

TALKING ABOUT ART:

The impact on family learning
of self-led interpretation activities at
Dundee Contemporary Arts

Holly Rumble



University
of Dundee

DCA

Dundee Contemporary Arts



Context: The Scottish Government's Review of Family Learning (2016)

- Children in Scotland spend approximately 85% of their waking time at home or in community settings, and 15% in school
- The parent is the child's first educator
- Intergenerational learning raises child's attainment, but also develops the parent's skills, attitude to learning, and aspirations
- Secondary benefits: increased wellbeing and improved family relationships

Context: Self-led resources

- 'Family' (as opposed to 'child') self-led resources are relatively recent
- Few studies to demonstrate impact on family learning
- Most research has been conducted in science or history museums
- Knowledge gap in contemporary art sector



Context: Relevant Studies

- Joint object handling with **joint discussion** improves long term recall

Haden, C.A., Ornstein, P.A., Eckerman, C.O., & Didow, S.M. (2001). Mother–child conversational interactions as events unfold: Linkages to subsequent remembering. *Child Development*, 72(4), 1016–1031.

- wh-questions (**where, why, what and how**) improve children's learning

Benjamin, N., Haden, C., & Wilkerson, E. (2010). Enhancing building, conversation, and learning through caregiver-child interactions in a children's museum. *Developmental Psychology*, 46(2), 502-515. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0017822>

Boland, A.M., Haden, C.A., & Ornstein, P.A. (2003). Boosting children's memory by training mothers in the use of an elaborative conversational style as an event unfolds. *Journal of Cognition and Development*, 4(1), 39–65. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S15327647JCD4,1-02>

Tare, M., French, J., Frazier, B., Diamond, J., & Evans, E.M. (2011). Explanatory parent-child conversation predominates at an evolution exhibit. *Science Education*, 95, 720-744.

Talking About Art: Observational Study



Talking About Art: Observational Study

45% visited gallery *before* Create Space

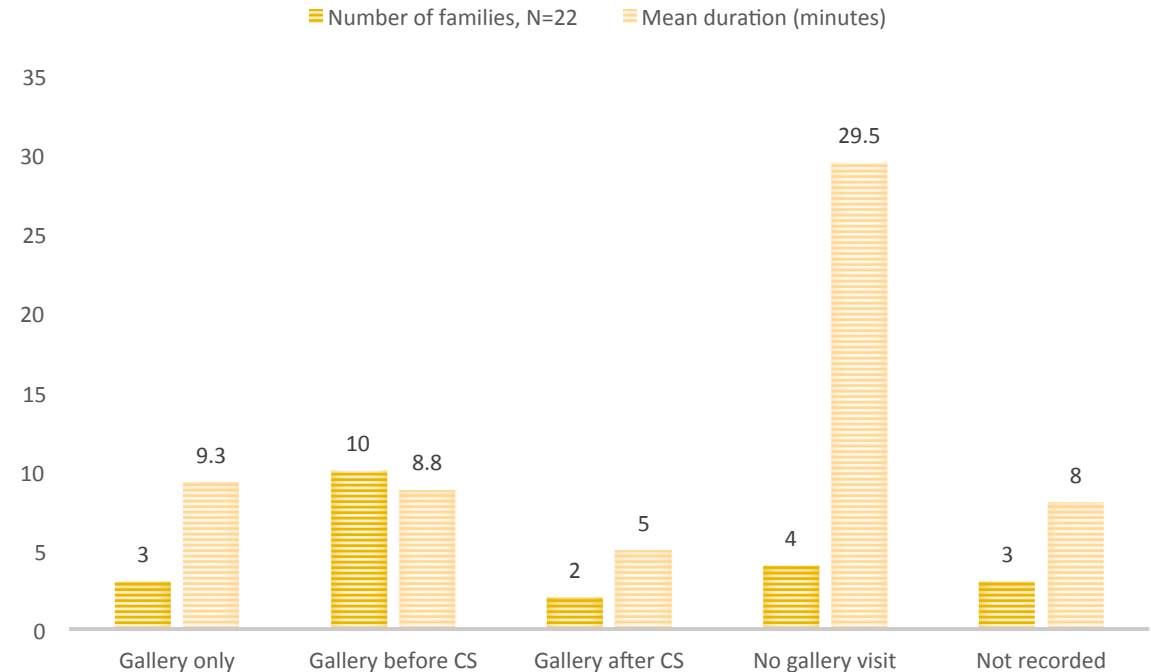
9% visited gallery *after* Create Space

18% no gallery visit (longest time in Create Space: M = 29.5 minutes)

14% gallery only

14% order not recorded

GALLERY VISITS IN RELATION TO
CREATE SPACE VISITS

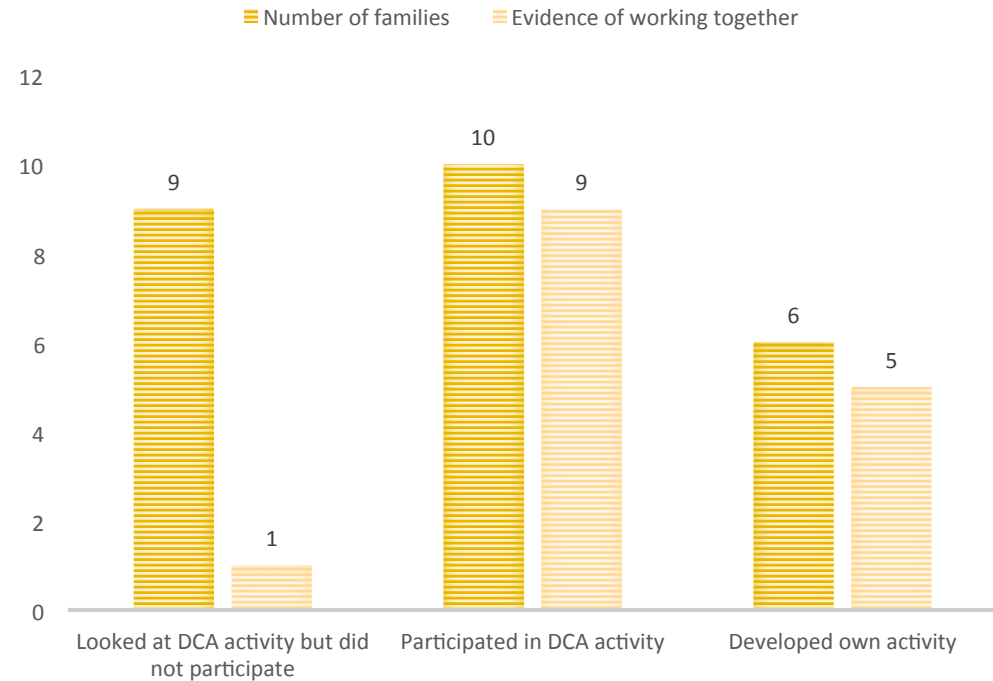


Talking About Art: Observational Study

- browsing the activities, but not participating
- active participation in DCA activities
- devising their own activities such as drawing or paper cutting
- resting or eating

Those taking part in DCA activities or their own creative activity showed evidence of **working together as a family**

PARTICIPATION IN ACTIVITIES



Talking About Art: Family Sessions

Compared effect of resource (CS or IS) type:

1. Gallery visit
2. Interview
3. Drawing task
4. Visit **Create Space** OR **Information Space**
5. Gallery visit
6. Interview
7. Drawing task



Talking About Art: Family Sessions

- “by allowing people to encounter authentic artworks in a special context that enables actual **physical exploration**, art is experienced as more arousing, positive, and interesting, it is liked more and remembered better”

Brieber, D., Nadal, M., & Leder, H. (2014). In the White Cube: Museum context enhances the valuation and memory of art. *Acta Psychologica*, 154, 36–42.



Lorna MacIntyre: Pieces of You Are Here
DCA, 2019

Talking About Art: Family Sessions

Interview:

What **colours, shapes, marks or textures** can you see?

What do you think it is **about**?

How do you think the work was **made**?

What is the **mood** of the work,
or how did it make you feel?

Influenced by:

Taylor, R. (1986). *Educating for Art*. Harlow: Longman



Talking About Art: Family Sessions

Interviews coded for:

- unique descriptive statements
- emotional responses
- working together
- family problem solving
- evidence of the specific intervention

Drawings coded for:

- unique drawn details

Goodenough, F.L. (1926). *The Measurement of Intelligence by Drawings*. Yonkers-on-Hudson, NY: World Book Company.



Talking About Art: Family Sessions

- ‘cognitive elaboration perspective’: information is better retained if the learner **elaborates** on the material

Slavin, R. E. (1996). Research on cooperative learning and achievement: What we know, what we need to know. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 21(1), 43-69. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1006/ceps.1996.0004>

- taking on the role of **listener and elaborator** in turn has been shown to be more effective in learning than listening alone

O'Donnell, A.M., & Dansereau, D.F. (1992). Scripted cooperation in student dyads: A method for analyzing and enhancing academic learning and performance. In R. Hartz-Lazarowitz & N. Miller (Eds.), *Interaction in cooperative groups: The theoretical anatomy of group learning* (pp. 120-141). London: Cambridge University Press.

Talking About Art: Family Sessions

- Verbal **evidence of intervention** was significantly higher in participants who had visited the **Information Space**

$F(1,42) = 4.93, p = 0.03$

- Instances of **family problem solving** increased significantly in participants who had visited the **Create Space** and decreased in those who had visited the Information Space

$F(1,42) = 10.20, p = 0.003$

Talking About Art: Conclusions

Creative activity encourages collaborative behaviour:

- sharing of materials
- helping with scissors
- displaying each other's drawings
- discussing activity and colours
- associative discussion



Talking About Art: Conclusions

A **conversational tool** in conjunction with **contextual information** provides an enhanced conversational experience for families



Talking About Art: Recommendations

Conversational prompts could be provided

Clearer **contextual link** between the creative activities and exhibition content by using visual examples

Retain provision for casual visitors to **enjoy shared making** and discussion in a non-didactic activity

Talking About Art: Recommendations

All galleries could evaluate permanent family resources with simple **observational methods**:

Existing staff, two hour observations over a few weeks

- Who uses each activity?
- Does it foster intergenerational dialogue?
- Do visitors also visit the gallery or is it used independently?

sites.dundee.ac.uk/artatthestart

h.rumble@dundee.ac.uk



University
of Dundee

DCA

Dundee Contemporary Arts

