

Using the ‘grand tour’ approach to aid understanding of garden visiting.

Dorothy Fox, Jonathan Edwards and Keith Wilkes

Introduction

Amidst claims that the use of mixed methods research is in the ascendancy (Brannen, 2005) much has been written defining mixed methods research itself, defining the types of mixed methods research and arguing the case for or against it. However, perhaps because academic journals tend to be discipline-based and often incline towards particular research paradigms, there are few examples demonstrating how the elements of a mixed method design were selected. In this chapter it is shown how a proposed two-phase mixed methods study was subsequently adapted to four phases to meet the changing circumstances of a cultural tourism research project. In doing so, a novel approach to interviewing was required and the method selected, drawn from ethnography, is described in detail.

The study cited sought to understand participation in garden visiting from a number of perspectives but principally that of the visitor. It concentrated on what lay behind the decision to visit gardens rather than the experiential aspects of a visit. It therefore moved beyond the established approach of individual agency with its assumption of free choice to incorporate social and material agency. Initially, the project was conceived as a quantitative survey followed by qualitative interviews. This design was developed, as like many others, because the research project had more than one objective and hence more than one type of question to be answered.

An initial literature search undertaken for the study showed that the data available appeared to be limited, in that it was based on visitor surveys (for example, Gallagher, 1983 on visitors to historic gardens). This type of data provides no information on the propensity to visit a garden or about people who may wish to visit but are constrained in some way from doing so. Therefore it was decided that, on balance, a survey of residents rather than garden visitors, would provide better numeric, descriptive data. Following the completion of a pilot study, a cluster survey of residents, based on postcodes in the BH postcode area, in southern England, was carried out in November/December 2002. The sample size was 932 households, from which the adult who would next celebrate their birthday was asked to complete the questionnaire. A total of 345 were completed, giving a response rate of 37%. The survey instrument included open and closed questions and the data was analysed using SPSS. At the end of the survey instrument the residents were asked if they would be willing to take part in an interview which would provide qualitative data in a subsequent phase.

However, two amendments were subsequently made to the initial plan – adding a further quantitative and qualitative phase. First, during completion of the resident survey data analysis, a major work on visitors to gardens and their motivation was published (Connell, 2004) and it was therefore decided to add an additional

quantitative phase, in the form of a garden visitor survey, so that some of the findings of Connell and the resident survey could be assessed further.

Secondly, as can happen in any research project, the best-laid plans may not come to fruition. Responses to the resident survey had indicated that 77 people were willing at that time (2002) to take part in further research. However, by the spring of 2005 when the interviews were able to be undertaken only nine respondents were then willing to take part in a semi-structured interview and the group were homogenous in terms of their gender (mainly female), age (predominantly middle-aged) and that all shared an interest in gardening and/or garden visiting. The research was not intended to focus on any particular group of people and therefore it was believed that these interviews although valuable, would not sufficiently enrich the understanding of garden visiting, which the research project sought. Therefore, the decision was taken to add a final data collection phase to the study, by carrying out a series of short interviews with visitors to a range of horticultural attractions as potential garden visitors might be found at them. All that remained was to select an appropriate form of interview.

Interviews are often perceived as the research method of choice within tourism (Jennings, 2005). However, as Jennings makes clear, not all interviews are the same. Not only do they use different *methods* to obtain information, but also, because they have different philosophical backgrounds, they may be part of different *methodologies*. Three main types of interview are widely discussed in the tourism and social science literature - structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews¹ (for example, Finn *et al.*, 2000 and Bryman, 2008). The structured or standardised interview is normally viewed as a quantitative method and the others as qualitative methods. In considering the type of interviews to be undertaken in the study cited here, there was concern that researcher familiarity with the context from the earlier phases could unduly influence and hence limit the questions asked if a semi-structured format was used and therefore an unstructured interview would be advantageous. However, even within this grouping there are many variations, with Jennings (2005) describing 13 different forms.

Generally, unstructured interviews rely on verbal accounts of social realities in which control by the interviewer is minimal; the interviewee leads the interview with their thoughts. The interviewer has an idea about themes or issues but these are used as a guide. There is no set order of questions although the interviewer may return the interviewee to the topic if they diverge from it.

The advantages of an unstructured interview approach, according to Jennings (2001), are the 'richness' of the description gained about a social world and the 'depth' of the data afforded by the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. The disadvantages include the inability to extrapolate from the data to the wider population and that they are more time consuming than other interview types (Jennings, 2001). For positivist critics, there can be concerns over reliability and viability, but non-positivists argue that criteria, such as trustworthiness are more appropriate in assessing whether qualitative research is well carried out.

¹ Similarly, 'standardized, semistandardized and unstandardized interviews' (for example, Berg, 2007).

Such interviews are a fundamental method in ethnography, together with participant observation and the sourcing of statistical and other records, photographs and artefacts. Ethnography is widely seen as a means of understanding a way of life from the native point of view. The study reported here, as already stated, sought the garden visitor's perspective and so drawing on the strengths of ethnography would be appropriate.

Jennings (2001) summarises the principles of ethnography as:

- A focus on understanding and interpretation
- A focus on process or negotiation of meanings
- Research undertaken in natural settings
- Social phenomena studied within the social context in which they occur, in order that a holistic perspective is gained
- Emic and etic perspectives jointly utilised
- The identification of multiple realities/perspectives
- The use of multiple methods that include participant observation and interviewing
- Non-judgemental positioning

(Jennings, 2001, pp. 160)

Spradley describes ethnography as 'the work of describing a culture' (Spradley, 1979, pp. 3) and he refers to culture as 'the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behaviour' (Spradley, 1979, pp. 5). He argues that a concentration on shared knowledge does not eliminate an interest in customs, behaviour and artefacts but that it highlights the importance of the *meaning* (his emphasis) of these phenomena. In complex societies, even within the same cultural groups there are cultural scenes, such as different professions, hobbies and neighbourhoods and any individual is likely to have the shared knowledge of several cultural scenes and can therefore act as an informant for any of them. Gardens open to visitors are clearly a cultural scene in this respect and therefore anyone who has visited or indeed, thought about visiting could be an informant about some aspect of participation.

Spradley's developmental research sequence

Spradley (1979) argues that the best way of learning to do ethnography is by actually doing it and he proposes a 12-step process to achieve such understanding by undertaking 'ethnographic interviews'. His developmental research sequence is not described fully here, as the purpose of this chapter is not to describe ethnographic research, but to show how the first four steps of his interviewing technique can be adopted for other types of research study. Despite several references to this technique, its use does not appear to have been described in detail or critiqued in any study.

The first four steps listed by Spradley are:

1. Locating an informant
2. Interviewing an informant
3. Making an ethnographic record
4. Asking descriptive questions

The remaining steps that are not considered here are:

5. Analysing ethnographic interviews

6. Making a domain analysis
7. Asking structural questions
8. Making a taxonomic analysis
9. Asking contrast questions
10. Making a componential analysis
11. Discovering cultural themes
12. Writing an ethnography

1. Locating an informant

He identifies five minimal requirements for selecting a good informant:

1. The informant is thoroughly familiar with their culture. For example interviewing a novice traveller will work well if you want to understand the experience of learning to be a tourist, but not if the subject of your study is tourism in general. A good informant is so familiar with their culture that they do things without thinking; it has become automatic from years of practice.
2. Informants must have direct and *current* experience of the cultural scene.
3. For inexperienced ethnographers especially, informants from an unfamiliar cultural scene can make things that are run-of-the-mill to the informant stand out to the ethnographer.
4. The informant has sufficient time to be interviewed.
5. The informant has not already 'analysed' their culture in a particular way. Spradley gives an example from his study of tramps in which a college-educated tramp used his social science background in responding to questions, defining the men on 'skid row' in standard socio-demographic characteristics, such as race and marital status, rather than in the language of 'skid row'.

2. Interviewing an informant

There are numerous speech events in different cultures, for example a job interview, sales pitch, friendly conversation or as discussed here, an ethnographic interview. Speech events have different cultural rules relating to how they start, finish, and the interaction in between. These differences enable one speech event to be distinguished from another, but there are also similarities. Spradley suggests that ethnographic interviews are a 'series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants' (Spradley, 1979, pp. 58). He describes three important ethnographic elements – explicit purpose, ethnographic explanations and ethnographic questions.

Ethnographic interviews, he states, tend to be more formal than friendly conversations because the interviews have a definite purpose and direction. Therefore the ethnographer gradually takes more control of the speech event, directing it in ways that will lead to an understanding of the informant's cultural knowledge. Ethnographic explanations must be given to the informant. These will include general statements about what the project is about, whether it is being recorded etc. Finally there are the ethnographic questions.

3. Making an ethnographic record

An ethnographic record consists of field notes, tape recordings and artefacts amongst others. Spradley (1979) stresses the importance of learning the language of a culture, not only as a means of communication, but also because language creates and expresses cultural reality. He emphasises the importance of a verbatim record of what is said, otherwise the interviewer, without realising it, will summarise and restate what the informants says. He gives the following example from his research:

(a) Informant's actual statement: *I made the bucket in Seattle one time for pooling: I asked a guy how much he was holding on a jug and he turned out to be a ragpicker and he pinched me*'.

(b) Field notes entry: *I talked to Joe about his experience of being arrested on skid row when he wasn't drunk* (Spradley, 1979, pp. 73).

Spradley acknowledges that whilst at the time his condensed notes seemed adequate, he came to realise that they lost some of the most important clues to the informant's culture and language. He therefore suggests that the most effective means of making a verbatim recode of an interview is to use a tape recorder, although he recognises their disadvantages of inhibiting informants and preventing a rapport to develop.

4. Asking descriptive questions

Developing rapport with informants is one of two complementary processes – the other is eliciting information. Spradley argues that an effective means of framing a question is to ask descriptive questions. As an ethnographer almost always knows who an informant is, they will also know the cultural scene with which they are familiar. Therefore, one could always ask a tourist, 'what do you do on holiday? Could you describe a typical day?' Spradley then describes five major types of descriptive questions and several subtypes, which could be used to encourage an informant to talk about a particular cultural scene. The aim is to persuade the informant to talk extensively in their native language.

Grand Tour Questions

Spradley begins by describing his own experience, one familiar to many ethnographers on starting a study of a cultural scene:

I arrived at the alcoholism treatment centre and the director asked, "Would you like a grand tour of the place?" As we walked from building to building, he named the places and objects we saw, introduced me to people, and explained the activities in progress. I could not ask tramps to give me a grand tour of the Seattle City Jail, so I simply I asked a grand tour question: "Could you describe the inside of the jail for me?" In both situations I easily collected a large sample of native terms about these cultural scenes (Spradley, 1979, pp. 86).

Grand tour questions about a location are relatively easy for informants and can be extended beyond spatial aspects, to temporal and sequential aspects. They can also be about events, people, activities or objects and as Spradley (1979, pp. 87) notes can

‘encourage informants to ramble on and on’, producing a verbal description of significant features of their cultural scene.

He describes four types of grand tour question:

1. **Typical grand tour questions:** the ethnographer asks the informant to generalise about a cultural scene. This encourages a description of how things usually are. For example, ‘Could you describe a *typical* visit to a museum?’
2. **Specific grand tour questions:** These questions seek information about the most recent or best-known event, location, activity etc. Spradley notes that some informants can find it difficult to generalise about a typical aspect, but can easily describe something that happened recently. An example question would be ‘Could you tell me about the last time you visited a museum?’
3. **Guided grand tour questions:** This form asks the informant to give an actual ‘grand tour’ – for example, ‘Could you show me around the museum?’
4. **Task-related grand tour questions:** As the name suggests this is a request to the informant to undertake a simple task that could aid the ethnographic description. Using the same example, a visitor to a museum could be asked to sketch a map of the exhibits they have studied.

Mini-Tour questions

Spradley suggests that the responses to these grand tour questions ‘offer almost unlimited opportunities for investigating smaller aspects of experience’ (Spradley, 1979, pp. 88). These smaller units of experience can be described by asking mini-tour questions, which use the same approaches as the four above, but which focus on a smaller aspect. An example, of a task-related mini-tour question would be to ask a visitor to a museum to demonstrate using an interactive exhibit.

Example questions

Example questions are still more specific. The informant above for example, could be asked to show what happens if they take a particular action with the exhibit. In Spradley’s experience, this can lead to the most interesting stories that an ethnographer can learn.

Experience questions

This final type of questions are best used after numerous grand tour and mini-tour questions have been asked as informants can find them difficult to answer. They seek to identify unusual or atypical events rather than the more routine ones. For example, ‘Could you tell me about some experiences you have had visiting a museum?’

Native-Language questions

Native-Language questions are designed to encourage the informant to use the terms and phrases common to a cultural scene and remind the informant that the ethnographer wants to learn their language. The first type, a direct-language question, would be for example, ‘How would you refer to it?’ or ‘Is that the way most people would say it?’ These questions are particularly important, if there is familiarity

between the informant and the ethnographer with each other's culture. A hypothetical-interaction question places the informant in an imaginary setting and asks them to describe what kinds of things might be said. The third type of native-language question is one in which the ethnographer asks the informant for typical sentences that contain a particular word or phrase.

This section has reviewed the types of descriptive questions advocated by Spradley for an ethnographic interview. It has demonstrated that they can be first, personal questions, such as, 'Can you describe a typical visit to a museum' in which the informant presents their own point of view. Secondly, the questions can be phrased culturally, for example, 'Can you describe a typical visit of most people to a museum?' This enables an informant to talk about patterns of behaviour in a cultural scene, including perhaps aspects that they have not experienced personally.

Spradley goes on to discuss the remaining eight steps for undertaking an ethnographic study, including asking different types of ethnographic question, the analysis and the writing up of the ethnography, but this chapter is concerned with how Spradley's interviewing techniques can be adopted in a non-ethnographic study and will therefore demonstrate this with a case study using a mixed method approach.

Case Study: Using the 'grand tour' approach to aid understanding of garden visiting.

Introduction

In considering the type of interviews to be undertaken in the final phase of the research, the breadth and multiplicity of the experience of visitors prior to a trip to a garden was required so the responses of many participants would be needed. This eliminated the option of long interviews with a small number of participants. Additionally, it was recognised that a visit to a garden is a social experience - Connell (2004) found only 14% of respondents visited alone and Gallagher (1983) recorded 9%. Therefore, a better understanding of the dynamics of decision-making within a pair or group of visitors could be obtained by interviewing the social unit together, whether they were family or friends.

Gardens afford opportunities to talk – only 4% of respondents in the resident survey said they did not like to talk to anybody when in a garden. Therefore the casual conversation form of interviewing described by Daengbuppha *et al.* (2006) could be effective. However, their interest was the visitor experience and interaction with heritage sites, whilst this research was more concerned with what had happened prior to the visit as much as the experiential aspects of the garden visit. Accordingly, some means of initiating the interview in such a way as to initially direct the participants' thoughts backwards in time, but which would then allow for an openness of direction was required and Spradley's method of asking descriptive questions, and in particular the 'specific grand tour question' seemed an appropriate vehicle.

The resident survey had also shown that a quarter of respondents had indicated that they liked to talk to other visitors and so it seemed likely that they would be willing to

talk to an interviewer. Other recommendations made by Spradley would also be met; for example, a visit to a garden is usually a leisurely pursuit without the fixed start and finishing times of some other cultural attractions, so visitors would probably have time to talk. In addition, by the very act of visiting a garden or other horticultural attraction, the participants would be informants having direct and *current* experience of the cultural scene. The resident survey also showed that as many respondents re-visited a garden or visited different gardens repeatedly it was likely that many participants would also be very familiar with the cultural scene.

A final requirement was that the data obtained from the interviews would need not only to complement the other phases of the research, but also be capable of integration with the existing data sets. However, the data consisted of many different types of response. For example, respondents to the surveys drew ticks, crosses or forward slash in boxes, or circles around numbers, to indicate agreement with a researcher provided response. They wrote in words, numbers or symbols in response to open questions and some wrote unprompted additional information about a response at the side of the questionnaire. Participants in the interviews replied not only to questions from the researcher but also spoke in response to questions or comments from their companions and some made an unprompted comment, having answered a question but then redirected the conversation.

The challenge of the research was therefore how to consider these very different forms of data. Furthermore, the research sought to generate understanding from the data but there was also awareness that if, as argued within the study, behaviour such as garden visiting reflects social influences, so it must be acknowledged, would the responses in the data. Therefore it was decided to consider all the forms of responses from both surveys and interviews as part of a participant's explanatory repertoire. Linguistic repertoires are '*a set of descriptive and referential terms which portray beliefs, actions and events in a specific way*' (Wooffitt, 1993, pp. 292). Similarly they are defined as '*clusters of terms, descriptions and figures of speech*' by Sarantakos (2005, pp. 310).

Potter and Wetherell (1987) were concerned with the way language is used to give an account of behaviour and introduced the notion of 'interpretative repertoires'. They defined a repertoire as '*constituted through a limited range of terms used in particular stylistic and grammatical constructions*' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, pp. 149), and interpretative repertoires as '*recurrently used systems of terms used for characterizing and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena*' (ibid.). Repertoires are not conceptualised by them as intrinsically linked to social groups nor does an individual draw on the same repertoire in different situations.

Hermes (1995) uses 'interpretative repertoires' to understand how women's magazines become meaningful in everyday life. She suggests that:

Repertoires are the cultural resources that speakers fall back on and refer to. Which repertoires are used depends on the cultural capital of an individual reader (Hermes, 1995, pp. 8).

Furthermore, the participants' explanations were accepted at face value, they were *their* explanations. Therefore, although they did not *explain* garden visiting *per se*, they did contribute to an understanding of the phenomena.

Data collection

When it became apparent that there might be difficulties in obtaining a suitable sample of volunteers from the resident survey, a pilot scheme of 19 short individual or group interviews, based on Spradley's developmental research sequence approach, was carried out at Compton Acres, a privately owned garden overlooking Poole Harbour in southern England. The 'specific grand tour question' '*What made you come to Compton Acres today?*' was used to start the interviews, further questions as suggested by Spradley followed, to encourage participants to expand on their initial response.

Thereafter further sets of interviews using the same technique were carried out at five other attractions, selected purposefully to be representative of the horticultural attractions sector. The first was in West Sussex - Wakehurst Place, described as Kew's garden in the country, is owned by the National Trust but administered by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. The remaining sites were all in Dorset – they were a mature cottage garden, opened under the auspices of the National Gardens Scheme (a charitable organisation); the Bournemouth Pleasure Gardens, publicly owned gardens, located in the town centre; Stewarts Gardenlands, the first 'Garden Centre' in the United Kingdom, and a Craft and Garden Show, a relatively small, professionally run show.

Additionally interviews were carried out with members of a Dorset allotment association, either on the day before or during a coach trip to Wakehurst Place, as part of that set of interviews. In each location the sample was chosen purposively, but with an element of randomness to be as inclusive as possible. At Compton Acres, the Craft and Garden Show, Stewarts Gardenlands and Wakehurst Place the interviewer remained at one location and approached the next group passing upon the completion of each interview. At the cottage garden, at the allotment association plots and on the coach trip, the interviewer selected a particular area and then interviewed every individual or group in that area. In the Bournemouth Pleasure Gardens both techniques were used, the first in the Lower Gardens (because too many people pass by at one time to randomly select a group) and the second in the Central Gardens (because far fewer people walk by).

All the interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and recordings were then transcribed. The process was iterative, with one set of interviews being transcribed and coded before the next set was carried out, so that the findings that emerged could be incorporated in subsequent mini-tour questions if an opportunity arose. The visitor interviews were analysed collectively with the data from the nine resident interviews.

Examples of questions and responses

Following the 'specific grand tour question', '*what made you come to Compton Acres (or Wakehurst Place etc.) today?*' a typical response and subsequent question was:

Interviewee: *I've been before but we're holidaying with friends and they've never been before so I brought them to have a look.*

Interviewer: *Was there anything special about the garden that you wanted them to see?* (specific mini-tour question)

Interviewee: *Uh, just everything really.*

Another interview beginning in the same way, but lasting longer progressed as follows:

Interviewee: *Um, visiting friends in Verwood, and uh, they had heard about the gardens and wanted to come and investigate.*

Later:

Interviewer: *And when you visit gardens, why do you like to go?* (experience question)

Interviewee: *Oh, it's very much a very peaceful pastime looking at gardens and great for ideas for your own garden, although it might be small, you can still scale down, what you see to fit your own garden.*

Interviewer: *Have you ever copied an idea, have you actually done it?* (example question)

Interviewee: *Yes,*

Interviewer: *Can you tell me...*

Interviewee: *Um, we've gone for, um, living in Cornwall, we get quite a lot of good mild weather and we've gone for more um, more oriental sort of looking things, we've got a fern tree, ah that's obviously going to the Eden Project, on our door step...generally sort of just picking up on those sort of things and making things more interesting, Acers and things and very much getting into scaling down what you see in the garden.*

Analysis of the interview data

The initial consideration regarding the data analysis was the type of analysis to be adopted. Sarantakos (2005) states that qualitative analysis:

...aims to transform and interpret qualitative data in a rigorous and scholarly manner...Beyond this there is simply no consensus as to how qualitative analysis should proceed, or what makes an acceptable analysis (Sarantakos, 2005, pp. 344).

Seale (2004) suggests that there are five main forms of qualitative analysis; conversation, discourse, semiotic, grounded theory and qualitative thematic analysis. Conversation and discourse analysis (Rapley, 2004 and Potter and Wetherell, 1987, respectively) are more concerned with the way in which the data is expressed, rather than its content. A semiotic analysis is concerned with uncovering the processes of

meaning production and how signs are designed to have an effect upon the perceivers of those signs (Bryman, 2008). Qualitative thematic analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Seale, 2004) and a form of grounded theory analysis (Glaser, 1978) therefore informed the analysis in this research.

Secondly, there was the practical issue of whether or not to conduct the analysis with the aid of computer software and if so, which programme to use. The principal arguments for using software packages are that they can add rigour by making analysis more systematic and transparent (Kelle, 1995). In contrast, concerns are concentrated on the possibility that a researcher can become alienated or distanced from the data by the technology (Weitzman, 2000). As the interviews were carried out, transcribed and coded by one researcher, the possibility of alienation was reduced compared to analysis carried out by different people. Therefore, Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) was used, and having considered the merits and availability of the packages available, NVivo (2) was chosen.

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe three components of analysis, which they argue are simultaneous - data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. These stages were undertaken using the NVivo software as an analytic tool. The first of several stages carried out was section coding, by which NVivo 'autocodes' sections of the text under a particular heading. The references of speakers were used as headings to enable the identification of everything which each person said, as opposed to the document, which contained the interviewer's and other companions' speech as well. Additionally everything which an interviewee said about that particular visit was coded 'this visit' to distinguish it from other visits to horticultural attractions. Both these actions facilitated searching at a later date.

Punch (2005) suggests that there is a wide range of possibilities when assigning codes to data:

At one end of the continuum, we can have prespecified codes or more general coding frameworks. At the other end, we can start coding with no prespecified codes, and let the data suggest initial codes....Nor...does it need to be an either-or decision. Thus, even when guided by an initial coding scheme, we can be alert to other labels and categories suggested by the data (Punch, 2005, pp. 200).

In this research pre-specified codes were derived from the findings of the quantitative phases. But as the qualitative phases were designed to elaborate and inform the data derived from the quantitative findings, the latter form of coding described by Punch (2005), in which additional categories are subsequently created, was employed. In NVivo, coded segments of text are copied to a node and any text can be coded as many times as the analyst requires.

Memos were created and linked to a node (using a DocLink in NVivo). Glaser defines a memo as '*...the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding*' (Glaser, 1978, pp. 83). Memos were created of the analyst's reflections on the related literature, difficulties in understanding the interviewee's meaning, patterns which were emerging and also contradictions etc. Memos were also made regarding the analyst's thoughts on the node contents. This

occurred either sporadically (as referred to by Glaser) or systematically. On completion of the coding of the first set of transcripts (those from Compton Acres) and after completion of each subsequent transcript, one or two nodes were reviewed in order through the tree hierarchy. Each segment of text coded at a node was assessed as to whether all the segments were consistent and whether the label given to the node accurately reflected its contents. If not, other notes were then added and the data was re-coded to the new node. NVivo allows for the easy merging, movement, relabelling and recoding of nodes, so as the memos developed (all entries were dated) various changes were made to the nodes.

Data display includes the organisation and concentration of the data and the NVivo software offers several means of doing this – in this study the nodes were constructed and displayed in a tree hierarchy. Concurrently with the data reduction and display, tentative conclusions were drawn. These were then tested using the information directly from the nodes, or by using the search facility in NVivo. The actions, of creating an initial coding framework, the development of further codes, reflection on the contents of the nodes recorded in the memos and constantly referring either back to the literature already reviewed or on occasion by seeking out new sources, were therefore iterative.

A summary of responses to the ‘grand tour’ question

The participants’ explanatory repertoires revealed individual processes as well as other phenomenon or structures which afford garden visiting and highlighted the importance of the natural and the social in addition to individual agency in deciding to visit a garden. One source of data which provided this information was the responses to the ‘grand tour’ question – *‘What made you come to ... today?’* This question was not only the opening question to all participants in the visitor interviews but was also included as an open question in the visitor survey which had been undertaken at Compton Acres too.

The written answers in the visitor questionnaire were always brief and many included two explanations, for example, *‘enjoyed previous visit + lunch’* and *‘like gardens, easy to reach from Bournemouth’*, (the nearby coastal resort). The oral responses were longer and again often included more than one explanation. All the written and oral explanations could be assigned to one of eight categories (examples taken from the visitor survey are in Table 1).

Table 1 The explanatory categories given in response to the ‘grand tour’ question (visitor survey)

Explanatory category	Example quote
Individual agency	<i>To study the gardens</i>
Re-visiting	<i>Been here before many years ago</i>
Social agency	<i>My friend suggested it</i>
Personal description	<i>We love gardening and visiting gardens</i>
Weather	<i>Sunny day</i>
Locality	<i>Local to where I’m staying</i>
Occasion	<i>Mother’s birthday trip</i>
Indeterminate	<i>Obviously a mistake</i>

The analysis of these initial responses and the answers given to the subsequent 'Spradley' descriptive questions, together with the findings of the other data sets enabled an in-depth understanding of participation in garden visiting to emerge. Detailed findings regarding the influence of first, the weather and secondly, family and friends are reported in Fox and Edwards (2008) and the findings in full are given in Fox (2007). However, the findings relating to one of the explanatory categories, an 'occasion', are detailed here, by way of example.

Occasions

The participants' explanations of their visit often referred to a temporal element. Time was either seen as 'ordinary', in which case they spoke in terms of its availability or it was considered as 'special' in some way - an occasion. Having the time to visit was an influence which many participants mentioned:

Interviewee: *...we've been going to visit this garden for ages and never got round to it. So today, we said right, we're going to drop everything and go! So we did and came here* [woman at the cottage garden].

Some participants spoke more specifically about how they had the time to visit gardens or about how the opening times of gardens limited their visiting, those which open as event attractions are particularly restricting. The cottage garden had opened for one week in April and then again in August 2005 when the interviews were carried out. Some of the visitors revealed why they were there that day:

Interviewee: *But this one we saw advertised, well in the 'yellow' book, [a guide book] saw earlier in the year and then I said oh we've missed that one, so it'll have to be later in the year.*

Interviewer: *Oh, because it was open in April, wasn't it?*

2nd interviewee: *... We missed that, so we figured...*

Interviewee: *We must do it now, we must do it this week.*

The natural environment also has its own 'calendar':

Interviewee: *We normally come Easter time, so of course it's nice now. I mean we usually come when the rhododendrons are out... We went down to Mottisfont Abbey, gorgeous roses. It's just the right time of the year* [woman at Wakehurst Place].

Therefore a different type of 'special event' arises when a visit to a permanently open garden is made at a particular time. However, some participants discussed attraction-visiting practices which amount to routine visiting. For example, one retired couple revealed how if it is a Thursday they will often visit a garden. For other participants, a socially mediated occasion can prompt a visit, as demonstrated here:

Interviewer: *What made you suggest Compton Acres today?*

Interviewee: *Today, Father's Day.*

Interviewer: *... do you usually go out on Father's Day or special days out?*

Interviewee: *Yep, all the time* [woman].

Participants also mentioned that Mother's Day, birthdays and anniversaries could prompt visits. However, some interviews carried out at the garden centre on the spring bank holiday Monday gave the impression that bank holidays seem to afford time rather than the affective elements of the personal occasions:

Interviewer: *And what made you come today rather than...*

Interviewee: *Bank holiday really. We're both off work [woman at Stewarts Gardenlands].*

Conclusion

Spradley (1979) developed a strategy for undertaking interviews, which included a form of questioning – descriptive questions – as part of his approach to ethnographic research. In this chapter it has been shown how using descriptive questions can be incorporated into a mixed method for aiding understanding of visitors to gardens. Replicating this form of unstructured interviewing suited not only the objectives of the research but also the context. Particularly, it allowed for limited researcher-bias and was very flexible. Additionally, it not only enabled interaction between participants but also, facilitated children and teenagers to contribute to the research, with the approval and in the company of their parents. However, as noted above, it is a time-consuming method particularly as there can be periods of conversation that whilst not directly relevant to the study, are necessary in developing rapport. As in any research method there are ethical and quality issues which need to be considered, but which have not been discussed here due to space limitations. Nonetheless, the study quoted offers practical and useful guidance for similar explorations of cultural attractions.

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