

TAMU-COMMERCE

"MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF YOUTH; MAPPING SUCCESS WITH THE  
'SIX C's"

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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CRITICAL ANALYSIS  
OF  
"MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF YOUTH; MAPPING SUCCESS WITH THE 'SIX C's"  
By  
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**I. PROBLEM**

Museums and other specialized out-of-school venues have developed many programs to help enhance student learning beyond the classroom. This article reviews the impact of outside learning opportunities by comparing them to the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework which analyzes the developmental growth gain by youth from the impact of informal programs. The PYD developed a process that emphasizes the strengths gained by young learners through a framework of experiences called the Six C's. They defined them as the following assets

- Competence in social, academic, cognitive, and vocational areas.
- Confidence in ability to have value in self-worth.
- Connection in positive bonds with people and community.
- Character in respect for self, others, and morality.
- Caring and Compassion in sympathy and empathy for others.
- Contribution in ability to contribute to family, community and society.

In order to support the reasons for this research several noted researchers and organizations were listed: Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992, 2004; (Luke, Dierking, Jones, Adams, & Falk, 2002); Eccles and Gootman 2002; Association of Science and Technology Centers 2005, Wetterlund and Sayre, 2003; James Irvine Foundation's Museum Youth Initiative; Baum, Hein and Solvay, 2000; Beane, 2000; Cosmos Corporation, Inc., 2000 and others. These developmental attributes are said to offer a holistic view of youth growth that helps foster productive members of society. The independent variables were the Six C's attributes and the dependent variables were how the participants reported the impacts of their experience developmentally as it related to the Six C's.

## II. HYPOTHESIS, SAMPLE, INSTRUMENTS, DESIGN

The major significance of this research was to document whether there was a long term effect on participants in museum based informal programs over a period of time; so a series of questions were developed in a qualitative analysis format to evaluate the developmental changes that occurred because of their exposure to this added form of learning. To answer that question coding was used to make the analysis. The main purpose was to analyze to what degree the programs impacted the participants using the Six C's themes. In addition a re-coding was done by two independent researchers to compare the results that they obtained.

The survey participants were randomly selected after having their initial experiences as far back as two to ten years earlier and selected from three main age groups at the time of their experiences. For the Children Museum of Indianapolis the Y-Press reporters and editors group ages 10-17; for the Great Scientific Adventure Series ages 10-14; the National Gallery of Art High School Seminar ages 15-18; the Franklin Institute Science Museum ages 10-18 They used the data analysis format from three sources: (Luke, Dierking, Cohen, Jones, Adams, and Falk 2002), (Kessler and Luke 2005) and (Stein and Luke 2005). By the time the survey was done many of the participants were well into adulthood. The research team was attempting to analyze the long term effects of their participation in the various programs.

The researchers used a qualitative analysis design with randomized choosing of the participants to ensure that they got varied selections of participants across several types of informal field experiences. This instrument worked well because they were seeking to show to what degree these experiences impacted the participants over a long period of time after the initial experience. They were looking at lasting results rather than just their immediate initial experience and long term changes in their views from this type of exposure.

### III. DATA, METHOD, RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS,

The youth programs that they used to review participation came from a varied range of disciplines from art history, journalism, technology and science along with an age span from 10-18 years old at initial experience. The participants were given the survey from as little as one year past initial exposure to as long as ten years after initial exposure. As with any qualitative study the data collections will have some limitations that are unavoidable by nature of this type of collecting format. (Patton, 1990) That is why the researchers opted to use the two independent researchers to further analyze their findings.

The data was collected by using a set of survey questions that they could compare to the Six C's that gave the participants a voice to express their feelings about the exposure that was offered by the institutions informal programs; (Luke, Dierking, Cohen, Jones, Adams, and Falk 2002); (Kessler and Luke 2005); and (Stein and Luke 2005). They questioned them about how they felt before participation, right after participation and a long period since participation. The participants felt that the programs helped them to break down barriers and opinions about other social and ethnic groups. It also taught them an appreciation for others expressions through art and culture. They also felt an increase in social awareness and responsibility towards society. The participant's personal comments showed a true change and their opinions on cultural and social issues as they developed through the programs that they participated.

The results showed that young people were able to identify personal gains in cognitive, academic and vocational competences as well as social competences across the study. It also identified how their museum experiences helped to support their critical thinking and analytical development. The participants felt that the museum exhibits helped them to consider cultural, historical, and political context by exploring it through the art that was exhibited. They were able to make better connections to peers, family, school, and the community because of this experience. The participants felt it helped developed their character and increase their family's appreciation of their new found love of the arts. They also concluded that they could communicate about this to their families without feelings of anxiety or rejection. The families

felt more appreciation for the values of the museum by observing the changes it made in their children.

The research team's preliminary conclusions for these types of museum experiences demonstrated that they helped to foster character and an appreciation of cultural diversity across the board as emphasized by use of the Six C's model. It proved that the museum experiences effectively aligned with the PYD literature and the Six C's to help young people develop into capable, confident, and thriving adults.

In researching current literature one study by Palacios (2013) showed the effects of museum exposure on the Latino community in North Carolina. It was an extensive study that showed the obstacles that are faced by Latinos and their community's resistance to visiting museums and galleries. This can be compared to other minority groups and the pressures faced by choosing to participate in museum programs. The Palacios study recommended that these types of studies can help museum managers and informal educational professionals plan better programs that will address the constraints to participation by minority populations. Her recommendation was that there should be "more collaboration among state museums and centers of research to increase the understanding of the constructs" Palacios (2013) to better understand cultural differences. This article further supported Palacios findings by emphasizing the need for museum professionals to effectively design and develop more programs that can impact youth.

The team felt "further research was needed to fully understand the extent to which museum programs facilitate each component of the Six C's framework." Additional research supports their findings in articles by Ajzen (2002), Alexandris, Tsorbatzoudis, & Grouios (2002), Buchanan and Allen (1985) and finally two of the main researchers in the field Falk & Dierking (1992 and 1998) further supported their findings.

These types of research are very important in order to create formable changes in how museums attract visitors and how they impact those visitors over the long term. We want to create positive awareness that can develop definite changes in the level of society's sophistication and appreciation of cultural differences. Museum programs and other informal programs like this can do just that.

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