

Something Different:

A pilot study evaluating family outreach activities at the Fitzwilliam Museum

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**The
Fitzwilliam
Museum**



Table of Contents

<u>TABLE OF CONTENTS</u>	1
<u>TABLE OF CONTENTS</u>	2
<u>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</u>	3
<u>BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT</u>	3
BACKGROUND: SOCIAL EXCLUSION	4
THE NEED FOR EVALUATION	5
THE CASE	6
<u>METHODS</u>	8
<u>RESULTS</u>	9
PRIOR EXPERIENCES OF ART MUSEUMS	9
CHILDHOOD VISITS TO THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM	10
EXPECTATIONS OF MUSEUM VISIT	14
'SOMETHING DIFFERENT'	16
<u>PERCEPTIONS OF MUSEUM VISIT</u>	20
OVERVIEW	20
THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CHILD ENJOYMENT	20
BRIDGING CHILDHOOD AND ADULT MUSEUM EXPERIENCES	26
GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM	27
PERCEPTIONS OF GALLERY TIME	28
PERCEPTIONS OF WORKSHOP TIME	34
AGE APPROPRIATENESS OF CRAFT ACTIVITIES	40
SECONDARY IMPACTS OF FAMILY OUTREACH VISITS	41
<u>DISCUSSION</u>	43
IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT	45
CONCLUSION	45

Executive Summary

This report establishes a basis for future research on the impact of arts outreach for socially excluded groups. The case examined is an outreach programme focused on bringing young mothers with low educational attainment into the Fitzwilliam Museum with their young children for a child-friendly gallery visit and craft workshop activity. Key findings include:

- The individuals participating in this outreach activity had no adult experience with cultural institutions and would have remained culturally excluded if not for the outreach programme.
- The outreach activity provided a bridge between vaguely remembered childhood museum experiences and adulthood for the mothers engaged.
- The gallery-based component of the family outreach visit provided a manageable introduction to the Fitzwilliam Museum collection.
- The workshop-based component of the visit fully engaged mother and child, promoting increased self-confidence, social capital and gregariousness.
- The outreach visits provided an all-around positive experience for the young mothers (all under 22) and their young children (all under 3).
- The exclusionary view of museums' role requires updating in light of present study.

These results are particularly significant within the context of growing pressure on cultural institutions to demonstrate their impact. This pilot study suggests the potential of outreach programmes to deliver authentic engagement with socially excluded groups. Moreover, the research methods employed in this study were qualitative and longitudinal in nature, offering an alternative to the dominant end-of-visit survey-based approach to museum evaluation.

Background and Context

In recent years, cultural institutions have increasingly emphasised social inclusion. Community cohesion and social inclusion are key items on the government agenda to which it is believed that museums and other cultural institutions can offer significant contributions (e.g. Lawley, 2003). However, there are clear limitations to the successful implementation of a social inclusion agenda within museums. For example, a recently published report on the DCMS / DCSF National/Regional Museum Partnership Programme pointed out that community inclusion work is new to most museums and that such outreach activities are “very resource-heavy, demanding staff with specialist skills and experience, and a commitment to opening up the museum to new ideas and new ways of working. Not all museums in the programme seemed able or ready to cope with that” (Greenhill et al., 2007, p. 43). Indeed, this report found that “some museums [...] were failing to grasp what was needed” (p. 38) to widen access and community participation. Thus, for most cultural institutions authentic social inclusion work remains much more of an ideal than a reality. Beyond the relatively low prevalence of full-scale social inclusion work in UK museums, there is a significant evidence gap between the aspirations of those in the museum sector who believe in the potential benefits of engagement with the arts and the existence of reliable and valid data demonstrating such benefits.

Nevertheless, the work museums have done to promote social inclusion over the last decade shows significant promise. The aforementioned report published in 2007 purports to be the “first study” to conduct direct research with “community participants” engaged by museums (p. 39). Although this study only employed a very limited closed-ended survey method administered at the end of the visit (no pre-test or follow-up), it provides the best empirical evidence to date of the impact of engagement for community members. The survey of young people and adults engaged through the programme’s ‘expansion of community provision’ were asked to respond to a number of statements with three response options: ‘yes’, ‘no’ and ‘don’t know’. Responses to this survey were very positive (Greenhill et al., 2007, p. 40), with large majorities saying ‘yes’ to the statements “I enjoyed today” (95%), “Working with the museum has been very inspiring for me” (82%), “I discovered some interesting things” (93%), “I feel I have a better understanding of the subject” (84%), “It was a good chance to pick up new skills”, “Using the museum was a good chance to learn in new ways I had not considered before” (80%), “I could make sense of most of the things we saw and did” (85%), “I am now much more interested in the subject than when I started” (78%) and “I would like to do this again” (80%). The problem with these results is that the statements used did not arise from the respondents themselves, but rather they were imposed within a closed-response framework. As such, the validity of these results could be questioned.

Background: Social Exclusion

Social exclusion involves the detachment of individuals and groups from institutions, resources and social networks within society. This disengagement can be compelled by prejudices or sanctions administered by core groups or it can be self-generated as a means of maintaining a strong, cohesive in-group identity within the rigid boundaries of a closed social network. Whatever the causal explanation, social exclusion has been implicated in a range of negative outcomes, including restricted access to basic citizen rights, education, welfare provisions, or participation in the “key activities of the society in which he or she lives” (Burchardt, Le Grand, & Piachaud, 2002, p. 30). Amongst these ‘key activities’ are the cultural offerings from museums. In recent years, museums have become an increasing focus within the general goal of combating social exclusion in contemporary Britain.

“Social exclusion is a multi-faceted and dynamic process that requires a range of policy interventions” (Walton, 2000, p. 59). It is also a key policy concern for the government due to its implications in terms of low average levels of educational attainment, employment participation, access to services and civic or political engagement, as well as high rates of truancy, crime and morbidity. For example, based on a 1995 survey of educational attainment in secondary schools within deprived areas, the Social Exclusion Unit (1998, p. 1.23) reports “one in four children gained no GCSEs, five times the national average, and truancy was four times the average”. Social exclusion is consequential across generations, affecting children, adults and pensioners. As such, interventions aimed at addressing social exclusion are most effective when they are intergenerational. The present

case is one such example of an intergenerational intervention at a crucial juncture in the lives of both the young mothers and the young children.

The Need for Evaluation

The possible role of cultural institutions in combating social exclusion has yet to be fully demonstrated through robust evidence, as noted by Richey (2004):

The arts possess certain qualities that enable them to reach and sometimes to affect the sources of disengagement in young people. The evidence for this, however, is invariably anecdotal or speculative. (Richey, 2004, p. 51)

In order to ascertain the effectiveness of interventions, rigorous evaluation research is needed. The need for evaluation research to demonstrate impacts related to social inclusion and other agendas has become increasingly apparent in the museum sector.

For cultural organizations, [...] tight budgets and increased public accountability, [...] have] put pressure on staff in cultural organizations to document and justify their practices and has highlighted the need for evaluation. (Economou, 2004, p. 30)

Evaluation research can help museums understand their visitors, and thereby enhance the efficacy of their interpretation and engagement activities. However, in many cultural institutions, evaluation research to measure “their impact is not undertaken at all or is limited to the personal feelings and impressions of the staff involved and to anecdotal evidence” (Economou, 2004, p. 31).

Although [...] the need for evaluation is mentioned increasingly often [...], remarkably few organizations in the cultural sector have actually developed systematic strategies for carrying out visitor studies and evaluation work. (Economou, 2004, p. 31)

The relatively limited capacity for high quality evaluation research within the cultural sector has also been identified by Galloway and Stanley (2004).

Experience of evaluating educational activity can be limited [in museums and galleries]. Often there has, until recently, been little support for evaluation, traditionally characterized by a standard end-of-session form. (Galloway & Stanley, 2004, p. 126)

By piloting more in-depth and robust evaluation methods than the traditional ‘end-of-session feedback form’, this study works to help fill the evidence gap that exists as a result of the increasingly high social inclusion expectations placed on museums and the aforementioned paucity of systematic empirical research to assess the efficacy of museum outreach activities. Moreover, such research has the potential to inform the design of interventions and outreach activities that can effectively engage individuals and families that do not currently attend museums or galleries.

The Case

This pilot evaluation research study was designed¹ to assess the impact of a recurring outreach activity that brings young and disadvantaged mothers into the Fitzwilliam Museum with their children. The aim of these family outreach visits is to introduce the mothers to the museum, enhance their engagement with the arts and give them experience gaining confidence in an otherwise unfamiliar setting. The approach taken by the education officer leading this outreach activity was to invite attendance from a group of young mothers who attend short child play sessions at a local community centre located in the south of Cambridge. Specifically, a gatekeeper at the community centre invited mothers attending the play session in the week before the scheduled Fitzwilliam family outreach visit; the mothers generally had to find their own mode of transportation to get to the Fitzwilliam Museum on the day of the visit.

The outreach visit was comprised of the following three elements (lasting a total of about two hours).

1. *Arrival and greeting* (approx. 15 minutes). The mothers did not arrive all at once, but rather came in ones and twos with their children. They were ushered through the reception area and into the studio / workshop room downstairs, where they were offered tea and biscuits.

Figure 1: Mothers offered tea on arrival and begin completing questionnaires (9.2.10)



¹ The author gratefully acknowledges the integral role of Dr Kate Noble at the Fitzwilliam Museum in supporting the design and implementation of this study and Emily Barton at Romsey Mill for assisting in the data collection process, as well as Education Assistants Rob Law and Alison Ayres for their support during the data collection at the Fitzwilliam Museum. Finally, Dr Brady Wagoner, Associate Professor of Psychology at Aalborg University, helped conduct the data collection (ethnographic and interviews) on the days of the visits to the Fitzwilliam Museum. He would also like to thank Gill Hart and others at the Fitzwilliam Museum for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this report.

2. *Gallery Visit* (approx. 20 minutes). The mothers and children were lead upstairs from the workshop through the main gallery and into a specific room where the education officer invited everyone to sit down and got out a storybook. The story was selected based on its correspondence with an aspect of the museum collection; this correspondence was then highlighted by the education officer leading the family outreach visit (see Figure 2). A different room within the museum galleries and concomitantly a different story were selected for each visit. The first visit within the study timeframe was to a gallery with historical paintings and some antique furniture; the second visit was to a room filled with antique pottery and fine china.

Figure 2: Education officer connects story to museum collection (24.11.09)



3. *Studio-based craft workshop* (approx. 80 minutes). Upon completion of the story, the education officer lead the mothers and children back downstairs to the workshop. This was done slowly, allowing the mothers and children the opportunity to stop briefly and look at objects in the museum collection on their way out. Once in the workshop, a craft-based hands-on activity linked to the museum collection (and the story read by the education officer) was explained and then handed over to the mothers and children to conduct together. Halfway through this time, a second craft activity was introduced

by the education officer and carried out by the mothers and children. Linked to the gallery component of the visit, the craft activities changed for each session. Thus, an internally consistent theme was maintained for each outreach visit.

This study included data collection before, after and during two family outreach visit days: 24 November 2009 and 9 February 2010. The earliest data collection point was one week before the 24 November visit and the latest point was about two weeks after the 9 February visit.

Methods

Most evaluation research currently being undertaken in museums employs reductionist, one-off survey methods that are “incapable of recording the subtle and unmeasurable experiences which visitors have in a gallery” (Economou, 2004, p. 35). Indeed, Economou (2004, p. 35) argues that “quantitative-based surveys produced for management which do not relate their results to the local area [...] might provide a misleading picture when not combined with interpretative and ethnographic methods (Hooper-Greenhill 1988)”. The methodological goal of the present study was to pilot qualitative methods of evaluation research that might provide the “sort of evidence which can substantiate more general judgments about a series of projects or a wider programme or initiative” within the context of museum outreach (Galloway & Stanley, 2004, p. 127).

The most relevant prior study of the impact of community engagement employed a one-off survey with highly circumscribed response options to pre-formulated statements (Greenhill et al., 2007). In the present research, the aim was to widen the analytical lens to explore the perceived value of the family outreach visits from a visitor-driven perspective. As such, open-ended qualitative methods were employed, and the research was conducted on a more longitudinal basis over a four-month period.

Data for this pilot study was gathered primarily through photographically documented ethnographic observation and qualitative interviewing. A questionnaire was also piloted for the second outreach event, yielding additional data. Access to the participants for this study was obtained through a gatekeeper who facilitated the loosely organised community centre meetings attended by the young mothers for their very young (under 3 years old) children to play in a group setting. The mothers who have been to the Fitzwilliam sessions range in age from 17-22. One mother has a level two qualification in childcare, which is the highest education level of the entire group. Most of the mothers have no GCSEs.

All interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed. Fieldnotes were taken during the ethnographic observations. All the qualitative data was analysed systematically following standard procedures (for details, see Jensen & Holliman, 2009) and with the assistance of the computer-aided qualitative data analysis software programme *Atlas.ti 5.2*.

Results

This section reports on participants' prior experiences of cultural institutions, their expectations of the outreach visit and their perceptions of each component of the visit. The data indicate that the family outreach visit engaged individuals with very little prior cultural engagement, offering them a valued experience and a manageable (re)introduction to the art museum setting as an adult.

Prior Experiences of Art Museums

Overall, participants in the present sample reported limited prior experience with cultural institutions such as the Fitzwilliam Museum. In particular, there was very little prior experience with any art museums post-childhood. The primary form of prior experience with art institutions comprised parental or school visits to the Fitzwilliam Museum during the participants' childhood. That said, some of the participants had never been to any art museum before. This was the case for the participant in the following extract, who said she had heard of the Fitzwilliam but wasn't sure what kind of a museum it was.

Interviewer So you haven't been to the Fitzwilliam before?

Sarah I haven't, no. I've heard of it though. [...]

Interviewer Do you have any general impressions of the Fitzwilliam Museum?

Sarah I don't. What kind of museum is it? [...]

Interviewer Have you been to any other art museums?

Sarah No.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09

Likewise, 'Rosie' did not have any pre-defined perceptions of the Fitzwilliam Museum.

Interviewer Do you have any general impressions of the Fitzwilliam Museum?

Rosie I don't really know. I've never been, so I can't really say.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09

The following extract is indicative of some participants' lack of experience with art museums. In this case, Carrie had not been to any museum of any kind (art or otherwise) ever before.

Interviewer Have you been to the museum before?

Carrie No, no, it's our first time. [...] I've never been here before.

Interviewer Have you been to any other museums?

Carrie No, no, not really, not museums. I've never really been.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit - 24/11/09

In a similar vein, 'Rachel' indicated that she had minimal prior experience with art in any setting, and none in an art museum.

Interviewer Have you been to the Fitzwilliam Museum before at all?

Rachel No.

Interviewer Any other art museums?

Rachel No.

Interviewer Do you think you might have come across art somewhere else, other than a museum, before?

Rachel Possibly. I don't really remember.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09

These data indicate that outreach visits to the Fitzwilliam Museum may be the first ever encounter with art- certainly in a museum context- for some of these participants. Other participants had childhood memories of visiting the Fitzwilliam Museum, which will be discussed below.

Childhood visits to the Fitzwilliam Museum

Because the participants tended to have been raised locally, some had vague recollections of childhood visits to the Fitzwilliam Museum. The following interview extract is from a participant who could not recall visiting the Fitzwilliam with her parents as a child, but surmised that she "probably" had done so.

Interviewer Had you come here before?

Katie No [...], not that I can remember. My mum and dad probably brought me when I was younger, but I don't know. I can't remember.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit - 24/11/09

In addition to childhood visits with parents, some participants reported that visiting the Fitzwilliam Museum as a school pupil was their only prior experience of art museums.

Interviewer Have you been to Fitzwilliam before?

Betty I've been here in the past. I'm not sure whether it was with my school or my college, but I remember being here.

Interviewer Do you remember any impressions from then?

Betty I was young then. I was a teenager, before I had a kid or anything. But yes, I thought it was all right then. [...]

Interviewer Have you been to any other art museums?

Betty No, I've only ever been to this one.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit - 24/11/09

In the following extract, 'Liz' recalls indistinct memories of visiting the Fitzwilliam Museum while she was a child, both with parents and with school.

Interviewer Have you been to the Fitzwilliam Museum before?

Liz [...] I came with school, but I don't remember coming, if that makes sense. But my mum said I came. I think I vaguely remember the horse upstairs, or something like that.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit - 24/11/09

The most consistent finding regarding prior visits to art museums was that with only one exception none of the participants had visited these cultural institutions as an adult. This result points to the value of the family outreach activities for bringing these young adults into cultural institutions, which may seem potentially intimidating to visit as a lone visitor.

While most childhood memories of visiting the Fitzwilliam Museum were relatively indistinct, for 'Tina' (extract below) her memory of coming to the museum while in school set in motion a strong negative expectation about what it would be like to come to the museum with her own child.

Interviewer Had you heard of the Fitzwilliam Museum before?

Tina Only through school. [...]

Interviewer Do you have any impression that you remember of the Museum from that?

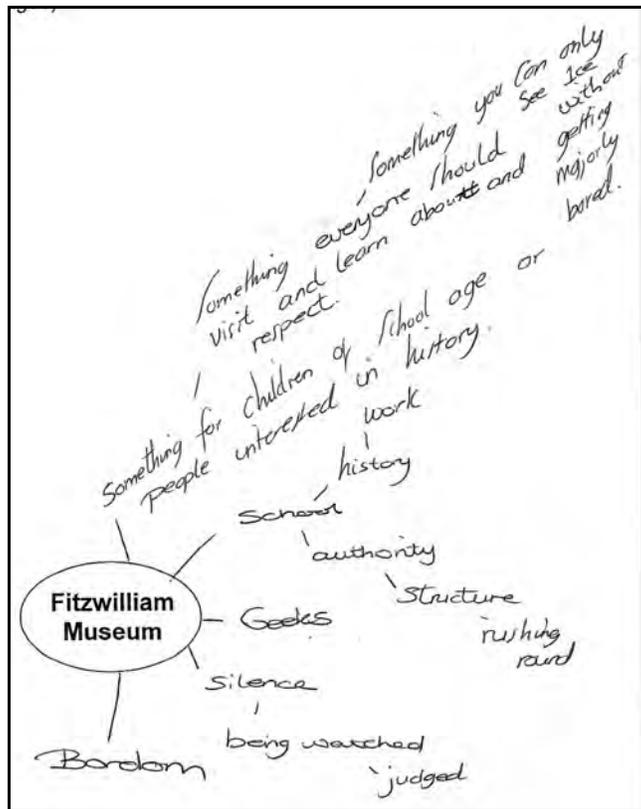
Tina Somebody kept saying, 'behave' and 'be quiet'. [My impression was] 'authority' really. I don't like authority.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit - 9/2/10

As can be seen in the extract above, Tina's prior experience influenced her expectations of the family outreach visit. The negative perception of the museum from this childhood

experience can also be seen in the personal meaning map that Tina completed on the day of the visit (see Figure below).

Figure 3: 'Tina' Pre-visit Personal Meaning Map



Tina's personal meaning map above is particularly interesting for the elements that are not directly negative. First the statement that the Fitzwilliam Museum is "something for children of school age or people interested in history" is notable for excluding her from the concept of 'who the museum is for'. Also interesting is Tina's perception that the museum is "something everyone should visit and learn about and respect". This view that museum visiting is a worthy activity was offset by negative perceptions of the museum as a boring and at the same time hostile place governed by "silence" and judgement. This negative perception aligns with the working class perception of museums identified in Bourdieu and Darbel's (1991/1969) study².

Demonstrating that the negative perceptions of the museum were not immutable, Tina showed a clear shift in her thinking about the Fitzwilliam Museum as a result of a single

² See Discussion section below for consideration of the continuing applicability of this research within the contemporary museum context. In sum, Bourdieu and Darbel (1991/1969) identified negative patterns and outcomes of museum visiting, which museum practitioners have sought to overcome in the four decades since the study was published. There is at least some evidence in this study that their overall conclusions may need updating, while some of their empirical and conceptual observations may still hold.

family outreach visit. On a questionnaire completed at the beginning of the outreach visit (9/2/10) Tina listed what came to mind when she thought of the 'Fitzwilliam Museum' as "school work", "not very child friendly due to lots of expensive, irreplaceable things" and "history"³. In contrast, on a questionnaire completed two weeks after the visit (23 February 2010), the two thoughts she associated with the Fitzwilliam Museum were "educational" and "adaptable for all ages".

Indeed, despite her negative expectations, Tina reported mid-way through her visit (after the gallery time) that these negative expectations were not at all realised.

Tina No, [...] I don't really know much about the museum. I've only ever been on school trips. So I didn't know what goes on here.

Interviewer What were your thoughts when you came in [to the Fitzwilliam Museum], initially?

Tina I suppose I thought there would be a lot of people standing around and making sure you don't touch anything.

[...]

Interviewer And what do you think so far, just going through the gallery a little bit?

Tina I thought it was kind of cool because [my son] could touch the glass. So I don't have to worry all the time about having to make sure he doesn't touch anything, which is how I thought it was going to be.

Interviewer So you thought it was going to be really stressful?

Tina Yeah, but it's not really.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit - 9/2/10

The pattern of children being able to freely explore the gallery during the family outreach visit can be seen in the image below (Figure 4).

³ Questionnaire completed at Fitzwilliam Museum on day of visit on 9/2/10. Spelling corrected in last two thoughts.

Figure 4: Children freely explore museum gallery during family outreach visit



Certainly, overcoming such a negative perception of the museum in such a short space of time is a remarkable achievement for the family outreach visit. Another implication of the childhood experiences discussed above is the possibility that the lack of memorable positive experiences with cultural institutions in their formative years may have inhibited these mothers' subsequent engagement with museums or galleries. This implication is significant given that the present outreach activity offers the possibility of delivering memorable and positive childhood memories of a museum for the children of the young mothers.

Expectations of Museum Visit

Other than Tina, participants' expectations of the family outreach visit were typically undefined. As such, they were often unable to articulate any detailed reasons why they elected to attend in the first place. This difficulty in articulating reasons can be seen in the extract below:

Interviewer What interested you in coming along today?

Liz Well, [the community group leader] said that we can come, [...] so I said, yes, we'll come along and see what it's all about.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit - 24/11/09

Indeed, as can be seen in the interview extract above, there was a willingness to ‘have a look’ at a museum if invited⁴, which would seem to suggest the value of programmes designed to reach out to individuals with no prior experience of art museums. This open attitude towards visiting an art museum for the first time if invited can also be seen in the following interview extract.

Interviewer Is there anything that would put you off visiting the Fitzwilliam or another museum?

Sarah Not really, no. I’d go and have a look to see what it was like. I don’t think anything would put me off, really.

Interviewer And is there anything that would make it especially appealing to go to?

Sarah I don’t know really, to be honest. It’s like, no. I’d have to have a look, I think, to see.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09

Given that the participant in the above extract had never visited an art museum before, this expressed willingness “have a look” once invited is encouraging from an outreach practitioner perspective.

One reason for attending the family outreach visit that was articulated was the hope that the child would enjoy it. The reasons for this enjoyment focused on the workshop aspect of the visit, as well as their children’s exposure to new visual stimuli at the museum.

Interviewer What has interested you in going?

Jane Why am I interested? I don’t know. He’s [the participant’s son] just never been to a museum. [...] So it would be nice to just go there and have a look around. But I think also they were saying about messy play- that they get to get messy and stuff- so that’d be quite enjoyable for [participant’s son], because he’s very overactive. So, yes, that’s pretty much it. I just want to get out and about and see what it’s all about; and let my son get messy. So I think [the community group organiser] said there’s one next week, so I’ll be able to see what it’s all about then.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09

As anticipated by the mothers, there was clear visual evidence that the children enjoyed and were engaged by the workshop activities, as can be seen in the following image (Figure 5).

⁴ It is worth noting that it is possible to ‘invite’ individuals to an event that is open to the general public. The important point is that these individuals would not seek out these cultural opportunities unprompted.

Figure 5: Child engaged by workshop activity (24.11.09)



In the following extract, the child's 'enjoyment' is emphasised, as well as the vague notion of this visit providing an experience that was distinct from their everyday lives: that is, 'something different'.

Interviewer What interested you in coming along today?

Katie I just wanted to have a look to see what it was; to see if she would enjoy it. It's something different, isn't it, for her? So she'll enjoy it. She'll like walking around.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit - 24/11/09

Indeed, the description of the visit as 'something different' was a recurring theme in participants' very vague and generalised expectations of what the visit to the museum would be like.

'Something Different'

In describing why they would be interested in attending the family museum visit, participants almost universally described the opportunity to visit the museum as 'something different'. This phrase communicated the idea that visiting an art museum was a break from the routines and activities of their daily lives. The fact that one of the mothers arrived for the outreach

visit with a camera and took pictures throughout the visit may be an indicator of this perception of visiting the museum as 'something different' or out of the ordinary.

Figure 6: Mother holding camera (24.11.09)



Given their undefined expectations of the Fitzwilliam Museum and the family outreach visit in particular, it was this 'something different' quality that made the opportunity to visit the Fitzwilliam appealing to many of the participants.

Interviewer Is there anything that would make the visit particularly appealing?

Rosie Just the chance to have a look around. It's something different, isn't it? Something different that you're doing. You don't do it every day, so it's- it will be something new for her [my child] to do.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09

The idea that the visit offered 'something different' was clearly meant as a positive descriptor, as evidenced by the following extract.

Jenny It [the museum visit] was quite good. Because I think it's just *something different* for them to do.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09 (Emphasis Added)

Indeed, the 'something different' theme appears in the following extract as part of the explanation for why the participant is interested in attending future Fitzwilliam outreach events.

Interviewer Do you think you'll go again the next time?

Katie Yes, yes, yes. Yes, I think it's just really nice to go. *It makes for a change* and they learn stuff, so why not?

Interview at Community Centre after Visit - 1/12/09 (Emphasis Added)

Indeed, one participant mentioned this “change” explanation for her returning (2nd) family outreach visit, quipping that she would otherwise be ‘home all by herself’.

Interviewer What made you decide to come back again?

Sarah Same as always really. *A nice change*, instead of sitting at home all by myself really. No, she enjoyed the visit.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit - 9/2/10 (Emphasis Added)

In the above extract, the idea of a “change” from ordinary routines combined with the perception that her daughter “enjoyed” the previous visit was sufficient to motivate a return visit to the Fitzwilliam Museum. For ‘Betty’, attending the family outreach visit was motivated by the perception that it would be ‘something different’ and that it would be “good for” her son. The following extract is from an interview at the beginning of the family outreach visit.

Interviewer Do you have any expectations about what it’s going to be like today?

Betty Not really, no. [...]

Interviewer So what interested you in coming?

Betty It would just be nice to get out and about really and *it’s something different*. It would be *nice to look round at all different things* and it would be *good for [my son]* as well.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit – 24/11/09 (Emphasis Added)

A similar line of thought was evident in the questionnaire Betty completed during the 9 February 2010 family outreach visit, in which she wrote that what came to mind when she thought of the Fitzwilliam Museum was “I think it’s fun and good for [my son], to have a trip out”. The perception of the visits being “good for” her son persisted in her response to the same question on a post-visit questionnaire (25 February 2010): “Nice day out good for my little boy, and special sessions for us is really good”. Betty also wrote in her personal meaning map on this questionnaire (regarding the Fitzwilliam Museum), “good for [my son] to do something different”.

One entailment of this “something different” theme is that there may be a latent willingness to ‘try out’ visits to cultural institutions if the social scaffolding is available to make the visit seem feasible and specific invitations to attend are proffered. The following extract from an interview with first time museum visitor ‘Tina’ is indicative of the willingness to “try it out” when invited.

Interviewer What interested you coming along today, and why?

Tina [The community centre coordinator] asked me to. Well, she didn't ask me to, she said that the group was going today, and [...] so I've come along to try it out.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit - 9/2/10

This point was further developed later in the interview when Tina displayed a latent interest in trying out new cultural experiences, but she indicates that she would not have initiated such an experience on her own.

Interviewer Have you been to any other museums?

Tina No.

Interviewer Any interest in going to any others?

Tina No, but I'm hoping to try new things, so I wouldn't say no. Like today- but it's not something I'd wake up and go, 'oh, let's go to a museum'.

Interviewer But if somebody asked you, you might?

Tina Yes, I might go then.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit - 9/2/10

The extract above offers crucial evidence of the latent interest in visiting cultural institutions amongst those who have never previously visited such institutions. These results suggest the importance of outreach programmes designed to provide a bridging experience for individuals who might otherwise never enter a museum.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that not all participants were open to visiting an art museum. 'Rachel'- who has never been to an art museum- was the one participant who indicated that she was unlikely to be persuaded to go to an art museum, regardless of what was offered.

Interviewer Is there anything that would make it particularly appealing to go for a visit? Like anything that would draw in?

Rachel Probably not, actually.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09

In Rachel's case, her child's health issues took precedence. Yet, even given her son's ill health, she indicated that she would consider going to the family outreach visit as can be seen in the interview extract below.

Interviewer Do you think you might go [to the Fitzwilliam Museum with the community group] next week?

- Rachel I don't know. It obviously depends on him.
- Interviewer Is there anything that might tip the balance one way or another, do you think?
- Rachel Yes, because he's not well- he gets put in hospital sometimes and that might keep us from going.
- Interviewer [...] But if he's feeling well, do you think you might be interested in going?
- Rachel Hopefully.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09

This was a very noncommittal response and this participant did not in fact attend the family outreach session at the Fitzwilliam Museum. However, this participant's response represents the greatest level of resistance to the idea of 'trying out' a family outreach visit encountered in the present study.

Perceptions of Museum Visit

Overview

There was a clear development in the demeanour of the mothers over the course of their visit to the museum. In the 24 November 2009 visit, the mothers arrived looking reticent and tentative. They continued to look uncertain and ill at ease throughout the initial greeting over tea and biscuits, as well as the first half of the walk through the gallery. However, starting with the story reading in one of the larger rooms in the gallery, the mothers began to appear more at ease. Most of the mothers sat with their children on the floor while the story was being told, while two mothers sat on a nearby bench and chatted quietly. Overall, this activity seemed to provide a manageable introduction to a small portion of the Fitzwilliam Museum collection. However, once the mothers were back in the workshop listening to the instructions from the education officer for the craft activity, they appeared to revert to their initial reticence. This reticence subsided for good once the workshop-based craft activity was fully underway.

The mediating role of child enjoyment

In representing their expectations and impressions of the visit, participants focused their discourse on the perceived benefits for their children. In the following extract, 'Carrie' indicates that her children were the primary motivation for attending the museum visit.

- Interviewer What interested you to come in today?
- Carrie Just really for the children really, just to get them involved in doing things.
- Interviewer How old is your-?

- Carrie She's two.
- Interviewer And did you have expectations of what would be happening today?
- Carrie I think that she just really gets engaged in doing things and is happy really, fun.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit - 24/11/09

It is worth noting that the perceived benefits for Carrie's child in the above extract are oriented towards action and 'fun' – as opposed to learning about art. Although there was indeed non-verbal evidence that children enjoyed the visit, the visit was also perceived as educational by most participants by the end of the visit.

'Liz'- who was attending this outreach session for the third time- emphasised enjoyment too, but also hinted at more general perceived benefits of the visits for her oldest child (e.g. 'It's just good for him'), who was just under 3-years-old.

- Interviewer What did you think of them?
- Liz I love it. Well, I say '*I*' love it. [*My son*] loves it, I should say. But yes.
- Interviewer What do [son's name] and you like about it?
- Liz I like the fact that you can just- I know he can't- but you can just wonder around and look at things. And you go and do the arts class, which he enjoys and I do as well. [...] I think these [family outreach visits] are a good idea, these groups [visiting the Fitzwilliam]. And it's just really good for him, so we [keep] coming along [...]. He loves it.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit - 24/11/09 (Emphasis in original)

In the extract above, the participant hesitates to say that she enjoys the craft activities, quickly correcting herself to say that it is actually her son who "loves it". However, she returned to the idea that she directly enjoyed the visit, saying "the arts class, which he enjoys and I do as well". To be sure, there was non-verbal evidence of direct enjoyment of the craft-based activity by the mothers, as can be seen in the following image. Below a mother can be seen working on the craft activity with a smile on her face while the child is looking away.

Figure 7: Mother enjoying craft activity (24.11.09)



Moreover, in the image below another mother is completing the first craft activity while her child has moved to the next table to begin the second craft activity.

Figure 8: Mother completes craft activity (24.11.09)



Despite such observational evidence of direct enjoyment of the craft activity by mothers, the contrast constructed between the child and the mother's enjoyment of the outreach visit was further developed in the following extract. Below, Rosie draws a distinction between her own limited interest in art and her clear desire to attend the family outreach visit for the benefit of her child.

Interviewer Do you have any kind of general views about art? Like, how do you feel about art in general?

Rosie I don't know, really. I don't know, really. [...] I'm not that bothered about it, but I don't mind going.

Interviewer So do you think you'll come along for the visit next week?

Rosie Yes, yes, yes. I'll definitely come, because that will be good for [my daughter], so she'll enjoy it.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09

This extract (above) mentions the child's enjoyment as a primary motivator for attending the family outreach visit, but also the more general notion of the museum visit being "good for her". This 'good for her/him' concept recurs in the present sample. The following extract is from an interview with a mother who had attended two prior family museum visits with the community centre group.

Interviewer Do you have any general impressions of the Fitzwilliam Museum?

Jenny Yes, it's alright. I think the first couple of times we went, she [the participant's daughter] was quite young, so *it probably wasn't as good for her then*. But for her now, it would probably be quite good, because she understands a lot more now. But yes, it was good. *It was good for her to have a walk around and see stuff like that, see museum-type stuff*. But yes, *it's good for them*. I think it's good to take them there when they're quite young.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09 (Emphasis added)

The above extract is illustrative of the view that visiting the museum is an inherently positive activity. This generalised notion is worthy of further exploration to identify more precisely why and how such visits are perceived to be 'good' for children.

While children were the primary motivator for attending the museum visit, they also represented a potential barrier to museum attendance at other times.

Interviewer Is there anything that might put you off visiting a museum like the Fitzwilliam?

Rosie Well, [concern about] her touching things and breaking things. Because she's into everything. She touches everything we walk past, so I'd be a bit worried about her breaking anything.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09

Significantly, it is precisely this kind of concern that the present form of facilitated family outreach visit is intended to overcome. The above extract indicates that the organiser of this family museum visit have accurately identified (and addressed) one way in which young children can inhibit museum attendance by young mothers. Indeed, this concern about children "breaking things" was highlighted by another participant as a key factor in her being interested in taking her children to the family outreach visit. This pre-visit interview extract indicates that the mother has been persuaded to attend based primarily on the fact that her child can go to the museum without the normal worry of him breaking things.

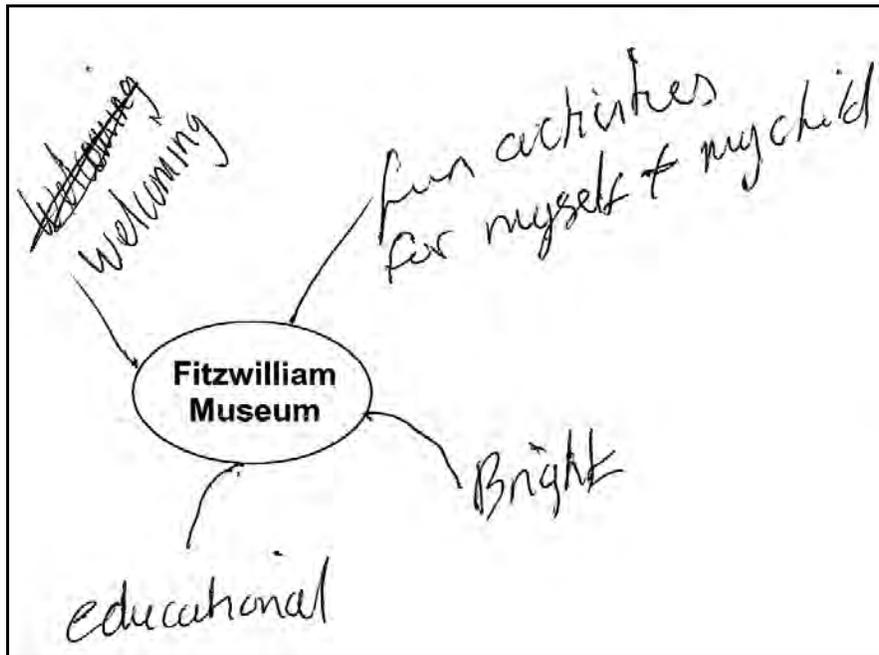
Interviewer Is there anything that would make it especially appealing to go for a visit?

Jane I think it is just generally being able to take the kids there. Because I'd be quite scared to take my kids to a museum, because he's very overactive and he's always touching things. So I think it's quite incredible that you can actually take your kids in there and they can do a bit of fun stuff. But I'm guessing that they're activities that are about art in the museum, which is good. Educational stuff, I like.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09

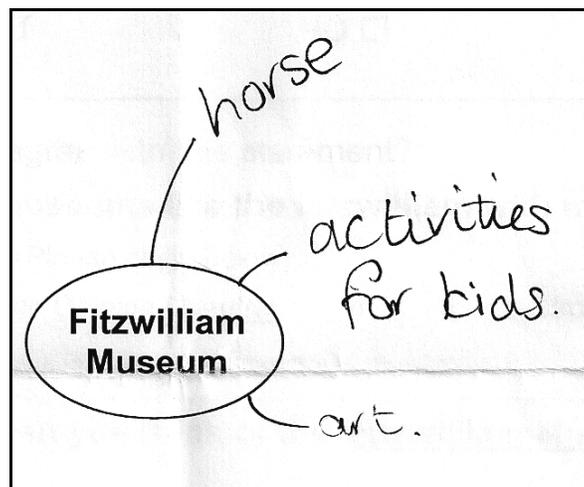
The above extract comes from an interview with a mother who had yet to attend one of the family outreach visits at the Fitzwilliam, but her expressed interest in future attendance was based on the expectations that the concern about her children breaking things would be overcome and the dual benefits of enjoyment and education would be delivered for her children. This dual perceived benefit of enjoyment and education can be seen in the post-visit questionnaire response of 'Katy', who listed "friendly", "fun" and "educational" as the thoughts she associated with the Fitzwilliam Museum after just one family outreach visit (see Figure below).

Figure 9: 'Katy' Personal Meaning Map (24.2.10)



Indeed, the questionnaire data also supported the idea that the mothers' direct viewing of the collection during the gallery visit and the children's enjoyment were intertwined in mothers' perception of the Fitzwilliam Museum. This intertwining can be seen in the two thoughts that 'Liz' identified with the Fitzwilliam Museum in a post-visit (24 February 2010) questionnaire: The first thought- "the big horse near the entrance"- refers to a life size object from the museum collection, while the second- "activities for kids"- is obviously focused on the children. This pattern can also be seen in Liz's personal meaning map below.

Figure 10: 'Liz' Personal Meaning Map (24.2.10)



Likewise, in a post-visit (23 February 2010) questionnaire, 'Samantha' listed the following thoughts about the 'Fitzwilliam Museum': "it is very interesting" and "there are lots of things to do with my child". The former thought suggests a direct perception of the mother, while the latter points to the role of the child in mediating the mother's engagement experience at the Fitzwilliam Museum.

Bridging Childhood and Adult Museum Experiences

As discussed above, a significant proportion of participants reported having visited the Fitzwilliam Museum as a child with their school or parents. However, all but one of these participants had only the vaguest of memories of the museum from these childhood visits and none of the participants had returned to the museum as an individual or as a parent with their own child(ren). In this context, there is evidence that the family outreach visits have the potential to bridge this childhood/adulthood divide for the mothers in this study, offering them a facilitated return to cultural institutions in a manner that is inclusive and unthreatening. The following extract exemplifies the role of a facilitated visit in drawing in someone who would otherwise not have come to the museum.

Rosie I don't mind going 'round to look at [the museum], in a group and stuff, but I wouldn't really go on my own.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09

Indeed, a number of participants indicated that it would not have occurred to them to visit an art museum if had they not been invited to go with this community group.

Interviewer Have you been to any other art museums, other than Fitzwilliam? [...]

Jenny No, *it's just not really the kind of thing I'd ever think to do.*

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09 (Emphasis added)

The participant in the extract above had visited the Fitzwilliam Museum with the community group twice, showing the family outreach programme's success at bringing in individuals who would not otherwise have visited a museum.

Indeed, there is significant potential for this approach to link childhood memories of art to the adult lives of these young mothers. As exemplified in the extract below, without this kind of outreach programme most of these mothers would not otherwise have engaged with the arts.

Interviewer Do you have general views about art, art in general?

Jenny I used to do art and that at school, but I've not really- not really ever thought about it, to be honest.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09

Jenny's statement above that she "had not really ever thought about" art, with her only prior art experience being in school, is indicative of the low level of prior engagement these individuals have had with the arts. The outreach visits have now begun to build an adult connection with the arts for Jenny and some of the other mothers.

General Perceptions of Fitzwilliam Museum

For the participants, the Fitzwilliam Museum was viewed and discussed first through the prism of their children's behaviour and enjoyment of the day, and only secondarily through their own perceptions of the aesthetic qualities of the museum and cultural artefacts.

Interviewer What were your impressions coming into the museum today?

Katie Yes, it's alright. I was making sure she [participant's daughter] was coming with me really. She's a nightmare. Yes, it's alright. It [the museum] looks nice.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit - 24/11/09

Another participant's perceptions of the Fitzwilliam Museum were shaped by her family connection to the museum.

Interviewer Do you have any general impressions of the Fitzwilliam, even though you haven't been there?

Jane Well, I haven't been there recently, but I've heard about it. You know, it's really good. And if it's anything like when my gran worked there, then I quite liked it. It's quite spacious, isn't it? It's quite organised. I quite like that. You know, you go to some museums, and you're just scared of breaking things.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09

The mention of being "scared of breaking things" in the extract above highlights a pattern in the positive comments of participants regarding the family outreach visit (also discussed earlier in this report). That is, multiple participants mentioned their prior concern about their children breaking things, indicating that this concern could be a factor in museum non-attendance for these mothers.

Interviewer How did you find it overall?

Tina Yes, it was all right, a lot different to what I expected.

Interviewer What were you expecting?

Tina Boring school stuff.

Interviewer There was more activity then?

Tina Yes, more focused at children rather than just lecturing about what each thing is.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum at End of Visit - 9/2/10

In addition to these general perceptions of the Fitzwilliam Museum, there were specific comments about the two main elements of the family outreach visit: The time spent walking around a gallery with the education officer reading a story to the children in the gallery and (2) the time spent in the downstairs workshop doing craft activities linked to the museum collection. These more specific comments are reported below.

Figure 11: Storytelling in gallery (9.2.10)



Perceptions of Gallery Time

It is important to note the starting point for the mothers engaged by this outreach visit in terms of their perceptions of art and the Fitzwilliam Museum. For example, Katie indicates in the following extract that there is “only so much art and stuff I can take nowadays”.

Interviewer And what did you think of the Fitzwilliam Museum as a whole?

Katie It's all right. It's a museum, to me.

Interviewer Just like a typical museum?

Katie I wouldn't know. I don't really go to many museums to find out, to be honest. But yes, it's all right. [...The Fitzwilliam Museum] is interesting and everything. It's always interesting, but there's only so much art and stuff I can take nowadays. So yes, it's fine.

Interview at Community Centre after Visit - 1/12/09

This self-report suggests that the organiser of this outreach visit is right to keep the time visiting the gallery to a relatively short timeframe.

Figure 12: Mothers stop in gallery to view paintings (24.11.09)



To be sure, it is clear that the gallery visit served to provide the mothers with some exposure to the museum's collection within a manageable framework and time period. In addition to looking around on the way into the gallery, the mothers and their children lingered on the way out (after the storytelling was complete), pausing several times to view paintings or artefacts on route back to the downstairs studio room. One such example of mothers pausing in front of a painting can be seen in the image above (Figure 12).

One participant- who was visiting a museum for the first time ever- discussed her response to the gallery 'walking round' aspect of the visit in a follow-up interview one week later.

Interviewer So what did you think overall?

Carrie Yes, I really enjoyed it. I would've actually liked to have walked round a bit more because [my daughter] was fascinated with it all. So it would've been nice if we could've walked

round a bit more so she could have had more of a look around. But apart from that, I really liked it. It was really good and she really enjoyed it. [...]

Interviewer Yes, she seemed to be very taken by the horse.

Carrie Yes, she did. She liked that and all the armour and stuff. It attracted her attention. She wouldn't leave. I had to drag here away. [...] She kept going back to it. But yes, it was good. I enjoyed it and she did.

Interviewer What did you think of the amount of walking around we did?

Carrie Yes, it was good and she enjoyed it. I really would've liked to have looked at other stuff, more stuff. And during the story, I found that quite difficult because of her- because she's at that age where she doesn't want to sit still. She wants to get up and walk around and stuff. So I found that bit quite difficult, to try and get her to sit still. She wasn't having none of it.

Interview at Community Centre after Visit - 1/12/09

It is noteworthy that the mother in the extract above indicated in a post-visit questionnaire (completed 24 February 2010) that she now strongly agrees with the statement, "I feel confident visiting museums like the Fitzwilliam with my child". Indeed, the words that she listed as coming to mind when she thinks of the Fitzwilliam now are "friendly", "fun" and "educational" (24 February 2010). However, Carrie's mention that her daughter finds it difficult to sit still for a story suggests that the informal speech genre of 'storytelling' has not been fully routinised for Carrie's daughter. This suggests a potential secondary benefit of the family outreach visit; that is, the visit may indirectly promote child literacy through the promotion of the storytelling speech genre. It is also possible that mothers may be more likely to follow this modelled behaviour post-visit, although such an outcome would require further research to establish.

The perceived value of the time spent in the gallery can also be seen in the following post-visit interview extract, which highlights the same issue of the children not wanting to "be sat around".

Interviewer What did you think about the walk around the gallery?

Katie That's always good, because it's always good for them as well. Because obviously they don't want to be sat around all the time doing stuff. So it's nice for them to see different stuff and that, yes.

Interview at Community Centre after Visit - 1/12/09

It is noteworthy that Carrie and Katie both viewed time walking around in the gallery as 'active' and in contrast with the idea of 'sitting around'. This perception suggests that more time could be spent within the gallery 'having a look around', without the mothers feeling their children are getting bored or restless.

Figure 13: Mothers and children walking around gallery (9.2.10)



Tina was similarly positive about the time in the gallery, emphasising that she viewed it as a manageable introduction ("not overloaded"). She also indicated she would have preferred a little more than the 20 minutes that the groups spent there.

Interviewer Anything that you think could have been done differently?

Tina No, I think it's all right. I'm guessing that each time these groups are on, they'd be looking at different things, so I think it's pretty good. One thing at a time. Not overloaded with everything all at once. [...]

Interviewer Do you think it was about the right amount of time in the gallery or would you have liked to have had more or less time there?

Tina I think a little bit more, kind of like just going with the flow sort of thing.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum at End of Visit - 9/2/10

In particular, Tina highlighted the use of toy animals as a tool for engaging children with the collection. Indeed, it is noteworthy that this technique of handing out toy animals to the children through the course of the storytelling was also used to involve the mothers, with the bag of toys sometimes handed to the mother to administer. Other times the mothers just took the cue to lead the interaction with their child (see Figure below).

Figure 14: Mother and child involved in storytelling



The children were each given one of the toys used in the story in the 9 February 2010 visit, then invited to go around the gallery identifying other animals in the collection.

Figure 15: Children inspect gallery displays (9.2.10)



As can be seen in Figure 15, the children carefully inspected the objects displayed in this gallery.

Tina commented on the use of animal toys in this gallery-based component of the outreach visit.

Interviewer Is there anything you think worked particularly well?

Tina The toys worked well as we were going around [the pottery room]. That worked pretty well. Down to like their level.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum at End of Visit - 9/2/10

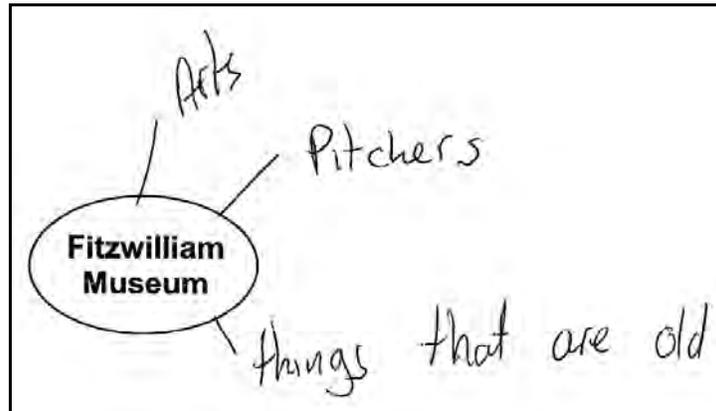
The mothers accompanied the children as they walked around in the gallery and as can be seen in the extract above, this component of the visit was viewed as effective. In addition, the use of the animal toys enrolled the mothers in the engagement activity (as opposed to them being passive bystanders while the education officer delivered the story activity). The active role of mothers in this gallery component of the visit can be seen in the Figure below, which is a photo taken while the bag of toy animals was being passed around to one mother and child pair at a time.

Figure 16: Mother playing active role in the gallery-based engagement (9.2.10)



Further evidence of the impact of the time in the gallery can be seen in the personal meaning map produced by 'Samantha' (Figure 17) three months after her only visit to the Fitzwilliam Museum (she had never been to any art-related museum prior to the family outreach visit in November).

Figure 17: 'Samantha' Personal Meaning Map (23.2.10)



In addition, the impact of the gallery time can be seen in the thoughts that 'Jenny' associated with the museum in a questionnaire (9 February 2010) completed after multiple family outreach visits: "Art", "Exhibitions", "Interesting". It is notable that all these words seem to relate to the mother's direct experience of the museum collection. Overall then, the current framework for the museum gallery visit was viewed positively by the mothers interviewed.

Perceptions of Workshop Time

After the gallery visit, the education officer lead the mothers and children back to the studio room, where they had begun their visit with tea and biscuits.

Figure 18: Mothers' hesitance at beginning of workshop time (24.11.09)



The collection-linked craft activity was first explained by the education officer. At this early stage, there was clear non-verbal evidence of reticence and hesitance amongst the mothers, as can be seen in Figure 18 above. This reticence can also be seen in the posture of the mothers in the following image of the education officer demonstrating the craft activity.

Figure 19: Mothers displaying initial reticence at beginning of workshop time (24.11.09)



When the mothers and children commenced creating their craft objects, this initial reticence melted away and they became fully engaged in the activity with their children (see image below).

Indeed, the workshop component was consistently praised by interview participants. In the following extract, the workshop time was highlighted as a positive experience for the participant's daughter.

Interviewer Was there anything about that worked particularly well?

Jenny I think because they [the children] do like making stuff and that, it's just the sort of thing like clay and stuff, and I don't really have a lot of those kind of materials at home. But it's something for them to make. So that sort of stuff [worked particularly well]. Just general different things. Yes, it's good. [Participant turns to her child] You liked it, didn't you? Having a run around?

Interview at Community Centre after Visit - 1/12/09

The perceived value of the workshop time can be seen in the following extract as well.

Interviewer And the craft activities?

Carrie Oh, she loved it. Yes, she absolutely loved it and she made wrapping paper and beads and stapled the beads. Yes, she loved that bit. We got nice and messy, didn't we? Yes, that bit was really, really good. She enjoyed it.

Interview at Community Centre after Visit - 1/12/09

In addition to 'enjoyment', the craft activity could be viewed as a means of connecting the museum collection with the important child activity domain of 'play'. The perception of this craft time as a form of 'play' can be seen in the following extract.

Interviewer What kind of things do you think she got out of [the museum visit]?

Katie It's just playing with all that different stuff, all the creative stuff that she doesn't have at home. It's just that sort of stuff. It was nice for her to do different stuff and playing with the other kids and stuff. It's a good environment for her.

Interview at Community Centre after Visit - 1/12/09

In addition to the dimension of 'play', the extract above highlights the perceived value of the social dimension of the craft-based activity ("playing with other kids"). In addition, participants reported that the craft activity linked well to the children's broader interests. In the following extract, Sarah highlights her daughter's general interest in craft activities such as this.

Sarah She loves to learn to cut and stuff; she watches Mr Maker on CBeebies and then she tries to copy him.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum during Visit - 9/2/10

As can be seen in the interview extracts above, the workshop-based component of the outreach visit was viewed as an effective way to engage the children through an art-based form of play. It was also clear from observing the non-verbal communication that the workshop activity allowed both mother and child to engage together in the collection-linked craft.

Figure 20: Mother and child engaged in workshop activity (24.11.09)



Indeed, despite the initial framing of the workshop activity as solely focused on the children's enjoyment, it was clear that the mothers were actively involved in this process with their children.

Figure 21: Mother and child engaged in craft activity



The participants were more able to acknowledge the joint enjoyment of the workshop activity after multiple visits. For example, ‘Betty’ wrote in the personal meaning map on her post-visit questionnaire (25 February 2010) after three family outreach visits “I like doing the activities there and so does [my son]”.

Figure 22: Mother and children engaged in workshop activity (24.11.09)



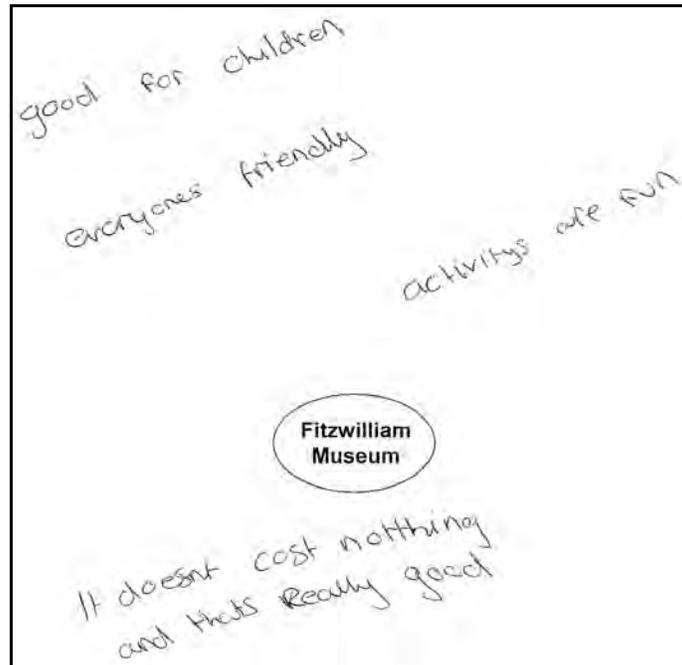
Although it was not explicitly discussed in the interviews, the opportunity to experience the new setting of the art museum together could be a positive bonding experience for mother and child. In addition, the visit also afforded the opportunity for mothers to build social capital and social skills through interaction with staff at the Fitzwilliam Museum and other mothers (see Figure below).

Figure 23: Mothers interact during workshop activity (24.11.09)



The idea that the family outreach visit offers a supportive context within which these disadvantaged mothers can develop new social contacts and interact in a new setting is supported by Betty's personal meaning map completed on the day of the 9 February 2010 visit, which reports "everyone's friendly" (see Figure below).

Figure 24: 'Betty' Personal Meaning Map



The potential benefits of enhanced gregariousness and social capital are well established, particularly for disadvantaged individuals⁵. “Social capital, in short refers to social connections and the attendant norms and trust” (Putnam, 1995, pp. 664-665). Social capital is held to impact the formation of economic and social networks within communities, integrating individuals into civil society. Halpern (2005, p. 51) suggests the importance of social networks connecting individuals “to advantaged individuals in mainstream employment”, indicating that “the paucity of [such] connections, becomes self-reinforcing at the neighbourhood level” and places individuals further out of reach of the social capital and other resources needed to achieve social inclusion and reengage in civil society.

Age appropriateness of craft activities

A number of participants indicated that their children’s age was an important variable affecting the perceived impact of the outreach visit. For example, ‘Liz’ mostly focussed on the benefits of the visits for her three-year-old son, suggesting that her 14-month-old daughter was not able to gain as much due to her age.

Liz But my little girl [enjoys the visits] as well. She’s starting to just take notice as well.

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit - 24/11/09

Jenny suggested that the outreach visit was most appropriate for children age 2 and up, as can be seen in the extract below.

Jenny I think really it’s just getting them at the right age. Probably more towards two is best. But other than that, [the family outreach visit activities are] fine.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09

Jenny further developed this point, indicating that at 18-months-old her child was less able to understand what happened at the outreach visit than the older children. As such, she felt that the upcoming visit would be more effective given that her child would now be almost two-years-old.

Interviewer And how old was she last [family outreach visit]?

Jenny God. I’d say she was probably maybe just under or just over 18 months, I think.

Interviewer And at that age, did you feel like she enjoyed it?

Jenny Yes, I think she enjoyed it. Like the last time we went, because she was rather young. I mean, she didn’t understand as much.

⁵ <http://www.dta.org.uk/resources/glossary/socialinclusion>

Some of the other kids did, but she enjoyed going. And it's just, I think, now that she's- I don't know, I guess she'll be able to understand so much more now, you know.

Interview at Community Centre Prior to Visit - 17/11/09

Very similar discourse appeared in the post-visit interview with Katie, who indicated that the age-appropriateness of the activities during the visit helped to promote a positive experience for her and her daughter.

Katie Yes, [the family outreach visit] was good. We enjoyed it a lot more this time than I thought we would. [My daughter] has grown up a lot since the last time we went. So yes, she enjoyed it. She got quite a lot out of it. So yes, it was good.

Interviewer You said 'more than you thought you would'. Did you have some concerns about-?

Katie Not really. It's just generally her attention span isn't exactly great and so I knew she wouldn't want to do too much. But what she did, I think she got more out of it than what she probably would've done.

Interview at Community Centre after Visit - 1/12/09

Thus, participants were generally positive in their comments about age-appropriateness. Nevertheless, given Jenny's comments about an optimal child age for participation, devising some kind of recommended (especially minimum) child age range for this event may be advisable.

Secondary Impacts of Family Outreach Visits

A key indicator of the perceptions of the young mothers engaged by this recurring outreach event is their interest in returning for future visits. On this point, there was universal agreement amongst those who attended an outreach visit: They all expressed strong interest in attending future outreach visits.

Interviewer Do you think you'd be interested in going the next time?

Carrie Yes, yes, I'd go again. I'd definitely go again because [my daughter] really enjoyed it.

Interview at Community Centre after Visit - 1/12/09

In addition, there was evidence of a secondary benefit of the family outreach visits bringing the mothers into a historic part of the town that they would not normally visit.

Interviewer Do you go to that part of town very much?

Carrie Not really, no. I go to the main town centre usually.

Interview at Community Centre after Visit - 1/12/09

Moreover, for a mother who used to visit the part of town near the Fitzwilliam, she did not visit the museum or other nearby cultural institutions. Thus, this visit took her into new territory.

Interviewer Do you go out to town very much?

Katie Well, I used to live over that way [unclear] so I used to go around town and that, but not really to do anything specific, to be honest.

Interview at Community Centre after Visit - 1/12/09

The interview extracts above offer some preliminary evidence of the potential secondary benefits of this outreach programme in engaging individuals with the cultural offerings in their community. Moreover, the ethnographic observations indicated other possible impacts, including self-efficacy for mother and child accomplishing the craft activity task (see Figure below).

Figure 25: Mother and child display completed masks from craft workshop time



In addition, the questionnaire data indicated the outreach visit's potential as a method of boosting the confidence of the mothers engaged. In response to a Likert scale (from 1 to 5) assessing the level of agreement with the statement 'I feel confident visiting museums like the Fitzwilliam with my child', Tina initially circled the number indicating that she 'disagreed' with this statement. In the second questionnaire completed two weeks *after* the visit, Tina indicated that she 'agreed' with the above statement – but she pencilled in the caveat "if attending something like this". That is, she would feel confident visiting museums like the Fitzwilliam if she had the support of a family outreach visit similar to the one examined in this case study. This questionnaire data is further evidence of the potential for broad impacts on the mothers' confidence, social skills and social inclusion. Indeed, O'Neill (2002, p. 35) identifies the importance of ensuring that "confidence is built up among the excluded and the included are genuinely welcoming" in order to foster inclusivity in museums. Moreover, as mentioned in the gallery time results, there may be secondary benefits from the family outreach visit in terms of child literacy through the reinforcing of the 'storytelling' speech genre.

Discussion

Having employed a mix of qualitative methods, some clear response patterns emerged in the data from this case study. This study and its results hold implications both for the practice of museum outreach and the evaluation of such activities, which are explored below.

Summary of Results

Clearly, the family outreach visits were viewed as effective from the perspective of those engaged. The very low level of prior experience with cultural institutions presented an initial barrier to these individuals' attendance at the Fitzwilliam Museum. However, this barrier was overcome for a number of disadvantaged young mothers through the opportunity to visit the museum as part of a facilitated group, with activities aimed at ensuring their children's enjoyment.

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Interviewer | Have you done anything related to art or culture or anything like that since your last visit? |
| Sarah | No. I think I'd prefer to come here as a group, and have these sort of exercises and stuff, rather than just going somewhere on my own with no one to help show me around. [...] |
| Interviewer | Have you come across anything else like this [family outreach programme] for other museums or places? |
| Sarah | No, this is the only place that does it. |

Interview at Fitzwilliam Museum on Day of Visit - 9/2/10

As exemplified in the data extract above, by and large, the mothers engaged by this outreach activity would not have felt confident enough to visit the Fitzwilliam Museum or other similar cultural institutions without this kind of supportive and child-linked event.

Within the outreach visit, both the gallery and workshop-based components of the outreach visit were valued by the mothers interviewed. Anchoring the gallery visit with a collection-linked children's story in one particular gallery was viewed as a manageable introduction to the main museum collection (see Figure below), although some of the mothers indicated they would prefer more time walking around the gallery.

Figure 26: Storytelling in Museum Gallery (24.11.09)



The use of toys and a focus on animals in the second outreach visit's gallery time was viewed as particularly effective at introducing and enhancing the children's experience of the museum collection.

Moreover, the workshop-based activities were viewed as an engaging way to bring play into the visit, thereby fully distancing the family outreach visit experience from prior negative stereotypes of stern behavioural and noise control from museum staff. Overall then, this method of engaging previously excluded young mothers was valued and viewed as effective by participants. All who attended expressed positive views about the visit and indicated they would be very interested in attending further events in this kind of facilitated group setting. What is outside of the scope of this pilot research but would be worth exploring in future research is the degree to which the outreach visits at the Fitzwilliam Museum translate into broader engagement with cultural institutions other than the

Fitzwilliam. Nevertheless, it is clear that this approach is reaching individuals who would otherwise not be engaged by the cultural sector at all.

Implications for future programme development

O'Neill (2002, p. 35) argues that “managing the context in which individuals encounter aesthetically charged objects so that individuals can have positive rather than negative experiences is the ethical responsibility of art museum curators”. However, delivering a positive experience for “first-time visitors to art museums, for whom [potentially] none of the works make sense” (O'Neill, 2002, p. 35) is not a simple or straightforward task, particularly for socially excluded young mothers with very young children. The positive outcomes achieved by the Fitzwilliam Museum outreach programme required a significant commitment of time and resources. In addition to the education officer, the activity required the support of two education assistants based in the studio and the gatekeeper who came with the group. Also, relationship building with the gatekeeper at the community centre occurred over an extended period of time and was a crucial pre-requisite for the success of this outreach activity.

Evaluating this outreach activity was likewise time and resource-intensive. To conduct qualitative data collection and analysis of this kind in a systematic and valid manner requires substantial training and experience. In this case, a social scientist was working part-time on the project over a six-month period, with support from practitioners at the museum, a professional transcription service and a second social scientist to assist in the observations and interviews on the days of the visits. To be sure, “evaluation [...], internal or external, requires commitment and energy” (Galloway & Stanley, 2004, p. 127). These resource intensive aspects of moving beyond the traditional end-of-session feedback form must be taken into account in the future design of robust systems of evaluation and feedback.

This pilot study is indicative of the kind of evidence that can be gathered through a more formal and thorough approach to evaluation. Clearly such an approach faces constraints in the wider context of the cultural sector, including under-resourcing, perceptions of data collection as an instrumental ‘chore’, assumptions that participants would view the research as intrusive, an ad hoc- rather than systematic- approach to taking on thorough evaluation activities (see Reeves, 2002, p. 34). However, with the potential for increasing interest in demonstrating value from within the arts sector (cf. Reeves, 2002, p. 34) meeting a longstanding interest in evidence from funders and others outside the cultural field, such constraints may be giving way to some extent.

Conclusion

A large-scale Europe-wide study of art museum visitors conducted forty years ago identified a number of barriers to inclusion, based primarily on class and education level (Bourdieu & Darbel, 1991/1969). Although her work is not empirical, Duncan (1995) draws on Bourdieu and Darbel’s arguments and goes even further in arguing that art museums are “engines of ideology” (p. 3) designed to serve the interests of the state, city, consumerism and patriarchy. Such negative conclusions about art museums are indicative of a persistent suspicion that

museums are bastions of exclusivity that reinforce class, gender and other distinctions. This view of art museums is described by Duncan (1995) as the 'political' theory of art museums' power to affect audiences.

This study calls into question the 'political' view that art museums are inherently exclusionary. Indeed, this research indicates that "home town museums" can be particularly important for bringing in members of "disadvantaged classes" (Bourdieu & Darbel, 1991/1969, p. 23). In this case, the link to a local play group for socially excluded mothers and their children was effective at bringing them into the Fitzwilliam Museum. Once in attendance, the family outreach visit then provided an emotionally safe and positive introduction to the museum. A key strength of the practitioner's approach throughout the family outreach visit was the successful enrolment of the mothers into taking an active role in the engagement process. In the gallery-based component, aspects of the gallery were highlighted for the children to seek out with their parents' support. In the studio an initial demonstration of the craft activity by the education officer was followed by a clear handover of lead responsibility to the mothers, with the education officer circulating to offer support and assistance as needed. Such techniques provided an empowering experience for the mothers involved. Moreover, the positive outcomes from these experiences offer preliminary evidence that the exclusionary view of museums may no longer be sustainable.

Despite the success of the present outreach case, however, museums and galleries should not develop an unrealistic view of what they can change (Newman, 2002) on their own or within a single visit. Indeed, the barriers to inclusivity should not be underestimated. Any cultural institution's contribution to a social inclusion agenda will be limited in its reach given the scope and complexity of the problem, which cuts across the domains of health, education, housing, unemployment and crime. Given this complexity, the outreach activities of cultural institutions must be conceived as part of broader efforts to foster a more inclusive society. Nevertheless, the cultural exclusion of individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds from museums and galleries is surely a component of this larger problem, which is worth addressing. As such, effective cultural engagement with otherwise excluded individuals and families has clear potential to contribute to wider initiatives aimed at combating social exclusion. Indeed, this study indicates that a focused outreach programme can overcome cultural and social barriers to museum and gallery attendance by inviting and enabling socially excluded families to try 'something different'.

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