to visitors while keeping in mind the principles of aesthetic development so that the art will be accessible to viewers who find themselves in various stages of that development, these viewers will be more likely to approach the works of arts with increased interest and motivation (Yenawine, 2003). As numbers of family museum visitors are increasing, children also have more opportunities to encounter works of arts directly. The museum's role then is to provide educational opportunities to both children and adults that help them grow and develop their aesthetic thinking. As they gain in aesthetic understanding and develop more direct interactions with art, museum

visitors experience heightened motivation and expectation.

I think you need to connect this back to your families, and either try to identify the various stages that you think they were in, or just make a more general observation about them, such as : “Obviously, the research participants can be placed into different stages of Housen(1992)’s model, which helps us understand the differences in their expectations and motivations.”

Prior knowledge and experience

When visitors try to understand an exhibition, this involves a process of interpretation. The interpretation process depends on the exhibit’s communication with the viewer’s prior knowledge and experience (Hooper- Greenhill, 1999). In this process, the viewers’ senses and memories are entangled. Moreover, in order to achieve individual meaning making, viewers need to be in a continuous communication between past and present, and knowledge and senses (Falk, 2009).

During the museum visit, each mother tried to facilitate conversations related to what the child’s favorite objects or topics were, and each child also connected what they saw to prior events they experienced, stories they read, or movies they watched.

When the children viewed the arts and remembered their prior knowledge and experiences, these connections were not always pleasant, but rather at times caused scary and fearful emotional reactions. However, even when viewing the same art, the emotional reactions differed greatly from child to child, depending on their personal experiences and knowledge.

According to Vygotsky (1978), the role of parents and teachers in a child’s social, cognitive, and emotional development is to step in and provide help when

needed and stand back when the child is making progress by her/himself and is confident to take on a task alone. As parents and other adults provide scaffolding, they provide a construction which aids children in developing their problem-solving skills. By doing so, even if it is difficult for the learners to solve the problem by themselves at first, they safely acquire the confidence and the skills to learn how to step forward to ultimately solve the problem successfully.

The concept of scaffolding in the art museum is especially salient in terms of helping children overcome negative reactions to the art or the environment, such as emotions of fear or boredom. A parent can step in to provide appropriate support where needed, but also has to help the child learn how to overcome these emotional reaction by him/herself.

Museum environment

Clearly, the children were interested in not only the art works but also the museum environment, much more than their parents.

Sujung's daughter Junhee had noticed the gift store in the front of the museum when they arrived and remembered it all throughout her visit. While viewing the art, she frequently reminded her mother about the gift shop and said that she wanted to go there as quickly as possible. So after some viewing, they decided to go to the gift shop rather than see the other galleries that I had offered as research sites. When they were at the gift shop, Junhee seemed much more interested in that place than viewing the art because she was able to see, use, and touch the products freely.

Karen's daughter Nancy seemed not so interested in the indoor museum environment, but when she discovered the lion's paws statue in front of the museum,

she tried to climb up and touch it for a while until her mother called her. This museum does not have its own garden, but in general, a museum garden is also a good learning space to be enjoyed and experienced by family members (Falk & Dierking, 1992).

Emily's daughter led her mother to a chair in the museum several times to settle down and take a break. At times, she would sit in the chair and then found what she wanted to see. She was probably also tired because she spent a long time in the museum, viewing the art enthusiastically, but nevertheless she did not want to leave early.

The physical experience at the museum provides additional opportunities to stimulate a child's emotions and intellect. The museum environment, such as its architecture, the organization and display of the art works, as well as the physical site of the museum, all affect a visitor's experience and contribute to a memorable experience (Falk & Dierking, 1992, 2000).

Conclusion

The three family groups came to the museum with different expectations of their visit, such as enjoying leisure time, having social interactions, and furthering their family's education. But after they had arrived at the museum and started viewing the art, I could observe two styles of facilitating, which I believe reflect the parents' expectations for their families. One was a more flexible and child-centered style, with the parent turning into a helper and supporter; the other was more rigid and adult-centered with the parent turning into a teacher and the child into a student.

Sujung and Emily both acted as helpers and supporters, facilitating their daughters in a child-centered approach. When Emily facilitated her child's learning

experience in the museum, she got down to their level and made eye contact and paid attention to the child's behavior and ideas. Sujung and Emily both tried to take themselves back and respect their children's interests and timing. Parents should listen carefully to what the children say, what they want to see, and where they want to go, to make the visit more exciting for them (Wasserman & Ivany, 1996).

Sujung's daughter, Junhee, was older than the other children, and as her mother is an expert in art education, she has had lots of opportunities compared to other children to experience visits to art museums and also to make art since she was young. When these two were in the museum, they communicated about art-related themes, and discussed questions based on the works of arts, such as feelings, materials, and colors. Moreover, Junhee also created narratives based on particular art works. Emily's daughter Erica was only three years old, but as the mother is an expert in family education and child development, she tried to pose questions related to numbers (math), scientific thinking, the alphabet, and literacy in the arts in general. When parents ask their children questions in the museum, they need to pay attention how their questions affect the children. Because we as adults often expect certain answers that are close to our own intentions or opinions, parents should consider before asking what the child's authentic curiosities and interests are. In addition, we tend to not give a child enough time to answer, and often provide the answer ourselves before the child had a chance to do so, so parents should remember to wait for their child's answer when they ask a question (Paley, 1981). It often happens that the child's answer is very different from what the parents expected, but parents who respect their children's own thoughts and perspectives facilitate much more meaningful interaction and communication.

In contrast, when family members are solely focused on understanding and sharing large amounts of information about the objects, this actually reduces the quality of interaction between parent and child and family and art, which in turn makes the learning experience less memorable and thus less effective.

In Karen's case, the facilitation problem related to how and what the mother tried to teach the child. In the end, she did not succeed at facilitating art-related conversations or discussing special contents of art works. She did not have fluent conversations with her child in front of the works, but tended to want to inject the information from the labels into her child, or just had simple exchanges with her daughter based on questions or reaction such as "look at this, do you like it?" or "what is this?"

Yenawine (2001) validated Housen's model of the different stages of aesthetic development, when he asserted that the key for aesthetic development is experience with visual arts over time. Most important, aesthetic development is not determined by age. No matter whether they are adults or children, if viewers have not much experience with visual arts, they remain at stage 1. This implies that adults do not naturally have a higher aesthetic sense than children just because of their age. It is exposure to the arts over time that is the significant factor in aesthetic development. Without time spent with art, aesthetic development is not likely to occur. This theory suggests that Karen's style of facilitating is directly related to her lack of experience and education in terms of arts. Yet, it also means that she has the potential to develop her aesthetic sense through lots of experience with art in a museum or elsewhere.

In sum, however, I do not think Karen's family had an inappropriate museum experience. According to Finn (1985), all kinds of museum learning behaviors have

meaning:

There is no right or wrong way to visit a museum. The most important rule you should keep in mind as you go through the front door is to follow your own instincts. Be prepared to find what excites you, to enjoy what delights your heart and mind, perhaps to have aesthetic experiences you will never forget. (Finn, 1985, n. p.)

Finn asserted that flexibility and open-mindedness are key to having a meaningful experience at the museum. Karen's family opened the door to future museum experiences through this first museum visit together. If they want to build on this experience and develop an aesthetic sense together, it would be helpful if the mother could be more open to such experiences for her family and maybe become more flexible in her role as facilitator.

Parents need to provide appropriate facilitation if they want their young children to have a memorable experience. And conversation is the most significant factor in conducting this facilitation. Conversation does not mean to teach or to assert one's own opinions. Conversation should allow for an exchange of ideas that benefits from and facilitates the other person's thinking. A parent's facilitation gives the child the opportunity to engage in the art and the art museum more deeply.

In order to offer the child a meaningful experience at the museum, one they will remember for a long time, not only museum educators and curators but also parents have to take on an important role. This means that parents should not merely ask what art pieces are made by whom, what they are made of, or what they depict. To truly aid

their child's development, both parents and museum personnel need to understand how to facilitate children's experiences in the museum, how to attract them with playful and interesting elements, and how to connect to their intellect as well as emotions. For the child to become a regular museum visitor and appreciator of the arts in the future, parents need to let their child know that the museum is not a boring but a highly interesting, fun, and stimulating space, one in which the child's opinion is just as important as the adult's.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

The museum is as a special informal learning space, in which visitors can experience the value of learning and meaning-making through personal interaction with the art and with each other. According to Falk and Dierking (2000), learning in the museum is shaped by the integration and interaction of each visitor's personal, social, and physical context. Based on these contexts, each learning experience is highly individualized and mediated by time, offering visitors the opportunity of deep engagement with the art (Henry, 2010). As family groups consist of different generations, genders, and have different sizes, and each of their members has different expectations and interests, it is of particular importance that their different needs get met by the museum.

The reason that I chose the art museum from among other kinds of museums, such as science museums, children's museums, zoos, and aquariums, which are often very child-friendly and interactive, is that parents tend to think that the art museum, especially a traditional-style one, is a boring and uncomfortable space to bring their child to.

Contemporary art exhibitions in particular often display art that the viewers feel is abstruse and that to them does not communicate the artist's intention, which basically leaves them wondering why this art work is called art (Becker, 1996). Moreover, Becker (1996) stated, without having knowledge of genres, categories, and conventions, novice viewers in particular might have a difficult time interpreting and accessing the works of art.

In addition, since the museum is a common space, visitors are asked to be considerate of others and to keep quiet. Parents also are asked to pay attention to their children's behavior and to discourage them from running in the galleries to decrease the risk of their child getting hurt or a sculpture or installation being broken (Barbe-Gall, 2005). Major art museums can often offer more family-friendly experiences. They tend to have their own children's galleries and provide various kinds of hands-on and studio programs, which appeals to family groups and brings them (back) into the museum (Otaka, 2007). For a good reason, most parents usually want to go to a museum which is child-friendly, and where it is possible to do hands-on activities, rather than a conventional style of art museum which they think does not accommodate visitors with children very well (Falk & Dierking, 1992).

Moreover, while museum theories (Crowley, & Callanan, 1998; Diamond, 1986; Falk, 2009; Falk & Dierking, 1992, 2000; Hilke, 1988; Leinhardt, & Knutson, 2004) generally cover parent and child interactions in the museum, they hardly ever refer to art museums, especially those exhibiting contemporary art. When children visit traditional art museums, it is often as part of a school field trip, outside of the family context. Thus, studies on family education in art museums are rare.

In an attempt to fill that research gap, and to contribute to an understanding of how family members experience contemporary art museums, I researched the conversations and viewing behaviors of three different family groups. I investigated what role parents play in the art museum, and how prior knowledge and experience affects family members who are visiting the museum and appreciating the arts, along with their interests and expectations regarding their visit. My study yielded the following results.

First, when viewing works of art in a child-centered and free-choice style, the child showed more interest and engaged in more conversations about the art with their parent. However, when viewing the art in a parent-centered or object-centered way, the child did not want to have conversations about the art with the parent and easily lost interest and felt bored, wanting to leave quickly.

The children's reaction varied depending on their parents' prior experience and knowledge of visual arts and museums, as well as their educational and socio-economic status. When socio-economic and educational status was higher, and prior experience and knowledge of visual arts were higher, like in the cases of Sujung and Emily, I found that parents facilitated in a child-centered and free-choice learning style; when both statuses were lower, such as in Karen's case, I found that the parent focused on a parent-centered and object-centered learning style. These parents' facilitation styles very much affected the children's museum learning experiences.

Moreover, each child also had different prior experiences and knowledge about the art and approached the art objects with different attitudes and expectations. For example, the same piece of art could make one child feel interested and enjoying it, while another child felt scared and fearful, and a third child was indifferent to it. These varying responses were based on each child's prior experience and knowledge. If the child had had a scary experience related to that art work or the theme associated with it in the past, then she was likely to imagine scary things when viewing it. In contrast, if the child had had a pleasant experience related to the art work before, she would respond with interest.

Second, I found that the children were not very interested in the information about the displayed art objects. They liked to see and imagine the art itself first and

then, maybe, check the information next. Parents, however, showed much less imagination in their viewing behaviors. Most parents fulfilled their curiosity by checking the label right away rather than contemplating the art and imagining what it represented.

Moreover, the children were not only interested in the art works, but also in the overall museum environment, such as the gift shop, chairs, movies, containers, and windows. Those physical environments especially aroused their interest when they were getting bored or tired.

All children wanted to touch the works of art. In order to understand and know what it feels like, or what a particular piece of art was made out of, their hands went directly to the arts first. While many major art museums are able to offer special exhibitions for children that display hands-on objects, unfortunately, the Palmer Museum has no opportunities for visitors to touch objects. Thus, parents need to understand their role as facilitators in the museum, especially in regard to touching.

Overall in this study, I realized that while each family group's learning behavior in the art museum had its individual characteristics, there were also differences and similarities in their behaviors and facilitations style that had much to do with the parents' educational and socio-economic status. As each museum visitor's expectations, background, and interests are different, each parent's role in the facilitation process also varies. My observations and evaluations of these diverse child and parent reactions in the museum leave no doubt that the role of the parents is crucial in promoting the child's interest in the art and in engaging them in meaningful conversations.

Museum learning is made by the visitor him- or herself. According to the

constructivist viewpoint, learning is an active meaning-making process, and for this concept of learning, personal experience is the most important factor. This means that visitors are not passive learners, but active agents as they make decisions, prior to the museum visit, during the visit, and afterwards. During their museum visit, they experience and conduct numerous choice processes, i.e., they make meaning. Children are the same. Housen (1992)'s research revealed that an adult's aesthetic development is not necessarily more developed than a child's; thus parents should not regard children as more passive and novice learners than themselves. Facilitation is not a one-side interaction, just received from the parents. It works best when communication flows, conversation gets initiated and moved forward by both sides, and adults as well as children can be both teachers and students. Such interactions make reciprocal learning possible for parents and children.

Based on these results, I had several questions. First, an essential question is how to convey these results to parents. Beyond conducting and evaluating my research, what matters to me is how to use my results: How can I apply them effectively and appropriately to other families' museum experiences? Based on my results, it is obvious to me that one of the methods of properly conveying what the research showed, is to focus on preparing for a visit at the art museum with children. When families visit for the first time or parents do not know how to facilitate the visit or how to communicate with their child in the art museum, it would probably be helpful for both the parent and the child if the museum provided a parent guide book or a simple orientation movie on the museum's web site or in the actual museum before they visit the gallery.

My second question is of less practical and of a more philosophical or

theoretical nature and concerns how I can define what constitutes a meaningful museum experience for each family and its individual members. As their personal backgrounds, likes and dislikes, family constellations, and family history varies, it seems inappropriate to create a framework for defining what is meaningful. One of the limitations of my study was that I collected data and analysis without deep understanding of each family group, because my research was a one-time observation and interview. While I tried to minimize this limitation by giving each family a background survey to learn more about them, it was still hard for me to understand and come to conclusions about what would have been meaningful to these family groups in terms of their museum experience. Hence I acknowledge that in future studies, in order to understand a particular family's experience more deeply, I need to research them over time, and also probably observe their long-term aesthetic development.

I conducted my case studies in order to investigate the role of parents and to reinforce family education in the art museum. Because this research was limited to interactions between mothers and daughters, future studies in this area should include a wider variety of interactions between family members, such as between parent and parent, and sibling and sibling, as well as across different generations and genders to achieve more meaningful results.

In addition, it would be useful to figure out how the observation could be even less intrusive and obvious to the participants, especially the children. Observing participants from a distance and following their tracks probably influenced their behavior to some degree. Future research needs to reinvestigate the researcher's stance and prepare for as little interruption as possible in order to minimize the

influence of the observer on the research participants, which might lead to changes in their natural behavior.

The most important value of the museum visit for children is to have memorable experiences in their lives. If children have positive lasting memories about the art and their own museum experiences, they are more likely to grow into active art lovers and art consumers. If they have memorable museum experiences in their early childhood, they will be able to enjoy the opportunity to be frequent museum visitors, and moreover will be able to share and understand different cultures and societies. Parents play a very important role in helping their young children have meaningful experiences at the museum, which has significance for their entire life. The more playful, multi-sensual and interactive the child's experience in the art museum is, the more positive the associations he or she will have with the visit in the future, and the more effective their appreciation of the arts and their learning will be.

The essence of the museum experience is each visitor's individual meaning-making process during their visit. In order to make the experiences of family visitors satisfying, we need to develop a balance between the family's and the museum's needs and goals. Collecting and analyzing data regarding the current state of family education in the museum lays the important groundwork for this development. I believe that this study can be a cornerstone for future museum education, and I would like to invite others to build on what we know and understand today.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

FAMILY OBSERVATION QUESTIONS

I will observe the activities of family groups in an art museum based on the following questions:

1. How are the groups constituted (age, sex, and educational background of family members)?
2. What are the children's and parents' learning behaviors?
3. How do conversations with family members help each person understand the art experience?
4. What kinds of art-related experiences do parents and children share, and how do they encourage each other in this process?
5. Who initiates the conversation and leads in terms of viewing behavior?
6. What are the art pieces, or the kinds of art, that they engage in?

Appendix B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

I will conduct a semi-structured interview with the parents after I finish the observation. The questions of the semi-structured interview are based on the following:

Family background

Family information

1. How is your family constituted?
2. What is your (and your spouse's/partner's) major (undergraduate/graduate) or occupation?
3. What is the age of your child(ren)?

Art-related family background

1. What kinds of art do you and your family like? (Traditional art, modern art, contemporary art, etc.)
2. How often do you take your child(ren) to an art museum?
3. Does your child like art-making or art-related activities? If he/she does, how do you interact with him/her about his/her art?
4. How familiar is 'art' in your family?

Agenda before museum visiting

Choice

5. What do you consider when you choose an art museum or particular exhibit?
6. How do you choose the art museum? (By yourself, together with spouse/partner, or together with all family members?)

Purpose

7. What is the purpose of your museum visit(s) with your child(ren)?

Preparation

8. Do you do any preparations before going to the art museum? (Such as downloading a family guide book, visiting the museum website, etc.)

Agenda during museum visiting

Learning

9. What do you think of the museum as a learning place; what do you think you learned at the museum? What do you think your child(ren) learn?
10. How did you try to interact with your child(ren) while viewing the art? Are you satisfied with your interaction with your child(ren)?

Difficulties and challenges

11. What were the difficulties and challenges during the process of appreciating art with your child(ren)?

Agenda after museum visiting

Significance

12. What do you think is the parents' role when appreciating art with their child(ren)?
13. What benefit(s) do you want to derive from the museum visit?

Museum-related experience

14. What did you do after visiting the museum? Did you do any artistic activity, such as making art, or did you talk about the museum experience with your family?

Appendix C

LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear parents,

My name is Min Kyung Kim, and I am a master's student in the Art Education Department at the Pennsylvania State University. During my time working at an art museum in Gwacheon, Korea, I learned that the museum is a dynamic informal learning space for families, and I came to realize how much the parents' style of learning behavior influences their young children.

My research focuses on naturally occurring learning behaviors of parents and their children and the conversations between them. The objective of my research is to explore how parents interact with their pre-school- and early elementary school-aged children (that is, three to ten-year olds) in art-related conversations.

To better understand how children and parents interact with each other and how they share museum learning experiences, I would like to observe your and your child(ren)'s naturally occurring behavior and conversations that take place during an one-hour visit to the Palmer Museum of Art on the Penn State campus. In addition, within a week after your time in the museum, I would like to conduct an interview with you in order to learn about your experience and interaction with your child in the art museum.

Participants need to meet the following criteria:

- Each family group has a minimum of two members: at least one parent and one child.
- Each family group has at least one child who is between three and ten years old.
- Maximum group size is five or six family members.

If your family group meets these criteria, please consider participating in my research. Since your participating children are under the age of eighteen, I will need a signed agreement from one of the parents. I promise that the research poses no risk to the participants' mental or physical health beyond what they encounter in their everyday life.

Moreover, research participants' personal information and identification will not be identifiable in any way. The compiled data serves my study only, and study results will be kept strictly confidential and will be completely destroyed before 2013. There are no obvious benefits to you or your child, except that you will spend some quality time with your child and you will be contributing to university research and to the field of museum education. If you remember going to the museum as a child and see how far the field has come since then, you can probably imagine how important research input has been over the years to enhancing the museum experience and making art education both fun AND educational.

Please contact me if you would like to participate in this study (or if you have any

questions or concerns about the research procedure) at 814-380-0944 or muk189@psu.edu. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Min Kyung Kim

Appendix D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

ORP OFFICE USE ONLY DO NOT REMOVE OR MODIFY IRB# Doc. # The Pennsylvania State University Institutional Review Board
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Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: Parents and children in the art museum

Principal Investigator: Min Kyung Kim, Graduate Student
Arts Cottage
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 380-0944; muk189@psu.edu

Advisor: Dr. Christine Thompson
209 Arts Cottage
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 863-7311; cmt15@psu.edu

Other Investigator(s): none

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research is to explore how parents interact with their pre-school- and early elementary school-aged children (that is, from three to ten years old) in art-related conversations and to what extent they use a knowledge-based or an experienced-based approach. The Principal Investigator also analyzes parent and child learning behavior by tracing their movements through the museum.

Procedures to be followed:

The data gathering process will consist of non-participant observation of the family groups who visit the Palmer Museum. The Palmer Museum of Art at the Pennsylvania State University is a suitable research site for observing parent-child conversations and viewing behaviors. This study focuses on contemporary art displayed in the Temporary Exhibition Gallery and Pincus Gallery of Contemporary Art and the Snowiss Gallery of American Art.

The observations collect information about the interactions between your child(ren) and you through your conversations and viewing behaviors as recorded on tape and video. After finishing the observations, the Principal Investigator will conduct an interview with you. This interview will take place either immediately after your museum visit, or on another day of your choice within a week of the observation.

The study will entail a short survey of basic background information and a longer interview related to each family's museum experiences. Before the observation, the Principal Investigator will ask you to fill out a short survey (10 minutes) to get to

know you and to better understand you during the observation. Then, your family will begin the museum visit, and the Principal Investigator will start the observation, focusing on your family's behavior and conversations. During your museum visit, I will take photos of you and your child(ren)'s viewing behavior, and I will attach a mike to both you and your family members' clothes to record your family's conversation and viewing behaviors on audio and video. After finishing the observation, the Principal Investigator will ask you about your experience and how you make meaning of your museum visit (60 minutes). This study will be done on two days; the short survey and observation on the first day, the interview on a second day which will be within a week of finishing your museum visit. The interview will be conducted at a place and time that make you feel comfortable. This interview will not be conducted with your children, but in case you will bring your children to the interview, I will provide some drawing materials (sketch books, crayons, and pencils) to keep them busy.

All of the data will be stored on the Principal Investigator's hard disk drive on a personal computer, and only the Principal Investigator and the Advisor will have access to the data. Moreover, I will destroy all recordings and photographs within three years, before 2013. And I will reformat my computer to completely destroy all of the data saved on it.

The Principal investigator wants to research your family's natural museum visiting behaviors so there will be no expectations of how your family should behave during the visit.

Discomforts and Risks:

There are no known risks and discomforts to anyone involved in this study.

Benefits:

The benefits of the research to you are increased insights and knowledge about museum education and increased enjoyment of museum visits with your children.

Duration:

Approximately two or two and a half hours, spread over two different days.

Statement of Confidentiality:

Your participation in this research is confidential. The data will be stored and secured at *Min Kyung Kim's personal computer* in a *locked and password protected* file. The Pennsylvania State University's Office for Research Protections, the Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this research study. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

Right to Ask Questions:

Please contact Min Kyung Kim at (814) 380-0944 with questions, complaints or concerns about this research. You can also call this number if you feel this study has harmed you. If you have any questions, concerns, problems about your rights as a research participant or would like to offer input, please contact The Pennsylvania

State University's Office for Research Protections (ORP) at (814) 865-1775. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedures. Questions about research procedures can be answered by the research team.

Voluntary Participation: Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

I give permission for my child, _____,
to participate in this research.

Participant Signature

Date

Person Obtaining Consent

Date