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Jessica Ann Piegrass
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**The Thesis Committee for Jessica Ann Piegrass
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**How Family Groups Experience the Blanton Museum of Art:
A Case Study**

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

Melinda M. Mayer

Paul E. Bolin

How Family Groups Experience the Blanton Museum of Art:

A Case Study

by

Jessica Ann Piepgrass, B.A.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my family – my parents who encouraged me to attend graduate school, my Grandma Piepgrass who inspired in me a love of art, and to Nathan.

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Thank you to Dr. Mayer. Your patience and coaching were invaluable during this experience. Thank you to my mom and dad who supported and encouraged me while I worked on this enormous undertaking. Without their love and encouragement I am not sure I ever would have finished. Thank you to Nathan, for his patience, his understanding, and his willingness to be my editor. It was not fun, but somebody had to do it.

Abstract

How Family Groups Experience the Blanton Museum of Art: A Case Study

Jessica Piepgrass, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

Supervisor: Melinda M. Mayer

This thesis details a study that I conducted in order to better understand family groups who visit the Blanton Museum of Art. This data is presented using a case study methodology. I interviewed and observed eight families in an attempt to better understand what brought them to the Blanton, and what they wanted to accomplish during their time at the museum. The data collected revealed six themes. Four of these themes were goals the families brought with them to the Blanton Museum of Art. One of the themes pertained to individual motivations for coming to the museum. The final theme related to the participating families use of museum resources other than the art on display.

The data was meaningful in that it demonstrated that these families did have specific goals for their time at the Blanton, and the families demonstrated behaviors which served as a means to accomplishing these goals. A goal of this research was to provide me, as an educator, with a more full and rich understanding of family groups that visit museums.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	x
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Introduction.....	1
Central Research Question.....	2
Problem Statement.....	2
Motivations for Research.....	3
Personal Motivations	3
Professional Motivations	5
Speculation About the Investigation.....	6
Research Methodology	7
Location	7
Participants.....	8
Data Collection	8
Definition of Terms.....	9
Limitations of the Study.....	9
Benefits to the Field of Art Education	10
Conclusion	11
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	12
Visitor Studies and Visitor Behavior	12
Informal Learning (Learning in a Museum Context)	18
Children and the Museum.....	22
Family Experience in Museums.....	24
Conclusion	31
Chapter 3: Methodology	32
Qualitative Research	32
Case Study Methodology.....	32
Location and Timing of the Study	34
Participants.....	35

Additional Information Regarding the Families	38
Qualitative Data Collection Methods.....	39
Data Collection Methods Utilized for this Study.....	41
Data Analysis.....	43
Conclusion	45
Chapter 4: Data Analysis	46
The Study Participants’ Backgrounds.....	46
Themes From the Data.....	50
Exposure to Art.....	53
Establishment of the Goal.....	53
Actions Related to the Goal	54
Visitor Reflections on the Goal.....	56
Actively Viewing Artwork	57
Establishment of the Goal.....	58
Actions Related to the Goal	59
Visitor Reflections on the Goal.....	65
Seeking and Sharing Information	68
Actions Relating to the Goal.....	69
Visitor Reflections on the Goal.....	70
Museum Behavior or Etiquette	71
Statement of the Goal.....	72
Actions Relating to the Goal.....	72
Visitor Reflections on the Goal.....	74
Identifying Individual Motivations	75
Statement of the Motivations	75
Actions Relating to the Motivation.....	76
Utilizing Museum Resources.....	78
Actions Relating to the Theme	79
Visitor Reflections on the Theme	81
Conclusion	83

Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	84
Goals and Motivations Derived from My Data	84
Meanings of Goals and Motivations Derived from My Data	86
Meaning of Observed Behavior Within the Museum	91
Parent Behaviors	91
Guiding Behaviors Exhibited by Parents	92
Teaching Behaviors Exhibited by Parents	93
Family Behaviors	96
Collaborative Behaviors.....	96
Interactive Behaviors	97
Fulfillment of Goals.....	99
Areas For Further Research	101
Conclusion	102
Appendix A: Permission Letter from Blanton	104
Appendix B: Consent and Assent Forms	105
Appendix C: Interview Protocol	113
References.....	114

List of Tables

Table 1:	Families who Participated in the Study	38
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Chapter 1: Introduction

INTRODUCTION

As an art museum educator, my passion lies in working with families and children within the museum environment. Interacting with children is professionally and personally something that is fulfilling and enjoyable for me. Children typically come to museums in two ways, as a part of a school group or with a family. Working with families, enables me, as an educator, to engage with a group that is unique amongst museum visitors. Families are varied in ages, and they choose to visit museums by of their own accord. A family is an intimate group; they have their own culture, their own values, and their own shared history (Borun, 2002). Knowing that this is the segment of museum visitors with whom I am most interested and with whom I enjoy involving myself with the most, I knew that I wanted to frame the research question for my thesis around families as museum visitors.

When I began the process of planning the study presented in this thesis, my intention was to conduct research in which I would be collecting qualitative data in an effort to learn about families who visit the Blanton Museum of Art. At that time, my most recent professional experiences in the field of museum education had taken place at the Blanton Museum of Art in Austin, Texas. Because of this, the Blanton was the natural place to conduct this research as I was familiar with the museum, its staff, collections, and audiences.

I wanted to learn more about family audiences: about their motivations for visiting the museum, if they come to the museum with specific learning objectives in

mind, and what their experiences at the museum actually entail. While there is a wide range of research (Borun, 2002; Crowley & Callanan, 1998; Falk & Dierking, 1995; Munley & Roberts, 2006; Rennie & Johnston, 2004) available regarding families, what motivates them to visit art museums, and how they experience them; the goal of my research was to explore not only what brought families to the Blanton Museum of Art, but also what they actually wanted to accomplish through their visit. I wanted to look beyond motivations to see if there were specific goals or objectives that families who would participate in my study set for themselves on their day in the museum.

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION

This central question directed my research, “What expectations, goals, and objectives motivate the visits of family groups to the Blanton Museum of Art, in what ways are their aims met, and how do families’ interactions at the museum reflect those aims?” I designed this question to have three parts because I was and am, interested in what happened before the families came to the museum, what occurred once they were at the museum, and how they felt about completing and fulfilling their goals after their visit.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Family groups are the majority of museum visitors. Because they make up approximately 60% of all museum visitors (Borun, 2002; Munley & Roberts, 2006), there is a need for further investigation into what brings families to art museums, and how they choose to experience the museum during the course of their visit. While there have been many studies conducted regarding families who attend other types of museums – science museums, children’s museums, etc. – there has not been as much research done on

families as visitors within an art museum context (Folk, 2007). Folk (2007) states that family education in art museums is a relatively new concept, thus not a lot is known about them. Currently, there is also a lot of experimentation in the field regarding family visitor groups, their needs, and the programming that will best serve them (Folk, 2007). There is a need to look deeper into the experience of family visitors within the art museum context, so that museum educators can better understand and meet their needs.

In the recent past, a shift occurred in a museum educator's responsibilities from being object-centered to a new focus on the visitor (Munley & Roberts, 2006). As it is a museum educator's job to create and implement, "timely and relevant experiences" for those who visit the museum (Munley & Roberts, 2006, p. 33), it is a necessity for museum educators to know their audience. In order to better understand visitors, and the dynamics that occur in a free-choice learning setting, museum educators need to talk to the visitors and solicit feedback (Borun, 2002). By studying families who visit the Blanton Museum of Art, I hoped to learn more about them, and why they visit the museum so that as a museum educator I can better serve them.

MOTIVATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Personal Motivations

I was a child who often went to museums during my youth. It was not just my parents who took me to museums, but my grandmother would frequently take me to local museums as well. I did not realize it until I was older, but a museum experience was different depending on who accompanied me. As a child, my grandmother was a working artist and former art teacher. She lived in a neighborhood adjacent to the grounds of the

McNay Museum of Art in San Antonio, Texas, and so it was a place we would often visit. Going to the museum with my Grandma was an entertaining experience. She had no shortage of opinions about artworks, and plenty of stories about the artists themselves, but she also was interested in hearing my opinion. She just wanted to talk about the art. What I thought genuinely mattered to her.

My parents would also take me to museums while I was growing up. I became interested in art and art history at a young age, and my parents were very encouraging of that. They were more than willing to take me to museums and exhibitions that were interesting to me, but a trip to the museum with my Dad and Mom was distinctly different from those I would go on with Grandma. My parents were going to the museum because I wanted to go, and I was usually the more interested party. The conversations we had together would usually consist more of my parents and I discussing what we knew about what we were viewing, as opposed to my parents facilitating discussions or weaving the more narrative and subjective conversations that my Grandma so often initiated. In hindsight, both experiences were beneficial. With my parents I would acquire more factual information and with my grandmother I became more comfortable forming my own tastes and opinions. The types of interactions I had would vary, as the adult that I was attending the museum with affected the types of experiences I had at the museum.

As an adult, after choosing to pursue my Masters degree in Art Education at The University of Texas at Austin, I became involved with the Blanton Museum of Art through various internships. In 2012 I was asked to conduct observations for a tracking and timing study at the Blanton Museum of Art, where I worked as a graduate intern in

the Education Department. While involved with this research, I followed visitor groups around an exhibition noting and quantifying the different behaviors that people were exhibiting in the galleries. I saw some interactions like those I remembered having as a child, and some that were different. I realized how broad the spectrum can be of how families and adult-child groups explore and interact with a museum. While conducting the study, I found it incredibly frustrating that I could not ask these groups any questions. I was, and still am, curious about how family groups learn, what they want to learn or accomplish when they visit the museum, and what they do to fulfill those needs within the museum context.

Professional Motivations

Much of the reading I did in preparation for this thesis mentioned the need for further research into the area of family learning in the art museum context (Falk, 2008; Folk, 2007), as there is a lack of knowledge in this area. Prior to conducting my research, I believed that by focusing on family groups who visit the Blanton, I would be able to learn more about their motivations and goals prior to coming to the museum, and possibly about the learning or personal outcomes achieved after they have completed their museum visit.

Additionally, my research addresses questions set forth in the research agenda presented in the 2008 NAEA Strategic Plan (“Creating,” 2008). This plan set forth four broad categories of areas of potential research – (a) learning, (b) community, (c) advocacy, and (d) research and knowledge. Exploring the questions of how adult-child groups interact in an art museum context, and what they want to get out of a visit to a

museum, would further the knowledge base in the learning category of this research agenda.

I am also interested in why there is so much variation in the types of interactions researchers have observed in families within a museum environment (Borun, 2002; Crowley & Callanan, 1998; Falk & Dierking, 1992), and in the amount and types of interaction between adults and children in an art museum context. As a museum educator, I am professionally invested in the question of what I can do to better facilitate interaction within these visitor groups to promote family learning and to help visitors have the experience they want to achieve when they visit a museum. My hope was that by studying groups consisting of adults and children in a museum environment, I would be able to have a better understanding of what brings adult-child groups to the museum, and what they are trying to get out of their experience.

SPECULATION ABOUT THE INVESTIGATION

I speculated that I would find families came to the Blanton for a diverse range of reasons. I thought that some might come for leisure, maybe to see a specific exhibition, or perhaps because they had previously visited the museum. While doing background reading (see Chapter 2), I learned that most observational studies of families in museums led researchers to find patterns and groupings in both motivations for a visit and learning behaviors (Borun, 2002; Crowley & Callanan, 1998; Crowley & Swartz, 2004). Researchers were able to categorize behaviors they observed, such as how parents led their children. Through coding of interviews and recorded interactions, language and learning categories typically emerge. I hypothesized that I would be able to categorize motivations and goals of the family groups who participated in my study. However, I

also hypothesized that by going deeper than just expectations, and by attempting to find out if families have specific objectives and goals in mind for their museum visit, that I would be able to more specifically categorize visitors by what they hoped to achieve with their visit. I believed that while there would be variation in motivations, goals, and objectives different families bring with them to the Blanton, I would be able to categorize the behaviors they exhibited in the museum in some way.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I wanted to use a case study as my research methodology, because it was important for me to present my data in a form that would allow for a descriptive and holistic discussion of the participants of this study. Creswell (2009) defines a case study as a form of inquiry that can be used to study a specific, limited set, such as a “program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (p. 13). As a result, case studies tend to be focused and narrow, in order to provide an in-depth perspective on the phenomena being studied. Common forms of data collection used in qualitative case studies are interviews, observational notes, and the usage of documents as a data source (Merriam, 1998). I wanted to present my findings using a case study format, because I thought that it would enable me to focus on the visitors and their experiences, which was always the intention of my research.

LOCATION

The research study took place at the Blanton Museum of Art on the campus of The University of Texas at Austin. I conducted the study in the summer and fall of 2013.

I gathered data on Saturdays and Sundays because I believed family groups, my focus, would be most likely to visit the museum on these days due to weekday work and school restrictions.

PARTICIPANTS

I wanted the participants in this study to be families I met at the Blanton Museum of Art. A total of eight families participated in my research. The families consisted of parents and children of different ages and familial configurations.

DATA COLLECTION

As previously mentioned, interviews, observational notes, and the studying of documents are all common data collection techniques utilized when conducting a case study (Merriam, 1998). Creswell (2009) states that qualitative researchers often combine these forms of data collected, as opposed to relying on one form. I decided to use two methods of data collection commonly used in case study research, observational field notes and interviews.

I chose these data collection methods based on techniques that were used in the literature I had read in preparation for this study. All the studies I read described a methodology in which the researchers collected qualitative data of some type (Borun, 2002; Crowley & Callanan, 1998; Falk & Dierking, 1995; Rennie & Johnston, 2004). For their various studies, the researchers conducted either interviews or collected observational data, and in some instances used both means of data collection to obtain information. Using multiple data collection methods is supported and recommended not

only by literature regarding case studies and qualitative research (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998), but also by current literature featuring studies of families in museums. Rennie and Johnston (2004) stress that the best way to learn the perspectives of visitors is to have them report it in their own words. Observations can help to correlate and support or negate statements that the participant makes when being interviewed. Crowley and Swartz (2004) agree that combining interview and observational methodologies provides a more complete picture of a visitor's experience.

I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews when initially meeting the families and after their museum visit was complete. The interviews were to be semi-structured so that I would be able to ask follow-up questions when necessary, and gain as much information as possible. After the initial semi-structured interview, I intended to ask families if they would be comfortable with me observing them during their visit. I planned on taking field notes that could later be compared and correlated to the interview transcripts.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Family – For the purpose of this research, I defined families as multi-generational groups. The families needed to consist of at least one legal guardian and child or multiple children.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

I conducted this study at the Blanton Museum of Art in Austin, Texas. As a result, the data I collected was specific to this one institution. Using one location, I was

also limited by the number of families who could participate in the study. I conducted this research for the purposes of a master's degree thesis, which is limited in scope and space for discussion, and thus also limited in the number of participants. Further limiting the number of participants in this study is that I chose to present the data in the format of a case study. A case study allows for an in-depth, rich look at the participants, but as it is an in-depth approach that requires intensive discussions of participants, it also limited the number of participants that was reasonable to include in this study. As a result of the specific location and limited number of study participants, the generalizability of my results is limited.

BENEFITS TO THE FIELD OF ART EDUCATION

Much of the literature I read in preparation for this research has called for further study regarding families and how they learn and interact within a museum context. It was my intention with this study to shed light on particular aspects of the families' visits. I examined how the participants in this study came to the Blanton with goals and motivations, how these were fulfilled, and how the families then reflected on their visit afterwards. The data collected sheds light on the participating families' experience, and as a result contributes to the goal of learning more about families as museum visitors and their specific needs. As previously mentioned, my research addresses questions set forth in the research agenda presented in the 2007-2010 NAEA Strategic Plan ("Creating," 2008). Exploring the questions of how adult-child groups interact in a museum context and what they want to get out of a visit to a museum would further the base of knowledge in the learning category of this research agenda.

CONCLUSION

The research presented in this study was born out of a love for working with children and their families who visit art museums. I was a child similar to some of those who appear in this study, and I could see my parents and grandmother reflected in the participants as well. The data they provided has allowed me to have a better understanding of how other families experience museums. This study enabled me to learn more about family groups who visit the Blanton Museum of Art. By studying what these families wanted to accomplish and how they did so, I will be a more informed museum educator in the future. The following chapter will discuss in-depth the literature I read in preparation for this research. This will be followed by a more rigorous look at my study methodology, the presentation and analysis of my data, and a discussion of the meaning of my findings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

When developing my thesis investigation, I was led to my research question by interest in families, specifically families with children, and how they interact with each other in the museum. Because of my research question, my review of literature centered around four main areas – (a) general readings on museum visitors and museum visitor behavior, (b) informal learning and learning in a museum environment, (c) children in the museum context, (d) family experiences in museums.

VISITOR STUDIES AND VISITOR BEHAVIOR

While my study focuses on families and how they experience the museum as a unit, I began my background research by reading general sources that pertained to museum visitors in a broad sense. I found Marilyn Hood's (1993) article, "After 70 Years of Audience Research, What Have We Learned?", to be a good introduction to this topic. Within this article, Hood reviews the history of studying visitors in museums from the early twentieth century through 1979, and gives a useful chronology of what was learned about visitor needs during this time period.

I found the first two sections most informative to my research, and the issues that Hood (1993) discusses are still relevant to museum educators today. In the section titled "Comfort and Social" interaction, Hood reviews literature as far back as 1916 that addresses the concept of museum fatigue. Museum fatigue refers to the symptoms of fatigue – mental or physical – that museum visitors frequently demonstrate during or after a museum visit. Hood (1993) states that museum fatigue is often more of a psychological issue than a physical issue. It is frequently the "mental saturation," the

sheer excess of information, that tends to wear out museum visitors (p. 18). In the section “Leisure and Communications Research,” Hood (1993) notes that as the work week was shortened in the mid-twentieth century, the general public had more time for leisure activities, such as visiting museums, and this led to a greater and more diverse museum audience.

The following sections, “Museology Research 1950-1969” and “Leisure and Museology Research 1960-1979,” (Hood, 1993) review other literature pertinent to the field of audience research within those time frames. Hood concludes the article by noting that many museums still lack the basic comforts that would make the museum visitor’s experience more enjoyable, such as easily accessible restrooms and plenty of comfortable places to sit and rest. In response to these matters, she calls for greater care and thoughtfulness for the visitor from museums and museum educators. This article is demonstrative of barriers, such as museum fatigue and an unwelcoming environment, that visitors sometimes face while visiting a museum. These are issues that could possibly hinder or prevent a visitor from having the experience they are seeking when they visit a museum, and issues that could possibly prevent visitors from achieving goals and intents they may have set forth for themselves.

Literature by Falk and Dierking (1992, 1995, 2012), a research team who specialize in museum visitor studies, was highly informative to my work. From their article, “Recalling the Museum Experience” (1995), I gained insight into how visitor experiences impact their recollection of a museum visit and what facets of a visit stay with the visitors after their visit. This article demonstrates that there are some facets of a

museum visit or experience that have the most effect and stay with a visitor. It seems that museum visitors best remember the parts of their trip to a museum when they have some form of prior experience to associate with it. They also found that almost all memories of a museum visit that participants could recall were linked to “nonmuseum memories” (p. 11). Falk and Dierking (1995) investigated how well adults recalled museum experiences they had as children. They found that 96% of the study participants could recall a field trip to some form of a museum as a child and of that 96%, 123 out of 125 participants, could recall specific information regarding the visit (p. 11). The authors argue that this demonstrates just how important and formative museum visits are to children. Falk and Dierking (1995) also address how children who visited museums more frequently, remembered more of their visits as adults than children who were less frequent museum visitors. This information regarding how well people remember museums and what stays with them after their visit could be informative to my work as I look at what people wish to accomplish with their museum visits.

In the article “Viewing Art Museum Visitors Through the Lens of Identity,” Falk (2008) demonstrates how aspects of a visitor’s identity can have an affect on the visitor’s experience. Falk divides visitors into five general categories based on motivations—(a) explorers, (b) professionals/hobbyists, (c) facilitators, (d) spiritual pilgrims, and (e) experience seekers. Explorers are curious visitors who come to the museum with interest in what is on display at the museum. Facilitators come to the museum with a focus on others and they typically want to help others in their group learn. Professionals and hobbyists come to the museums with “a desire to satisfy a specific content-related

objective” (p. 30). Experience seekers come to the museum because they feel the place itself is important; simply visiting the museum is the experience for which they are looking. Finally, spiritual pilgrims are seeking an introspective experience and the museum is a “refuge” for them (p. 30). Falk makes the argument that these motivations create a feedback loop, which will affect the outcome of the visitors’ experience. By feedback loop, Falk means that people tend to describe their museum experience in the terms of the experience they were seeking. People typically have the type of experience they intend.

The article was pertinent to my research in that part of what I want to learn is why families come to museums. I had originally theorized that some, if not all, of Falk’s (2008) identified individual motivations would be reflected in the motivations of family groups as well. The theory behind his article, that the type of experience visitors will have once at the museum is partially dictated by the motivations that bring them to the museum, is also a foundational theory of my research question. My research focused around what brought family groups to the Blanton and what they hoped to accomplish while at the museum.

In their book *The Museum Experience Revisited* (2012), Falk and Dierking update their prior work, *The Museum Experience* (1992), with more recent research conducted in the ensuing twenty years, but with the same goal in mind, “to create a readable, easily accessible primer for the museum profession, particularly new museum professionals” (p. 15). The core of the book is that any museum visit involves three contexts: personal, sociocultural, and the physical, and that “All museum visits, as well as the meaning brought to and taken away from them, can be understood as occurring at the intersections

of these three contexts” (p. 32). Section one of *The Museum Experience Revisited* (2012) is titled, “Before the Visit” and spends time discussing a museum goer’s personal context. As my research centers on the goals and motivations of family visitors, this section of the book was most relevant to my study. Falk and Dierking (2012) state that all visitors are brought to the museum for *some* reason, and that a museum visit can satisfy a diverse array of needs. According to Falk and Dierking (2012) a museum “visit typically becomes framed around a specific identity-related visit motivation” (p. 42). Falk and Dierking state that when people are asked about why they are visiting a museum, their answers usually can be grouped into the following categories: social-related reasons, recreational reasons, learning and personal enrichment, hobby and professional interest, and reverential reasons (p. 44). Also of interest, Falk and Dierking (2012) note that there is not necessarily a separation between fun and learning as motivations. Visitors can see a visit as a blend of those experiences. The authors make a point to note that not all visitors mention learning as a reason for visiting museums, but this does not mean that learning was not a motivation. Learning can sometimes be thought of as a given by museum visitors (p. 45). Outside of a person’s own interest in a museum or its contents, there can also be external motivations, such as word of mouth that bring visitors to museums (p. 85).

Stéphane Debenedetti’s article, “Investigating the Role of Companions in the Art Museum Experience” (2004), looked at how and why people attend museums with companions. While the article discusses the experience of visiting the museum with a companion, not necessarily visiting with family members, I felt that the findings were

still applicable to my research. The researcher interviewed 24 museum visitors in Paris, and found that 23 of them had been to a museum with a companion (p. 56). Throughout the article the author refers to the concept of attending the museum with a companion as “affiliation” (Debenedetti, 2004, p. 55). The article examines how and why people choose to attend and view museums in groups. Debenedetti (2004) notes some similar behaviors displayed by family groups attending museums, such as allowing visitors’ “companions to share their experiences” and serving a “reassurance function” (pp. 56-57). The author found that sociability was a frequent reason for attending a museum with friends, and just as a visit to a museum can be an identity-building experience for a family (Ellenbogen, Luke, & Dierking 2004; Riedinger, 2012), it also can be a way for people to strengthen social bonds (Debenedetti, 2004).

Debenedetti (2004) found five functions of attending a museum with a companion – (a) mutual enrichment (learning together), (b) recreation, (c) reassurance (having someone as a support system in an unfamiliar and/or intimidating environment), (d) prestige, and (e) transmission of knowledge (primarily found in groups that consisted of a parent-child relationship). The article implies that most people prefer to go to the museum accompanied by someone. While half of the study participants had been to a museum alone, half of those participants were in unusual circumstances (traveling, work, etc.), which was prohibitive to attending the museum with a companion (Debenedetti, 2004, p. 57). The author’s findings further emphasizes the idea of a museum visit being a social event, and provided ideas of themes for me to look for in my own data.

INFORMAL LEARNING (LEARNING IN A MUSEUM CONTEXT)

The intent of my research was never to attempt to evaluate the amount of knowledge gained during a museum visit. However, learning is a common motivation behind a museum visit (Falk & Deirking, 2012). As such, I thought that literature on how visitors and families learn in an informal (museum) setting, and what informal learning can look like, would be relevant background information for me as a researcher, and would be essential when analyzing the data I collected. By informal learning, I mean learning that takes place outside a formal, structured environment, such as school. Borun (2002) explains that much of what people learn occurs in these informal, frequently “socially situated” situations (p. 245), meaning this learning can occur in group settings. As a researcher, I anticipated that families would mention some form of learning in pre- and post-visit interviews, and I also expected to observe what could be considered “learning” behaviors in the museum.

Falk’s (1999) article, “Museums as Institutions for Personal Learning”, makes the argument that learning occurs in a museum setting, but is different from the more formal learning that takes place in institutions such as schools. The author highlights the difficulties in evaluating learning that takes place outside of the traditional absorption-transmission model of education. Falk argues that any study dealing with visitor learning needs to take into account the experiences the visitors are bringing with them to the museum, what actually goes on during the visit (what they say, think, do, etc.), and time. Time is important, as knowledge and connections build with time. Informal learning is not an instantaneous phenomenon, but connections tend to evolve over extended periods.

In this article, Falk (1999) also highlights several studies that document informal learning. These studies were also good reference material regarding the methods and techniques commonly used in a study such as mine, and validated my own research methodology as all three studies used some form of interview as a data-collecting tool.

Some of my readings focused on the benefits of informal learning. In their article, “Facilitating Family Group Inquiry at Science Museum Exhibits”, Gutwell and Allen (2009) studied possible ways to increase the depth and effectiveness of inquiry techniques used by families visiting a science museum. While the article focuses on inquiry at a science museum’s interactive exhibits, much of the background information in the article is relevant to my research. In this article the authors argue that “designed informal settings such as science museums constitute ideal environments for teaching and learning inquiry skills” (Gutwell & Allen, 2011, p. 711). Like Falk (1999), Gutwell and Allen believe that museums as informal learning environments provide resources that a formal institution, such as a school, cannot. Museums also offer an opportunity for “authentic” and “self-directed learning,” because the visitor *chooses* to learn; and museums offer resources for “life-long” learning, places where those who may not typically choose to study something can freely explore a subject matter or topic (p. 2). All these benefits of the informal learning environment afforded to those visiting a science museum are applicable to art museum visitors as well. Gutwell and Allen (2009) see museums as, “a potentially powerful yet underutilized resource for genuine, sustained inquiry” (p. 712), and their research in the article centered around trying to find ways to help families engage in inquiry-based conversations that are more in-depth.

Dierking (2002) contributed a chapter titled, “The Role of Context in Children's Learning from Objects and Experiences” in Paris’ *Perspectives on Object-Centered Learning in Museums*. In this chapter, she elaborates on a learning model she and John Falk created: “The Contextual Model of Learning.” They developed this model to “deal with the complexity and richness of learning and meaning-making from objects and experiences” (Dierking, 2002, p. 4). This model is based on the idea that a museum visit is really made up of a visitor’s experience in three different contexts. These three contexts are (a) the personal context, (b) the sociocultural context, and (c) the physical context. Falk and Dierking (2002) argue that these contexts are not separate, but instead are interconnected and overlap.

This model expands on the construct they previously developed in the early 1990s (and described in *The Museum Experience* in 1992 and *The Museum Experience Revisited* in 2012), “The Interactive Experience Model.” “The Contextual Model of Learning” is a framework through which one can analyze learning in an informal context, such as a museum. This model argues that there are three contexts, personal, sociocultural, and physical, which affect how children derive meaning from an object-centered experience. The personal context means that knowledge is not formed in a vacuum; learners have an entire personal history of background from which they build new knowledge. The sociocultural context outlines that people do not learn as an exclusively individual activity, but that history and the world the learner lives in also affect how knowledge is constructed. Finally, a learner’s physical context, sensory information and impressions, can impact how knowledge is retained and recalled.

In their article, “The Nature of Learning and its Implications for Research in Learning from Museums,” Rennie and Johnston (2004) build on the previously mentioned framework set forth by Falk and Dierking (1992, 2002), that learning is personal, contextualized, and takes time. Crowley and Callanan (2004) state that there is a spectrum on which results of a museum visit can fall. Reactions to knowledge gained are rarely life changing, but someone could simply change how they view an issue or subject or have thought about an idea in a new way. They also argue that interaction between people will enhance the knowledge gained during a museum experience. This interaction is necessary as “a learning experience requires engagement, some mental, physical, or social activity on the part of the learner” (Rennie & Johnston, 2004, p. S6). In order to learn, people need to be involved. Interacting with family members can provide the stimulus for real learning to occur.

Reidinger (2012) further explores informal learning within families in her article, “Family Conversations in Informal Learning Environments”. Informal learning is learning that takes place outside of a structured environment (like school). When families utilize informal learning environments, there is an opportunity for them to expose their children to interests such as art and science in a more in-depth manner (Reidinger, 2012). It encourages families to explore areas of interest in a less structured, less pressured environment. In this article the author attempts to explain what family learning can look like and also offers suggestions to parents in ways they can direct their own families’ informal learning. As Gutwell and Allen (2009) do, Reidinger discusses some of the benefits of informal learning to families.

Reidinger (2012) argues that visits to museums can be identity-building experiences for families, and that “family visits to informal learning environments provide opportunities to learn together, interact, engage in conversations, and learn more about one another” (p. 125). Another benefit of informal learning, according to Reidinger, is that informal learning contexts offer parents a chance to foster learning in diverse areas such as science and art. Familial learning and interaction in an informal learning environment is that families have a history together. As a result, parents can use past experience and information that they know their children possess to “scaffold” learning (p. 126). Families can draw on experiences that only the family is familiar with, thus parents and families in an informal learning situation have access to information and resources that a more formal environment and teacher cannot provide.

CHILDREN AND THE MUSEUM

My research focuses on families with children in a museum environment. I really wanted the children to be an active part of the study, participating in the interviews and observations. I did not want them just to be bystanders. As a result, I felt that it was important to review literature pertinent to how children experience museums, how they feel about museums, and how they learn within the museum.

In their article “Describing and Supporting Collaborative Scientific Thinking in Parent-Child Interactions”, Crowley and Callanan (1998) discuss their findings from a research collaboration done at the Children’s Discovery Museum of San Jose, California, in which they studied the development of scientific literacy in children. Their research was based on the hypothesis that parents and the guidance they provide are an important

bridge between the material on view at the museum and the knowledge of the child. While their focus is on scientific thinking, the concept of how parents help children to gain deeper thinking skills is transferable to any museum environment. This builds on previously mentioned sources (Falk & Dierking, 1992; Falk, 1999), which emphasize how context affects informal learning.

Crowley and Callanan (1998) state that as parents play a role in how children learn and develop every day, they do so in a museum setting as well. As stated by the authors, “developmental research suggests that socially situated learning, rather than being weaker than isolated learning, is often a more powerful and general form of learning, particularly in the case of children” (p. 13). Both how the children and parent interacted with an exhibit and the types of conversations in which the child and parent were involved were analyzed by the researchers. The authors argue that in everyday life parents shape how their children develop theories and analyze situations, and their findings demonstrated the benefit of parental involvement with the child in a museum context as well. Children visiting an exhibit with their parents stayed at the exhibition longer, and examined the exhibit more thoroughly (Crowley & Callanan, 1998). Parents tended to “mediate” (Crowley & Callanan, 1998, p. 14) the exhibit for their children, and provided guidance. This article offered examples of parental behavior, how parents aid in navigating a museum and maximizing the experience, to look for in my own data.

As a researcher I was also interested in children’s perceptions of their museum visit as well as those of their parents. Jensen’s (1994) article “Children’s Perceptions of Their Museum Experiences: A Contextual Perspective” examines how children feel about

museums as institutions of learning. The research had participating children categorize places they visit (including museums) on a spectrum showing how fun (or not fun) an institution was, and whether or not the location was thought of as only a place of learning. I found some of the findings from Jensen's article of particular relevance to my research, as I thought the findings could possibly aid in my analysis of the children's behavior within the museum and with their families, and shed light on some of their comments during interviews. Jensen (1994) noted that the children's feelings towards museums were predominantly positive (p. 309). Additionally, the children in the study generally agreed that museums were more fun when they were with family or friends – not on a school trip (Jensen, 1994, p. 311). The reasoning was generally that trips outside of school, with family or friends, were generally a more free choice experience. There were no “boring discussions” (p. 311) and the children felt they had more say in the visit's direction and activities. This research corroborates with previous sources (Gutwell & Allen, 2009; Reidinger, 2012), that informal learning that takes place within a family is different than learning that occurs within a formal setting and has a unique set of benefits.

FAMILY EXPERIENCE IN MUSEUMS

Another topic I focused my reading around was the investigation of family behavior in museums. Prior to conducting my study at the Blanton Museum of Art, I lacked formal experience observing how families interact in a museum context. Readings that discussed both specific studies of families and general family behaviors within a museum context provided me with foundational knowledge from which to

develop my thesis proposal and also provided ideas for patterns in behaviors, motivations, and themes to look for in my data.

Dierking's article, "The Family Museum Experience: Implications from Research" (1989), was a good introductory article to the topic. As families are still a large portion of a museums' visitors (Ellenbogen, 2002), this article is still relevant today. Within this article Dierking outlines some basic defining characteristics of family groups as visitors. She starts by defining them as multi-generational, social, and diverse groups who come to the museum as a unit. They visit the museum for various reasons, but one thing is consistent – at least one person in the group chose to visit, they have "elected" to come to the museum (Dierking, 1989, p. 9). As a result, they are most likely there with some type of agenda. Whether to entertain themselves, have a bonding experience, see something specific, entertain a visiting family member, etc., families usually come to a museum with some type of purpose. Dierking (1989) states that families can usually be divided into two types; they either want to stick together and peruse the museum while engaging in guided/collaborative learning or they may break up either throughout the museum or within a smaller space, like a gallery, and function as independent learners. This similar pattern was found by Debenebetti (2004) in his study of how people visit the museum in companion groups (both related and non-related).

In their 1992 book *The Museum Experience*, Dierking along with John Falk further explore family behaviors in museums in the chapter, "The Social Context: Groups in Museums", which focuses on families as groups. In this chapter, Falk and Dierking discuss how the social dynamics of a family impact a museum visit. Families often

consider the museum a leisure experience, and they frequently bring with them a desire to learn (Falk & Dierking, 1992). The children in a family will determine a family's level of interactivity, while parents tend to plan out stops and do more reading of labels and graphics. Dierking argues that usually when a family comes to a museum they want "to do" it; by this she means they read labels, participate in activities, and generally want to learn something (p. 45). As families tend to share a knowledge base and a common history, their conversations at museums will often start with an object, and will frequently touch upon knowledge previously shared by the family. This can lead to conversations that center on (or are searching for) shared meaning derived from what is being viewed. Dierking also breaks down the time families usually spend in museums and lists other behaviors (such as modeling) families frequently exhibit. Folk (2007), in "Family Learning in Art Museums", cites similar behaviors to those identified by Falk and Dierking as being typical of families. She, too, defines families as intergenerational groups, and as a result of that they have varying interests, learning abilities, and needs.

In Borun's (2002) chapter, "Object-Based Learning and Family Groups", in *Perspectives on Object-Centered Learning*, the researcher refers to informal learning as "socially situated" (p. 245). This chapter begins with a review of socially situated learning and family interaction within a museum and then discusses a study conducted at the Franklin Institute Science Museum to see how exhibition design impacted interactions within a family group and how families interact within the museum. In the context of a museum, exhibitions and objects serve as catalysts for conversations within

families. The researchers recorded visitor behavior and conversation and then coded the behaviors and conversations in an effort to categorize the ways in which families interact.

Crowley and Swartz (2004), in “Parent Beliefs About Teaching and Learning in a Museum”, discuss findings from a study conducted at the Children’s Museum of Pittsburgh, in which the final goal was to produce signage that encouraged parent involvement. They support the previously mentioned presupposition that families visit museums for diverse reasons and elaborate on this by commenting on how parent interaction within a museum varies, too. Parental interaction can range from encouragement to giving direction to explicitly attempting to help the child connect a new experience at a museum to an external experience and previous knowledge. The researchers videotaped interactions between parents and children, and also interviewed the parents. The interview transcripts were coded and from that data analysis five parental approaches to teaching and learning emerged: focus on fun, individual discovery, back to basics, learning together, and explanations everywhere (p. 5). Each of these categories was designed to represent the predominant teaching beliefs of different parents. For example, the parents categorized as “focus on fun” (Crowley & Swartz, 2004, p. 5), placed a premium on their museum visit being an entertaining and fun experience for their children.

While Sedzielarz’s (2003) article, "Watching the Chaperones: An Ethnographic Study of Adult-Child Interactions in School Field Trips, focuses on adult-child interactions within school groups, I believe that the findings, and types of behavior she observes are transferable to studies that focus on family groups. Sedzielarz (2003)

observed 30 chaperones at the Science Museum of Minnesota. Within these chaperones there were several divisions. The broadest divisions Sedzielarz (2003) found was that some saw themselves in a teaching role, and some simply felt that “experiencing” the museum was in itself an enriching enough experience for the students. Chaperones (and I would argue, parents at the museum with their families) hold multiple roles. They are, to some extent, guides, group facilitators, timekeepers, learning leaders, role models, security guards, and strategizers (p. 22). The division of importance between these roles and the roles chaperones felt were most defining of their duty for the day varied highly between individuals.

In her chapter “Museums in Family Life: An Ethnographic Case Study” from the book *Learning Conversations in Museums* Ellenbogen (2002) discusses some of her findings from an ethnographic study she conducted. For this study Ellenbogen studied several museum-going families for a period of six months. The goal was to gain in-depth access to a look at how museums are a part of family life within museum-going families. The researcher accompanied a family to the museum on their regularly scheduled visits, and wrote down field notes after the visits. During this part of the study she developed questions to study further. In the second phase of her study, the researcher continued to accompany families on their museum visits, but she dedicated her research to the previously identified questions and issues. Data collection during this phase consisted of field notes and audio recordings. Ellenbogen (2002) also observed the family at home in order to assess how the “meaningfulness” (p. 85) of the museum visits fit within the

framework of the family's life. Finally, the researcher discussed her findings with the families as a way to confirm or elaborate on her findings.

Four families participated in the study. They were families who were contacted through a science museum, which they frequented. In order to be included as study participants the families needed to attend museums at least six times per year. Only one family, the Parker family, participated for the entire six months of the study. As a result of her research process, Ellenbogen (2002) was able to observe the Parker's interactions before, during, and after their museum visits, and she was also able to gain a holistic view of how the family integrated museums into their lives on a regular basis. The Parker family consisted of a mother and a father, each about 50 years-old and two children aged 12 and 14. The parents chose to homeschool their children, and visited the science museum on a regular basis. They were so comfortable with the museum that they would even use it as a place to have lunch (brought from home) while running errands. It was interesting to see how the researcher studied the families and the holistic perspective placed on family learning that the author provided was unique. Further validating my research methodology, Ellenbogen (2002) collected data through interviews and by writing field notes as she would observe the family (p. 85)

In their article, "Family Learning in Museums: An Emerging Disciplinary Matrix?" Ellenbogen et al. (2004) begin to define a disciplinary matrix they see emerging in the field of research regarding family learning in museums. Ellenbogen et al. (2004) state that a disciplinary matrix is "defined by shared values and beliefs, assumptions about how research should be conducted, and common interest in similar problems" (p.

S48). The authors begin their article with a brief discussion of past research in the field, and problematize the lack of consistency in goals and terminology that existed in previous research.

Ellenbogen et al. (2004) see three aspects present in the current field of research that they believe indicate a shift towards a more consistent and cogent body of research in the field of family learning in museums. They then elaborate on the three aspects of the “emerging” matrix. The first is shifting theoretical perspectives that “signal shared language, beliefs, values, understanding and assumptions as to what counts as family learning” (S49). The authors credit this change to the recent embrace of sociocultural perspectives in research, meaning that studies are not just focusing on families in a museum, but also within a larger context. Second, the authors argue that there has been a shift in research methodologies, which is a result of “shifts in disciplinary assumptions about how research in the area is best conducted, what questions should be addressed and criteria for valid and reliable evidence” (Ellenbogen et. al, 2004, p. S51). Previously, most studies conducted about family learning were tracking or timing studies, now a variety of methodologies are being utilized, such as interviews, journaling, discourse analysis, and audio and video recording. The final aspect of the emerging matrix noted by the authors is a better understanding of the family as a learning institution, “resituating research foci that ensure that the family is central to learning” (Ellenbogen et. al, 2004, p. S49). Currently, in research in the field there is an emphasis being placed on the family’s agenda – not that of the museum.

Essentially the authors are attempting to develop a shared vocabulary, a shared methodology, and a new focus that centers on the family's agenda. Previous studies have found that "museums can be tools for enculturation that families use to establish and negotiate their identity" (Ellenbogen et. al, p. S49). The emerging matrix that the authors set forth calls for an emphasis on a family's agenda that they bring with them to the museum, deemphasizing the museum's priorities. This encourages a museum experience to be identity-building for a family, and the matrix calls for that to be more examined. The article concludes by listing some potential draw-backs to this matrix, which includes that the field can become exclusive, that research can become similar and less welcoming to new view points, and that the field now focuses heavily on socio-cultural research leaving areas that are lacking in new research. On the other hand, as the matrix has emerged, the field has gained a better understanding of families and become a more diversified research field (Ellenbogen et. al, 2004).

CONCLUSION

The literature cited in this chapter provided me with a basic understanding of how visitor research can be conducted. I was able to use these studies to develop and validate my study protocol. Additionally, reviewing relevant literature enabled me to gain a more rich and full understanding of how museum visitors, specifically families and children, use, learn and act within a museum environment. I also was exposed to previously established categories of museum visitors and behaviors, which provided good starting points when looking for categories and themes within my own data.

Chapter 3: Methodology

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

According to Merriam (1998), “Qualitative researchers *are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed*, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 6). My research question centers around identifying expectations, goals, and objectives that motivate families to come to the Blanton Museum of Art, and then how (or if) these desires are fulfilled. My question is one that requires a qualitative research investigation, as I am interested in understanding a particular experience and the thoughts and motivations behind the impetus that brought about my participants’ desires to visit the museum. According to Seidman (1998), qualitative researchers are not looking for data that can be generalized to a broader public, but are instead looking to provide readers with a deeper understanding of their participants’ experiences. Creswell (2009) also stresses that the ultimate goal of qualitative research is to better understand “meaning that individuals ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4).

CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

The intent of my research was definitively qualitative, and I chose to collect and present my data using a case study methodology. A defining characteristic of a case study is that whatever phenomenon is being researched can be defined by a set or “case” (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) states that there must be a finite number of possible participants, and Creswell (2009) argues that a case study, as a strategy of inquiry, can be used to study a “program, event, activity, process, or one or

more individuals. Cases are bound by time and activity” (p. 13). Merriam (1998) defines a case study design as one that is intended to “gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation” (p. 19). I did not expect to gain concrete quantifiable data from my study, but rather to have a better grasp in understanding a particular type (the family group) of museum visitors and a particular aspect of their visit. Narrowing my pool of potential participants even further, I wanted participants who chose to visit the Blanton for the sake of visiting the museum itself. I did not want to conduct research on days that a special event was being hosted at the museum, which might have been a competing motivation for a family to visit. I looked for visitors on specific days and in a specified location. This finite number of subjects was defined by the protocol I created (to be discussed later in this section).

The use of a case study methodology in conducting my research enabled me to focus on the visitors and their experiences, which was the ultimate goal of my research. A case study can serve purposes other than just to provide information to the researcher and her readers. It can also shed light on areas that require further research (Merriam, 1998). By providing the researcher with a broader understanding of an experience or topic, data gathered in a case study can often offer possibilities for further or more specified research. A limitation of a case study is that the research typically leads to broad generalizations, which can result in inconclusive data. There are several data collection techniques commonly used in case studies. Creswell (2009) states that “Qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and

documents, rather than rely on a single data source” (p. 174). This methodology led to other decisions I made when designing this study, including the number of participants involved and how I gathered and analyzed data.

LOCATION AND TIMING OF THE STUDY

My research took place at the Blanton Museum of Art, which is located on the campus of The University of Texas at Austin. I chose to conduct the study at the Blanton for several reasons. First, I wanted my research to take place locally. Second, I have also held three different graduate internships with the Blanton’s Education Department. As a result, I am familiar with people within the Education Department and I knew they would be accommodating and open to research being conducted on the Blanton’s premises. The third reason I wanted to conduct my research at the Blanton was that I also believed my depth of familiarity with the museum would be helpful when observing the participants of this study.

It was important to me that the participants of my study felt comfortable when I was observing them during the visit at the museum. I thought that being in an environment wherein I was comfortable and with which I was familiar would help the families to feel comfortable as well. However, I made a concerted effort to interact with the families only as much as they invited me to do so. I wanted to ensure that a family dictated the direction and extent of their visit, and that I did not impose my agenda on them. Prior to conducting my study at the Blanton Museum of Art, I obtained a letter granting me permission to conduct my research from the museum. This letter can be found in Appendix A.

According to the Blanton Museum of Art's website, it is "the only art museum in Austin with a permanent collection of substantial range and depth" ("Blanton Museum," n.d.). As the Blanton offers the widest ranging collection of art in Austin for visitors to view, I believed that this location would appeal to the largest demographic of families and would offer the most diverse pool of participants. The museum's holdings include a substantial Latin American art collection, and the eras of the art on view spans from Greek and Roman to contemporary.

My study took place over several months in the summer and fall of 2013. After conducting initial research in June and July, I undertook additional research in September and October after a malfunction with my audio recorder resulted in the loss of my initial recorded interviews. I conducted all of my research on Saturdays and Sundays at the Blanton, as I was interested in family groups and I knew that they would be most likely to visit the museum on those days due to freedom from work and school restrictions. I tried to avoid conducting my study on days that featured special programming for families, because I wanted to interview families who were attending the Blanton out of a desire to see the museum exclusively and not to attend special activities or events.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in this study were families I met at the Blanton Museum of Art on the day that I interviewed them. I approached families after they had entered the museum, and not prior to their visit. Most families that I asked to participate in my study were already in the galleries of the museum, and had begun exploring the collection by the time I made initial contact with them. I wanted to recruit participating families

towards the beginning of the visit, as I wanted to observe as much of their time in the Blanton as possible. Creswell (2009) states that researchers need to select both their site and their participants in an intentional and purposeful manner.

As a researcher, I made an effort to be thoughtful when selecting families, as I looked for families who appeared to be engaged with the artwork and with each other. The only exception was that I did approach one family group before they had entered the galleries, in an attempt to observe as much of a complete visit as possible. Approaching the families in a friendly, professional, and respectful manner was important to me because I wanted to build rapport with them. Seidman (1998) states that how an interviewer approaches their subjects can have bearing on every other aspect of the interview process, and I knew that I wanted the families to feel comfortable when talking with me. However, I also made an effort to be as unobtrusive as possible when observing the participants as I wanted my presence to affect the nature of their interactions in the museum as little as possible.

I had originally planned to interview and observe approximately four to six families; however, due to the data recorder malfunctioning, the recordings of my initial four interviews were lost. I knew that my observational data from the first four families was still relevant and important to the study, so I decided to keep my data collected from my observation notes of the first four families. In addition to the first set of data collected from four families, I also decided to interview and observe an additional four families.

Prior to participating in their first interview, all families agreed to participate in this study. Before obtaining consent, all participants were told about the procedures of

the study. The consent and assent forms can be found in Appendix B. I informed participating families of how I would be collecting data – there would be a first interview, then I would observe the family in the museum for the extent of their visit and take field notes to record my observations, and finally we would conclude the visit with a second interview. I also explained to families how the data would be used in the study. I advised participants that I would be using quotes from interviews and my observational notes while writing this study. I also assured participants that their real names would not be used in my writing.

A total of eight families participated in my research study at the Blanton. The families consisted of various combinations of parents and children whom I met at various intervals during their visit. While all families were interviewed, only recorded data was available for the last four families. The table below lists the families who participated in my study and information that may be helpful to the reader regarding the families and the data I was able to collect.

Family	Demographic Information	Point of Initial Contact	Data Type Used
Family A	Mother Father Daughter approx. age 8	Beginning of visit	Observational notes, some written quotes
Family B	Father Daughter approx. age 4-6 Daughter approx. age 4-6	Midway through visit	Observational notes, some written quotes
Family C	Mother Daughter approx. age 12-14 Daughter approx. age 12-14	Midway through visit	Observational notes
Family D	Mother Son age 8	Beginning of visit	Observational notes and written responses to second interview
Family E	Mother Son age 9	Beginning of visit	Observational notes and interviews
Family F	Mother Son age 9	Beginning of visit	Observational notes and interviews
Family G	Mother Son age 2	Beginning of visit	Observational notes and interviews
Family H	Mother Daughter age 3 Daughter age 2	Beginning of visit	Observational notes and interviews

Table 1: Families who Participated in the Study

Additional Information Regarding the Families

Two families were visiting the Blanton with family members who did not participate in the study. Family C attended the museum with two cousins who were

approximately the same age of the daughters in the family. The cousins could not participate in the study because they were not at the Blanton with a legal guardian who could sign a consent form. Additionally, while Family E was visiting the museum with the child's grandparents, the grandparents did not participate in the study. Although they joined the group late in the visit, they were not with the mother and son from the beginning. One final note about the family groups who participated in this study is that Families G and H were visiting the museum together.

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION METHODS

There are several common methods of data collection frequently utilized when collecting data for the purposes of a case study. According to Merriam (1998) interviews, observations, and the studying of documents are common ways in which researchers collect qualitative data (p. 69). However, the two primary forms of data collection are interviews and observations (Merriam, 1998).

According to Merriam, interviewing is “probably the most common form of data collected in qualitative case studies in education” (1998, p. 70). There are both strengths and weaknesses to this method of data collection. Interviews do not enable the participant to remain anonymous, and that can affect the reliability and honesty of their answers (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2004). However, the advantages of using interviews as a data collection tool, to me, outweighed the possible drawbacks. As previously mentioned, qualitative researchers are interested in meaning constructed by study participants (Merriam, 1998), as such the flexibility an interview format offered appealed to me. Cohen et al. (2004) argue that another advantage of an interview is that it allows for

clarifications from both parties – the interviewer and the party being interviewed. Interview structures vary in how definite they are. Merriam (1998) describes a continuum of structure. On the most structured end, interview questions can be so rigorously scripted they resemble questionnaires in oral form, while at the least structured end, interviews can be free flowing conversations. While most interviews are based on some form of a script, semi-structured interviews use this script as more of a guide (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009), which allows for flexibility during the interview.

Like interviews, observations can also range from structured to unstructured (Cohen et al., 2004). Structured observations are “systematic” and result in quantifiable data, while less structured observations involve simply recording events. These events are recorded by the researcher as field notes. Cohen et al. (2004) refer to this type of observation as “participant observation,” and note that data gathered in this way is often combined with other forms of data (p. 211). According to Merriam (1998), observations vary from interviews in two ways – they take place in a natural setting and enable the researcher direct experience with what is being studied. Besides providing context, observations are also beneficial as they can provide areas to explore in later interviews (Merriam, 1998).

All of the studies referenced in my literature review (see Chapter 2) consist of researchers collecting qualitative data of some type (Borun, 2002; Crowley & Callanan, 1998; Falk & Dierking, 1995; Rennie & Johnston, 2004). While conducting their studies, these researchers either interviewed participants or collected observational data, and in some instances used both means of collecting information. Crowley and Swartz (2004)

recommend combining interview and observational methodologies for a more holistic picture of actual visitor behavior, as self-reporting is not always the most accurate form of data collection. Crowley and Swartz (2004), in their article “Parent Beliefs About Teaching and Learning in a Museum”, describe how they as researchers used observations from videos of a family’s actual museum visit and interviewed parents to collect data. Dierking (2002) also supports using multiple methods of data collection for the sake of clarity.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS UTILIZED FOR THIS STUDY

When developing the structure of this study and deciding which method I would use to collect data, I kept in mind that the goal of my study was to understand particular facets of personal experiences and motivations. As such, I chose methods of data collection that would enable me to understand, as much as possible, the other parties’ experience and point of view. I chose to utilize two methods of data collection in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of my participants’ experiences. I wanted to both interview and observe participants so that I would have the richest understanding possible of their experience, but also to see if the interviewees’ words and actions were in port of one another. According to Merriam (1998) qualitative research requires use of a sensitive “data collection instrument” (p. 1), and I believed that interviews and observational data would be appropriate instruments to best understand the responses of my participants.

The interviews I conducted with participating families were semi-structured in nature. All the interviews derived from a protocol (Appendix C); however, as they were

semi-structured, I was able to adjust, add, or omit questions as needed in order to best accommodate and understand my participants. Rennie and Johnston (2004) stress the importance of seeing through the eyes of the visitors, and that the best way to accomplish this is to gain data straight from them (self-reporting), as there can be a gap between observation and what is actually going on that self-reporting can help to eliminate. The goal was to interview participating families as close to the beginning of their visit as possible and then again after the family experienced the museum. I wanted to observe the participating families while they were in the galleries so that I could see how their actions related to their words. I wanted to close the “gap” Rennie and Johnston (2004, p. S8) reference, and be able to see what actually happened.

I intended to interview my participants as their museum experience began and ended. As a researcher, I positioned myself in the museum looking for families who appeared to be involved with each other and/or the art at the Blanton. I was also hoping to conduct first interviews with families close to the beginning of their visit, and so I looked for families who appeared to be commencing their visit, or towards the middle, but not winding down their time in the museum. After I obtained consent and assent, I then proceeded with my initial interviews. First and second interviews were semi-structured so that I would be able to ask questions when necessary and gain as much information as possible. My interview questions are can be found in Appendix C.

Prior to conducting this initial interview, while obtaining consent, I asked families if they would be comfortable with me observing them during their visit. All of the families who participated in my study agreed to be observed during their visit at the

Blanton. I did not digitally record the families' conversations or actions during their visit at the museum. However, I did take field notes during observations as a means of documenting what I saw in an effort to better remember the actions and words I witnessed. I knew that I would use these notes when analyzing my interview data, as something to compare and substantiate with the interview data.

After families completed their visit to the museum, I conducted a second interview with them, during which we discussed their visit and how they felt about their experiences. We revisited goals they had mentioned during first interviews, and discussed if they felt they had accomplished those goals. I primarily interviewed the parent in most of the family groups, but I tried to include the children in the conversation as well. The child in Family E did not want to speak to me, but the child in Family F did participate in the interview. The three children in Families G and H were too young to participate in the interview process.

DATA ANALYSIS

All the interviews I conducted during this study were audio recorded, so that I would later be able to transcribe the interviews. I wanted to be working with textual data (field notes and transcribed interviews) because I had originally intended to code my data. However, as I began to review my data the method of inductive analysis worked more naturally.

Thomas (2006) in his article "A General Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Data" describes inductive analysis in a simple, straightforward way. Thomas defines inductive analysis as "approaches that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to

derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher” (p. 238). According to Thomas (2006) there are three main purposes for a researcher to use inductive analysis, to summarize data, to define links between research objectives and findings, and to develop theory. One of the techniques mentioned by Thomas is to read data multiple times to see what patterns and themes emerge from it.

The approach described in this article is one in which the research objectives guide what the researcher looks for in the data. My research focused on the goals, motivations, and actions of museum visitors so I began my data analysis looking for those themes. Thomas (2006) states that it is important that “the evaluation objectives provide a focus or domain of relevance for conducting the analysis, not a set of expectations about specific findings” (p. 240). The next step of the process is to define thematic categories into which data is sorted. Inductive analysis coding can take different forms; one example of categorizing data provided by Thomas is to use a computer to copy and paste examples from textual data into categories (p. 241). This is how I sorted my data, I copied and pasted similar phrases or notes together in an effort to categorize the data into themes. As I began to group actions and words into themes, sometimes other themes, or even sub-groups, would emerge.

Creswell (2009) states that data analysis is an inductive process, and that during this process the researcher derives meaning from the data by “moving from particulars to general themes” (p. 4). This was a process similar to what evolved as I became more familiar with my data. Merriam (1998) agrees with Creswell stating that the data analysis

process is a “dynamic” one through which “hypotheses” and “hunches” become more clearly defined and the process progresses (p. 155). As I began to examine my data I found similarities and patterns in what participants had expressed during their interviews and actions I had seen during their actual museum visits.

CONCLUSION

The study protocol set forth in this chapter was the catalyst for the themes that emerged from my data. It was the data that I collected, and how I as a researcher analyzed the data that enabled the themes that emerged from my data to come to life. The following chapter explains further how I analyzed my data and the findings that emerged from it.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

My research question focused on the motivations, goals, and expectations of families who visited the Blanton Museum of Art, including how they accomplished those aims and if they believed their aims were met. In an effort to answer this question, I collected data from eight different families who visited the Blanton during the summer and fall of 2013. The families who participated in my study engaged in two interviews, and let me observe them during their visit. Prior to initiating the first interview and obtaining consent and assent, I explained to all participants the protocol of the study and how I would be using the data collected. All participants agreed to participate in the study prior to the first interview.

THE STUDY PARTICIPANTS' BACKGROUNDS

Before I review the data and findings from my research, it is important to introduce the families who participated in this study. In order to understand the actions of the families and the data collected, one needs to know more about who these families are. As presented in Chapter 3, a total of eight families participated in my study. Table A, located in Chapter 3, details information about the families who participated in this study. The composition and prior museum experience varied between families, as did their primary reasons for visiting the Blanton. The only obvious common denominator between all the families was that they consisted of parents and children. All but one the families consisted of one parent and their child or children. The parents who participated in my study were also overwhelmingly mothers, and the ages of the children ranged from toddlers to young teenagers. As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, Families E and C attended the museum with additional family members who did not participate in this study.

Some of the families who participated in this study brought with them a lot of past experience visiting museums. The family who may have had the most frequent contact with museums and galleries out of all participating families was Family E. They frequent museums and galleries so often that the family has developed specific art viewing rules, which will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter. The mother in Family E holds a Master's Degree in Art History, and wanted to visit the Blanton because she was aware of the museum's substantial Latin American collection. Family E was visiting Austin from New York to attend a wedding, and so this was an opportune time for the mother, her son, and his grandparents to visit the Blanton. Family B had prior experience with museums as well. They had been to the Blanton several times, and the father even thought that they might be members, but was not sure. The father was at the museum with his young daughters as a family outing on a Saturday. Like Family B, Family H had also visited the Blanton on multiple occasions. Family H was unique in having a direct connection to the Blanton. The father of Family H, who did not participate in the study, is a Blanton employee. When interviewed, the mother in Family G initially stated that they had never been to the Blanton before and they did not frequently attend museums. However, once I clarified that the children's museum counted as a museum, the mother stated that her family used to visit Austin's Children Museum on a regular basis. However, now that her two daughters were enrolled in preschool, they were not able to visit as frequently.

Other families who participated in my study had less experience with museums. Two of the families, Family D and Family F, had never visited a museum together as a family. Family D was attending the Blanton because the mother was enrolled in a college course that required her to visit the museum in order to complete a project. The mother from Family F stated that this was their first visit to the Blanton, and that they had never

been to another museum. However, her nine year-old son corrected her, stating he had visited a museum with a family friend. The mother from Family F advised me that a motivating factor behind her family's attendance to the Blanton was that the Smithsonian was offering free admission to museums around the country, which allowed her and her son to visit the Blanton for free.

Due to my recorder malfunctioning, I do not have documentation regarding how frequently Families A and C visited museums. However, I do know that both families appeared comfortable within the galleries of the Blanton. The mother, father, and eight year-old daughter of Family A navigated the Blanton and the artwork on display while maintaining comfortable body language and demeanor. Family C had recently moved to Austin from Houston. The mother and her daughters expressed that they felt that the Blanton was small in comparison to the museums they had frequented there. This statement indicates some experience visiting museums.

MY ROLE AS A RESEARCHER

To understand how I collected data and to have further background regarding the study itself, it is important also to understand my role as a researcher. As a museum educator it is my natural tendency to want others to be comfortable and to have a positive experience in a museum environment. In my role as a researcher I made a concerted effort to not guide, prompt, or direct the participating families during their visit to the Blanton. I did, however, inform them that they were welcome to talk to me or ask questions if they wanted to, but they could also simply ignore me if they found that to be more comfortable for them. My main goal was to not involve myself too heavily in a family's experience or to steer them in any way. However, for the sake of my research, I wanted all the participants to feel comfortable and as natural as possible while I was observing them, and so I wanted to be accessible in as neutral a way as possible.

I found myself speaking to the children unprompted more so than the adults, as I really wanted them to feel comfortable interacting with and talking to me. Several of the children, particularly those in Family C and E, did not want to speak with me much or participate in the interviews. All the participating families interacted with me in some way during their time in the Blanton galleries, some more than others. Family F would frequently ask me questions about the museum or the art, and I found myself talking to the child in Family D a lot as the mother was focused on completing her academic assignment that had brought them to the Blanton.

REVIEW OF DATA COLLECTED

Before presenting the data, I am going to summarize the data, so as to demonstrate the information with which I worked. After conducting my study, I had two sources of data to use during the analysis process: interviews and field notes. Table A in Chapter 3 details the data associated with each family that I used as information during the analysis process. While I collected interview data and observational notes with all participating families, the quantity of information available is not the same. Due to how early in their visit to the Blanton I first approached each family about participating in my study, I have differing amounts of notes on the families. I met both Family B and C when they were about halfway through their visit, and I have only my field notes to provide data for them due to the recorder malfunction. As a result, I have the least amount of data on these two families and their presence will be limited in this study. On the other hand, I spent large amounts of time with Families A and F. While I have no interview data for Family A due to the recorder malfunctioning, I did spend a lot of time with them in the museum. I have the most data from Family F, as I was with them for almost an hour and

a half and their interviews were the lengthiest of any participating family. As a result, Families A and F, along with the other families whose interview data I had available to me, are the most prominently featured families in this chapter.

My interview protocol (Appendix C) was intended to serve as a guide for the interviews that I conducted. As discussed in Chapter 3, interviews with the families were semi-structured. I did not ask every family all the questions listed on the protocol, and with some families I asked additional questions, or re-phrased questions from my protocol to suit the situation or person being interviewed. All of the participating parents agreed to the interviews, and to being observed during their visit. The children all consented to participate in my study, however, they did not all want to be interviewed. The child in Family E did not want to speak with me very much and opted out of both the first and second interviews. However, the child in Family F, a nine year-old boy, participated in both the first and second interviews with his mother. The children in Families G and H were too young to participate in interviews.

THEMES FROM THE DATA

After I collected all of the data – interview results and observational notes – I then read through the data looking for themes. While I examined the interview transcripts and the observational data, themes began to emerge. To flesh out the themes, I began to sort my data by cutting and pasting notes and quotations from field notes I had written while observing families in the museum and from interview transcripts into thematically related groups. There were six predominant themes that arose from the interview and

observational data. These themes emerged from the study participants' documented words and actions.

I set two criteria that a theme had to meet in order for me to consider it valid. First, the theme needed to be supported by data from more than one family. Second, the theme had to be evident in both observational notes and interview data from either the first or second interviews. It was not necessary for the theme to be supported by data in both first and second interviews, but the theme needed to be substantiated in at least one of them. The six themes that emerged are:

1. Exposing Children to Art
2. Viewing Art Actively
3. Seeking and Sharing Information
4. Learning Museum Behavior
5. Identifying Individual Motivations
6. Utilizing Museum Resources

The first four themes I discuss below are goals that were established by families, either through words or actions, as something they wanted to accomplish while at the Blanton. The fifth theme reflects motivations that drew individuals within families to the Blanton. This means that this theme was not necessarily something that families wanted to accomplish while at the museum, but something that initially drew the families to the museum. Finally, the sixth theme that emerged from my data pertained to the families' use of museum resources beyond the artworks. While this is not a motivation or goal that families brought with them to the Blanton, it is relevant to my study. This theme speaks

to how families utilized the museum, and was overwhelmingly present in the data I recorded from six of the eight participating families.

My research question addressed not only the goals or motivations visitors brought with them, but also how they accomplished those goals while at the Blanton. Once I had established the themes, I further organized the data within each theme into sections relevant to which part of my research question that it answers. This is how the data will be presented here.

I organized the data in this chapter so that it would be presented in sections that relate to when I collected the data. Within these sections, data is organized into three different sub-sections. Data that I collected during the first interview fell into the category of *Establishment of the Goal* or *Establishment of the Motivation*. Within this sub-section I discuss how participants initially stated and established the respective goal of, or motivating factor behind, their visit. Behaviors and strategies that I observed during the families' visits at the Blanton are discussed in sub-sections titled *Observations Related to the Goal* or *Observations Related to the Motivation*. Finally, any data I collected during second interviews relevant to the participating families' reflections on their goals and motivations is categorized under the section *Reflecting on the Goal* or *Reflecting on the Motivation*. The final theme was not a goal or motivation, and the same structure was followed when presenting the data. I did not find data relating to every theme in both first and second interviews. However, every theme is mentioned at least once within the data from a first or second interview, and I observed related behavior, actions, or words during the families' time together in the galleries.

EXPOSURE TO ART

I derived this goal from statements families made regarding a desire for the family, child, parent, or both to be exposed to art. Of all the themes that emerged from my data, this theme was the most literally stated by my participants. All four of the families whose first interviews were still useable after the recorder malfunctioned mentioned exposure to art as a goal to accomplish on their museum visit for their family or children. The goal was revisited, though not as explicitly, in second interviews as well, which I detail below. Likewise, families also actively demonstrated behavior indicating becoming aware of art was a priority to them during their visit.

Establishment of the Goal

A desire by parents to expose a child or the whole family to art was repeatedly and explicitly brought up by the study participants during the first interviews. Two of the interviewed mothers stated that art exposure was a goal without much elaboration. One of these mothers, from Family H, provided an unelaborated reference to art exposure, simply stating that one of her objectives for the visit was for her children, both approximately two to four years of age, “to just see art...and just see the setting of a museum.” Referring to her son, the mother in Family F supplied a less direct reference to this theme, stating that she just wanted to “expose him to different things.” The context of our conversation indicated the meaning of the word “things” was intended to imply “art.”

The mothers in Families E and G provided reasoning behind their desire for their children to be exposed to art. When I asked why she had brought her child to the Blanton,

the mother in Family E stated, “I think it’s important for him to be exposed to art.” The mother in Family G initially stated that she felt her two year-old son was too young for her to be setting specific goals. She then went on to say that she did want him to “experience something different” and that she thought “if he’s experiencing art, and he’s around art, I think that’s a positive thing for him to sort of know that’s a part of his life, and something that he can just be interested in absorbing.” This statement indicates that she felt there is a larger purpose, beyond merely having the experience of viewing art, to exposing her son to art. She believes that it is a “positive” thing. Statements made by all four of these parents indicate that exposure to art was a goal for all their families. Their actions, as well, indicated that this goal was a priority.

Actions Related to the Goal

Not only did parents make statements indicating that exposure to art was a goal during their first interviews, but they also performed actions during their time in the museum that further emphasized this was important to them. Throughout the course of the museum visits, the most obvious way I saw parents consciously or unconsciously accomplish the goal of exposing their children to art was by attempting to see as many works as possible. They were at the Blanton to see the museum, and most of the families were intent on seeing the entire building and collection, or as much as possible. Typically, it was the parent leading their family unit through the museum. However, there were instances in both Families A and F when the child occasionally led the group through the museum.

The Blanton is a museum that is a size easily managed by most visitors. Viewing the museum in its entirety is a feasible goal, even for families with children. Five families of the study successfully viewed the majority of the Blanton's collection, if not the entire collection, during the course of their visit. For some families, that meant skimming over most artworks. Family C, who I met approximately mid-way through their visit, was quickly walking through each gallery while looking at the art. The mother even mentioned at one point that this pace characterized the entire visit. They would generally walk through the galleries in a group, with some discussion between family members. Sometimes the daughters and mother would separate, viewing art individually or in smaller groupings.

Families F and E also walked through almost every gallery. Family F was a family who went through the museum more slowly than Families B and C, and in a more purposeful manner. They had come to the Blanton because of the wide-range of art on display, and did in fact see the vast majority of the collection. Like Family A, Family F had come to the museum so that their child, who was interested in art, could experience a wide range of works. Both Families F and A viewed the collection in a way that was occasionally child-led; the parents in these families would stop and discuss artworks that interested the child. This differed from the majority of the families participating in my study, where the parent directed the visit or, as with Families C and D, the parents and children occasionally parted. Family D was at the Blanton so that the mother could work on a project for a college course in which she was enrolled. They walked through the museum trying to see everything. But this family had a unique approach in that the

mother and child would often separate – sometimes the child would even go into a gallery by himself.

Visitor Reflections on the Goal

During the second interviews I conducted, I tried to gain a grasp of the families' impression of the museum and their thoughts regarding their visit to the Blanton. I also wanted to ask families if they were successful in meeting the goals or expectations they had for their visit. During these second interviews, three parents expressed that the goal of art exposure was one that their family had fulfilled.

While interviewing Family F the mother and the son discussed the wide range of art they saw. The mother stated, "I liked looking at the different types of art. I'm glad that [my son] got to experience new things." To emphasize the newness of the experience, she mentioned that her son was able to, "experience a lot of things that he isn't able to see at school." During our initial interview the mother had explicitly stated that one of her main goals in bringing her son to the Blanton was to be able to expose him to art. When I asked if she had accomplished this goal she said, "Yes," and then went on to add that "there were everything from modern art to...many time periods and so many different styles and types that I think it allowed him to experience things that he normally wouldn't."

The mother from Family H also referred to the art that her family saw during their time in the galleries at the Blanton. When asked during the second interview if she thought her children had gained any skills, she stated, "I think they really enjoyed what they were looking at. Ya know, I think they enjoyed the art." When conducting the

second interview with the mother from Family E, I reminded her that one of her main goals for the day was to enjoy the museum and that was something to work on along with actively viewing artwork. When I asked if she accomplished that goal, the mother stated, “Oh, absolutely.” These statements indicate that these three families were able to accomplish a goal that they had set for their visit, and that they felt that they were able to successfully see or be exposed to art.

ACTIVELY VIEWING ARTWORK

A goal related to art exposure that varied in intent when stated and demonstrated by study participants was the goal of actively viewing artwork. This is different from mere exposure to art, and was indicated by statements and actions from the study participants that spoke to a desire to create meaningful experiences viewing and discussing artworks as a family group. I saw this goal demonstrated in the ways that art was approached and discussed among families who participated in this study.

During the first interviews several parents expressed interest in not only exposing their children or themselves to art, but also inspiring new interest or building on existing interest. This demonstrated a desire to actively engage with the artwork. When parents and children talked about making meaning or relating to art, or when they demonstrated behavior in which they tried to make meaning of or relate to the art, I categorized those verbalizations and actions into this category of actively viewing artwork. This interest in not just viewing, but engaging somewhat deeply with art was not only expressed in interviews, but also demonstrated through parental and child actions during the course of the visit, and then discussed by four families in the post-visit interviews.

Establishment of the Goal

While conducting first interviews with families, three parents made statements that indicated they wanted to view art in an active way with their child while at the Blanton. During her pre-visit interview, the mother in Family E said that while not necessarily a specific goal, an “increased appreciation for art” could be a possible outcome for her child. When I asked the mother in Family F if there were any specific skills that she wanted to work on during their time at the Blanton, she stated, “we work on being involved in the activity of being in the museum.” She wanted her child to engage actively with the art and not merely be exposed to it. The mother from Family E was the only parent to use the word “appreciation” when she spoke about viewing art in a museum environment. Likewise, the mother from Family F expressed an interest in “learning what [my son] likes and doesn’t like” with the ultimate goal being to plan more outings such as this. She hoped for larger outcomes besides widening her child’s art experiences, and for him to begin forming opinions. As a parent she stated she would like to use that information to create further learning experiences for her child. The mother from Family G stated that she believed experiencing art was “a positive thing for [my son]” and that she wanted him “to sort of know that’s a part of his life, and something that he can just be interested in absorbing.” This is a more involved statement than simply wanting to expose her child to art because it indicates a desire for involvement. The statements made by these three mothers expressed an interest in not only viewing art with their children, but also in engaging actively with the artwork. While in the galleries with their children these three parents, and other families who participated in this study,

tried to create an active and engaging experience for their children, while utilizing works of art in the Blanton.

Actions Related to the Goal

While not all parents expressed a desire to view art actively during their visit to the Blanton as a goal in their first interviews, parents from six of the families who participated in my study demonstrated behaviors that indicated they wanted an experience more involved than mere art exposure for themselves and their children. I observed all of the three families who initially indicated active viewing as a goal acting out behaviors that supported this goal. I also observed parents from three other family groups engaging in these behaviors as well. There were two behaviors I saw across multiple family groups that demonstrated this desire to have an involved experience with the artwork on display and for the child to be an active participant with the artworks. One of the behaviors I saw repeatedly between family groups was that parents would steer their children towards works they thought might interest their children the most, and would then interact with them in response to the artwork.

The other method I saw was one conversation. I observed parents questioning their children regarding their feelings and thoughts about an artwork, and working to create conversations about the artwork they were viewing. Some of these conversations included techniques such as making comparisons, or relating the artwork to outside knowledge and other interests of the child. These conversation and inquiry techniques demonstrated a parent's interest in their child's opinions and interests, and a desire to practice skills such as critiquing.

As previously mentioned, multiple parents would consciously select artworks and then steer their children towards them in an attempt to engage the child with something that would appeal specifically to the child. Families B, F, E, G, and H all spent time in the art installation *How to Build Cathedrals*, by Cildo Meireles (1987). This artwork consists of a large base area filled with 600,000 pennies, surrounded by paving stones that are in turn bordered on their outer edges by sheer black fabric that hangs from the ceiling (see Illustration 1).



Illustration 1: *Missão/Missões [Mission/Missions] (How to Build Cathedrals)* by Cildo Meireles (1987).

While the artwork is unique within the museum in its large scale and construction, it is also singular in that visitors can physically interact with it. Visitors are encouraged to walk through the sheer curtains and enter into a brightly lit area where, at its center, lie the pennies. The appeal of this artwork to children is straight forward; it is visually striking and filled with money. What makes the artwork even more appealing is that the visitor can touch it. Visitors are allowed to enter through the sheer fabric to sit or stand

on the paving stones surrounding the pennies. Not only can they touch, but also they can pick up the pennies. This artwork provided parents with a chance to engage with their children while interacting with an artwork. Parents did not need any background knowledge regarding the artist or the intended meaning of the piece in order to discuss how it looks, what it is made of, what you can do with the pennies, and so on. There was a playful aspect of the artwork that I observed, in that families were able to interact with the artwork on a physical and tactile level.

Families G and H spent approximately 15 minutes together sitting and playing with the artwork *How to Build Cathedrals*. The children enjoyed handling the pennies and the mothers discussed the artwork with each other. It offered a place for different participants in the visit to engage with the artwork in various ways. The mothers had taken the opportunity to discuss and intellectually engage with artwork among themselves while the children had a chance to experience play and creativity within the museum environment. The children were fascinated by the pennies and spent a lot of time building “castles” out of them. Their castles consisted of big piles of pennies the children would build up in front of themselves. Both mothers participated in this activity with their children. In the second interviews Family E and Family F both mentioned *How to Build Cathedrals*. When discussing her experience at the Blanton during her second interview, the mother in Family F stated, “How often do you get to see the style of art with like the pennies, and the cow bones, and the communion wafers?” The mother in Family E also specifically mentioned this art work. She described it as, “the installation with the pennies, and the bones,” and went on to say, “That was really moving I think.”

The mother in Family E was a parent who also employed the tactic of steering her child toward artworks that would be interesting to him. Of all the children who participated in this study, her son appeared to be the least interested in the Blanton and the art on display. While the mother was at the Blanton because of her own interests (she holds an MA in Art History) she did try to find artworks that would pique her child's interest and she encouraged discussion when her son was drawn to works on his own. One of the artworks the mother led her son towards was *Sternenfall* by Anselm Kiefer (1998). Like the previously mentioned *How to Build Cathedrals*, this painting is large in scale compared to many of the others on display at the Blanton. Creating further visual interest, the artwork is also made out of unusual materials such as mud, straw, and glass. Another discussion point the artwork offers is that it is intended to resemble a night sky full of constellations. When I spoke with the mother during her family's exit interview, she brought up how her child's attention span was something she needed to consider during their museum visit. Likewise, when the child was drawn to an artwork on his own, she tried to encourage discussion.

One sculpture that attracted the son in Family E was *Progress II*, a large sculpture by Luis Jiménez (1999). However, this happened more organically than when the mother led her son to *Sternenfall*. Without his mother steering him, the son noticed this artwork and began to discuss it with his grandparents (who were present, but did not participate in the study) and his mother. This sculpture is impressively large, brightly colored, and depicts an exciting event. A cowboy perched on a bucking bronco is lassoing a steer, which is also bucking away from the cowboy and horse. Both animals seem to be frozen

mid-struggle and have bright red, glowing eyes. The artwork cantilevers out eight or ten feet on each side of a main base. The child discussed the artwork, specifically how it could stand spreading out as it does, with his grandparents for several minutes.

Actively discussing artwork in a manner that allowed the children to give their opinions and thoughts about art was a way I saw parents encouraging art appreciation in their children. This approach did not place primacy on factual information or a traditional teacher to learner transmission of information. Two families who were almost constantly engaged in this type of discussion were A and F. Both these families had come to the Blanton specifically because their children were interested in art. The daughter in Family A, who was approximately eight years-old was very interested in the artwork on display, and told me that she also makes art. Likewise, the son in Family F also expressed to me his interest in creating art.

Family A, as a whole, was very involved during their visit to the Blanton. For the most part, the mother and daughter walked through the galleries together while the father wandered ahead or lingered behind on his own. However, the parental roles did occasionally reverse and the father would walk and talk with his daughter while the mother explored the artwork on her own. The mother would frequently ask open-ended questions and would support her daughter's opinions. The daughter appeared very comfortable and confident discussing her opinions and thoughts. Family A repeatedly talked about art in a more exploratory and thorough way than most of the other participants in my study. The parents asked thoughtful questions of their daughter that went beyond her opinions, and provided nuanced explanations that would be relevant to

their daughter. At a painted portrait of a woman with a small dog within the European galleries, the daughter asked her mother about the purpose of the artwork. In an effort to help her daughter understand the artwork more fully, the mother responded with an analogy to which her daughter could relate. She asked her daughter, “You know how you get school pictures taken?” The daughter indicated that she understood how this painting could be similar to a photographed portrait. Not all conversations Family A engaged in were initiated by the parents. The daughter would often make comparisons between artworks and other things familiar to her. For example, she compared a blue print to the ocean, and while viewing another large painting the child stated, “When you go back it looks like triangles” and “I found a maze.”

There were other ways in which the parents in Family A encouraged their daughter’s interaction with the art as well. I saw the family, and sometimes the daughter on her own, moving closer and further away from artworks discussing how an artwork changed depending on where one stands. The daughter seemed to feel very comfortable expressing her opinions about what she did and did not like. She called artworks “cool” and at one point even stated, “I could do that.” The statement was not made in a derogatory manner towards the artwork. I could tell by the child’s tone of voice that this was a statement of the child’s confidence in her own artistic abilities. The family did not just keep their conversation focused on likes and dislikes, however. I also heard the mother bring up interesting questions, which encouraged deep thinking. One particular question I heard her ask her daughter came up when they were looking out a window together. The mother asked what made a view from a window different from looking at a

painting. She then encouraged her daughter to make a thoughtful comparison. Her daughter responded by talking about how the trees outside the window moved and swayed and trees in a painting remain still.

The mother in Family F had specifically stated that a goal of her family's visit to the Blanton was to learn more about her son's personal preferences when it came to art. This demonstrated her intent to view art in an active manner; she wanted her son to form a relationship and meaningful connections with the work on display. This mom and her son explored the entire museum, walking through every gallery. While they did not talk about every artwork, they would frequently stop and discuss artworks that interested them or about which they felt strongly. I repeatedly heard the mother ask her son what he thought about the art, and if he liked an artwork.

Visitor Reflections on the Goal

The goal of actively viewing art emerged in statements made by parents during the first interviews, and also in the actions of families within the galleries of the Blanton. These statements and actions revealed an interest in forming connections with artworks, and interacting with them on a level beyond merely viewing them. This was shown by the way parents engaged in conversations with their children, and in the way in which they worked to find artworks with which their children would want to engage. Families also made statements in their second interviews that indicated how they achieved these connections and interactions as they actively viewed art as a family.

When discussing their visit at the Blanton, the son in Family F expressed his opinions about the art they had viewed, mentioning two memorable sculptures as "really

cool.” When I asked the family to share with me how they viewed and discussed art as a family, the mother in Family F described an approach which invites involvement with artwork. She stated, “[my son] would bring my attention to something he liked, I would ask him questions to see if he noticed things... we stayed together through the whole thing, I thought it went well.” When I asked if there were any artworks that they discussed a lot as a family, the son responded by saying, “The statues. With the people from the Rome and Greece places. And the airplane. We talked about that a lot and the art was really cool. We talked about that like a bunch.”

One of the questions I asked most of the families during their post-visit interview was to discuss an experience they had at the Blanton that day which they felt was positive. My intention behind asking this question was to have families discuss the artworks with which they felt they interacted with each other and the work the most, and how those interactions occurred. The mother in Family E mentioned an artwork that other families also enjoyed during their visit at the Blanton, *How to Build Cathedrals*, by Cildo Meireles. She described “the installation with the pennies and the bones” as “really moving.” The mother in Family E also noted why she felt that the artwork was one that her family connected with strongly, and stated how her family actively engaged with the artwork. According to the mother, it was a piece “that we could all kind of talk to [and] about.”

Family E was one of the participating families who were extremely comfortable in the museum environment. The mother has a Master’s Degree in Art History, and she and her son frequently attend “Third Thursdays,” in New York where they live. She

explained that “Third Thursday” refers to a monthly event in New York when various galleries are open for viewing free of charge. The family attends galleries so often that they have a specific policy for viewing art. When they are in museums or galleries, the mother does not allow her son “tablet time,” time spent on a smart phone or iPad, until he has looked at and interacted with all of the art on display. While the family had not brought an iPad with them to the Blanton, the prior establishment of this rule indicates the importance the mother in Family E places on her child’s engagement with artwork. She does not want her child to merely be exposed to art, but to actively talk about its subject matter or content.

During the second interview, when I asked the mother in Family G if she thought her toddler son had gained any particular skills during their visit to the Blanton, she laughed. She had mentioned during the pre-visit interview that she felt he was too young for her to be setting concrete goals to pursue at the Blanton. However, she described her family’s approach to viewing, stating that, “Intuitive is really the only word, you know. If we see something, we can respond to it and talk about it, but that’s about it.” This statement indicates an interest in discussion and interaction between the mother, her child, and the artwork that they are viewing. The mother in Family H also stated during the second interview that she felt her children were not only exposed to art, but also they experienced and maybe appreciated it. She said that she thought “it was really impressive to them. I think they really enjoyed what they were looking at. I think they enjoyed the art.” Three families indicated during their first interviews that actively engaging in artwork was a goal of theirs, and six families demonstrated behavior while viewing

artwork that demonstrated an interest in fostering active engagement between their children and artwork at the Blanton. During second interviews, three families made statements that continued to emphasize an active approach to viewing artwork and indicated that they felt they had actively engaged with art as a family while at the Blanton.

SEEKING AND SHARING INFORMATION

The goal of wanting to find and share information was defined by study participant behavior and statements that placed an importance on factual information. While in the galleries, families demonstrated they were interested in learning factual information, and that gaining information was an important part of their visit. Some participants reflected upon this desire for themselves and their children to acquire information during the second interviews. However, none of the families stated in their first interviews that one of their goals at the Blanton was to have their children acquire information, nor did any of the parents state it was their goal to share or seek out information with their children. Learning was mentioned in other senses, such as learning what one likes or does not like, or learning how to behave in a museum, but none of the parents stated that learning or gaining information was a goal during the first interview. Thus, I drew all data relevant to this theme from observations and statements made during the second interviews.

Actions Relating to the Goal

The families who participated in this study demonstrated a desire for their children to acquire information during their visits in multiple ways. Parents would attempt to seek out information to provide to their child by reading labels or by encouraging their children to read labels in order to see if the family could find answers to their questions. The mother in Family D was one of the parents who encouraged her son to do much of the label reading on his own. She was viewing artwork at the Blanton to complete a school assignment, and part of her assignment was to write about her impressions of the artwork she viewed. The mother tried to avoid reading labels so that her opinions of the art would not be affected by outside information. As a result, when her son would ask her questions regarding content of the work they were viewing, she would encourage him to read the labels for himself. The mothers in Family A and F also encouraged their children to look for the information they were seeking regarding content of an artwork or information about the artist from the label.

Another source of information I saw parents utilize during the course of their families' time at the Blanton was their own personal knowledge of artists or subject matter depicted in artworks, which they shared with their children. For example, the father in Family B explained who Farrah Fawcet was to his two daughters when viewing an Andy Warhol portrait of the actress. Similarly, I noted the parents in Family A and C discussing what they knew about Lichtenstein with their children in a print exhibition featuring the artist's work. In addition to reading the labels next to artworks, I found that

Family F also asked me a lot of questions regarding the Blanton and the art that was on display.

Further evidence that Family D was interested in acquiring information from the Blanton was that they expressed interest in a tour and then participated in one. Family D, who was at the Blanton for the mother's school assignment, chose to join a tour of a temporary exhibit already in progress. Although they joined the tour late, and tended to drop in and out of it at their leisure, Family D participated for about half of the tour. They listened intently and appeared genuinely interested in information that they could gain.

Visitor Reflections on the Goal

Unlike the first interviews, during which none of the participating families mentioned acquiring or sharing information as a goal to be accomplished during their visit, in the second interviews two families made references to a desire to acquire information. The family who discussed this goal in most detail was Family F. When I asked about her family's approach to viewing and discussing art, the mother in Family F indicated that factual knowledge was of some importance to her. She said that, "If [my son] has questions I will try and answer. If I'm not able to answer, we will try and find someone who can." This was validated by her behavior in the museum when they read labels and would ask me questions. The mother clearly felt it was important for her son to learn correct information when and if he appeared genuinely interested.

The mother had also expressed that she wished she and her child had been made aware of more resources that were offered at the Blanton. She felt that when they had first entered the museum "none of the opportunities that were available were really presented to us." She further stated that she and her son "kind of went in blind," noting

“we weren’t really sure where we were going.” During the second interview, the mother in Family F expressed that she wished that visitor services had provided more information when they arrived. She thought that it would have been beneficial if someone who worked at the museum would have asked if they had previously been to the Blanton. The mother said that “evidently there was some kind of tour,” and her family had not been made aware of that. The mother stated that when they returned to the Blanton a tour is something she would participate in, because even though they would be viewing the same artworks, they would be learning new and different information. The implication was that if she and her son had been more aware of this opportunity to gain information offered by the Blanton, they would have utilized it.

Like the mother from Family E, the mother from Family F did not mention seeking information as a goal in her first interview. However, during her second interview she did mention that she wished she and her son had been informed of opportunities available at the Blanton to gain additional information. The mother in Family E described her family’s visit to the Blanton as “educational,” implying that she felt her family had a learning experience while at the museum.

While families did not state they were interested in acquiring information as a goal for their visit, data gathered from observing families’ time together in the galleries at the Blanton indicated this was important to them. Additionally, two families stated that gaining information was a priority of theirs during their exit interview. One family wished that they been able to take advantage of more opportunities to gain knowledge, while another felt they had done so successfully.

MUSEUM BEHAVIOR OR ETIQUETTE

Two of the parents participating in this study made statements during their initial interviews with me that indicated they felt it was important to for their children learn the

type of behavior expected in a museum context, and that their time at the Blanton would be an opportunity to work on this goal. This is different from the goals previously discussed because it is less related to the content of the museum and more to the socio-cultural experience of going to a museum and what that experience is expected to be like. These parents wanted their children to not only gain experiences related to art, but also wanted to work on socialization as well.

Statement of the Goal

The mothers in Families G and H, the parents with the youngest children participating in my study, saw a visit to a museum as a chance to work on museum etiquette and rules with their children. This goal became apparent during both families' first interviews. The mother from Family H stated that she liked "the idea of getting them kind of used to behavior in an art museum" and "understanding what that behavior is." Likewise, the mother from Family G stated that a "byproduct" of exposing her son to a museum environment would be "just to slowly get to learn how to behave in a place like this. But you can't expect too much from... a two and a half year old yet."

Actions Relating to the Goal

During the time I observed these two families at the Blanton I witnessed multiple instances that showed how the two mothers and others in the museum reinforced appropriate behavior. There were recurring interactions with the guards who interacted with these two families throughout the length of their visit, more so than with any other families who participated in my research. As with other families, the guards would

remind the children or parents of rules. I specifically observed as Families G and H were entering the gallery where *How to Build Cathedrals* is housed, that a male guard got down on one knee and talked to the children about how they should and should not interact with the artwork, including handling the pennies. He spoke to the children in a friendly, but thorough manner. As previously mentioned, I knew that the father from Family H worked at the Blanton, and the gallery assistant spent so much time speaking to the children that I thought at one point he might actually be the father, but he was not.

Both mothers were attentive to their children's behavior at this artwork as well. While it is the intention of the artist for viewers to participate with the artwork by touching it, the Blanton staff still has rules about acceptable interactivity. For example touching the pennies is allowed, but tossing them is not. The children piled up the pennies, and even held them in their shirts. However, the mothers did intervene if their children played too roughly with the pennies.

I also observed the mother from Family G working with her son, a toddler, on the appropriate distance to stand when viewing artwork. There is a large gallery in the Blanton that features several large, multi-media artworks. Within this gallery several of these artworks are grouped together, and the museum has placed white lines on the floor near these works that signal a safe viewing distance. In this area I observed the mother from Family G explaining to her son that he should not cross the white lines. She would remind him as he occasionally walked beyond the lines that he needed to look at the lines and not step over them.

Visitor Reflections on the Goal

Both mothers in Families G and H spoke about how their children behaved in the galleries of the Blanton during the course of their second interviews. In contrast to their first interviews, the mothers also discussed their children's behavior in the context of how the Blanton staff responded to them. Families G and H visited the museum together, and as a result both mothers were present for part of the other parent's interview. During her exit interview the mother in Family G stated that "it is inherently challenging bringing a toddler to a museum where they can't touch anything. I mean it's kind of a ridiculous ambition in a way. But we still had fun." While I was interviewing the mother from Family G, the mother from Family H also became involved in the discussion.

The mother from Family F expressed indirectly that she felt the guards should have been more relaxed. While these two families were at the Blanton there was a temporary exhibit featuring medieval art and objects. Sharing an anecdote in which one of her children was reprimanded for touching a display case which housed armor, she stated that a guard had said that her daughter "was banging on the thing that had the armor in it. Ok, so it's armor. If [my daughter] were somehow able to bang the plexiglass to collapse...I'm pretty sure the armor would stand." The tone of the mother's voice indicated that she felt that the guard's intervention was unnecessary and possibly offensive.

During her post-visit interview the mother in Family H revisited the goal she had set for her family during their initial interview, of wanting her daughters to become used to behaving properly in museums. She said, "there were a lot of challenges, which is just ya know the 'touch, don't touch,' and that kind of thing, but I think they did pretty good, and I think they had a great time." She went on to say, "I think [my daughters] learned kind of the behavior in a museum." The mother also offered an evaluation of how she

thought her and her two daughters had made progress towards this goal, and how others at the museum may have responded to her family. She stated, “I think they performed well for their age level, which maybe some people thought...I don’t know how worried the people at the museum were, but I feel like they did great.” Museum behavior was clearly stated as a goal by Families G and H during the first interviews, then demonstrated in the museum, and evaluated by them as successful in second interviews.

IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL MOTIVATIONS

All the parents interviewed during this study stated goals that they had established for their children, or their family as a whole, while visiting the museum. However, the motivations discussed in this section are different from the prior goals. These are motivations that drew individuals, two parents and two children, to the Blanton. The motivations were driving forces behind planning a visit to the museum, as opposed to goals to be accomplished once at the Blanton.

Statement of the Motivations

The motivations that brought the mothers in Family D and E to the Blanton related to education. The mother in Family D was completing a school assignment, and the mother in Family E was pursuing her personal interest in Latin American art. The mother in Family D was currently enrolled in a college course that required her to visit the Blanton, and observe various art works for an assignment. Her main intent while at the museum was to complete that assignment, and as a result, to view as much of the museum as possible. During her pre-visit interview, the mother in Family E told me that “part of my Master’s degree in Art History was studying Latin American artists so I

wanted to see the Latin American art collection...but also the general collection.” The Blanton has a large Latin American collection for which it is well known. As previously mentioned, this family had come to Austin from New York. They were visiting for a wedding and while in Austin the mother had decided the Blanton was something that she wanted to see.

One child concretely told me of a motivation which drew him to the Blanton. The son in Family F expressed to me, during the first interview with his family, that he enjoyed painting. When I was asking his mom if there were any skills she would like for him to gain during their visit, the son interrupted. He stated, “I can think of one” and then continued saying he would like to do “a better job painting.” Another child, the daughter in Family A, expressed an interest in art-making to me as well. While I recall her saying that she was interested in being inspired by the works at the Blanton, her comment was made during one of the lost interviews resulting from the recorder malfunction.

Actions Relating to the Motivation

Both mothers from Family D and E were able to pursue the motivations that had brought them to the Blanton during their families’ visit to the museum. The mother in Family D approached her trip to the Blanton in a serious manner because she was at the Blanton to complete a college class assignment. She mentioned this assignment several times and was actively involved in completing her work during her museum visit by taking notes, photographing labels, and trying to view as much of the art on display as possible. The mother’s project required that she record her own impressions of and thoughts regarding the artwork. She was so invested in her goal to record her authentic

thoughts regarding the artwork, untainted by information or opinions of others, that she would not read labels.

The mother from Family E had mentioned a personal interest in the Blanton's Latin American collection during her first interview. In the second interview, she specifically mentioned three art works from the Latin American collection that she enjoyed viewing. She cited *How to Build Cathedrals* as an artwork at which her family had interacted in a positive way, but she also discussed some sculptures by Luis Jiménez. The Blanton had two large Luis Jiménez sculptures on display at the time Family E visited the Blanton – *Progress II*, 1987 (1999) and *Border Crossing* (1987). Referring to the sculptures the mother said, "I was really happy to see the Luis Jiménez sculptures in person, cause I read about them, and studied them so many years ago, and so it was nice to see them." These statements reflected her motivation for visiting the Blanton; she wanted to view the museum's Latin American collection.

While in the galleries of the museum with their families, both mothers from Families D and E pursued their own interests that had brought them to the Blanton. The comments and actions of the mothers demonstrate that they did make efforts to further these interests. Likewise, the comments made by the children in Family A and F indicate that they were motivated to visit the Blanton by their interests in art making. These motivations also demonstrate that while parents had goals in mind for their children while at the Blanton, there were also motivations held by individuals within family groups affecting the outcome of the visit.

UTILIZING MUSEUM RESOURCES

The final theme that emerged while analyzing the data produced by my study was a pattern I noticed in how families utilized museum resources other than the art on display. During the first interviews I conducted with families, none of the parents or children talked about wanting to utilize resources at the Blanton in addition to the art on view. While observing and interviewing families, there were three resources other than art that I noticed families taking advantage of: a tour, sketch kits, and the E-Lounge, which is an interactive area located midway through the second floor of the museum. My research question related not only to the goals or motivations that families brought with them to the Blanton, but also how, once at the Blanton, they achieved and met their aims. These resources, which the families interacted with, did at times serve as means through which they accomplished their goals.

The Blanton offers several resources that visitors can utilize besides the art which are available year round. First, as I previously mentioned while discussing how families sought out information, the Blanton offers tours in which visitors can participate. The museum also offers sketch kits visitors can take into the galleries to use during their visit. These sketch kits consist of sketch pads, colored pencils, and activity suggestions for the user. The resource most frequently utilized by families who participated in my study was the E-Lounge.

The E-Lounge is intended to be an interactive space for all visitors, not just families. It holds books and computers, which are typically set to programs or websites specifically related to the Blanton's collection or an exhibit on view. Additionally, during

the time I conducted my study there was also a video artwork on view in the space. Puzzles or toys for children are present as well. When I conducted my study, there were wooden boxes of colored sticks, flat wooden shapes, and blocks that a visitor could use to build or create designs. The room is circular, surrounded by desks, that hold computers. There are shelves with books, puzzles, and toys bordering the room. A large ottoman surrounded by many chairs sits in the center of the room. Of the eight families who participated in this study, five brought the blocks and shapes to the ottoman, which they then used as a play or building surface.

Actions Relating to the Theme

The families went on tours, used sketch kits, and visited the E-Lounge during their time in the galleries at the Blanton. One family participated in a tour while I observed them at the museum, and a second family mentioned in their exit interview that they would have wanted to participate in a tour had they been aware of the timing. As previously mentioned, Family D joined in on a tour of a temporary exhibition at the Blanton. They went out of their way, coming down from the second to the first floor, in an effort to locate and then participate in the tour. They tended to leave and rejoin the tour group intermittently, but both the mother and son appeared interested in the content the docent presented.

Family D is the family whose child made most use of the sketch kit, although Family B also checked a sketch kit out from the visitor services desk. I do not have notes, however, regarding how they used it in the galleries of the Blanton, but the family carrying a kit with them through the Blanton at the very least indicates interest in the

resource. The son in Family D made frequent use of this kit, which he appeared to enjoy. He would often sit in the galleries drawing pictures while his mother walked around the galleries looking at the art. Sometimes the kit did not include particular colored pencils he wanted to use, and the boy would borrow mine, which I had brought in my bag in order to entertain the children while I interviewed their parents. Although I do not know what he was making, this boy appeared to enjoy having the tools provided to make art while at the Blanton.

The E-Lounge was the most utilized of all the additional resources beyond the artwork available at the Blanton. Families B, E, F, G and H all stayed for a while in the E-Lounge. I made initial contact with Families B, G, and H while they were using this space and the activities it provided. Family E and Family F lingered in the E-Lounge during the course of their visit to the Blanton, using it as a break time in the midst of their visit.

Regardless of age, all children of the families who participated in the E-Lounge were drawn to the same items. They gravitated towards the blocks, the flat wooden shapes, and the colored sticks. When I approached Family B about participating in my study, the daughters were happily playing at the ottoman with some of the wooden blocks and shapes. The girls were building castles, and I was able to interview their father as they played. The daughters were so engaged with the activity that when it was time to leave the E-Lounge their father had to set a time limit to get the girls to leave the area and continue on with their museum visit. The children in Family G and Family H were also playing at the ottoman when I approached their mothers about participating in my study,

and the blocks kept them entertained as I interviewed the mothers. The child in Family F chose the flat shapes with which to play. He used them to make snowflake patterns. When Family E stopped by the E-Lounge the son played with the blocks, however, he also was very interested in the video artwork displayed in the room. He was one of the only children to pay much attention to this artwork. The actions of the participating families demonstrate that they were interested in taking advantage of resources offered by the Blanton. Families who participated in this study invested time, and, in the case of Family D who went out of their way to locate a tour, effort to utilize these resources.

Visitor Reflections on the Theme

During the second interviews that I conducted one family, Family F, discussed at length resources offered by the Blanton. Referring to the E-Lounge, the mother commented that she was glad “there were things, there were the rooms with the puzzles...that he got to do something and actually could touch something, ‘cause there’s so much you can’t touch.” The other families who stayed in the E-Lounge also appeared to enjoy the space. This was evidenced by how involved children became in the activities that they chose. It gave them a chance to build and play, and the space provided something of a break for parents as well.

The fact that the E-Lounge was only mentioned in Family F’s second interview could be explained in several ways. First, my questions were generally geared towards asking families about art or their museum visit in broader ways. I did not specifically ask about other museum resources in either the first or second interviews. Whatever the reason, even though this resource, the E-Lounge, was rarely mentioned in interviews, it

was still something that families took advantage of and with which they actively participated, as my observations revealed.

The mother in Family F also discussed tours at the Blanton during her exit interview. She and her child did not have an opportunity to join a tour while at the Blanton. The mother felt that if her family had been made aware of the tour when they entered the museum, that it would have been a resource they would have sought out. This was the family's first visit to the Blanton, and the mother stated that she wished someone would have asked her, "Have you ever been here before?" and then provided some orienting information. She stated, "Evidently there was some type of a tour," making it clear that this was something about which she was not aware. The mother went on to say, "None of the opportunities that were available were really presented to us." She also indicated that if the family returned they would be participating in a tour, because "now that we know that there's a tour, and we've kinda been through and seen what kind of things there are, I'd like to learn more about them."

The second interview with Family F and the quantity of the other families utilizing resources within the museum demonstrates that these were opportunities of which families wanted to take advantage. Additionally, Family D utilized a resource, the tour, to accomplish the goal of seeking information, and Family F would have liked to go on the tour to accomplish the same goal. The additional resources provided opportunities for families to interact with each other, and in some cases provided avenues to accomplish goals, which they had set for themselves and their visit.

CONCLUSION

The families who participated in this study provided data through the interviews and by allowing me to observe them within the museum. This data brought to light multiple themes which spoke to my research question. These themes related to goals and motivations families brought with them to the Blanton. Data from the families also revealed how they accomplished their goals, and if they felt they had fulfilled those goals and motivations during their time at the museum. The next chapter explores what these findings suggest in relation to museum visitors.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The research question that served as a catalyst for my study was about motivations that brought families to the Blanton Museum of Art, goals they set for themselves during their museum visit, and the actions they took to fulfill their intentions. Data gathered from interviews revealed that families did set goals for themselves. These goals were not always verbally stated during the first interviews, but instead emerged through the families' actions while in the galleries of the museum. Through interviews, families discussed these goals and motivations, and in some instances actually evaluated how successful they believed they were in accomplishing their goals. In this chapter I discuss what these findings suggest, and discuss the literature that relates to my findings in a meaningful way.

GOALS AND MOTIVATIONS DERIVED FROM MY DATA

As discussed in Chapter 4, the families who participated in this study made statements during the first interviews and also behaved in ways within the museum that brought to light goals they held for themselves while at the Blanton. I determined three of these four goals from statements parents made during their first interviews. These goals were again demonstrated through actions within the museum, and then further discussed during the second interviews with families. During the first interviews parents stated they wanted to expose their children to art, and made statements indicating they wanted to actively view art with their children. Two families expressed they wanted to work on teaching their children proper museum behavior. One of the four goals did not emerge from statements made during initial interviews, but instead came to light through the families' behaviors during their time within the galleries of the Blanton. This was the goal of seeking out and sharing information regarding art on display at the Blanton.

That families omitted the goal of wanting to acquire and share information during their first interviews does not mean that gaining knowledge was not important to them or was not something they wanted to accomplish during their visit. According to Falk and Dierking (2012), it is common for study participants to not verbalize learning as a reason or expectation for a museum visit when they are being interviewed. This motivation can be left unsaid because visitors feel that this motivation is either implicit or implied in a museum visit. According to Falk and Dierking (2012), “virtually all individuals, visiting a museum understand that museums are educational institutions and consequently expect to learn something during their time there” (p. 45). Parents who participated in my study may have been exhibiting the same behavior observed by Falk and Dierking (2012), feeling that learning may have felt too obvious to be stated as a goal for their visit. While the goal of seeking and sharing information is not synonymous with learning, behaviors that fell under the seeking and sharing information category discussed in Chapter 4 were similar to behaviors associated with a traditional teaching model. This model places a primacy on information and maintains that the main role of the teacher is to be a transmitter of information.

In addition to the goals that emerged from the data I collected, in the previous chapter I also discussed individually held motivations. These motivations differed from the goals established by parents, as they were factors that brought singular members of families to the Blanton, rather than goals that they set to be accomplished while at the Blanton. One of the parents who participated in my study wanted to visit the Blanton because of her educational background and personal interest in the Blanton’s Latin American collection. Another parent was motivated to visit the Blanton in an effort to complete a school assignment for a college course in which she was enrolled. One child

clearly expressed an interest in becoming a better artist, while another expressed interest in art making.

Another theme discussed in Chapter 4 was not a goal or motivation, but did relate to both categories. This theme was that five of the eight families who participated in my study made use of resources the Blanton offered other than the art on display. Families took advantage of resources such as tours and an interactive space referred to as the E-Lounge. In some cases resources served as means to accomplishing goals families had determined for themselves. Even in instances when the participating families utilized resources in ways not directly related to goals or motivations, these resources were integral and significant activities for the majority of the families who participated in my study. The following sections discuss the meanings of my findings and connect these findings to the existing body of research in the field.

Meanings of Goals and Motivations Derived from My Data

The data I collected through this investigation demonstrated that the families who participated in my study set goals for their visit to the Blanton Museum of Art. Whether verbally stated or not, their goals were present. During the first interviews all the families established that they wanted their children to have an opportunity to view art, and two families clearly stated they wanted their children to learn and practice museum behavior. Some families made statements indicating that they not only desired to view art, but also that they sought out the opportunity to discuss the art in an involved manner. The families' actions within the museum demonstrated that some parents also believed it was important to share information they knew with their children and to seek out additional information.

The goals of seeking out information and actively engaging with art are different in intention and purpose. While the goal of having an involved experience with art and the goal of sharing information with your child are both intents related to learning, they are goals, however, that prioritize different forms of knowledge. The goal of seeking and sharing knowledge is a goal that places a primacy on factual information. When parents engaged with their children in a manner that was conducive to an active art viewing experience, there was an emphasis placed on learning that went beyond the retention of rote facts. By asking their children open-ended and opinion generating questions, parents opened up the possibility of an involved dialogue. Both of these forms of learning are categorized as informal learning, because they took place outside a traditional educational environment (like a school) and happened in a museum (Reidinger, 2012). These goals were not just expressed by parents, but by children as well. Both the children in Family A and in Family F told me of their personal interest in learning about art, as they both enjoyed making art as well. Both children played a role in occasionally leading their family through the Blanton and participated in the family conversations.

All parents from the four families whose interview data remained usable after the recorder malfunctioned stated that they wanted their children to have the opportunity to view art. This is a goal that centers on the experience of visiting the institution. Instead of focusing on a concrete outcome, the parents looked at visiting the museum as a goal in and of itself. These parents believed that mere exposure, the opportunity to see art, would be beneficial to their child. This is different from wanting to actively engage with the artwork, another often established goal, because it is a more passive way of experiencing art.

Finally, parents from two families stated that they hoped to provide their children with an opportunity to work on appropriate museum behavior while at the Blanton. These

families included the youngest of the children who participated in my study, so it is logical that these parents would want to take the opportunity of being at the Blanton to work on social skills with their children. The children were preschool aged, an age at which parents and teachers are reinforcing social behavior for many life scenarios with the children.

Individually held motivations emerged from my data as well. I categorized the motivations separately from the goals because the data indicated that the motivations were factors that brought families to the Blanton, while I defined goals by an expressed desire to accomplish something while at the museum. These motivations were related to the parents' and children's own personal interests. The mother from Family D was at the museum to fulfil an assignment for a college course that she was enrolled in and the mother from Family E was drawn to the Blanton because of a personal and professional interest in Latin American art. While these parents brought their sons to the Blanton, and had goals for their children as well, they both made a point to focus on their own needs while at the Blanton. The son in Family F expressed a desire to become better at painting, and hoped that the art on display at the Blanton would help him to achieve this artistic ability. Similarly, the daughter in Family A was an artist in her own right, although I do not have documentation that she was specifically looking for inspiration.

The individually held motivations that brought some families to the museum pertained to personal interest or a personal need. The mother from Family E was pursuing a personal interest, and a school project was a motivating factor for the mother in Family D. Both mothers brought their children with them. While the children were on the visit with the mothers, there was tension in both cases between the child's interests and that of the parent. The child in Family E was clearly uninterested for portions of the visit. Conversely, the child in Family D was very interested in the art on display. However, his

mother was trying to write down her unaltered impressions of artwork for her school project. So, while her child wanted to read labels and ask questions, she did not. The child was also not as interested in viewing everything on display. While the mother was trying to view the whole museum, he would frequently sit and sketch with a sketch kit while waiting for the mother.

I also observed tension between goals of the parent and the wants of the children in other families as well, Families B and F. The father in this family had stated that one of the reasons he had brought his family to the Blanton was because he wanted his young daughters to be exposed to a college environment. It was evident by conversation and the children's behavior that this was clearly the father's interest. The girls were not of elementary school age yet, and did not appear as interested in the idea of college as was their father. The mother of the son in Family F had her own reasons for coming to visit the Blanton with her son. She wanted him to enjoy himself and she wanted to learn what he liked and did not like in terms of art, yet she was completely unaware of his own personal motivation. Her tone of voice indicated that she was surprised when he informed her that he was hoping to become a better painter. Falk (2008) argues that motivations that bring people to museums are often identity-related, meaning that people come to museums for purposes that are important to them. All the reasons these individuals wanted to visit the Blanton are reflective of something that was significant to them – personal interests, college requirement, wanting to inspire children to pursue higher education, and art-making.

In their book *The Museum Experience Revisited* (2012) Falk and Dierking revisit and update a previously set forth framework they established to describe visitor experiences. They state that “people visit the museum to satisfy specific, often highly personal and/or sociocultural needs” (p. 33). While Falk and Dierking address

motivations here, the statement can be applied to the goals that participants in my study set for themselves as well. If people are visiting museums because of their personal or sociocultural needs, then it follows that the goals they set for themselves will most likely be related to those needs as well. The findings from my study indicate that the participants of my study were not only motivated to visit the museum for specific reasons, but also that they did have goals they wanted to accomplish while at the museum. These goals fit within the categories of motivations set forth by Falk and Dierking.

Falk and Dierking (2012) surmise that visitor motivations can be grouped into three categories—social-related reasons, recreational reasons, and learning. The goals that emerged from my data are reflective of these categories. A parents' desire to have their children learn museum behaviors is an inherently social goal. The parent is beginning to equip their children to handle a specific social situation appropriately. When the parents expressed their desire for their children to be exposed to art, they were conveying a recreational goal. They wanted their children to have an experience, to participate in the activity of viewing art. When parents sought out information with their children or passed along information from their own knowledge, they indicated that acquiring information was important. As previously mentioned, this approach resembles traditional learning that places a primacy on factual concrete information. Parents that engaged actively in their art viewing experience with their children were engaged in a learning activity as well. However, the conversations they facilitated with their children were not focused on facts, but instead these discussions emphasized thoughtfulness and critical thinking.

MEANING OF OBSERVED BEHAVIOR WITHIN THE MUSEUM

During the course of their time at the Blanton, families who participated in my study set about accomplishing the goals they had established for themselves in various ways. All the goals and motivations were demonstrated through behaviors and actions the families displayed while in the museum. These actions and behaviors are meaningful because they demonstrate how the families worked to fulfill their goals.

While many families performed actions relating to similar goals, and some articulated goals that were the same, none of the families set forth identical sets of goals. Thematically related goals emerged from the data. However, they did so in various ways. Across the different themes discussed within Chapter 4, several types of cross-theme behavior emerged. Two main types of behaviors surfaced from observations of the parents; these behaviors can be categorized as guiding behaviors and teaching behaviors. Within family groups the actions I observed were actions I then categorized as collaborative and interactive.

Parent Behaviors

Across all the themes discussed in Chapter 4, I divided the parental behaviors I observed into two types. The first behavior is that parents of the families demonstrated guiding behaviors, a means by which they led and directed their family in different ways while at the Blanton. Parents from the participating families led their family between galleries, set guidelines for their families, and directed their children towards artworks they felt would work for them. The second behavior I observed was that parents taught their children. Parents taught from their own personal knowledge and from information they sought out as a family.

Guiding Behaviors Exhibited by Parents

While conducting my observations, I noticed that the parent frequently took on the role of a guide. When engaging in behaviors that were conducive to an experience in which their children did not just view artworks, but also became engaged with them, parents from multiple families steered their children to artworks they believed would interest them. Several parents in my study directed their children to artworks that were then able to serve as a catalyst for discussion. A specific example of this was how the mother from Family E would purposefully nudge her child toward certain artworks that were conducive to conversation. She chose artworks that were large, made of unique materials and contained familiar subject matter. One of the artworks was a large painting, *Sternenfall* (1998) by Anselm Kiefer, with dirt, straw, and glass on its surface, which resembles constellations. She and her son were then able to discuss how the artwork resembled a night sky, and talk about the media from which the work was constructed. The child from Family E appeared the least interested of all the children who participated in this study. It seems likely that by choosing artworks that were unique, his mother was selecting pieces she thought would pique her child's interest and serve as a catalyst for conversation. The mother discussed during both interviews that her child's short attention-span is an issue when they attend museums and galleries, and it seemed that at times she was making a conscious effort to counteract this effect.

The mother in Family E used her knowledge of what would interest her child, and knowledge of his attention span, to make decisions that could potentially lead her child to be more engaged with the art on display and the family's museum experience. Other families demonstrated this as well. Multiple families spent time in the artwork *How to Build Cathedrals* (Illustration 1), which is unique amongst the works on view at the Blanton due to its innate interactivity and size, and provided families a way to interact

physically with the artwork. During the second interviews families made statements revealing that they felt this artwork was one at which their family interacted in a positive way. I observed several families spending time in this piece. All the families I observed at *How to Build Cathedrals* stayed for a significant period of time, when compared with other works they viewed as a family. Parents in Families A and F took the opportunity to discuss the artwork with their children, while the mothers in Family G and H encouraged their children to enjoy the physical aspect of the art, touching and playing with the pennies. These parents made a decision regarding the timing and planning of their visit to stay longer at an artwork that was engaging to their children.

Family members know each other, their interests and their personal history, in ways that people outside the family group do not. The parents who participated in this study utilized their personal knowledge of their children and their experiences to lead their children while at the Blanton. In her chapter “Museums in Family Life”, Ellenbogen (2002) discusses how families are equipped in unique ways for museum learning experiences. She states that, “family members are accustomed to interacting and learning together, and they are equipped with an extensive array of personal and cooperative learning strategies that facilitate the museum learning experience” (p. 83). The parents who participated in my study used their knowledge of their children and their family to effectively guide their children and determine how their family spent time at the Blanton.

Teaching Behaviors Exhibited by Parents

Parents also enacted behaviors that can be categorized as teaching behaviors. Gutwell and Allen (2002) state that museums offer opportunities for “authentic” and “self-directed inquiry” (p. 711) and that museums offer resources for learning at different ages and phases in life. Museums also provide opportunities to learn or study objects and

ideas that a visitor may not usually have a chance to explore. Some of the parents who participated in this study were intentionally taking advantage of these opportunities. Both children in Families A and F were very interested in the art on display at the Blanton, and their parents planned the visit to the Blanton to provide their children with an opportunity to pursue these interests.

I have documented observations of all but one parent assuming a teaching role at some point during the visit to the museum. Some parents initiated and facilitated conversations regarding artwork on display. Parents also shared their own personal knowledge regarding art and artists. At other times they took on the role of assisting their children in finding information to answer their questions. They encouraged their children to learn on their own by having them read labels, and sometimes suggested asking someone else such as a guard or, in one instance, me. Parents embodied traditional teaching roles when they taught and assisted in the finding of factual information. In other instances, such as when leading conversations regarding artworks, they embodied the role of a facilitator. As a facilitator they initiated and promoted discussion between their children and themselves. These parents took on different roles, contingent on which goal they were fulfilling at the time.

In the article “Watching the Chaperones: An Ethnographic Study of Adult-Child Interactions in School Field Trips”, Sedzielarz (2003) discusses ways in which parents serving as chaperones led children during field trips at a museum. There were specific behaviors that Sedzielarz saw chaperones engage in that I saw the parents who participated in my study engage in as well. She observed parents who were focused on specific roles such as teaching, acting as a facilitator, and serving as a role model. Sedzielarz (2003) noticed that parents generally saw themselves as either a teacher or

someone who was there simply to help the children experience the museum, with the museum itself serving as the main teaching tool.

The mothers from Families G and H served as role models for their children as they modeled and reinforced appropriate museum behavior. This role fit their need for teaching socializing behavior to their children. Other parents who participated in my research adopted teaching techniques that are common to informal learning. Informal learning takes place outside of a formal learning environment, somewhere like a museum. Borun (2002) states that as people, “much of what we learn is part of the process of growing up as a member of a social group” (p. 245), and this is true of informal learning as well. Borun states that informal learning can be referred to as “socially situated” (p. 245), because it is so often a social experience and not one that is individual. All the families in this study, even Family A and B who would split into smaller groups at times, participated in socially situated learning when they discussed art works collectively. This socially situated learning was the kind of learning that parents promoted when they served as facilitators for their families. Parents in this role promoted learning as an involved group activity.

While the roles I observed were similar to those identified by Sedzielarz (2003), the teaching behavior I saw exhibited by parents was fluid. Parents did not maintain one role during their entire visit. Some parents were facilitators at one point, but took on traditional teaching roles and shared their knowledge with their child at other points. An example of this is how I observed the mothers in Families G and H taking on the role of model behavior at some points in their visit, but also serving as a facilitator at other points. Most of the parents who participated in this study served as a teacher at some point during their families’ visit. But these roles were flexible and changed depending on the goal being pursued.

Family Behaviors

The families who participated in my research study exhibited behaviors at the Blanton that I generalized into two broad categories: collaborative behaviors and interactive behaviors. Collaborative behaviors were interactions I observed in which the family worked together to construct meaning. Interactive behaviors were behaviors I witnessed in which families engaged with the museum resources, art and otherwise, as a group. Working together and interacting with the museum were both ways in which families collectively fulfilled their goals.

Collaborative Behaviors

The parents in both Family A and Family F facilitated conversations that were the most involved with each other and complex of all of the families I observed. The parents would ask questions regarding artworks, and then listen supportively to the answers their children gave. To create a more collaborative conversation, the mother in Family A would ask questions that called for deeper thought and contemplation than conversations I observed amongst other participating families. The mother in Family F would contribute her own thoughts about the art work to conversations she would have with her son as well. Both Families A and F were at the Blanton because of their child's interest in art. The purpose of the visit was for the child's benefit, and both families' visits were focused on the children's needs and interests. The conversations these families engaged in required the input of multiple family members. They were collaborative efforts through which the family was able to collectively explore an artwork.

Another collaborative behavior I observed families participating in was the use of prior knowledge to construct meaning while discussing artworks. For example, the father in Family B would incorporate what he knew about artworks or the subject matter when

talking about the art with his daughters. In the case of Family A, both the child and parents would draw on what they already knew in order to create analogies and comparisons. The mother in Family E appeared to choose artworks to which she knew her son would respond. She chose artworks with familiar content – a cowboy, constellations – which would serve as talking points and a way for her child to connect his current body of knowledge with the art on display. Both families used what they knew to try and create meaning and give the artwork relevance for their children. Having a shared body of knowledge is one of the unique aspects of a family. Family conversations can contain exclusive information only known to those in a family, and the knowledge family members have about each other provides them with unique insight into what will interest or be meaningful to other family members.

The collaborative behaviors exhibited by the families are beneficial, because according to Borun (2002) people acquire knowledge through guided participation. This guided participation, defined as interaction with people in a group setting who are more skilled or experienced, enables those in a group who are less experienced the opportunity to observe and acquire new skills. When the parents who participated in this study facilitated conversations with their children, they were not only engaging in a collaborative conversation, but also showing their children ways to approach and discuss artworks. According to Reidinger (2012), some of the most unique aspects of visits to a museum as a family group are “to learn together, interact, engage in conversations, and learn more about one another” (p. 125).

Interactive Behaviors

In addition to utilizing collaborative behaviors to make meaning from artworks the families were viewing, they also interacted with the artwork and resources available

at the Blanton in a way that added to their museum experience, and at times helped the families accomplish their goals. Borun (2002) argues that the most memorable part of a museum experience comes from observing and manipulating objects, not just reading the text on display with the pieces.

Several parents discussed times when their families interacted with the works that they viewed, validating Borun's (2002) argument that interaction with objects at a museum is the most memorable part of a museum visit. Three families discussed how their family was able to interact with *How to Build Cathedrals*, an artwork that visitors can touch and actually sit inside. Parents commented on how it was a positive aspect of the artwork and their visit that their children could touch the artwork. They also said it was an artwork that was conducive to a lot of interaction within their family group. The interactivity of this installation provided parents a chance to actively engage in an artwork with their children.

Another area that fostered a lot of interaction between family members and what they encountered at the museum was the Blanton E-Lounge. The majority of families who participated in the study utilized this area. This lounge provided families an opportunity to play with toys and puzzles in a creative manner. At least two families visited the E-Lounge at approximately the mid-point of their visit, and all five families who utilized the E-Lounge did so after they had viewed art, but before their visit was complete. The parents were able to relax while the children had the stimuli of the activities with which they were able to physically interact. Hood (1993) describes museum fatigue as a phenomenon in which a visitor becomes mentally or physically exhausted by the museum experience. While the E-Lounge offered interactivity, the timing of how families utilized the E-Lounge indicated that the area served as break as well, both mentally and physically, for the families who utilized it. Parents and children

had an opportunity to sit on comfortable chairs as well as relax and play before continuing on with the rest of their visit.

The behaviors exhibited by parents, both guiding and leading, and the behaviors exhibited by whole families, collaborative and interactive, are significant in two ways. First, the data I collected showed that families used the behaviors to accomplish the goals they had set for their visits. Second, the data also demonstrated that behaviors changed depending on the goal upon which the parent and family was working. The next section discusses how the families spoke about the fulfillment of their goals and the meaning of their comments.

FULFILLMENT OF GOALS

The parents who participated in this study established goals for their families during the course of our first interviews and in their actions as a family within the galleries of the Blanton. Moreover, they also they revisited these goals during the second interviews that I designed and conducted after the families had completed their visit to the Blanton. The semi-structured interviews enabled me to ascertain whether or not visitors were satisfied that they fulfilled their goals, and if they were able to accomplish what they wanted to achieve in their museum experience. All families shared with me their reflections on at least one goal they felt they had accomplished.

When the mother from Family F discussed how their visit to the Blanton had enabled her to expose her child to art, she said he was able to “experience a lot of things that he isn’t able to see at school.” Other families expressed satisfaction that they had fulfilled the goal of exposing their families to artworks as well. The mothers from Families G and H stated that they had fulfilled the goal they had set of introducing their children to the concept of appropriate museum behavior.

One family, however, was unique in discussing a goal they had not completely fulfilled, and one they wished they could have pursued further. The mother in Family F believed that her family had not been adequately introduced to the resources offered by the Blanton. As a result they were not able to experience everything she would have liked. Specifically, they missed a tour because they were not aware it would be happening. This speaks to how important it is for museum educators and other staff to be aware of visitors' needs and recognize that new visitors are unfamiliar with the museum environment.

The families who participated in this study were, as a whole, reflective in their second interviews. They evaluated goals they had accomplished, and in at least one case shared with me something more they wished they had been able to accomplish. Parents also analyzed their actions, considering at which artworks they felt their families' had interacted positively, and spoke to how their family collectively viewed artworks.

In his article, "Viewing Art Museum Visitors Through the Lens of Identity", Falk (2008) explores five common motivations that bring people to museums. He argues that the majority of motivations visitors come to the museum with can be grouped into the following categories— (a) wanting to explore, (b) fulfilling professional duties or pursuing personal interests, (c) facilitating the visit for others, (d) seeking a spiritual experience, and (e) looking for a unique experience. There is, however, another concept Falk (2008) discusses in this article that I believe is relevant to my findings. Falk establishes the concept of feedback loops. According to Falk, visitors come to museums because of identity-related reasons (2008). These reasons begin the cycle Falk (2008) refers to as a feedback loop. After their visit, the feedback loop will come full-circle when within the framework of their previously expressed motivations, visitors evaluate whether the museum met their needs and fulfilled their reasons for visiting. Falk (2008)

states that “as active meaning seekers, most museum visitors engage in a degree of self-reflection and self-interpretation” (p. 28).

When the participants of my study discussed their visit with me, they frequently demonstrated Falk’s concepts of feedback loops (2008). They considered the goals set at the beginning of their visit, and then evaluated their visit with those goals in mind. They also referenced ways they were able to accomplish their goals. These reflections demonstrated which goals were fulfilled and how the families were able to accomplish these goals. The families focused on their previously stated goals when discussing their visit during second interviews.

AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

My research is meaningful in that it speaks to not only the motivations that brought the participating families to the Blanton Museum of Art, but also to the goals or objectives they set for themselves while they were at the museum. This study also led to several questions to be explored through future research.

One of these questions is: How pre-planned were the goals these families set for themselves? I used the word “goal” when interviewing study participants. It was not a participant derived term, and it would be interesting to study whether or not participants would volunteer the word “goal” to describe what they wanted to accomplish at the Blanton themselves. Researching how these families would define their goals would provide insight into how families prepare for a trip to a museum.

Another avenue for further exploration would be to examine if families would continue pursuing the same goals upon returning to the Blanton or another art museum, and how they would do so. Would their goals be the same, would there be additional goals they would like to work on as well? This would lead toward a better understanding

of how important these goals are to the family, if they were intended to be long-term goals or not, and provide perspective onto how long-term these goals were intended to be. Additionally, new goals might emerge. Exploring this would also add meaning to my research by examining how completely families felt they fulfilled their goals, and the importance the families placed on them. Another way to further my research would be to study additional families in another museum environment. This may help my research findings to become more generalizable.

CONCLUSION

The data I collected during the course of this research study provided information regarding what brought families to the Blanton Museum of Art, what they wanted to accomplish while they were at the museum, and to what degree they successfully accomplished these goals set for themselves. Additionally, the data revealed that the families who participated in this study behaved in a manner consistent with what is known about museum visitors. The data I gathered during this study is also conducive to further research, opening up questions that would delve even further into how families plan for a museum visit and what they want to take away from the visit.

The intent of this study was to learn more about some of the families who visited the Blanton Museum of Art, in an effort to better understand and, in the future, better serve family visitors. Through my research I was able to learn about what brought the study participants to the Blanton, and the goals they shared with me enabled me to have a more rich understanding of why they acted the way they did in the galleries of the museum. The goals and motivations provided an explanation for the actions I observed, and also enabled me as an educator to have a better understanding of what visitors' needs may be.

Information gained from this study will contribute to my development as a museum educator, and hopefully will be informative to others as well. Because of this study, I have a new sense of how important it is to learn what brings families to museums. The families who participated in this study had specific goals they set for themselves, and by performing actions that fulfilled these goals they demonstrated that they cared about bringing their goals to fruition. As a museum educator, it is my job to understand the goals that visitors bring with them and also to help them fulfill these goals and expectations.

Appendix A: Permission Letter from Blanton

The Blanton

February 26, 2013

Dr. James Wilson, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
P.O. Box 7426
Austin, TX 78713
irbchair@austin.utexas.edu

The University of Texas at Austin
Blanton Museum of Art
200 Martin Luther King Blvd, Stop D1303
Austin, Texas 78712-1609

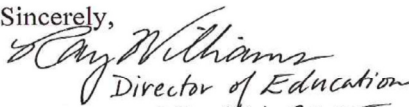
MLK & Congress
Phone (512) 471-7324
Fax (512) 471-7023

www.blantonmuseum.org

Dear Dr. Wilson:

The purpose of this letter is to grant Jessica Piepgrass, a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin, permission to conduct research at the Blanton Museum of Art. The project, "How Family Groups Experience the Blanton Museum of Art" entails interviewing family groups who visit the Blanton Museum of Art prior to and after their museum experience, and observing them during their visit. The study will take place in March 2013, and will involve the participation of 4-6 families who will be asked to participate in the study upon their arrival at the museum. The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of why family groups choose to visit the Blanton museum of art, what their goals and objectives are, and if their visit fulfills their expectations. The Blanton Museum of Art was selected because of Jessica's familiarity with the museum and its audience. Jessica has worked with the Blanton's education department as an Art Central Gallery Teacher and as the School and Family Programs Graduate Intern. She plans on sharing her research findings with the Blanton's Education department upon the conclusion of her research. I, Ray Williams, do hereby grant permission for Jessica Piepgrass to conduct "How Family Groups Experience the Blanton Museum of Art" at The Blanton Museum of Art.

Sincerely,


Director of Education
512.471.9205

Appendix B: Consent and Assent Forms

IRB Use Only:
Study Number:
Approval Date:
Expires

Parental Permission for Children Participation in Research

Title: How Families Experience the Blanton Museum of Art: A Case Study

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you (as the parent of a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to let your child participate in this research study. The person performing the research will describe the study to you and answer all your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to give your permission for your child to take part. If you decide to let your child be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your permission.

Purpose of the Study

If you agree, your child will be asked to participate in a research study about what brings families to art museums, and how they experience them as a family group. The purpose of this study is to gain further knowledge about families and their experiences at an art museum.

:

What is my child going to be asked to do?

If you allow your child to participate in this study, they will be asked to:

- **Participate in a family pre-visit interview**
- **Be observed as a part of your family group during the museum visit**
- **To draw a picture of their museum experience afterwards, and then discuss their image with me.**

This study will take approximately 1-2 hours and there will be 4-6 other families who will participate in this study at other times.

NOTE:

Note:

Your child will be audio recorded during both interviews.

What are the risks involved in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

Your child will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, he or she will be contributing to the field of museum education.

Does my child have to participate?

No, your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect their relationship with The University of Texas at Austin (University) in anyway. You can agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty.

What if my child does not want to participate?

In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study. If you child does not want to participate they will not be included in the study and there will be no penalty. If your child initially agrees to be in the study they can change their mind later without any penalty.

Will there be any compensation?

Neither you nor your child will receive any type of payment participating in this study.

What are the confidentiality or privacy protections for my child's participation in this research study?

This study does require me to document names of participants, however, your real names will be replaced with pseudonyms in transcripts of interviews and in any publications referencing this research. This form with identifying information will be accessible only by the researcher.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the recordings. Recordings will be kept for 6 months and then erased. The data resulting from your participation may be used for future research or be made available to other researchers for research purposes not detailed within this consent form.

Whom to contact with questions about the study?

Prior, during or after your participation you can contact the researcher Jessica Piepgrass at 210-556-8663 or send an email to jessica.piepgrass@utexas.edu. This study has been reviewed and approved by The University Institutional Review Board and the study number is [STUDY NUMBER].

Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Signature

You are making a decision about allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow them to participate in the study. If you later decide that you wish to withdraw your permission for your child to participate in the study you may discontinue his or her participation at any time. You will be given a copy of this document.

Printed Name of Child

Signature of Parent(s) or Legal Guardian

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

IRB USE ONLY

Study Number:

Approval Date:

Expires:

Consent for Participation in Research

Title: How Families Experience the Blanton Museum of Art: A Case Study

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

Purpose of the Study

You have been asked to participate in a research study about what brings families to art museums, and how they experience them as a family group. The purpose of this study is to gain further knowledge about families and their experiences at an art museum.

What will you to be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- **Participate in a family pre-visit interview**
- **Be observed as a part of your family group during the museum visit**
- **Participate in an interview after your visit.**

This study will take approximately 1-2 hours and there will be 4-6 other families who will participate in this study at other times.

NOTE:

Your participation will be audio recorded.

What are the risks involved in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, you will be contributing to the field of museum education.

Do you have to participate?

No, your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or, if you start the study, you may withdraw at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas at Austin (University) in anyway.

If you would like to participate please sign this form. You will receive a copy of this form.

Will there be any compensation?

You will not receive any type of payment participating in this study.

What are my confidentiality or privacy protections when participating in this research study?

This study does require me to document names of participants, however, your real names will be replaced with pseudonyms in transcripts of interviews and in any publications referencing this research. This form with identifying information will be accessible only by the researcher.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the recordings. Recordings will be kept for 6 months and then erased. The data resulting from your participation may be used for future research or be made available to other researchers for research purposes not detailed within this consent form

What should you expect if the study is collecting genetic information?

Whom to contact with questions about the study?

Prior, during or after your participation you can contact the researcher Jessica Piepgrass at 210-556-8663 or send an email to jessica.piepgrass@utexas.edu. This study has been reviewed and approved by The University Institutional Review Board and the study number is [STUDY NUMBER].

NOTE: Only include this statement if the study is Expedited or Full Board:

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University Institutional Review Board and the study number is [STUDY NUMBER].

Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Participation

If you agree to participate please sign this form.

Signature

You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You

voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, procedures, benefits, and the risks involved in this research study.

Print Name of Person obtaining consent

Signature of Person obtaining consent

Date

IRB USE ONLY
Study Number:
Approval Date:
Expires:

Assent for Participation in Research

Title: How Families Experience the Blanton Museum of Art: A Case Study

NOTE: Write in the information so it reflects the age group that you will be recruiting to participate. Depending on the age of the participants, you may need more than one assent form with language appropriate for the different age groups, e.g., 7-12, 13-17.

Introduction

You have been asked to be in a research study what brings families to art museums, and how they experience them as a family group. This study was explained to your [mother/father/parents/guardian] and [she/he/they] said that you could be in it if you want to. We are doing this study to gain further knowledge about families and their experiences at art museums.

What am I going to be asked to do?

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to

- **Participate in a family pre-visit interview**
- **Be observed as a part of your family during the museum visit**
- **Participate in an interview and draw a picture after your visit**

This study will take approximately 1-2 hour and there will be 4-6 other families who will participate in this study at other times..

Note: Your participation will be audio recorded.

What are the risks involved in this study?

NOTE: There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study

Do I have to participate?

No, participation is voluntary. You should only be in the study if you want to. You can even decide you want to be in the study now, and change your mind later. No one will be upset.

If you would like to participate please sign this form. You will receive a copy of this form so if you want to you can look at it later.

Will I get anything to participate?

NOTE: You will not receive any type of payment participating in this study.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

The records of this study will be kept private. Your responses may be used for a future study by these researchers or other researchers.

Signature

Modify the statement below depending on the age level:

Writing your name on this page means that the page was read by or to you and that you agree to be in the study. If you have any questions before, after or during the study, ask the person in charge. If you decide to quit the study, all you have to do is tell the person in charge.

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

PRE-VISIT QUESTIONS – ADULTS

1. Are you members at the Blanton?
2. How frequently do you, as a family, visit museums?
3. Why did your family decide to come to the Blanton today?
4. Why, specifically, did you want to bring your child/children to the Blanton?
5. Is there anything specific you would like for your child to learn today?
6. What do you expect will be positive outcomes for your child from this museum visit?
7. What do you expect to be positive outcomes for yourself?
8. Are there any particular skills you are hoping that you, or your child, will develop today?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add about your expectations for this visit?

POST-VISIT QUESTIONS – ADULTS

1. How would you describe your family's experience at the Blanton today?
2. How would you describe your family's approach to viewing and discussing art?
3. Do you think you or your child gained any specific skills today?
4. Do you think you gained any specific skills today?
5. How would you describe the ways in which your family interacted today?
6. You had several goals and objectives for your visit today (list them). Which do you think were achieved?
7. How did you achieve (insert what they say)?
8. Was there anything that the Blanton provided that helped you to meet your goals or objectives?

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