

# **Hearing Families:**

## **Using listening methodologies to nurture relationships and transform museums**

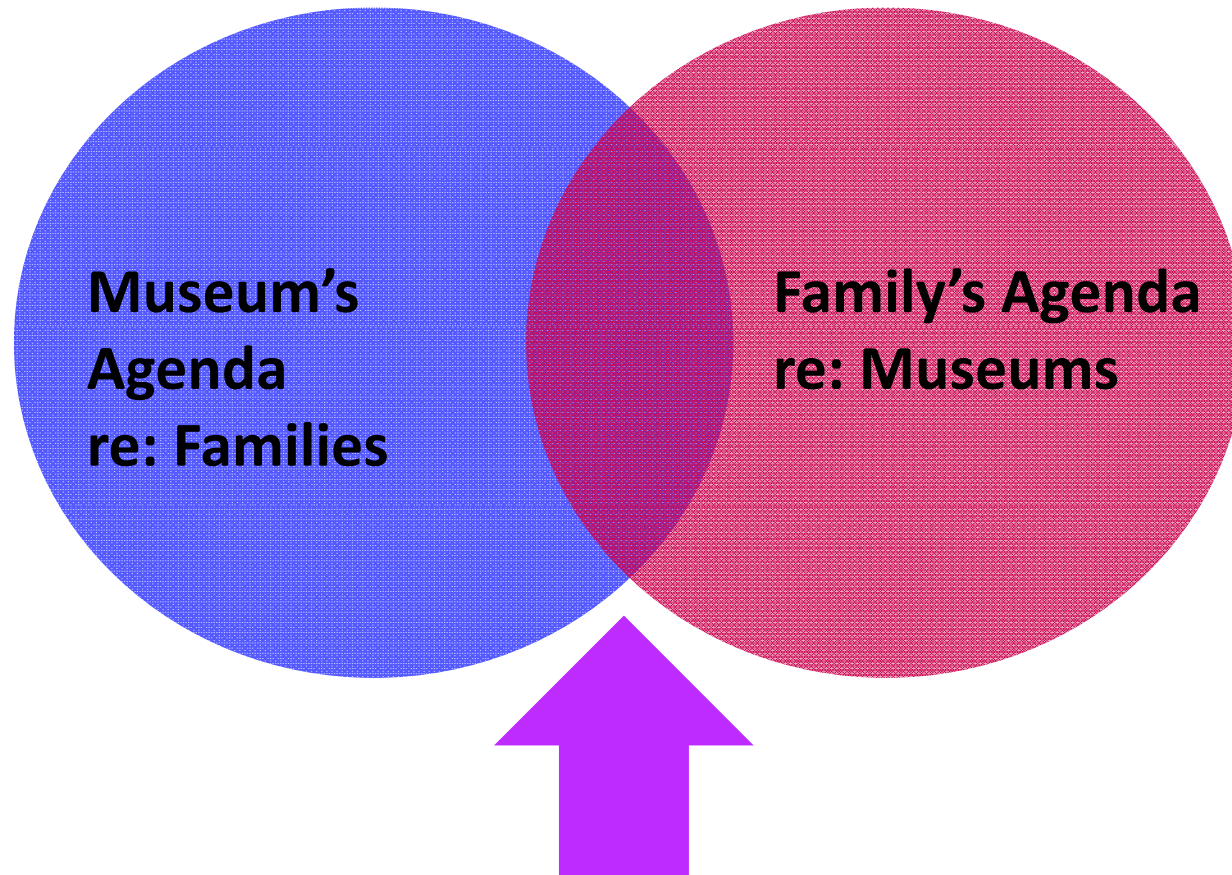
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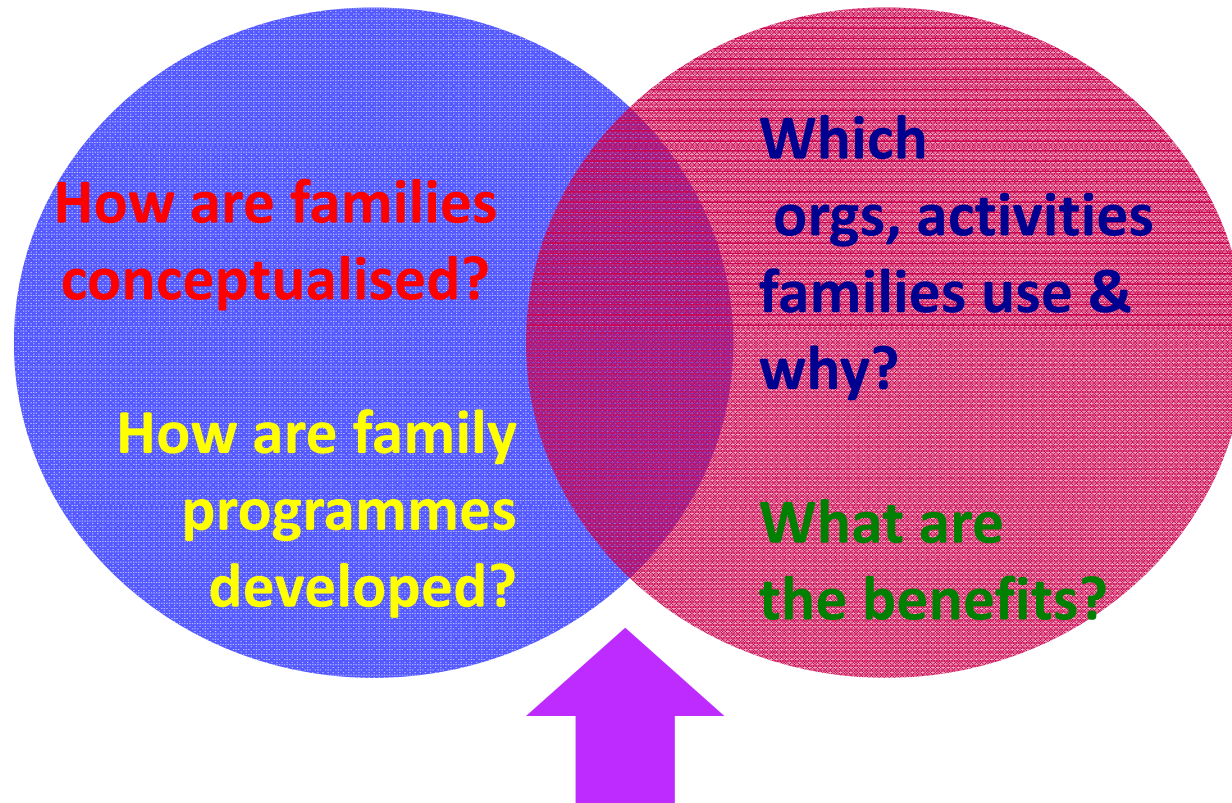
**VSG Conference, 7th March 2014**

# How to develop relationships with families?



**(Co-)design of family experiences?**

# Smithsonian Institution-family relationships



**(Co-)design of family experiences?**

# Three home school families

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



# Division of roles

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

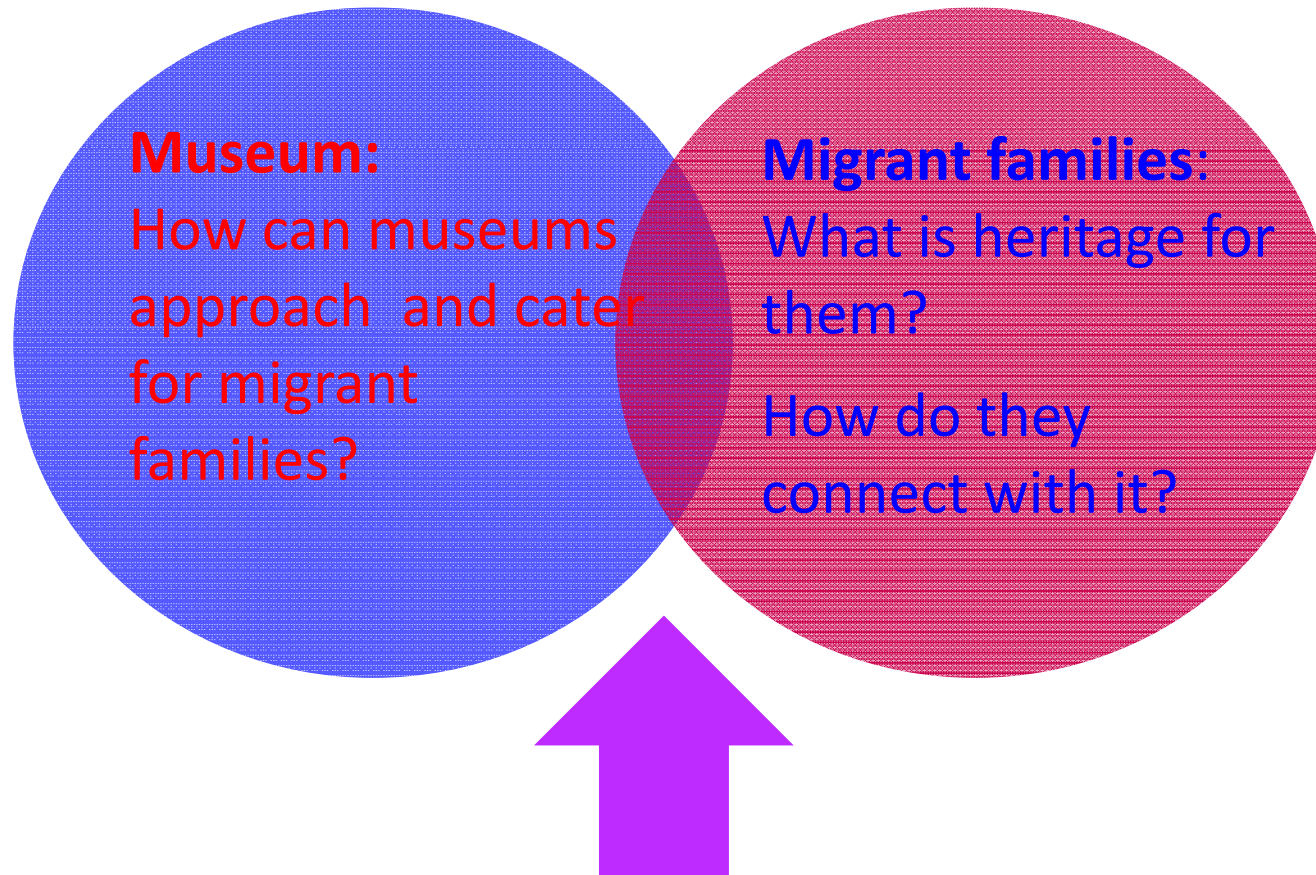
# Schedule

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

# How to develop relationships with home school families?

- Challenges notions of 'family' & approaches to 'family programmes'
- All families members play key role in each other's learning
- Knowledge of kids & environments
- Lack of subject matter knowledge & anxieties
- Different settings/experiences to meet developmental needs & new interests

# How to develop relationships with non-visiting/migrant families?



**(Co-)design of family experiences?**



# Albanian families & their heritage

- Ethnographic study
- Home setting and beyond
- 6 Albanian families
  
- History and heritage *from below* movements
- Participant observation, conversational & walking interviews, visual ethnography
- **Families as co-researchers**

# Home as a site of memory work & heritage making

- Diverse forms of heritage
  - Material culture
  - Visual culture
  - Intangible heritage



# Home as a site of memory work & heritage making

- Diverse modes of remembering
  - Autobiographical
  - Collective
  - Sensory



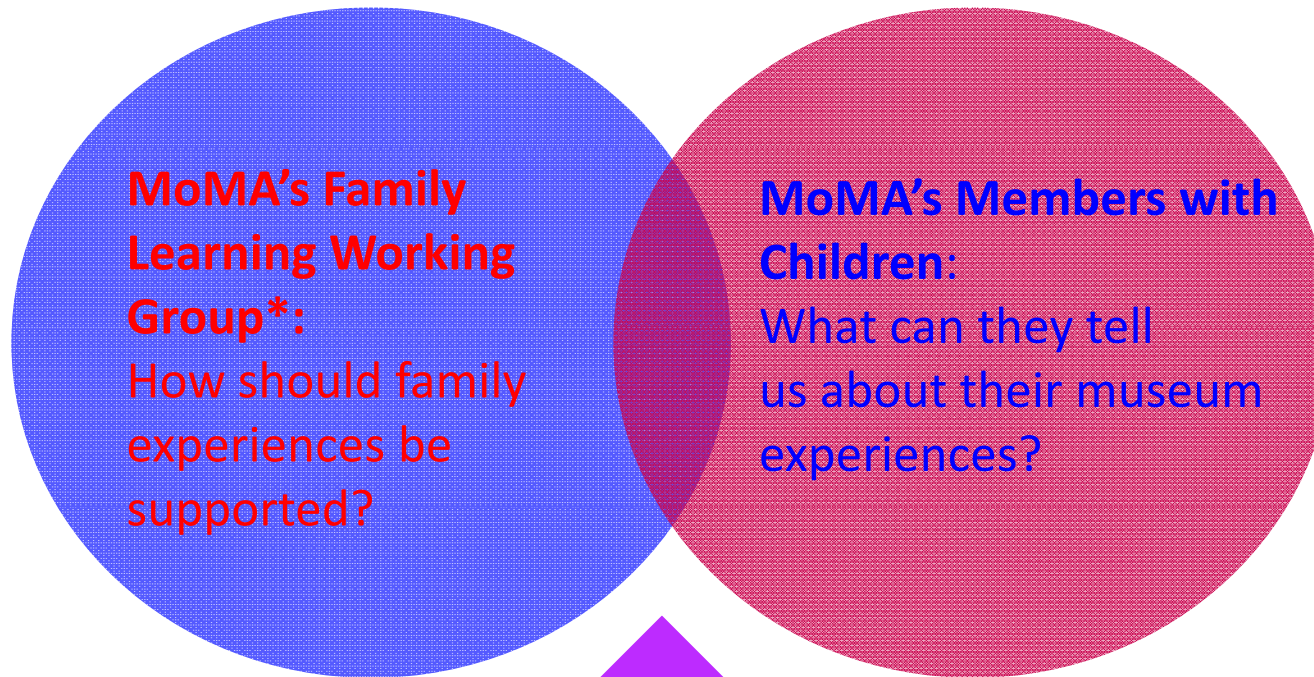
# Stages for working with migrant families

1. Starting from the families' **home & neighbourhood**
2. Listening to the families: **heterogeneity & multi-vocality**
3. Co-designing experiences with the families: **cross-cultural themes** & museum collections

## Why is it 'all about relationships?'

- The extended family relationships
- The transnational family
- Children with dual/plural identities

# How to develop relationships with families?



•Internal committee consisting of representatives from Education, Membership, Fundraising, Retail, Marketing, Communications, and Visitor Services

**(Co-)design of family experiences?**



Research question:  
**What do families with established, formal relationships  
with MoMA value about their visits?**

Survey question:  
**“How would you describe MoMA  
to friends with children?”**

- Open-ended question administered through an online survey emailed to 5,013 MoMA members with children
- 412 responses (8% response rate)
- Framework Analysis revealed *four general categories* of responses

# “How would you describe MoMA to friends with children?”

Visits are enjoyable and educational for the entire family

“A great open place where imaginations can run wild, and if you bring children you can experience the art in a totally different and uniquely insightful way.”

Programmes are high-quality but demand outpaces capacity

“The events and workshops are wonderful, the activity guides go a long way toward making the galleries accessible to and fun for kids. But it's very hard to find openings in the workshops.”

Accessible spaces for breaks and dining add to the over-all experience

“... the Cafe on 2 has been a big boost for us. The kids love it and look forward to eating there, as do the adults, and it gives them a break and a boost which results in longer stays at the museum...”

Membership makes short, frequent family visits possible

“it's a wonderful place to bring children -- and with a membership you can drop in for an hour or two and leave when the kids get restless”

# “How would you describe MoMA to friends with children?”

Statements often fell into two or more response categories, illustrating the impact of multiple departments on individual visits:

“Overall I consider the museum a great place to take kids for a variety of reasons -- a range of **art that kids can enjoy** in a museum that does not feel stuffy, **the outdoor sculpture garden is beautiful and a nice break from the indoors**, the **cafe has decent food and is kid-friendly**, the **movies for kids are a nice change** from most of the junk churned out and shown in the mainstream theaters, and a **range of kid programs.**”



# Implications for Supporting Family Visits

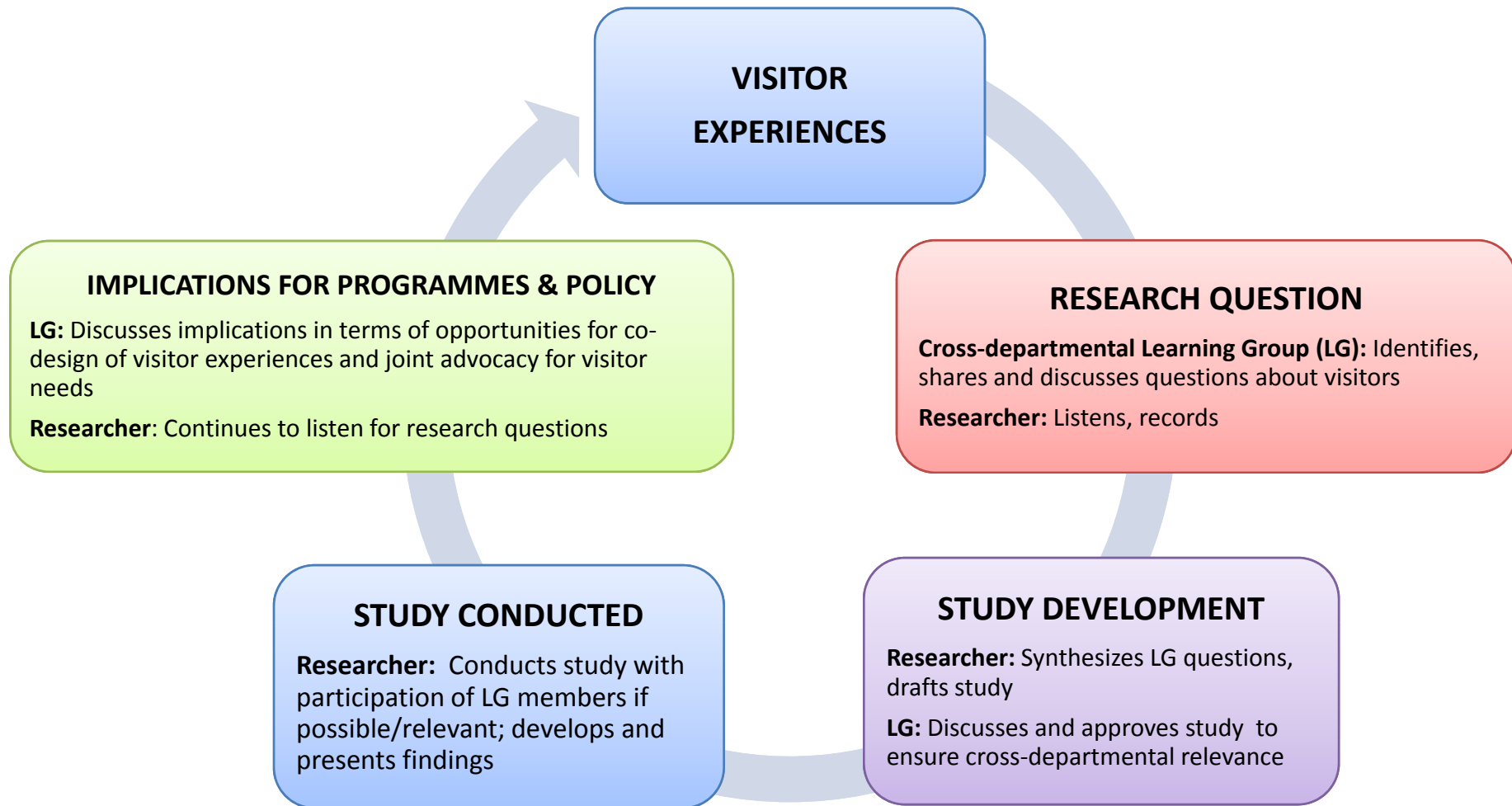
Understand and respect what families **value** about their museum experiences

- Educational, enjoyable informal experiences for all family members
- Family programmes that are easily accessible (time, space, age/developmental appropriateness)
- Sustaining visits through family-friendly dining and spaces to take breaks
- Cost-effective opportunities for shorter, more frequent visits that accommodate children's attention spans

Support family experiences **inter-departmentally**

- Programme co-design, research and advocacy on behalf of families in museums

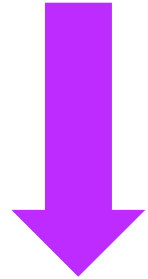
# Model for Cross-Departmental Visitor Research



# What is your Institution's/Dept's Relationship with Families?

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

We think about and plan for families specifically



# Resources

- **Home schooling**

Current estimations indicate that in the United Kingdom alone between 60,000 and 150,000 children are being homeschooled (Conroy, 2010; Kraftl, 2012).

Conroy, J. (2010). The state, parenting, and the populist energies of anxiety. *Educational Theory*, (60), 325-40.

Kraftl, P. (2012). Towards geographies of 'alternative' education: A case study of UK home schooling families. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. DOI: 10.1111/j.1475-5661.2012.00536.x

# Resources

- **Museum resources**

Smithsonian Environmental Research Center –  
Programmes for home schoolers:

[http://www.serc.si.edu/public\\_programs/  
home\\_school.aspx](http://www.serc.si.edu/public_programs/home_school.aspx)

Colonial Williamsburg home schooler experience:

[http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/plan/groups/  
homeschoolers/](http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.com/plan/groups/homeschoolers/)

# Resources

- **Evidence-based family spaces:**

MAKESHOP - Children's Museum, Pittsburgh:

Visit it at: <https://pittsburghkids.org/exhibits/makeshop>

Read about it: <http://www.hfrp.org/complementary-learning/publications-resources/makeshop-family-engagement-in-exploration-creativity-and-innovation>

MAKESHOP is a partnership between Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Center for Learning in Out of School Environments (UPCLOSE) and Carnegie Mellon University's Entertainment Technology Center (ETC)

# Resources

- **Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO):**

Families and Expanded Learning Opportunities: Working Together to Support Children's Learning [<http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/publications-series/ncsl-harvard-family-research-project-brief-series-elo-research-policy-practice/families-and-expanded-learning-opportunities-working-together-to-support-children-s-learning>]

Year-Round Learning: Continuity in Education Across Settings and Time Through Expanded Learning Opportunities [<http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/publications-series/ncsl-harvard-family-research-project-brief-series-elo-research-policy-practice/year-round-learning-continuity-in-education-across-settings-and-time-through-expanded-learning-opportunities>]

# Resources

- **Migrant Families:**

**Every object tells a story:** <http://www.everyobjecttellsastory.org.uk/>

Project by the University of Sheffield that looked at the relationship between objects in the home and the narratives of migration of families of Pakistani heritage. The stories and objects that were collected were displayed in an exhibition in Rotherham Arts Centre in March 2007.

**Transmitting Musical Heritage:** <http://musicalheritage.group.shef.ac.uk/>

Project by the University of Sheffield involving three local community music organisations (Arts on the Run, Babelsongs and Soundpost Community Network) to look at 'music made by communities' and 'community made through music'.



# Resources

- **Migrant Families:**

**Connected Communities: Language as Talisman**

<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/Research-funding/Connected-Communities/Scoping-studies-and-reviews/Documents/Language%20a%20Talisman.pdf>

Project by the University of Sheffield in partnership with the Youth Service in Rotherham to look at language in community contexts and engage families and young people in creating stories, poems, films and other linguistic forms of the theme of language in the community.

**Becoming literate in faith settings: Language and literacy learning in the lives of New Londoners** <http://www.belifs.co.uk/>

Project by Goldsmiths University London involving four faith groups (the Pentecostalist community from Ghana, the Catholic community from Poland, the Muslim community from Bangladesh and the Hindu community from South India/Sri Lanka) looking, among others, at how participation in faith literacies contributes to multilingual identities.

# Resources

- **Migrant Families:**

Gardner, K. and Mand, K., 2012. **'My Away is Here': Place, Emplacement and Mobility amongst British Bengali Children.** *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38/6, 969-986.

The paper looks at how Bangladeshi children living in East London negotiate complex translational identities and roles and are mobile not only across places but also across time. Part of this research culminated in an exhibition of children's art held at the Museum of Childhood in Spring 2009

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/sussex/7898294.stm>.

Robertson, I., 2012. ***Heritage from Below***. Surrey; Burlington: Ashgate.

The authors offer an in depth discussion of the heritage from below concept to then focus on case studies from UK, Europe, Australia and North America.

# Resources

- **Migrant Families:**

Kean, H. and Martin, P., 2013. *The Public History Reader*. London: Routledge.

Kean and Martin explore public history as an everyday practice- the idea that historical knowledge is discovered and accrued from everyday encounters people have with their environments and the continuing dialogue that the present has with the past.

Rosenzweig, R. and Thelen, D., 1998. *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life*. New York; Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press.

The authors conducted a survey with 1,500 Americans asking them how they connect with the past and how the past influences their daily lives and hopes for the future.