

EXPANDING ENGAGEMENT: DEVELOPING THE PARENTAL AUDIENCE

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To Mom and Dad, for your constant encouragement and love

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School  
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For many years, museum visitor studies have organized people into "audience" groups based on (though not limited to) demographic factors such as age, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. A more useful and accurate way of identifying audiences and their motivations was cited by Falk and Dierking. By scrutinizing visitor "identities," referring to a person's self-assigned personal and sociocultural roles, museums can better understand not only a person or audience's motivation for visiting the museum, but also their associated needs. It is this model of audience study that inspired the following research. A potential audience was identified by the researcher—the Parental audience. The researcher asserts that parents are an important but overlooked audience that deserves to be developed and better engaged by museums. The researcher interviewed a number of parents in Gainesville, Florida about their hopes and expectations for a forthcoming museum, and this information was used to generalize about the needs of the Parental audience at large. Museum professionals from around the country were also interviewed to discover how museums are currently serving parents in their own communities. Using this information, the researcher outlines strategies for the museum community to use in better serving the parental

audience; she also uses the Gainesville museum case study to show how parental engagement might look by suggesting several programs and services that can be implemented based on the interview information.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Over the past 20-30 years, there has been a dramatic shift in museums. Whereas in the latter part of the 20th century (or at least, up until that time) the majority of museums concentrated on their collections as the most important reason for existence, the past few decades have seen the emergence of education and visitor service as the central focus of many museums around the world.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, education—once a mere afterthought in museums' quests to preserve art, history and culture—has now become a major part of the mission of most museums. There are even museums that have no collections at all but instead make use of exhibits, technology, and pedagogy in order to educate and engage the public.

As education has come to the fore, the study of visitors has become more and more important, and with the passage of time, much has been done to identify audiences, along with their needs and wants. Early on (and to this day), a great deal of audience identification and study that has been done by museums (as well as other entities) has been on the basis of demographics such as age, race/ethnicity, sex, and socio-economic status. Recently, this has begun to be thought of as a less-than-helpful means of engaging audiences, since these indicators do not necessarily dictate what a person might be interested in, or how they can best be engaged. Falk and Dierking, in their 2011 work, "The Museum Experience: Revisited," postulate a different methodology for engaging audiences: by examining people's identities/ roles and reasons for coming to the museum.

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<sup>1</sup> Weil, 1999; Pg. 231-234.

It is with this method of audience identification that the research herein was undertaken. I recognized a potential audience, the Parental audience, which at this time is being overlooked in favor of children, a separate— though adjacent— audience. Parents comprise a distinct and important audience that has its own needs and which deserves to be better engaged by museums; In the course of this paper, I will endeavor to illustrate what needs the parental audience has, how the supporting information was gathered, and how museums can go about engaging parents in their own communities.

### **Keywords**

The following are definitions of some common terms as utilized in this thesis.

**Engagement:** in museums, this refers to the ability to foster meaningful interaction between two or more entities, whether between the museum and the visitor, the exhibit and the visitor, or between visitors.

**Museum:** (unless a specific named institution) any informal educational institution, including art, history, natural history, or children’s museums, but which also includes zoos, botanical gardens, arboretums, science centers, historic homes, national parks, visitor centers, and a variety of other exhibitions and collections.<sup>2</sup>

**Parent:** An adult person who, through natural birth, adoption, or other legal means, is the primary provider, caregiver, and legal guardian of a child. This term shall include and also refer to grandparents, foster parents and legal guardians.

**STEM:** an acronym indicating the academic subjects of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, as well as programming that focuses on these subjects.

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<sup>2</sup> Falk and Dierking, 2011; Pg. 25.

**STEAM:** An acronym which encompasses the academic subjects of STEM, but which also places importance on the Arts; this also refers to the programming that utilizes these subjects.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research study is to identify the existence and evaluate the relevance and needs of the Parental audience, as well as show how they are currently being underserved by museums. Parents are an important audience to museums, as they are the facilitators of their children's experiences and the ultimate arbiters of a how a family's leisure time (and budget) is spent. Families are a foundational unit of a community; if museums are to become a central part of the community, they need to realize the importance of the family in its entirety and serve all its members well, not just the children.

### **Significance**

The research contained herein is of great importance to the museum community, because parents are a ubiquitous population, and have heretofore been largely ignored in favor of programming that serves and engages children. As museums have worked to improve visitor experience and educational opportunities for many different kinds of audiences, parents have remained in the peripheries, many feeling uncomfortable or out of place in "family" programming, and others seeking ways to take an active role in the informal educational setting, with varied degrees of success.<sup>3</sup> This is where the museum falls short; parents need support and development of their own in order to be

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<sup>3</sup> Perry, 2012; Pg. 21-22.

able to engage more effectively with the museum and with their family/social group in the museum setting.

This research also shows the need for museums to learn about their communities. If museums are to remain a trusted institution, they must seek to discover the community's needs, and provide the programming and support that meets those needs. In addition, with governmental sources of income increasingly threatened, the museum must become more careful with how it spends its funds and it must increasingly rely on such things as membership programs, admission fees, and store revenue, which methods can only remain viable if people feel they are being served well by the museum.

### **Example Institutions**

The Cade Museum of Creativity and Invention is currently based in a small office building on S. Main St. in Gainesville, Florida, in the developing "Depot Park" area of town. At approximately 5,552 sq. ft., the space is small, with enough room for the offices of museum staff as well as a fabrication lab, a classroom, and storage space for lab materials. There is also a storage area for the museum's small collection, consisting mostly of the personal/professional effects of Dr. Robert Cade (lab equipment, early cans/bottles of Gatorade, etc.). The Cade's mission is "to inspire creative thinking, future inventors, and early entrepreneurs so that communities flourish," which they endeavor to fulfill through their STEAM-focused programs.

The Cade's current facility setup has put the museum in a unique position with regards to visitorship. The Cade's building has no room for exhibits, and as such, the museum has been restricted solely to providing programming in the form of classes and camps, for which visitors must register before arriving at the facility. To the walk-ins who

wish to “see the museum,” the Cade staff must apologize and explain that they have no exhibits to see. As a result of this situation, the Cade’s audience has been limited to the school-aged children (about ages 6-17) who participate in the Cade’s classes, camps, field trips, and other programs.

Recently, the Cade has begun fulfilling their desire to grow their institution by building a new museum facility in Depot Park, across the street from their current building. The new facility will be about five times larger than the Cade’s current layout (new building’s square footage to be about 26,000 sq. ft.) and will contain exhibit spaces as well as provide impromptu hands-on learning opportunities each day for visitors. This is in addition to the continuation of the programs that the Cade currently provides.

The Thinkery in Austin, Texas began as the Austin Children’s Museum, and was in fact co-founded by a group of local parents seeking to provide their children with more educational and cultural opportunities. Initially only constituting mobile exhibits which were brought to schools and presented, the museum eventually got a brick-and-mortar facility and from there expanded several times until it came to rest in its current location, a 40,000 sq ft facility in the Mueller community of Austin.

The Thinkery’s mission is “to create innovative learning experiences that equip and inspire the next generation of creative problem solvers,” and it carries out this mission through the implementation of STEAM-based programs and exhibits.<sup>4</sup>

The Orlando Science Center began in 1955 in much the same way as the Thinkery did—as a variety of mobile exhibits and demonstrations that were presented at area schools. Then called the Central Florida Museum and Planetarium, the institution

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<sup>4</sup> Thinkery website

opened its first brick-and-mortar facility in 1960, at which time the museum's exhibits focused on Natural History. For most of its existence, the Museum operated out of a small building in Loch Haven Park, but it is currently situated in a 207,000 sq ft. facility.

The Orlando Science Center's mission is to "Inspire science learning for life," and it accomplishes this goal through a variety of means, from exhibits, theatrical performances, classes, and camps, to the continued use of mobile exhibits and demonstrations provided to schools. In addition, the Center strives to establish and maintain healthy partnerships with community entities and other educational institutions around the state for the benefit and promotion of science learning in Florida.<sup>5</sup>

The Reynolda House Museum of American Art started out as the private home of RJ Reynolds, a tobacco tycoon, and was passed down through several generations of the family until it was opened to the public as a museum, under the direction of Barbara Babcock Millhouse, the granddaughter of the home's original owners. The museum began with 9 paintings from American artists such as Frederic Church and Gilbert Stuart, but over time the collection grew and now includes paintings, sculpture, photographs, and other art objects dating from 1755 to the present. In addition to the 3000 sq ft. gallery space, visitors to Reynolda can explore the rest of the estate, which still retains 28 of the original 30 buildings.

In its mission statement, the Reynolda states that it, "[P]reserves and interprets an American country home and a premier collection of American art. Through innovative public programs and exhibitions, the Museum offers a deeper understanding of American culture to diverse audiences." In their impact statement, they add that, "Those

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<sup>5</sup> OSC website

who experience Reynolda House Museum of American Art are inspired to learn, imagine, and find meaning in the art collections and historic site.”<sup>6</sup>

Glazer Children’s Museum was originally founded in 1986 as the Children’s Museum of Tampa. Originally located in the Floriland mall, it eventually expanded and merged with the pre-existing site of Safety Village, a miniature town for children to play and explore in. As the museum focused on allowing children to role-play everyday community life, this was a fortuitous union. By 2003 the museum, then called Kid City: the Children’s Museum of Tampa, finished long-range plans for further expansion of the museum, including acquisition of a new site and plans to build a new facility. Finally in 2010, the Glazer Children’s Museum, named for the principal donors to the project, opened at Hixon Waterfront Park in downtown Tampa, Florida.

Glazer’s mission statement is “to create learning environments where children play, discover, and connect to the world around them to develop as lifelong learners and leaders.” They undertake to fulfill this mission through “Brain-Building Play,” which still involves the opportunity for children to “role-play community life” through exhibits such as a mini Publix Supermarket, fire house, restaurant, etc.; and by providing field trip programs built around Glazer’ own acronym, DREAM, which stands for: **D**esign-thinking, **R**eading skills, **E**ngineering, **A**rts and **A**rchitecture, and **M**athematics/**M**usic/**M**aking. They make the claim that, in addition to regular STEAM subjects, the concepts captured by this acronym better encapsulate the skills that will be “critical to 21<sup>st</sup> century careers.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Reynolda House website

<sup>7</sup> Glazer Children’s Museum website

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned previously, education has become a central priority in most museums; this shift can be seen in many ways, an example of which is the institutional mission statement. In the previous section, I quoted the mission statements of several museums that illustrate this concept. The American Alliance of Museums, in their guide to developing a mission statement, even says, “A mission statement is the beating heart of a museum. *It articulates the museum’s educational focus and purpose* and its role and responsibility to the public and its collections.”<sup>1</sup> Such phrases as “lifelong learners,” “creative thinking,” “inspiring,” “problem-solvers,” “understanding,” “imagining,”<sup>2</sup> and many others are indicative of the educational aspects museums wish to promote about themselves. The fact that museums are professing their educational goals from the onset, that they want those particular types of phrases to be in the first statements that people see when researching what their institution “is all about,” is a testament to the important role that education has come to play in museums.

Having education at the fore of an institution’s mission means that a museum’s focus should be outward, towards its audience— the (intended) receivers of the educational benefits. And if museums believe that they are audience-centered, then visitor studies needs to be a central element of that museum’s activities;<sup>3</sup> a museum cannot be audience-centered if it does not know its audience. Along with museums’ focus on education came the widespread use of the discipline of visitor studies. Though

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<sup>1</sup> AAM Developing a Mission Statement Guide, 2012; Pg. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Terms found in the mission statements of the case study museums.

<sup>3</sup> Black, 2005; Pg. 10.

Visitor Studies had already existed in some form for over 90 years, systematic and deliberate study of visitors did not really take off in this country until about 20 or so years ago, when the shift to education began occurring.<sup>4</sup> But once the practice of conducting visitor studies began to spread, professionals increasingly developed new methods in an effort to discover specific kinds information about their audiences.

### **Learning about Audiences**

In order to effectively carry out one's mission statement, an institution must know and understand the audience it is proposing to educate and inspire. Talboys says, "The greater your understanding of your catchment area and those who live and work in it, the better will be your response to educational users."<sup>5</sup> The information museums have deemed necessary to adequately carry out their educational goals includes knowing 1) the interests and needs of the audience, 2) an audience's general level of ability and/or background knowledge, 3) the community's makeup such as age ranges, ethnicities, religions or beliefs, socioeconomic factors, and more, 4) what potential audiences are being overlooked or underrepresented. Some museums might have additional pieces of information they wish to gather from their audiences, but in general, these are the main questions that most museums ask.

When thinking about the needs of the community, it is important to remember that they can be complex and multi-dimensional. Falk and Dierking's contextual model of learning with its three branches— the Personal context, the Sociocultural context, and the Physical context—show the complexity that is inherent in people's reasons for

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<sup>4</sup> Black, 2005; Pg. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Talboys, 2000; Pg. 39.

visiting the museum. People use the physical context of the museum in order to fulfill their own personal and sociocultural needs.<sup>6</sup> Personal needs involve the visitor's educational and/or developmental level, their strengths and weaknesses, their preferred method of learning, and even their own attitudes and interests. Sociocultural needs revolve around the visitor's personal cultural background—the environment into which they were born and raised. Often this alone can color the way that a person perceives the museum, as well as how they will remember the experience. The Sociocultural needs of visitors are also influenced by their social interaction within the walls of the museum. Whether alone or in a group (but most often in a group), a visitor's experience is affected by the people around them. If museums want to be successful in engaging their current audiences and attracting new ones, they have to be sensitive to and learn how to support the personal and sociocultural needs of their community as well as those of the museum.

Knowing about the educational or developmental level of the audience is imperative to knowing where to begin in a museum's design not only of exhibits, but also of its programming and outreach. To be sure, any community will have within it people of varied knowledge or skill levels. This is one way that museums can and have distinguished different audiences, but when the museum is familiar with its community, it can plan and design levels of programming and enrichment within each of its exhibits and programs that can be tailored to best fit each visitor's educational and skill levels.

The use of demographic information such as race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status, not only for audience segmentation, but also as reasoning for why people do or

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<sup>6</sup> Falk and Dierking, 2011; Pg. 31.

do not visit museums, is less than helpful. Falk and Dierking mention that the reasons why people do or do not visit museums are at the same time “simpler *and* more complex”<sup>7</sup> than these demographic factors alone. Races/ethnicities are not monolithic. There is great variation in people’s reasoning for why they visit, or do not visit, a museum. Race or socioeconomic factors might have some bearing in certain people’s cases, but by no means are they primary reasons people come or stay away.<sup>8</sup> Falk and Dierking give an example in *The Museum Experience Revisited* in which, during the 90’s, a certain art museum in the Southern U.S. endeavored to become more inclusive of the African-American community, a group that had been underserved by the museum in the past. Their strategy, however, was flawed—they assumed that by reinstalling their prominent African collection, they would “naturally” appeal to the African-American community, and therefore have more African-American visitors. They soon discovered that focusing on collections instead of people, and making assumptions/guesses instead of hearing people’s opinions, was ineffectual in attracting an audience. They thought that appealing to ethnic ties was enough, but once again: race/ethnicity is not monolithic, and it’s not a major reason why most people come to a museum.

### **Visitor Motivations**

What Falk and Dierking did find to be a major factor was what they called “family leisure history,” or rather, the way that certain people perceive or have been raised to perceive (whether explicitly or implicitly) what the proper use of leisure time consists of. Through research, they found that people who visited museums and libraries as

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<sup>7</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>8</sup> Falk and Dierking, 2011; Pg. 49.

children with their families were more likely to continue visiting museums as adults.<sup>9</sup> Another strong factor that they found informed visiting behaviors was educational level; the finding was that the higher the level of education attained by an individual or by the parents of an individual (i.e. collegiate vs. elementary, and even post-graduate vs. collegiate), the more likely that individual was to visit museums as part of their leisure activities. Falk and Dierking mention that this is a strong correlation, though they were unable to find why this was the case. Although these two findings were found to be stronger indicators than demographic factors for the reasons why people do or do not visit museums, we cannot assume that even these are the only reasons for people's decision-making either. What we as museum professionals can do, however, is get to know our communities and what they expect of us.

Instead of ethnic or socio-economic factors being those by which audiences are segmented, Falk and Dierking found that a better indicator for people's individual museum visit motivation was the fulfillment of certain personally held identity roles. They state, "Unlike many other ways in which museum audiences have been segmented, for example categorizing based upon age, race/ethnicity, gender, or even level of education, separating visitors according to their entering identity-related motivations provides useful insights into actual museum experiences." They further explain that when they say "identity-related" they aren't speaking of the permanent qualities of an individual, such as, for example, ethnicity or race, as was mentioned above.<sup>10</sup> Such permanent identity descriptors as ethnicity and race they refer to as "Big 'I'- identities";

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<sup>9</sup> Falk and Dierking, 2011; Pg. 54.

<sup>10</sup> Falk and Dierking, 2011; Pg. 49-50.

and the kind of identity descriptors Falk and Dierking mention as important to understanding people's reasoning for visiting the museum, they refer to as "Little 'i'-identities." The Little 'i'-identities that Falk and Dierking found through their studies comprise 7 categories: Explorers, Facilitators, Professionals/Hobbyists, Experience Seekers, Rechargers, Respectful Pilgrims, and Affinity Seekers.

- Explorers: Visitors who are curiosity-driven with a generic interest in the content of the museum. They expect to find something that will grab their attention and fuel their curiosity and learning.
- Facilitators: Visitors are socially motivated. Their visit is primarily focused on enabling the learning and experience of others in their accompanying social group.
- Professionals/Hobbyists: Visitors who feel a close tie between the museum content and their professional or hobbyist passions. Their visits are typically motivated by a desire to satisfy a specific content-related objective.
- Experience-Seekers: Visitors who are motivated to visit because they perceive the museum as an important destination. Their satisfaction primarily derives from the mere fact of having been there and done that.
- Rechargers: Visitors who are primarily seeking a contemplative, spiritual, and/or restorative experience. They see the museum as a refuge from the work-a-day world or as a confirmation of their religious/spiritual beliefs.
- Respectful Pilgrims: Individuals who visit museums out of a sense of duty or obligation to honor the memory of those represented by an institution or memorial.
- Affinity Seekers: Visitors motivated to visit a particular museum or more likely a particular exhibition because it speaks to their sense of heritage and/or Big "I"-identity or personhood.<sup>11</sup>

Museum visitors could identify with multiple of these Little "i"-identities on any given visit. No one of the above categories is dominated by or correlates exclusively with any one ethnicity, age, or gender. Bearing this in mind, museums could potentially

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<sup>11</sup> Falk and Dierking, 2011; Pg. 47-48.

find many new audiences beyond those “traditional” or “common” few, such as Families, Adults, Millennials, etc. It was in this mindset that I began thinking of Parents as a unique audience that has been very little developed or engaged heretofore in the museum.

### **Parents as a Unique Audience**

Being a “Parent” *can* be thought of as one of those Big “I”- identities, but it is as much a role as a title. In the context of the museum, parents are mostly facilitators—they are the ones who ultimately decide how the family will spend their leisure time—where the family will go and what they will do there. They are the ones that provide transportation, they are the ones who pay for admission, they are the providers of food and other necessities, they help their children navigate the world of the museum, and have the ability to extend the child’s museum experience even after the visit. Yet, most programming in museums, even that labeled as “Family” or “Family-Friendly” is geared toward children only, the parents left to hover in the background. Within museum exhibits, there is little or no help for the parent, and they are often left to search frantically through the labels and text of exhibits in order to answer their children’s questions.<sup>12</sup> Or they check out completely, leaving children to their own devices. Neither of these scenarios allows for the fulfillment of a museum’s mission or educational purpose, and thus museums can come up short in their effectiveness as educational institutions.

In all of the literature I reviewed as a part of this study, there were descriptions of needs for many different audiences including “Families,” “Adults,” and even breakdowns

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<sup>12</sup> Black, 2005; Pg. 25. Or to keep the children interested and engaged with the exhibit.

of child audiences by age/developmental level, but I was unable to find any mention of the needs or roles of parents. Even within the “Family” audience, the focus was on the needs of children. Parents need to be studied to discover what their needs are and how the museum can best serve them.

Jeanne Vergeront, in her blog “Museum Notes”, asks an important question: “What do we want parents to do?” She talks about an IMLS project advisors’ meeting she attended that included the topic of engaging adults. During the meeting, there were many complaints about the way that parents acted in museums, mostly that they were either tuned out (preoccupied with their phones and ignoring their children), or else they were taking over their children’s work (which curtails the experience for both the child and the parent). Despite their complaints, it didn’t seem as though anyone at that meeting had any suggestions of how to correct these issues. Vergeront makes the point that we as museum professionals need to have a “framework” both for understanding parents, and for how to serve and engage them well.<sup>13</sup> Mariana Adams also speaks to this issue; she attributes the disengagement of parents in “Family” programming as “mindless practice” on the part of the museum, meaning that museum educators get into a routine of designing and implementing “family” programming involving the same sort of activities over and over the same way without thinking about the underlying factors and assumptions. She calls it “going on autopilot.” We don’t stop to think and evaluate our performance, to think, *how can this or that be more effective?* When she encountered museum educators who complained that parents wouldn’t get off their phones or engage “properly,” she asked, “What are we offering to the adults that is

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<sup>13</sup> Vergeront, 2014.

more interesting than their mobile devices?,” and what does “proper” engagement entail?<sup>14</sup> In short, are we actively including the parents in our family programming? Something unique about the parental audience is that, not only can museums discover the parents’ needs and wants, but we as museums can also let parents know what the museum wants of *them*. If we want parents to understand how they can make their own and their family’s museum experience richer, we need to tell and/or show them, clearly, and then encourage them to become active participants in the visit or program.

### **Parents and Education**

As stated above in the last section, parents are an overlooked audience, and museums should make an effort at developing and better serving that audience. But how do we go about engaging parents? It all begins with discovering who the audience is and what their needs are. First of all, we need to remember that no audience is monolithic: parents come from a variety of backgrounds, have a variety of interests, they span a wide age range, and have a variety of preconceptions and goals, but there is one thing all parents share in common—they have children. And while, unfortunately it’s not universally the case, most parents are invested in the educational welfare of their children. It’s one of the reasons why parents bring their children to the museum—for its educational benefits.<sup>15</sup> The amount of concern parents have for the educational well-being of their children is manifest in their self-reported involvement in their children’s

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<sup>14</sup> Adams, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> It may not always be cited by parents as a main reason for bringing their children to the museum, but it is always there. As Falk and Dierking mention, when asked why a person has decided to visit a particular restaurant on a particular day, you might get many answers, but very few would say, “because I was hungry.” It is an assumption that when one is hungry one eats, so too with museums and educational enrichment. Falk and Dierking, 2011; Pg. 45.

schools and schooling. According to a recent study by the U.S. Department of Education, 87% of students in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade had parents who attended a school-wide or parent-teacher organization (PTA) meeting, and 76% had parents who attended regular parent-teacher conferences. At home, 86% of students had a place set aside for doing homework in their home, and 67% had an adult who checked that homework was done.<sup>16</sup> What the report doesn't mention are all the other ways in which parents participate in their child(ren)'s education, including, but not limited to taking them to museums.

Parents' concern for their children's education is also manifest in the many forms of alternative schooling that have become increasingly popular in the last few years. Although in the past the term "alternative schooling" (previously thought to be an inferior type of schooling)<sup>17</sup> has been associated with students who were unsuccessful in the "traditional" school system, many parents have been making the decision to switch to alternative forms of schooling for their children due to their dissatisfaction with the public school system and also because of the freedom and customization of curricula available through alternative schooling methods such as homeschooling. Katherine Prince, an educational futurist, talks about the importance of highly personalized "learning ecosystems" for producing more meaningful and lasting learning in children's lives. According to Prince, such ecosystems 1) adapt to the individual child's needs, 2) allow the individual (rather than the institution) to direct the flow of learning resources, 3) support all students in accessing the right learning experiences and supports at the right

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<sup>16</sup> Zuckerberg, et al., 2012; Pg. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Aron, 2006; Pg. 3.

time, 5) allow for “school” to take many forms, whether a customized compilation of learning experiences, or attending an institution akin to today’s “traditional” public school, 6) allow for children to move through the learning process at their own pace.<sup>18</sup>

This trend toward increased parental involvement in children’s education and provision of more meaningful learning experiences is an opportunity for museums to engage parents by addressing this need.

Since so many parents are becoming increasingly interested in the education of their children, museums can serve parents better by providing them educational resources and helping them develop skills that will allow them to engage with their children more easily. In her work, *What Makes Learning Fun?*, Deborah Perry talks about helping visitors become teachers as well as learners. She mentions three case studies of interaction between adults and children in an exhibit; these case studies demonstrate some of the difficulties parents face in being able to engage with their children and create moments of meaningful learning.

The exhibit was on mixing of colored lights, and featured a white table under a red, green and yellow light. The first case study was of a father and son. The father was excited by the exhibit, as it had to do with his own work, and he had a large amount of knowledge on the subject of light and the way it behaves. The father attempted to share his excitement with this son, but was unable to interest the boy in what he was explaining. The father had the body of knowledge, but didn’t know what kinds of questions to ask, or what level of explanation would be appropriate for the son’s age

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<sup>18</sup> Prince, 2015.

and level of comprehension. As a result, the boy became bored and an opportunity for meaningful learning was lost.

The second case study Perry gives is an elementary school teacher and her daughter. In this case, the woman knew how to ask questions, present challenges, and explain concepts in an age-appropriate manner. However, the mother and daughter also walked away from the exhibit without having had a meaningful encounter because the mother did not have much knowledge about the mixing of colored lights and also because the two were unable to glean any more useful information from the exhibit's labels. In this case, there was no body of knowledge to support meaningful learning.

The third example Perry gives is an ideal. A drama teacher and his students were able to have a very meaningful and rich experience with the colored lights exhibit because the teacher happened to have the body of knowledge (use of colored lights in theatre work) and appropriate pedagogical skills to support his students.<sup>19</sup>

Museums are too much like the first two examples. We install exhibits and write information in 150-word paragraphs on labels. Usually there are no docents or other staff on hand, and parents have to scan wall text and labels in order to answer their own and their children's questions; it's another case of "mindless" practice. What can museums do for parents to make engaging with their children easier?

### **Example—Reynolda House**

At the Reynolda House Museum of American Art (RHMAA), the educational staff asked themselves the same question in the midst of developing a new Family Program. The program, "Mornings at the Museums" (MAM), was originally designed by staff to

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<sup>19</sup> Perry, 2012; Pg. 19-21.

promote “reading readiness and visual literacy” in children aged 3-5 years. Each of the six weekly sessions was to have a theme around which certain activities would be led, including a story time, a sensory play time, a discussion of a selected artwork, exploration of museum space, and an artmaking period.

As part of the development of this study, the staff talked about what outcomes they felt would indicate the success of the program; two of these centered on parents/caregivers:

[A successful outcome would be] One in which the families learned to feel comfortable at RHMAA; that they would see the ‘play’ as ‘learning’ and that they [parents] would feel confident in teaching their children in the museum (Museum Education Staff).

[it is] Critical for parents to learn how to experience museums and be comfortable with the home. To engage in a museum with their children and that it can be done through participating in these six visits and hopefully they will come back (Museum Education Staff).<sup>20</sup>

However, what staff noticed through their observation and study of the pilot program was the same sort of behavior that Jeanne Vergeront’s colleagues were complaining about at their conference; the parents were not engaging. During the sensory play time, parents were “outside [the instructor’s] realm of awareness and they were just observing.” When it came time for the story portion of the program, the instructor has the children sit on the floor at her feet; she asked the children questions about the story and had them act out voices or other parts of the story while parents “remained on the sidelines.” During the tours, the instructor continued to engage the children through questioning, explanation, and acting. Yet again, the parents were noted to be “passive observers” or on their phones during activities. While the instructor did

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<sup>20</sup> Lifschitz-Grant, n.d. Pg. 8.

attempt to involve the parents during the artmaking portion of the program, the parents were told to “help their children, not direct them.” The staff decided that in order to reach the outcomes they wanted for this program, they needed to make adjustments to involve the parents, rather than continue to leave them in the periphery.

The next session followed the same order of events, but with the “inclusion of the parents as active participants.” After participants arrived, and while the children engaged in sensory play, the instructor gathered the parents together at the story time area and briefed them about the day’s theme and schedule. During story time, the parents sat in the circle with the children. When the instructor introduced the day’s selected artwork, she asked questions of both the children and the parents, and during the tours, she encouraged the input and questions of the parents as well as those of the children. Finally, during the artmaking portion, adults were invited to make art alongside their child, instead of helping them with their work.

Through the implementation of these changes, the RHMAA staff gained important insights about the needs of parents and how they can be engaged. The staff observed that parents were learning methods of engagement indirectly by watching how the program instructor engaged with the children through the course of the program. In speaking of the way the program instructor interacted and involved the children, one staff member said, “A parent has more opportunity to observe that [engagement method], even if they are directing that. Remember we want them to be the primary teacher, we are acknowledging that by helping them. But they have some space to see how they are doing, how their kids are doing, how [the instructor] is doing and how their peers are doing.” In addition, the staff noted that, “the importance of [family

programming] is when the parents are able to witness what their children are doing. By having it be a shared experience they are learning about how their child engages with others, interacts with the materials in a way that they would not see unless they were having that shared/joint experience that is also structured.” If the program had continued to proceed the way it did in the museum’s first round of testing, the parents would not have benefitted because the parents would have continued to be on their phones or otherwise tuned out. Including the parents as active participants in the program allowed for this observation and learning to take place. Being attentive to the proceedings of the program allowed the parents to observe and glean more than just information about the house and its collections. They gained information and skills they could use in the future to continue having meaningful learning experiences with their children. Like the Drama teacher from Perry’s study, engaging parents in this manner allowed for the cultivation of skills as well as body of knowledge.

The staff also concluded that the inclusion of parents in the program proceedings rendered MAM a much more effective “Family” program (because it actually engaged the *entire* family). They commented that meaningful learning experiences such as those shared by the parents and children in this program could extend beyond the museum visit. “[the experience] becomes part of the conversation at home and they tell other members of the family about it, so it extends beyond the walls and gets written into memory by these conversations.” The staff also noted that through participation in the program, parents were able to learn and “explore their own creativity, make discoveries,

and express their own ideas and feelings.”<sup>21</sup> To me, this translated nicely into the fulfillment of RHMAA’s desired outcomes for the program.

With regards to the reasons why parents should be engaged in the museum, I had previously stated that parents look for educational opportunities for their children, but this is not the only reason by far. In the book *The Engaging Museum*, the author notes that a large reason for visitation to the museum is the social factor.<sup>22</sup> People go to museums usually with family or friends and are seeking to engage socially with the other members of their group, as well as “have fun.” This is also the case with parents: they not only want to provide educational opportunities for their children, they also may seek an opportunity to engage and bond with their families as a unit in a fun and social atmosphere. In addition, Black mentions another factor which I found true in the sample of parents that I interviewed; the museum provides an opportunity to entertain and occupy children so that parents have a chance to relax (another “little-i” identity parents might claim). For this reason, says Black, there must be facilities in the museum to cater to such needs.

### **Example—Glazer Children’s Museum**

Parents are also people who lead very busy lives. They work, they take care of their families, usually they have many responsibilities, so for them time is a valuable resource. In the same vein, many parents are abiding by some kind of budget, so cost might be a major factor in their choice of leisure time activities for their family.

Considering this, museums should ask themselves, if these parents have chosen this

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<sup>21</sup> Lifschitz-Grant, n. d. Pg. 30.

<sup>22</sup> Black, 2005; Pg. 29. A point corroborated by Falk and Dierking’s Sociocultural Context. (Falk and Dierking, 2011; Pg. 64-81.)

museum as a place that provides an experience they value, then what can we do to ensure a great museum experience for them?<sup>23</sup> In order to appeal to the many different kinds of parents in the community, the institution must provide a variety of resources, programs, and opportunities.

The Glazer Children's Museum is an institution that, from my experience, has put an emphasis on the engagement of parents through provision of resources. On the third floor of the building, Glazer provides space for special events, such as birthdays, recitals, competitions, and expositions. While volunteering there in the summer of 2011, I had the opportunity to observe a resource expo the museum staged for the benefit of area parents and families. Attending the fair were vendors and service providers from all over Tampa, Florida. It appeared to be a very successful event because the hall was full and I saw many people coming and going. At a later date, I visited the museum and examined their newsletter, which advertised an upcoming "Babyshower" event, also a resource expo, where parents and prospective parents were invited to come and connect with businesses in the community.

In addition to these resource expos, Glazer offers other resources to parents in the community. On their webpage, parents can register for "Developmental Checkups," a service where parents of very young children (0-3 yrs.) can bring their child to the museum, receive a checkup, and consult with professionals about the development of the child. New parents can also register for a program called "Parenting Consults: Positive Parenting Program." Through this program, new parents have the opportunity

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<sup>23</sup> Vegeront, 2014

to meet with clinicians from Champions for Children and talk about parenting or childcare issues that they are concerned about.

However, not all services Glazer provides are for parents of the very young. Glazer provides a once-a-month event called “Sunshine Sundays” where the museum invites children with special needs and their families to experience the museum with lights and sounds turned down. They also provide special programs and access to other community resources during this event. Another once-a-month event provided by Glazer is their Free Tuesday, where the museum opens its doors to the public free of charge. For member families, differently themed exploration backpacks are available for use during their museum visit. Glazer also publishes a quarterly newsletter in which they detail many other events and daily programs, and their website provides information to parents about ways in which they can engage with their children both inside and outside the museum.

The impressive variety of services and resources that the Glazer offers to parents serves to show that the institution is in tune with the importance of whole-family engagement and with the importance of parents as an audience in their own right. They recognize that although parents’ main needs revolve around facilitating for their child(ren),<sup>24</sup> they have additional needs that the museum can meet, needs such as parenting advice, access to certain services or products, even something as simple as a place to sit down.

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<sup>24</sup> Providing educational experience, having fun, and building social bonds.

## Communication

Many parents might also fit in to one or more of the other little “i”- identities. They might want to relax and recharge at a museum, letting someone else take charge of their children; they might be curious explorers alongside their children. They might even be hobbyists attempting to bond with their children over a shared interest. We as museum professionals must ask parents outright what it is *they* are looking for in the way of a museum experience. Granted, some people might not know what it is they want exactly, but if we can discover visitors’ motivations, we can provide a customized, curated group of options that fit their needs. In developing and providing resources and programs to the community, museums should remember, more is not always better, it’s just more. In his work *The Experience Economy*, Christopher Pine says that providing too many options [of museum offerings/ services/ programs] can make things more stressful for visitors. Not only would they have to spend more time sorting through a seemingly endless list of possibilities, but they may never find exactly what they’re looking for. Variety is not the same as customization.<sup>25</sup> However, there are many people who do know what they would like to see in a museum. By fostering open communication with visitors, a researcher will come to find what museum amenities or services the public values most.<sup>26</sup>

Though the above paragraphs begin to enumerate how museums can engage the parental audience, a more in-depth discussion of this topic will appear in the fourth section of this paper. What is important to gain from the current discussion is the fact

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<sup>25</sup> Pine, 2011; Pg. 76.

<sup>26</sup> This will be discussed further in chapter 4.

that parents are a unique audience and they have their own needs, some of the most major ones being 1) a high-quality educational environment for their children, 2) an experience that they will feel is valuable for the amount of time and money they must spend, 3) opportunities and resources that will allow parents to create moments of meaningful learning with their children, 4) active engagement by museum staff in “family” programming, 5) having resources and opportunities that appeal to the explorer, hobbyist, etc. in themselves. In order to find out more about the Parental audience, I decided to carry out a study of the parents in Gainesville, Florida and their reactions to the emerging Cade Museum of Creativity and Invention. I also sought out other institutions to get a wider range of information on how museums have or have not sought to engage parents in the course of family programming, the results of which will add evidence to my argument.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODS AND ANALYSIS

### **The Cade Museum and the Initial Aim of the Study**

This research originally started out as an effort to help the Cade Museum, a small local institution begun in 2004 by Dr. Robert Cade and his family. James Robert Cade was a professor of renal medicine at the University of Florida, and was also one of the inventors of Gatorade; but he had many other interests during his life, calling himself a “physician, scientist, musician, and inventor.” Following in the footsteps of Dr. Cade, the museum is dedicated to inspiring future inventors and entrepreneurs by advocating for creative thought and invention. Because of the Cade’s current location and the limited space available for programming, the museum has been restricted to a very limited audience. This unique situation is what originally drew my attention to this museum, as I had never encountered a museum that had been restricted in such a way before. To me, it was as if the museum had not existed before and was just now coming into being. I wondered how the museum would be able to grow its audience once it opened the doors on its new building. Certainly, there would be an initial draw simply because of the novelty, but what after that? I wanted to help the Cade become more attractive to the people of Gainesville so that they could build a membership base and truly succeed.

To begin my research I visited with Leslie Ladendorf, Operations Director for the Cade, for an informal interview about what plans the museum had for its new opening. The Cade currently has several programs for school age children in the Gainesville area. Below are brief explanations of each.

The Cade's "Living Inventor Series" (LIS) is a program in which the museum partners with local inventors as well as Take Stock in Children, a Florida-based organization that seeks to provide extra-curricular resources to low-income and underprivileged students. This program takes the form of a lecture series; the Living Inventors are invited to come to the museum and talk about the scientific principles behind their inventions. In addition to this, the Inventors and Cade staff teach the participants about creative problem solving and provide a lab experiment for the students to do that would illustrate the science behind the inventions. In the process, the participants not only meet an inventor, but they also can come to the realization that they too can be inventors. After the LIS runs its course, the museum generally invites the participants to register for the Early Entrepreneurs Program, which takes the LIS principles already taught one step further.

In the "Early Entrepreneurs Program", middle- and high school students work collaboratively with each other as well as with mentors from UF's Innovation Academy<sup>1</sup> to design, produce, and package a product. Participants then learn how to brand and market their products, turning their ingenuity and effort into profit. Finally, the students use their new skills to sell their products at community events such as street fairs and farmer's markets. This program gives participants the opportunity to see that imagination, hard work, and persistence lead to success.

The Cade has over 160 classes and camps recorded in their books; of course, the majority of these are no longer offered, and some were merely earlier iterations of

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<sup>1</sup> UF's Innovation Academy is a program through which students develop skills in creativity, entrepreneurship and leadership.

the current class and camp offerings. Programming Director Patty Lipka develops and re-develops new ways to tweak her course offerings so that students are consistently engaged and learning when they visit. Class schedules are drawn up each quarter and sent to Cade mailing list recipients. Each class has a description and is accompanied by the STEAM indicators that the class/camp will involve. These classes and camps constitute the vast majority of the programming the Cade provides currently. Field trips are also comprised of these types of classes, but there is a major difference to regular classes and camps. That difference is the fact that teachers have the opportunity to tailor the curriculum to their class's needs. Patty makes sure to offer this service as part of the field trip registration process. As a result, field trips can become especially meaningful learning opportunities for the children involved.

Although most programming at the Cade is geared toward children between the ages of 5 and 11, the museum does have programming available for youth over the age of 11. Although it is not as structured as the museum's other offerings, the Cade youth volunteer program allows young adults to get experience in museum work and teaching, instills in them a better understanding of responsibility, and generally helps them to gain a good work ethic. Young people who decide to become volunteers can still feel a part of the Cade's programming, but at the same time, they are able to take on more of a leadership role.

The Cade's Creative-In-Residence Program is a program directly engages children at the Cade. Creatives-in-Residence are scientists, engineers, programmers, and artists from the local community or farther who, through the program, become instructors at the Cade. Like an Artist-in-Residence, these Creatives have the

opportunity to design their own programming (within the scope of the museum) and to receive exposure for their excellence in their area of expertise.

These are just a few examples of the ways that the Cade is trying to better engage the Gainesville community as it grows, but since its visitorship is about to explode (due to the fact that they will soon have a building that people will not have to register for beforehand in order to visit), they will need to expand their vision from serving only children. This is not to say that the Cade should become lax in its engagement of children, but they should make efforts to expand their engagement to the new audiences they will soon have. My original argument in studying parents as an audience was to prove that they were the most logical choice for the Cade to engage once their new doors opened. After all, as I mentioned in the last section, parents are usually the ones who choose what a family will do with their leisure time, plus they are the ones who provide transportation, they are the ones with financial means to facilitate leisure activities, and they are also the ones seeking educational enrichment for their children. And in many cases, the Cade has a potential connection with parents because so many children in the area have been to the Cade and loved it; the children's enthusiasm for their Cade experience opens the door to parents' good graces. It was only later that my research became about the parental audience in general and not exclusively about the Cade; but regardless, because of my research on the parental audience, I decided to perform research with the parents of the Gainesville area in order to find out how the Cade can best serve them.

### **Study Development**

There were two main groups that I wanted to talk to in an effort to discover more about the parental audience. The first group consisted of parents themselves, and I felt

that talking about the Cade museum would be a good opportunity to find out what parents are looking for in a museum experience. I determined that in the case of Parents, my criteria for participation would be: a) people who were parents of school-aged children, and b) who lived in Gainesville. The second group I wanted to talk to as part of my research was museum professionals. My criterion for professionals was that they needed to be in the development or education department of their institution. I didn't want to add any other criteria about whether the institution was already attempting to engage parents. Since there is not as much research done yet on the parental audience, I wanted to see if museums have started thinking about parents as a distinct audience, or they've actually begun to make efforts towards more inclusion of parents in "family" programming.

I decided that the best way to discover the information I was looking for was to perform a short personal interview with each participant instead of conducting a focus group or administering surveys. As Tracy states, "Interviews elucidate subjectively lived experiences and viewpoints from the respondents' perspective...enable[ing] the researcher to stumble upon and further explore complex phenomena that may otherwise be hidden or unseen."<sup>2</sup> Through this method, I hoped to gain an understanding of parents' thoughts and feelings about the museum experience from the role of parent/facilitator. I wanted to uncover parents' ideas on how the museum could help them have a better experience, as well as what services and resources they might need from museums. All this could be accomplished through the interview process.

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<sup>2</sup> Tracy, 2013; Pg. 132.

I felt that the personal interview would yield better results than a focus group because, while focus groups can be appropriate in situations where the study sample shares a significant experience in common,<sup>3</sup> in a focus group, people might influence each other's answers negatively; either participants might change their answers to "keep up appearances" as it were,<sup>4</sup> or else the participants might refrain from sharing not only their true actions and opinions, but also the important "rationales, explanations and justifications for their actions and opinions."<sup>5</sup> Whether it was to impress others or else to avoid having others think ill of their family practices, I did not want to risk participants feeling either the need to give inaccurate or false information, or the need to hold information back.

I felt that personal interviews would yield better results than administering out surveys because I didn't think that the depth of information I wanted for this study could be achieved that way, unless I was prepared to make the survey consist entirely of essay questions, which from experience I've discovered that people generally find irritating and tedious. Shorter questions such as multiple choice, True/False, or short answer questions would not give me a proper depth of information, and such questions can too easily be biased to reflect the opinion the researcher wants it to. I also felt the analysis of survey information would end up being more quantitative in nature than that from either interviews or focus groups. There isn't anything inherently bad about quantitative measures, or anything I personally have against them, but I felt that taking

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<sup>3</sup> Such as having children, in this case.

<sup>4</sup> The concept of "keeping up with the Joneses" is a real factor that could have skewed the results.

<sup>5</sup> Tracy, 2013; Pg. 132.

an emic, descriptive approach to learning about the parental audience would render better, more in-depth results because of the nature of information gathered in that manner; what Tracy calls “thick description.”<sup>6</sup>

Since I wanted to interview professionals in museums around the country as well as parents locally, I drafted two sets of questions. The questions for the parents revolved mostly around what their family typically does for recreation, what the parents are looking for in a museum experience, and how active they are in their child(ren)’s education. The questions for the professionals revolved around describing how they went about developing audiences, their thoughts on community partnerships, and what services or resources they would like to provide but currently cannot or do not.

Before I could begin my research, I had to get approval from the University’s Internal Review Board, an organization that ensures that any research done involving human subjects is humane and respectful. Although my research is not as invasive as medical or psychological studies, it is still necessary to get approval from the review board to make sure that I treat people fairly. In my application to the review board, I related that I wanted this research to be as unbiased and as risk-free as possible, and that I would not be collecting any kind of demographic or personal information. I was not interested in race, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status, only in the needs and wants of the parents in Gainesville. My reasoning for not collecting demographic information also related back to the fact that I wanted this research to be more qualitative and descriptive rather than quantitative and statistical. I believed that

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<sup>6</sup> Tracy, 2013; Pg. 3-4.

avoiding the collection of personal information would aid in keeping the focus on the voices of the people I spoke to.

Once I gained approval from the IRB, I was able to begin advertising my study. As a part of my IRB submission, I developed promotional materials, and I decided that the best way to attract participants was to place the ads in locations with a high volume of family traffic. I placed two of the ads at Depot Park, the location where the museum was soon to be opened and where, currently, there is a large new park, playground, and splash pad—all of which have been attracting a high volume of families. One of those ads was posted in Pop-A-Top, a small convenience store and café in Depot Park, the other on one of the outdoor marquees in the area. I also placed an ad in each of Gainesville's five public libraries. In addition, I called around to the local community centers and placed an ad at each one that allowed it. Finally, I invited the Cade to promote the study to the people on its mailing list. The reason I chose these places to advertise was because I believed that they covered the widest variety of people, as the libraries and community centers were in both areas of high- and low income. Although I wasn't collecting information on socio-economic status, I nevertheless wanted to ensure that people from various socio-economic backgrounds had the opportunity to participate, because I wanted the results to reflect as much as possible the makeup of Gainesville parents.

### **Implementation**

I began the interviewing phase of the study by meeting with participants as often as was possible. Eventually, for reasons I will explain later in his section, I expanded my methods of contact with both parental and professional participants to include phone interviews and email responses. In each of my in-person and phone interviews, I

recorded my conversations with the participant for later analysis. I always made sure to alert participants to the fact that the phone call or interaction would be recorded, and assured them that the recordings would be erased after transcription. I also had participants sign a release form stating that they had been made aware their responses would be used in this study, and that their identities would remain anonymous. While transcribing, I made sure to always use the letter “K” to indicate myself (the researcher) and the letter “I” to indicate the interviewee, since all interview participants were to remain anonymous. For the people I interviewed over the phone and those who chose to answer via email, I executed two extra steps. These were to email/snail mail the participants the waiver for them to sign and return, and then to mail them the admission voucher. I did not feel confident in emailing the vouchers, which were meant for one-time only use, because I didn’t there to be the temptation to print multiple vouchers. To this end I also signed all vouchers and added the phrase, “valid after 2/1/18.”<sup>7</sup>

At the beginning of the interview period of this study, I attempted to get as much detail from participants as possible, and to that end, I did very little to curtail their responses. As a result, interview transcripts tended to be very lengthy and contained many tangents as a result of the participants’ stream of consciousness. I also began to notice that some of the questions were causing participants confusion and did not contribute significantly to the theme of parental audience development. In order to increase the relevance of the information I was gleaming from participants, I removed some questions, crafted additional questions that were more pertinent and easier to

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<sup>7</sup> The reason for this is because, at the time, I was told that the grand opening of the new building would not take place until February 2018.

understand, and began to direct the conversation in ways that would focus the participants on their experience. As I made these changes, I observed that the length of the interviews decreased and the informational depth of responses increased. I ended the study in mid-September to give me time to analyze the information gathered, and as a result had to turn away a few people who attempted to contact me about participation after the fact. Such cases were few however, and for the most part I had no trouble in closing the study.

### **Issues**

Several issues occurred during the course of the development and implementation of this study. During the IRB submission stage, I had a few difficulties navigating the IRB website, and discovered in the midst of my submission that there were several steps my “Co-Investigator”<sup>8</sup> needed to accomplish in order to *become* my co-investigator, a role which needed to be filled in order for me to be able to submit my IRB protocol. We eventually were able to meet all the requirements, but it made the application process take longer than I would have liked.

Another issue I ran into during the course of this study was the way in which I had decided to recruit participants. I initially took a very passive stance, distributing my advertisements in the park, the libraries, and the community centers; but of those advertisements, I only received one response, and that was from someone who was not qualified for the study.<sup>9</sup> In order to increase the exposure of the study, I asked the Harn and the Florida Museum of Natural History if I could pass out fliers to parents in the

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<sup>8</sup> Basically, a faculty mentor; who in this case was Eric Segal from my committee.

<sup>9</sup> The person was not a parent of school-aged children.

museum. This method was slightly more effective than waiting for people to see the fliers I had posted, but it, too turned out to be an ineffective method. For every 100 people I approached in this manner, only 1-2 people actually made, and participated in, interview appointments. I began to consider what might be preventing people from following through on making interview appointments and came to the conclusion that scheduling issues might be the cause of my problems; as I stated before, parents are busy people with many demands on their time. I decided that I would widen the interview methods to include over-the-phone interviews and email responses, so that parents wouldn't have to take as much time out of their schedules as meeting with me in person might. That decision produced a few more participants, but it did not solve the problem entirely. I considered again what I could do to execute more interviews, and came to the conclusion that I would need to approach people instead of waiting for them to approach me. I got permission from the Florida Museum of Natural History to come in on a Saturday and approach people to do a short interview with me. Taking a more active approach in this way proved much more effective than my previous approach. I shortly afterward received an influx of participant requests due to an email the Cade has sent out to their mailing list, and thereby reached the sample number I had set out to achieve.

I had other minor issues regarding the professionals I interviewed. Some institutions I asked for help never responded, and so I had to look for other institutions to interview. Thankfully, I found several institutions that contributed great information and opinions on the subject of parental engagement. Using the information I was able to gather from these institutions along with the information I learned from the parents of

Gainesville, I compiled a list of parental needs along with methods that could be used by museums (particularly the Cade) to engage and serve the parents in their communities.

### **Organization and Analysis**

Though the process of coding and analysis in qualitative research is unique from researcher to researcher and from project to project, how one catalogues and organizes the data they gather from a study is important. Organization can affect researchers by encouraging them to draw distinctions between certain kinds of data or even overlook certain other data.<sup>10</sup> Because of my previous decision not to record demographic or personal identification information from my participants, I overlooked distinctions such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status and focus on the information that was pertinent to my guiding questions: what are the needs of this audience and what can museums do to ensure they are engaging parents? As I stated previously, I felt that demographic information of that kind was not pertinent to discovering the needs of the parental audience, because parents come from many backgrounds.

Throughout the execution of the study and the subsequent analysis, I used the Constant Comparative Method to uncover information in response to the above questions. An aspect of the Grounded Theory approach, this method was effective both in the development and re-development of my interview questions, and in the analysis of the responses to those questions. Using the information this accumulated, I was able to draw conclusions and form theories to support my thesis statement.

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<sup>10</sup> Tracy, 2013; Pg. 185.

To begin analyzing this study, I transcribed the interviews recorded over the phone and in person. I also compiled the interview responses of the people who preferred to use email. Once the data was in text-form, I created an Excel spreadsheet with headings for interview date (y-axis) and for each question in my interview schedule (x- axis). I went through each interview and pasted participants' responses from the interview transcriptions directly into the cells that corresponded with the date of the interview and the question being asked. From this point, I was able to compare responses from each participant one question at a time. As I compared the responses, I distilled the data into themes or primary code terms. I created a second spreadsheet similar to the first, but instead of the participants' actual responses, I filled the second spreadsheet with the corresponding code terms from each response. After completing the second sheet, the similarities and differences between the responses became apparent, and I saw patterns appear.

## CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

### **Findings**

As a result of the parental and professional interviews, and the subsequent analysis, several main points became apparent. These points are, firstly, that parents' primary concern/hope with regard to museums was how it would benefit their child(ren). Secondly, that parents want their children to learn more than the academic subjects themselves. Thirdly, that parents want access to more resources that will help in the education of their child(ren), and lastly, that parents are looking for good cost value options for their families.

The fact that parents are concerned about providing a good experience for their children, at least in the academic sense, is a topic that was covered in section two of this paper. Some might think that parents wanting the museum to benefit their children is a foregone conclusion, but I believe there is more to this first finding. There are many ways in which parents can provide their children a fun and/or educational experience, so what makes parents choose a museum as the venue for that experience? As Vergeront mentioned, "if these adults have chosen this museum as a place that provides an experience they value for their child[ren], then what can the museum do to ensure a great experience for them?"<sup>1</sup> The answer, according to the participants of this study, was that the museum could provide activities and experiences that no other venue or institution could. Said one parent:

We often go to museums around the state. It is a great way to inspire children and to show them things that they may not normally get to see.

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<sup>1</sup> Vergeront, 2014

You never know what piece of art or what exhibit might spark an idea in them! (Interview 9/8/17)

A museum is a unique institution that delivers learning in a unique fashion. In 2014, AAM published a white paper called “Building the Future of Education,” in which various leaders in museum education and beyond spoke on the innovations that museums are developing to support the learning efforts of families across the country. Importantly, they mention the shifts taking place in education in the U.S. and about the museum’s place in the future of education. Museums are poised to become a great resource for people seeking learning on their own terms; learning that is more customized to themselves, their own learning style, and their interests. Katherine Prince calls these “Learning Ecosystems.”<sup>2</sup> Many parents might be looking for such learning resources for their children, so museums need to make sure they have a variety of high-quality programming that can fill the needs of these learners.

Another point to consider is, though all the parents mentioned that benefit to their child was the primary factor with regard to museums, many parents noted that they, too hoped to benefit from their museum visit. The following quotes illustrate this:

I try to look for things that will inspire both of us, especially when it comes to math because math is our weakest subject. So we look for things that will help us learn it better and integrate that with science together... I would tell you that I think it expands the learning process for both of us. (Interview 7, 9/2/17)

Normally, when I bring the kids to the museum, I want them to learn, maybe about different types of frogs that we see on a day-to-day basis; but it would be cool to see something for me to learn and me to encounter that I don’t already know... so it would be cool to have the museum be a learning experience for everyone and not just the kids. (Interview 3, 9/2/17)

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<sup>2</sup> Prince, 2014

Despite the facilitator role most parents take on as part of the museum visit, it is entirely possible that they also identify with other of the “little-i” identities that Falk and Dierking outlined (people can identify with several roles at any given time).<sup>3</sup> Like the parents quoted above, they could be explorers seeking learning for themselves as well as for their children. For this reason, it is important that parents are included as active participants in family programming, as the Reynolda House Museum did in their “Mornings at the Museum” program.

The second result I distilled from the study is that parents are looking for more than just instruction in academic subjects for their children. I identified some of the additional concepts parents were looking for from the interview transcripts. These include creative/critical thinking (or being able to look at a problem from different angles),

Having a museum that emphasizes creativity and invention is of great interest to me because it can help to stimulate the developing minds of young children. The public sector emphasizes memorization, conformity, and appealing to authority. To invent, one has to actually think and break the mold. (Interview 9/8/17)

persistence (learning to get up and try again when one fails),

Thinking about innovation that way is useful because everybody gets disheartened, you know, when they're searching for something and... they might give up, but if they continue to try... I've met entrepreneurs and some of them fall down and they fail, and I think seeing failure lead to success is kind of cool to see...and [kids] may not get that at school; they might learn about Edison and the lightbulb, but do they learn how many times he failed at it before he found the solution? (Interview 8/25/17)

and application (of academic knowledge to real-world situations and problems).

It would be interesting to see how in art and invention you can apply the stuff for math and science, and all that. I have one child who's very

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<sup>3</sup> Falk and Dierking, 2011; Pg. 49-50.

creative, and I think creativity is something we should nurture, but my other two are like, 'No, we just do math.' And I'm like, 'You can still be creative *and* do math.' So I think it would be neat for them to look and see, like, how this bridge, they use math but this is how they make it. (Interview 10, 9/2/17)

Paula Gangopadhyay, in the AAM white paper on the Future of Education, states, "Rigor is no longer just related to mastery of content. Rigor now is all about adaptation and application of content in real-world scenarios."<sup>4</sup> Developing these skills is essential in order to be successful in this emerging job market and economy, so it makes sense that parents should be seeking programs that promote skill-building in these areas. Additionally, these are concepts that could potentially be added to existing museum programs. They do not interfere with academic subject matter, and their inclusion would increase the quality of the visitor or participant's experience, as well as meet needs.

My third finding is that parents are seeking more resources that will facilitate the education of their children. Though not all parents were able to articulate just what types of resources they wanted exactly, the fact that they were seeking resources was made clear through the way they described their interaction and assistance of their children with their educational pursuits and in the hopes/excitement they expressed regarding the upcoming opening of the Cade museum. Other parents did note specific resources they hoped the Cade would be able to provide to their families. The following quotes illustrate some examples:

I think something like, maybe guides, to help people engage their kids in conversations afterwards? Like, 'Hey, you spent a few hours at the Cade,

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<sup>4</sup> Merritt, et al., 2014; pg. 23.

these are the exhibits you went to, here's some stuff that you can talk about at the ice cream shop later...' (Interview 2, 9/2/17)

I'll tell you what, we used the Smithsonian a lot, even though we don't live close to it. They have a lot of free information that we can access, and then, I think it's once or twice a month, they'll have a paleontologist or zoologist... have, like, 30 minute sessions that we can actually engage with [them] from all the way over here, so that distant learning is available to us. I haven't found anything [like that] in Florida, so... definitely something like that would be good. (Interview 7, 9/2/17)

[I would like to see] A library system to check out cool and interesting gear, a productivity 'lab' where we can work on our own projects (like a Hackerspace for children!), and having something for every age group. (Interview 9/8/17)

It is interesting to note that in all these examples, the resources were spoken of not only for the use or enjoyment of the children; parents appeared to want to join in on the use of the resources they mentioned. Provision of such resources contributes to parents' ability to create moments of meaningful learning with their children, whether inside or beyond the museum walls.

My last finding is that parents are concerned with the cost value of the museum as a leisure or learning venue. This was a concern that was shared by parents across the board, especially when asked about what would make them consider becoming a member of a museum. Although having a membership typically can save a family money if they visit frequently, parents want to make sure that the museum will provide enough variety in programming and exhibits so that they can visit frequently and see something different each time. In other words, they want frequent visitation to be worth their while. One parent summed it up as follows:

We've been to this museum [The Florida Museum of Natural History] probably five times this summer... um, and now we know where all the exhibits are, which is great. The Discovery Zone is awesome, because that's new, but I mean other than that, we've seen it, so now it's not necessarily as an engaging thing. We kind of walk through the museum in

like, 45 minutes and then we're kind of done, so it would be nice to see... little new things, even if they're not permanent. (Interview 3, 9/2/17)

Though the thought of frequent changes to exhibits or the provision of daily programming might seem like an unrealistic expectation to some museum professionals, there are ways to provide those frequent changes or unexpected new experiences to the visitor without an institution's schedule or budget getting out of hand. In the next section, I will make some suggestions based on my findings from the Parental interviews, my conversations with other museum professionals, and my own observations on how museums can better engage parents as an audience in museums.

### **Suggestions**

My first suggestion for museums is to provide a variety of resources that will help parents to engage with their children more effectively. Doing so will lead to increased opportunities for meaningful learning experiences and contribute to the fulfillment of institutions' educational purposes. I have classified some examples of resources into two general types. These are Skill-building resources and Knowledge Base Resources. This distinction reflects Perry's findings from her observations, that in order to have a meaningful learning experience, parents need to have both a knowledge base and appropriate engagement skills.<sup>5</sup>

Parental Skill-Building Resources revolve around providing parents with materials, direct training/instruction, or observational/indirect learning opportunities that help them to develop engagement skills they can use to enhance their museum experience with their children. An example of this is the observational/indirect learning

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<sup>5</sup> Perry, 2012; Pg. 21-23.

opportunities that parents at the Reynolda House’s “Mornings at the Museum” program had. That learning was achieved by the parents involved because of two reasons, 1) They were present for the entire duration of the program, and more importantly, 2) They were engaged as active participants in the program. This second fact is the more important because, although the parents had been present for the program prior to being specifically included, the engagement caused them to pay attention to what was happening around them instead of zoning out with their phones. The parents began not only to pay attention to the program instruction itself, they were able to notice what the instructor was doing and what their children were doing. The parents’ observation of the interaction between the instructor and the children modeled appropriate engagement for the parents. Likewise, the parents’ observation of how the children interacted with the instructor and their peers, provided insight into the children’s learning styles;<sup>6</sup> important information for parents seeking to assist children in their learning.

Another example of Parent Skill-Building Resources is the Department of Education Series, “Helping Your Child.”<sup>7</sup> In this series, parents receive tips, tools, and sample activities to help their children in a number of academic areas. There are separate booklets for reading, science, mathematics, and more. This type of guide could be replicated in the museum setting. In fact, many museums have tried using printed or even electronic guides in the museum in an effort to support family interactions. Nadelson, in his study on the interactions between parents and children in Science Centers and Natural History Museums, found that the video and print guides

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<sup>6</sup> Lifschitz-Grant, n.d. Pg. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Education, 2002

offered were ultimately ineffective at helping parents to interact with their children. According to Nadelson, the parents found the print guide lacked “detail,” and “specific information about the exhibits” that the parents were looking for.<sup>8</sup> The video guide fared even worse, with less than a third of the participants even noticing the video, and none stopping to watch it. A print guide for parents could be more effective if it contained detailed, easy-to-read information about each of the exhibits, as well as questions parents could ask children, sample activities or challenges families could do together in the museum, and even sample activities that could be done at home to extend the museum experience.

An example of a direct instruction resource is Glazer Children’s Museum’s consultation services. For parents in Tampa, Florida, Glazer’s Parent Consults are a way for new parents to ask parenting and child care questions and receive answers from professionals. This can be adapted in other museums, as well, and not just for child care questions. Taking the Cade museum as an example institution, one way this service could be applied would be that member parents could consult with a museum education professional about their child’s scholastic needs, including their academic strengths and weaknesses. The Cade could then suggest a number of classes and/or camps that might help the child strengthen their weak subject. Or a museum could offer workshops for parents on how to develop engagement skills they could use in or out of the museum.

The second sub-category of Parental Skill-Building Resources is Knowledge Base Resources. This revolves around providing the background knowledge or

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<sup>8</sup> Nadelson, 2013; Pg. 481.

important points that might be covered in the museum's exhibits. This provides a parent the necessary information to answer their child's questions or to explain what the exhibit is about or explain a certain concept to their child. Such resources could be provided before the visit or included in the design of the exhibits themselves. In her article, Meghan Kelly notes that design is a form of pedagogy, and has a direct impact on the visitor's learning.<sup>9</sup> Good design supports learning while inadequate design can hinder it. A negative example of this is Perry's account of the mother and daughter who left the museum exhibit discouraged because they were unable to find the answers to their questions in the exhibit's text.<sup>10</sup> If designed more efficiently, pertinent information could be made more readily accessible for interpretation by visitors. However, the background knowledge and important facts could also be provided to parents via a printed guide (perhaps even included in the parental guide mentioned previously), or on the museum's website, for perusal before the museum visit.

Another way to have information readily available to parents and families is through the use of docents. Many museums have docents give tours of their institutions, and for this purpose they generally must memorize a script, which can be the source of visitor dissatisfaction if there are questions posed that the docents cannot answer. If a museum is near or associated with an educational institution such as a university, it would be good to seek volunteer docents that are knowledgeable in the subject matter of the exhibits/museum. If a museum does not have such connections available, it would be important to find docents knowledgeable in the subject matter, or to

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<sup>9</sup> Kelly, 2015; Pg. 392-393.

<sup>10</sup> Perry, 2012; Pg. 20.

encourage docents to *become* knowledgeable in the subject matter (as well as making sure docents have pedagogical/engagement skills). That way, the docents could provide better engagement with visitors and even provide additional engagement modeling for the parents. If no docents can be found or adequately trained, museum staff could provide the Parental Knowledge Base Resources by acting in the stead of docents.

Additional information about how museums can plan for effective parental engagement can be found in the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s publication, “Engaging Parents, Developing Leaders.” This short guide provides an assessment tool as well as sections on partnering with and coaching parents in the development of their children.<sup>11</sup>

My second suggestion for how museums can better engage parents revolves around the promotion of whole family engagement in “Family” Programming. An example of this is the Reynolda House’s inclusion of parents in their early childhood program. There were no major changes made to the content of the program, but when the museum staff became more inclusive of the parents, the results showed the parents found the experience more meaningful. Another way to promote whole-family engagement is to provide activities and challenges that the family can do together during their museum visit, resources such as family backpacks, online learning resources, or a lending library of books and other materials provide families. The Cade is about to implement another type of whole family engagement when their new facility opens, in the form of impromptu demonstrations/ experimentation opportunities done on mobile “science carts.” Whatever the program or resource implemented, the importance

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<sup>11</sup> Boots et al., 2016.

of whole-family engagement is that it provides the opportunity for families to have meaningful learning experiences as well as build social bonds, as was mentioned by Black.<sup>12</sup>

My third suggestion for better engagement on the part of the museum is the building and strengthening of community partnerships. Glazer Children's Museum is an example of the benefits of community partnerships, as seen in the way they are able to connect community businesses with families via their resource expos, and their partnership with Champions for Children, through which they are able to offer their Development check-ups and Parent consultation services. The Cade also is an example of good community partnerships, working extensively with the University of Florida and with Take Stock in Children, an organization dedicated to providing extracurricular learning opportunities to children from low socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>13</sup>

Brandan Lanman of the Orlando Science Center also spoke to the importance of community partnerships, stating that it is essential to partner not only with local businesses or service organizations, but also with teachers, schools, and alternative schooling groups.<sup>14</sup> By forming and maintaining such partnerships, Museums can connect with parents, teachers, and other experts, which can lead to better communication and a more concise fulfillment of community and parent needs by the museum. Through community partnerships, the museum also has the opportunity to provide special events. In the case of the Cade, one such event is their annual Cade

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<sup>12</sup> Black, 2005; Pg. 25.

<sup>13</sup> Take Stock in Children website.

<sup>14</sup> Interview 7/6/17.

Prize competition, where inventors from all over Florida show off their ideas in the hopes of winning publicity and prize money for the development of the invention.<sup>15</sup> In the future, the Cade might add such other community events as community science fairs (for k-12 students). And, with support of their community partners, they might even offer periodical free admission days (or other admission-free events), like Glazer does through their partnership with PBS.

Something that was mentioned by many of the parents that participated in my study in relation to becoming a member of a museum was the value they saw in reciprocal admission programs. This is a manner in which museums can form partnerships with other learning institutions throughout the state to benefit members and provide more value for the cost of membership. In such a program, visitors who become members are able to gain admission not only to the museum/institution that they sign up with, but they also receive admission to other institutions with which the membership institution partners. Brandan Lanman told me during our interview that he would like to form a coalition of science learning centers in the state of Florida to promote STEM learning state-wide. Such a coalition would be a perfect opportunity to provide a reciprocal membership program, but other partnerships could be formed with zoos, aquariums, and historic sites around the state to the same effect.

If museums wish to develop or better engage their parental audience, the preceding suggestions can be implemented to help parents engage better with their children, provide additional learning experiences for themselves, and positively affect their perception of an institution's cost value, making it more likely that they will invest in

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<sup>15</sup> Cade website.

museum membership. Better engagement of parents and families will also contribute to the museum's fulfillment of its educational and mission goals.

## CHAPTER 5 FURTHER RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION

As previously mentioned, there is much more that can and should be studied regarding parents' needs, roles, and importance within the museum. I would personally like to continue studying this topic, as I feel it could greatly increase quality of experience for both parents and families. If I were to continue this study, I would survey an even larger sample in order to see if the outcomes I distilled from this study hold true. I would also consider using other forms of data collection such as the focus group; because although, as I mentioned before, there are risks with this method,<sup>1</sup> but there is also the opportunity of making meaning/ generating information and opinions that might not occur to participants singly. As an example, perhaps there is some aspect of the museum experience that is confusing or irritating for a participant, but they think they are the only one who feels that way until they have the opportunity to discuss it with others who feel the same. There are ways that withholding of information can be mitigated; one of which being saving sensitive topics for individual interviews or questionnaires.

Of course, a larger audience would mean a larger amount of data to analyze. I would have to seek help from volunteers in order to transcribe and analyze the data, as well as code more extensively than I had to in the scope of this study.

Another topic I would like to research in conjunction with the present study would be whether there is a discernible return on investments in the multiple types of resources I suggested museums provide in the previous section. To be sure, providing

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<sup>1</sup> Such as the possibility of participants withholding certain information.

such resources would require museums to make substantial investments not only monetarily, but also in time and manpower; but if museums could show some kind of increase in visitorship or membership as a result of these resources, it could justify the cost of their provision. It might also be helpful in convincing funding agencies and donors of the success of the museum.

During the course of this paper, I have discussed the importance of the Parental audience, outlined some of their needs and motivations for visiting the museum, and made some suggestions for how museums might endeavor to serve them better. Parents are a ubiquitous audience; every museum has one, but not every museum has taken the time to discover what they can do to make a parent's museum experience more meaningful. There remains much that needs to be studied and discovered about parents and their needs, as well as the best ways to engage them in their many roles (facilitator, explorer, rejuvenator, etc.).<sup>2</sup> But one fact is apparent: museums need parents.

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<sup>2</sup> Falk and Dierking, 2011; Pg. 47-49.

## APPENDIX A STUDY ADVERTISEMENTS



### Request to Participate in Museum Development Study

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Katie Kelly, I'm a graduate student at the University of Florida in the Museum Studies program. As part of my master's thesis, I am attempting to assist the Cade Museum by doing research into the needs and interests of parents/guardians of school-age children in the Gainesville community and how they (the Cade) can meet those needs and interests.

This study will assist in making your family's experience with the Cade Museum more interactive and memorable— knowing the needs and interests of the community will allow the Cade to create programming, exhibits, and events that are tailored to the Gainesville community and which reflect the interests and concerns of those who call Gainesville home.

In order to accomplish this, I am looking for parents/guardians from the community to volunteer to meet with me for a one-on-one interview. Upon completion of interview, participants in the study will receive a one-time Cade admission voucher for the new Cade facility.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at 813-205-6365 or via email [kkelly2@ufl.edu](mailto:kkelly2@ufl.edu) to schedule your interview date and time.

I hope you will consider participating in this important study, the Cade Museum values you and your family and wants to make your experience exciting, educational, and memorable. Getting your feedback will help them to accomplish this more effectively.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

**Katie Kelly**  
MA student, Museum Studies  
University of Florida, '17

Figure A-1. Expanding Engagement advertisement letter

**Request to Participate in Museum Development Study**

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My name is Katie Kelly, I'm a graduate student at the University of Florida in the Museum Studies program. As part of my master's thesis, I am attempting to assist the Cade Museum by doing research into the needs and interests of parents/guardians of school-age children in the Gainesville community and how they (the Cade) can meet those needs and interests.

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**Katie Kelly**  
MA student, Museum Studies  
University of Florida, '17

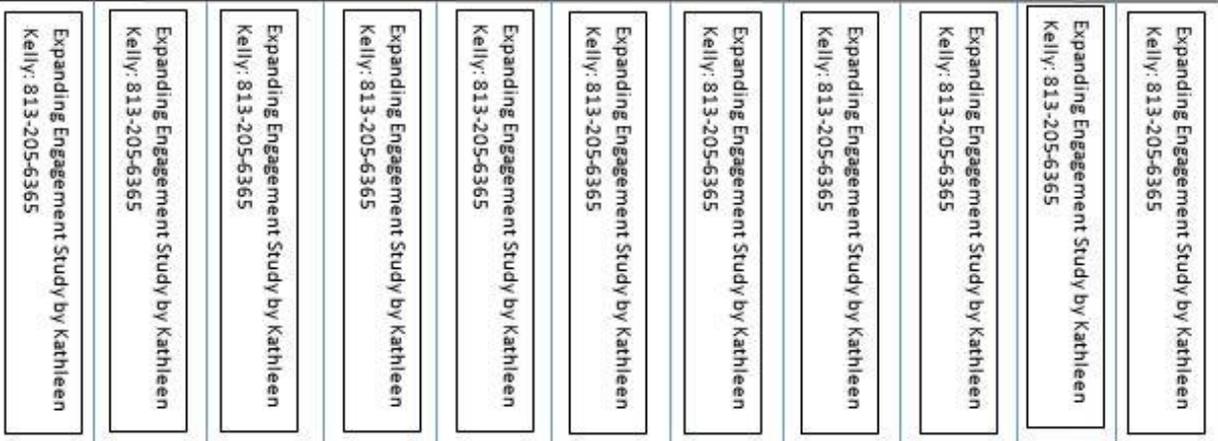


Figure A-2. Expanding Engagement advertisement flyer

APPENDIX B  
STUDY QUESTIONS AND CONSENT FORMS

**Expanding Engagement Professional Interview Questions**

What factors do you take into account when designing programming?

Is/are there certain audience(s) who you are seeking to develop/more effectively engage?

What are you doing to develop that/those audience(s)?

In your institution, do you attempt to engage specifically with parents? Please explain why or why not.

What kinds of resources do you provide for parents? For families?

Are there resources/opportunities you would like to provide but as yet do not? Please explain.

What features of your programming/exhibits have you noticed that appeal to both parents and children?

Do you partner with any local businesses? If not, why?

If you could, what types of businesses would you want to work with and what would you want to achieve through your partnership?

**Professional Informed Consent Statement: Expanding Engagement Study [IRB201701264]**

This study attempts to assist the Cade Museum by doing research into the practices of other museums and how they go about engaging new audiences. The interview is expected to last about 30 minutes. Your interview will be audio recorded initially, then a transcript will be made of the conversation and the audio recording will be deleted. In addition, no demographic or personal information will be recorded, and any identifying information will be removed from the transcripts. Participation is voluntary and you will not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer.

There are no anticipated risks, or direct benefits to you as a participant. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may discontinue your participation at any time without consequence.

By signing below, you are agreeing to participate and you give the Principal Investigator (Kathleen Kelly) permission to report your responses anonymously in a final manuscript to be submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Florida and to the Cade Museum of Creativity and Invention’s Membership and Development Department.

If you have any questions about this research protocol, please contact Kathleen Kelly at (813) 205-6365. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant may be directed to the UFIRB office, University of Florida, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611; ph 352-392-0433. Your participation will be confidential to the extent provided by law. Your responses will be anonymous after transcription

I affirm I have been informed and give my consent to the terms above:

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person obtaining consent: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Expanding Engagement Parental Interview Questions**

Has/have your child(ren) been to the Cade before?

What reactions to the experience has/have your child(ren) shared with you?

How do you perceive your child(ren)'s feelings about the Cade?

As a parent, what about the idea of a 'creativity and invention' museum interests you?

As a parent, what would you expect/hope to see/experience in a creativity and invention museum?

What would you say would be your biggest reason for taking your children to a museum?

In general, in museums that you visited with your family before, do you feel that you personally are engaged by what's going on in the museum? Does it feel compelling/interesting to you?

What could the museums do to help you engage better with your child? Is there anything that we could provide for you?

What kinds of activities does your family enjoy doing together?

How often do you plan family activities outside the home?

What are the major factors you consider in planning family activities?

How active would you say you are in your child(ren)'s education?

What kinds of resources would you like to have access to through the museum?

What would make you consider becoming a member of a museum?

**Informed Consent Statement: Parent/Guardian Audience Study [IRB201701264]**

This study attempts to assist the Cade Museum by doing research into the needs and interests of parents/guardians of school-age children in the Gainesville community. The interview is expected to last about 30 minutes. Your interview will be audio recorded initially, then a transcript will be made of the conversation and the audio recording will be deleted. In addition, no demographic or personal information will be recorded [aside from number of children in the household and their age(s)], and any identifying information will be removed from the transcripts. Participation is voluntary and you will not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Your identity will be anonymous and at no time will your identity be revealed. There are no anticipated risks, or direct benefits to you as a participant. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may discontinue your participation at any time without consequence.

By signing below, you are agreeing to participate and you give the Principle Investigator (Kathleen Kelly) permission to report your responses anonymously in a final manuscript to be submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Florida and to the Cade Museum of Creativity and Invention’s Membership and Development Department.

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Your participation will be confidential to the extent provided by law. Your responses will be anonymous after transcription

I affirm I have been informed and give my consent to the terms above:

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person obtaining consent: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C  
SAMPLE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

**Interview 9.1.17 Total run time: 27:51**

K: hello?

I: hi

K: Hey, so I'm just getting out my questions right now.

I: Okay, take your time.

K: So, have your children ever been to the Cade before?

I: no.

K: have you ever heard of the Cade museum before?

I: I think I did but I kind of forgot about it because it's part about it one time.

K: okay, do you— so, you don't remember anything that you had heard about it,  
or...

I: I actually don't, I just think it's like a science museum, right?

K: I 'm sorry, you breaking up a little bit; what was that?

I: I'm sorry I was saying that I thought maybe it was a science museum more  
interactive type of museum.

but I mean I honestly don't remember much about it at all.

K: that's no problem the Cade is actually a museum it's called—uh, they call  
themselves the Cade Museum of Creativity and Invention; so they are—  
they have a goal of, um, fostering creative thought, early entrepreneurs and  
innovators, and they do this through promoting programs with STEAM  
subjects. Are you familiar with the acronym of STEAM?

I: yeah

K: Okay. so yeah, that's what they use, so that's what that museum is about and  
it's actually named for Dr. Robert Cade who is one of the inventors of  
Gatorade.

I: okay; how long has it been open?

K: Well, they actually have a- another building which is a lot smaller that they have  
been working out of for a number of years, but in that particular building they  
don't have space for exhibits they don't have an exhibits there, they only  
have like a- a classroom

I: oh, okay

K: So that's why they're building the bigger building so that they have opportunities  
for exhibits to be and other events and things like, you know, in in addition  
to their classes in programs. So, as a parent, what about the idea of this  
kind of museum—a museum of creativity invention— appeals to you the  
most?

I: Um...that's a great question, um... I think everything in its title, [laughs] we're big  
on creativity and thinking outside the box and we are constantly coming up  
with projects and artwork and my daughter absolutely loves science, and  
just really... there's not really a whole lot in Gainesville, so kind of any  
opportunity for her to have some extra exposure, um, it's great to us and  
then, us as well; you know we- we work all day every day so it's nice to be  
able to go, and—even us as adults, enjoy um, the museum that she goes  
to as well. Um, you know we take her to the natural history museum a lot,

um... yeah, it's good to see things that she can interact with... she's five so she's pretty hands-on and it's good for her to be able to touch and play and explore.

K: okay, as a— in that same vein, as a parent, what would you expect to see or experience in a museum of creativity and invention? Or what do you hope to?

I: I have no idea what to expect from the museum, so... it's a little bit of a difficult question because I haven't— I haven't taken her to any museum like that before, other than the Natural History museum where there's a lot of hands-on, um... so I think maybe I would expect, um... have you seen the new area at the Natural History museum, the discovery zone?

K: the Discovery Zone? Yes

I: I think I would expect something like that with a lot of hands-on, um... trying to think... I don't know because I don't really have much of an expectation, but yeah I do think a lot, a lot of— a lot of hands-on, a lot of different areas— nooks and crannies and things for her to look into and be able to touch and play...

K: ...okay, so, you've never had the opportunity to take her to like a science center before is that correct?

I: no, correct

K: okay; what kind of activities does your family enjoy doing together?

I: we, like, do a lot of outside, um we do a lot of art projects— painting and drawing um, we... actually, pretty often we make board games together or make a card game come up with our own rules and kind of go through the entire process of making a game from cutting out the cards and drawing on them and then coming up with a rules and then actually playing together; we watch— we watch TV together, we read stories, we used to be big on cooking together but she's kind of lost interest in that lately; and then beyond that go to the parks— swings and slides— and she began doing little science projects— those little things that we can do at home. She has a little science kit that we got off Amazon, and we do that together... Oh! She loves making slime, that's like the biggest deal for her right now; I guess that's kind of a fad right now, all the kids are doing that, but she loves slime... and play-doh.

K: Now, what would you say would be your biggest reason for taking your children to a museum?

I: I think to get her out of the house and doing something different. I feel like my— I feel like my book answer is that I want to expose her to more science and art, but really it's just get out and do something, um, and have her not cooped up in the house. [laughs] to have something interesting to go and do yeah it's a kind of detached a little bit from the screens; she has an iPad and likes to watch a lot of shows and also play apps; which are educational, but it's also good to get her away from that and sometimes it's just good for all of us to get out together. That's actually how the destination you to make her happy and content, you know? Especially in Florida, you know, it gets hot and— there— you want to get out and do things, but at the same time, when

it's in the summer it makes a lot harder to do you she's not good at being hot and sweaty and it's just good to have a destination where you can go and feel like, you know, you're not going to have to no worry about, 'oh, gosh, she needs to be acting this way' and not touching this, you know? like just a place that she can go and be a kid and we all kind of be together and just relax.

K: okay. all right, well you know, that's definitely is important, yeah. In general, in museums that you visited with your family before, do you feel that you personally are engaged by what's going on in the museum; like does it feel compelling to you, does it feel interesting to you?

I: [sound cuts out] We have done some museums [sound cuts out] but, I can say it's a little harder to keep an eye on her, she's a pretty busy girl, so there are certain areas that we tend to stick to. Um, again using the natural history museum— just because go there so frequently— as a specific example: The Discovery Area is really great because it's easier to keep an eye on her— there's one entrance and exit [laughs]. So I know that when- if I- if she is quick and busy and a lot of kids there and a lot of things going on, um, if she slipped out of my sight one second, I know where the entrance and exit is and I know that I can keep my eye there, and, you know, while my husband looks for her, but... you know. Not that we lose our kid very often but, you know when it's so busy, those museums sometimes, that—that's just one extra level of stress that added trying to make sure that, 'oh gosh, you gotta keep your eye on her' every- every little second, you know, so it's a little harder to enjoy the museum when you're doing that and so that has been a challenge at some museum where it's just like, 'I can't enjoy it and keep an eye on her at the same time' so the set up, I think, in the new museum makes a difference: whether it's big open spaces or whether it's, you know, one entrance or—maybe not just one— fewer entrances and exits, you know, just that a little bit easier, I don't know if that was helpful or not...

K: I think it is actually I think it is very helpful. Um, in the same vein, what could the museums do to help you engage better with your child? Is there anything that we could provide for you? You know, anything that that you'd like to see in a museum that might be able to help you engage better with your child?

I: Um, let me think about that one for a minute... I feel like there is a really good answer, but... I'm not sure what it is right now... can I think about that one and get back to it?

K: I understand. Let's stick a pin in that; I'm actually gonna make a note of that one... write that down

I: okay...

I: I feel like there has to be... [laughs]. I'm not sure what it is yet. I don't know if other parents have the same... I mean I'm sure that some of them do, but I don't know the all parents have the same issues or not, um, but I just I have a busy girl and she's 'go, go, go', and sometimes, when there's a lot of kids, it's very stressful to go to museum. that's all my focus, is keep an eye on her, make sure she's in your sight, you know?

K: yes yeah I can see that. Certainly; Um, so... how often do you plan family activities?

I: Um... probably every other weekend.

K: okay, and what are some major factors that you consider when you're planning family activities?

I: Um, cost, and.....we definitely, just— not to rehash it, the same thing comes up— the layout, so that we're able to kind of sit and relax, you know; you don't wanna plan a stressful event by any means, so we do look at cost, we look at, you know, we really like to go to Bouncin' Big a lot for the same reason. Um, big, open area and same thing, there's one entrance, one exit and there's also on little child safety gate that you have to go through before you get to the outside door, so we can go there, she can jump in a bounce house, we can kind of sit in the middle of the room and then you're surrounded by bounce houses so we can bounce with her for a little while and then we can sit and then she can kind of move around and we can see her pretty much anywhere. And then, we think about food options as well, depending on how long we're going to be there are we going to need to eat or not, and if we are allowed to come in or is there a food option that she's going to be okay with eating, and I guess that's about it, other than just if physically she wants to go or not...

K: I see. Alright... how active would you say it— would you say you— okay, sorry. How active would you say you are in your child's education?

I: Very

K: Could you go into that in a little bit more detail?

I: We do homework with her every night, um, on top of that we tried to incorporate learning all the activities that we do. I mention the board games that we make, a we also play board games with— we play a lot of European board games um, so a lot of times instead of buying kid games, she likes to play the games that we play. So we will take our board games and make the rules a little bit different or simpler; um, but we always incorporate math into it and she doesn't even realize it: just like, with rolling the dice we'll have to add and subtract and try to figure out, you know, whether her card is going to beat our card and things like that. So we just really try to incorporate it everywhere that we can, we do the same thing with vocabulary, um, constantly working on word— and then reading, and same thing— we'll just we'll usually do that with games or with reading story we'll stop and have her read here and there... um, you know, she's five...

K: cool, no that's great! very clever with the dice and everything...

I: yeah she's been able to do simple math for quite a while, it's just a game, it's not math...so...

K: right. So, revisiting, kind of, the question I asked you before, this question is kind of similar to that one. It's: what kinds of resources would you like to have access to through the museum?

I: so... I don't know, think it would be really great if they were—um, if there were activities that the kids could do... I don't know if that is a thing or not... but, um, if there- if there were any, like, fun stuff they had, like a slime- making

lab or, you know, an area where they can actually make or do something, I think that would be really cool. [Sighs] trying to think of what else... umm, she really likes anything interactive; I know I talked about getting away from the screen, but you know, kids love screens [laughs]. She- she loves, I think, anything that would kind of tie something that was... I don't know what I'm trying to say... I mean, this is something that would tie something *not* on the screen that will also be cool... like, if you had an iPad and you press the button on here it did something over there...

K: oh I see...

I: Or- and maybe- I don't know, maybe the iPad [garbled], I mean I don't know..... Am I even close what you're asking? Is... my answer... what you wanted?

K: No, yeah, no you're totally fine.

I: okay, who knows maybe I misunderstood the question...

I: I don't know..... aside from like, having attendants [laughs] that could help. That might be kind of cool if there was like... if they had anyone... like staff, you know, help engage your child a little. Just because— I think sometimes we go the museum is like, she's looking at things and you want to kind of teach her about it— I'm mom, you know? and it's like, 'Oh mom! I just want to do my thing'; and so she just gets into it. Um, but if you have an outside person kind come up and want to talk, and teach, and engage with your child, sometimes they respond a lot better to that. So, I mean, not exactly like a tour, but maybe if you just had people that were around that might be like, 'Hey, you want to learn about this?' kind of just on this part and ask questions and engage your child I think that could be really helpful... where they could ask some questions... and then, maybe my child and I could also kind of answer and ask questions and sort of thing.

K: yeah definitely, that's a great suggestion.

I: My kid loves talking to people. She loves talking to people and asking questions and being able to tell her experience with whatever it is, you know? And then, a lot of times with museums same thing it's just kind of like she buzzes to one area and then she goes to the next area, and the next area, and she's quick and doesn't really... she knows, like, when I'm there trying to show her things and tell her things, at that point you know it's not really a game, she knows I'm trying to teach her, so she not interested, she's, 'leave me alone, let me do my thing', So...

K: right...so she- she isn't interested in being directly lectured at...

I: right exactly yeah it's- if she learns, then she usually doesn't know it.

K: okay...

I: I'm sure- I mean she- I think she's different in school, but when she's with me, that's- it's not learning time. So, everything you need to do to teach her something has to be incorporated in other ways, unless there's a goal for her— which, the goal is again usually it's incorporated another way, like she's learning because she wants to be able to do something. But...

K: okay, so this is— I mean these have all been really great answers that you've given- a lot of insight. I just have one last question, and that is: what would make you consider becoming a member of a museum?

I: have to think about this one for a minute... Um... the cost benefit would be big; we're definitely on a budget, so cost benefit would be very big, and then... just how often we think we're going to visit the museum. If it's, you know, really engaging and a place that she really likes to go, then we definitely consider doing it. Um, and of course, I mean if it's something in Gainesville we would already consider it because we we want more opportunities here, and more resources.... But yeah...

K: okay great! was there, was there anything else that you— did you have any other questions? Did you have any questions for me?

I: I don't think so...

K: All right, well I really appreciate your time...

APPENDIX D  
STUDY REIMBURSEMENT VOUCHER



Figure D-1. Expanding Engagement compensation, Cade Museum admission voucher

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kathleen Kelly was born in 1987 while her family was stationed in Okinawa Prefecture, Japan. After returning to the states, Kathleen grew up in Florida, the fourth of six children. She graduated from Walter L. Sickles High School in May 2005 and then began attending Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah in 2006. Between her sophomore and junior years, she served a proselyting and service mission in Viña Del Mar, Chile (2008-2010), after which she returned to Brigham Young and received a B.A. in anthropology, specializing in archaeology, and minoring in Spanish in 2012.

At first, Kathleen did not know what she wanted to do with her anthropology degree, but she knew she loved to learn, and she wanted to help others view learning with the same sense of wonder that she possessed. During the course of her undergraduate studies, Kathleen happened to take a course in museum collections management, and it was that course which opened her eyes to the world of museum education. Here was a way for her to connect people to history, art, and culture in meaningful ways! Kathleen believes that informal education is the key to developing a person's love of learning so they continue to pursue it throughout the course of their lives.

Kathleen began her master's work in museum studies in the fall of 2015. During her time at the University of Florida, she worked and volunteered at the local museums and galleries. She also completed a practicum for the Cade, a small local museum. Her first summer of grad school was spent in Greeneville, Tennessee as an intern at the Doak House Museum, where she designed and ran two children's summer camps, as well as organizing several community events hosted by the museum. Her second summer was spent doing research as well as working for the Harn Museum of Art in

Gainesville. After graduation, Kathleen will pursue a career in museum education at a History, Natural History, or Science museum.