

Researching Family Programs at the Smithsonian

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Background

- PhD research: family agendas
- Visitor Motivation: on-going research interest
- GLOs: link between motivations & outcomes
- London Zoo study: motivation -> visit routes
- Family Stories study: methodology

Foundation for the SI study

- Access to similar organisations & resources
- Museums one of the many orgs/resources used
- Differences in use and perceptions of “learning activity”

Ideas about knowledge & leaning → learning activities

highly
structured

content-led

loosely
structured

child-led

Role of family/home culture!

NEED TO UNDERSTAND FAMILIES' ECOLOGIES

WHAT ARE THE RESOURCES FOR FAMILY LEARNING?

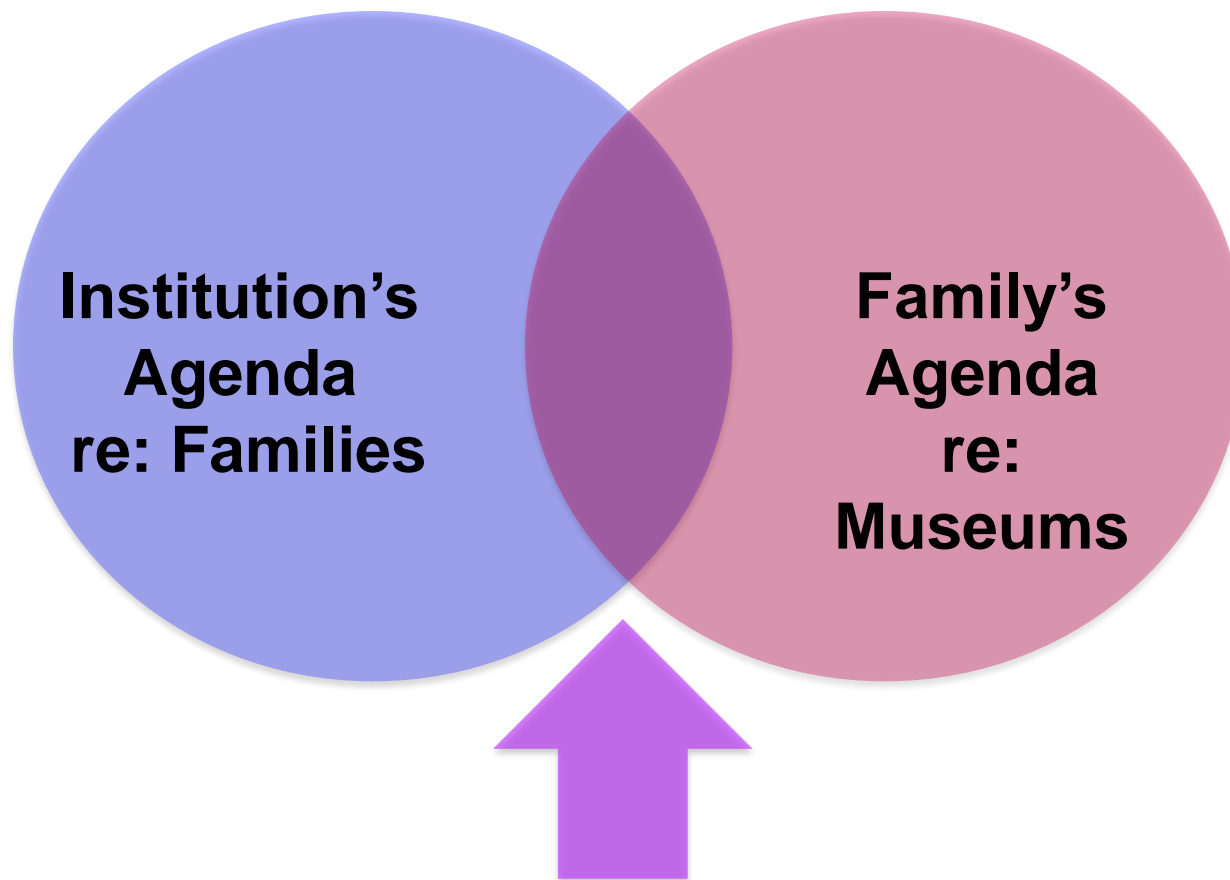
Why start with family culture?

- Diversity of values - multicultural world
- Different cultural & linguistic identities
- Education-culture intertwined (UNESCO 2006)
- Cultural references important resources for family learning
- Participation in visible & less visible institutions/ activities

Methodology

- Diverse & complimentary experiences across different settings and cultural practices
- “Listening” & participatory methodologies - funds of knowledge within the family
- Context & routine practices matter

Where is the Alignment?



Co-design of programs?

Smithsonian study goals

- Staff study:
 - How are families conceptualized?
 - How are family programs (co-)developed?
- Family study:
 - Types of orgs/activities & why?
 - Benefits

Participants

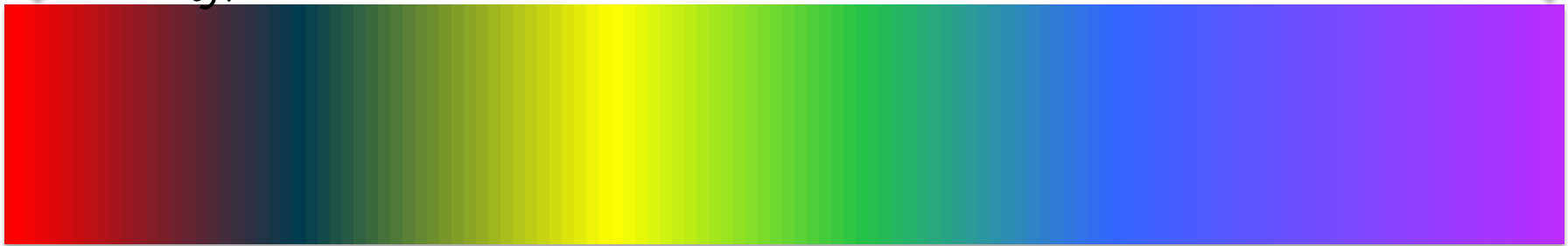
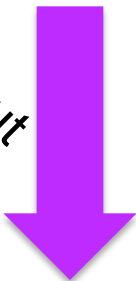
- Portrait Gallery
- American Art
- Air & Space
- American Indian
- Postal Museum
- Natural History
- Asia Pacific American History Month program
- 13 family groups
 - 3 home schoolers
 - 2 stay-at-home mothers
 - 1 PhD student
 - 3 part-time/consultants
 - 4 full time work

What is your Institution's/Dept's Approach to Home-School Families?



Great if they come –
don't think about or
plan for them
specifically

We totally think about
and plan for
homeschoolers
specifically



3 home school families

- The “Renaissance family”
 - “a well-rounded person”
- The family with a gifted child
 - “I can do more & more in-depth at home”
- The learner-driven family
 - “She wants to learn; she lives it”

The “Renaissance family”

- Artist, lawyer/politician, 1 boy (3)
- Environment – behaviour/outcome
- Regular SI user
- Key elements:
 - Educational
 - Entertaining
 - Capture attention



The family with gifted child

- Teacher, military, 2 girls (5 & 7), 1 boy (2) & twins
- Very structured schedule
- SI – twice monthly
- Key elements:
 - Facilitation - interaction
 - Hands-on or presentation - questions
 - Links with curriculum

The learner-driven family

- Special needs teacher (part-time), painter & computer programmer, 2 girls (4 & 5 m)
- Passionate about art/culture
- Loose curriculum – child's interests
- Frequent SI user
- Key elements:
 - Engaging, fun, age-appropriate & interactive



COMMON PATTERNS

Division of roles

- Mother: educator, network, resources/activities, role model
- Father: directly/indirectly involved @ weekends
- Kids: share learning & unique perspectives, socialize younger siblings & accommodate each other

Schedule

- am: home school curriculum or field trip/program
- pm: physical activity, play
- weekends: family time, relaxation
- holidays: fun/play, family time, experiencing place
- activities: engaging, interactive, fun, multifaceted

Summary

- Interdependencies between (learning) settings
- Knowledge of kids & environments
- Background
- Lack of subject matter knowledge & anxieties
- Different settings/experiences
- Transfer of knowledge
 - parental role construction
 - knowledge gap (Free Library of Philadelphia)



IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE?

Resources

- Other sites:
 - SERC
 - Colonial Williamsburg
- MAKESHOP – Children’s Museum, Pittsburgh
- Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs)
 - Parents as bridge between learning settings
 - Harvard Family Research Project