

A study of grandparents and grandchildren as visitors to museums and art galleries in the UK

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Abstract

This paper discusses one aspect of a major research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council of family group visitors to museums and galleries in the UK. Grandparents visiting with their grandchildren are a little understood phenomenon in terms of visitor research and this paper aims to address that balance. The research project focuses on three art galleries and museums in the UK where 44 sets of grandparents were interviewed during the initial stages of the research. Findings have shown a number of interesting facets, some of which are presented in this paper. Grandparents are motivated to visit the museum with their grandchildren in the main because they are seeking an entertaining visit, a day out that is also educational and linked to school projects. They are likely to be the children's primary carers as parents are out to work and the destination might not link with their own interests but those of the parents. They have social roles to play in their grandchildren's lives. They often seek activity or workshops in the museum/art gallery that will be of benefit for their grandchildren and encourage them to explore the activities provided. These and other aspects are discussed within the paper. We conclude by suggesting how the findings can be used to inform more sophisticated approaches to 'family friendly' initiatives in museums and art galleries.

Key words: museum visitors, children, grandparents.

Introduction

This paper discusses the findings of a sub-set of data on grandparent and grandchildren visitor groups, drawn from a larger two year AHRC research project 'Exploring family visitors to art galleries and museums in the UK', now nearing completion. There is a paucity of research on family-group visitors to museums and galleries and least is known about grandparents and grandchildren as visitors. This paper aims to shed some light on the latter. From previous research undertaken by the team into family group visitors we knew that curatorial and managerial assumptions about the nature of family group visitors are not always accurate, because baseline data in relation to the social composition of family visitor groups audiences are scarce (Pfrommer 2002). There is a received and widely held misunderstanding of what constitutes a visiting 'family' and indeed the definition of a family in contemporary society has proved to be both multi-faceted and complex.

Phase one of our larger research project, which has now been completed, has yielded a range of findings on family groups in general. We investigated family visitors to three major museums and galleries in the UK over a period of one year. The data from this research are currently accessible via the *visAvis* website at Salford University. A significant finding was that families fell into six clearly identifiable family groups, one of which was grandparents visiting with their grandchildren. It is the characteristics of this group and the findings of our research that are discussed in this paper. The rationale for our chosen research methods is provided, the case study sites are identified and demographic data on grandparent and grandchildren groups are provided. The discussion moves on to a consideration of the motivation for and, experience of, visits to museums and art galleries by grandparents and grandchildren. The

paper concludes by suggesting how the findings can be used to inform more sophisticated approaches to 'family friendly' initiatives in museums and art galleries. Finally, we also suggest that more research into this fascinating and little understood visitor group would be beneficial to the sector.

In January 2002, in the UK, MORI reported an overall increase in people attending art galleries and museums with children. In particular, it was reported that there was a large increase in attendance amongst the 45 to 54 age group, and a significant increase amongst people aged between 55 and 64; both groups included grandparents (MORI 2002). A similar percentage was confirmed in our wider sample of 165 family group visitors as we found that between 21% and 33% (44 in total) of family group visitors in the sample were grandparents aged between 51 and 64, and visiting with their grandchildren (Sterry 2004, Sterry and Beaumont 2005).

Grandparents as a whole are an under researched group (Attias-Donfut and Segalen 2002) although there are some useful studies (Diamond 1986, McManus 1994, Cox *et al.* 2000). Three age categories of grandparents are identified by Diamond, the 'young old' (baby boomers who may be free-spirited, affluent and unconventional), the 'growing old' (aged 60-74, with values influenced by post-war austerity), and the 'old old' (for whom the contemporary world represents a threat) (Diamond 2003). This paper focuses on the first of these groups, the 'young old', who are in the first stages of grandparenthood and who are visiting art galleries with their grandchildren.

From the sample of 165 family group visitors that we interviewed at our three case-study sites, there were between 21-32% grandparent/grandchildren groups aged between 51 and 64, (the 'young-old' group). We identified other family groups with grandparents, including three generational groups and grandparents over 65. However, for this particular study, we focused on younger grandparents between 51 and 64, visiting with their grandchildren as it is within this group that we expect to find significant changes.

We found the most common grandparent and grandchild visitor group was a grandmother with one or two grandchildren, with 52% (23) of our grandparent and grandchildren groups fitting this category. The second largest category of grandparent groups was grandmother and grandfather couples, with one or two grandchildren 36% (16). Grandfather and grandchild groups were the smallest category-13% (6). The largest category of children in the sample were aged between 11 and 16 years (46%), the second largest category was children aged between 11 and 16 (31%) and the rest were children under five years (23%).

Research has shown that grandparents participate in a wide range of activities with their grandchildren including day trips, and that grandchildren and grandparents play important social roles in each other's lives, sharing activities through which grandparents may also serve as mentors for their grandchildren (Mueller and Elder 2003). However, in traditional art gallery research, very little focus is placed on the quality of visitor experiences (Worts 2002). By using a traditional approach to visitor studies, art galleries have tended to find out more about the demographics of their visitors in general but less about the experiences of regular, local visitors, especially those who are very young and more elderly. Visitor studies have provided evidence of the need for outcome-based approaches (Falk and Dierking 2000), but much of what has been done in this regard has been quite narrowly focused on distinct educational activities that are prescribed by the art gallery (Worts 2002).

Typical art gallery evaluations assess the effectiveness of educational programmes, but the data from evaluation studies does not provide information about the less structured visits of the majority of the public in the galleries (Downs 1995). Visiting art galleries is a more widespread phenomenon than it is sometimes thought to be. Moreover, many museums attract a core audience of local people, including grandparents and grandchildren. This has important implications for the type of research that needs to be carried out, because audience research has not shed much light on how best to understand the cultural needs of local communities (Worts 2002). Increasingly, within museums, audience research is shifting towards qualitative research, regarding socio-cultural theory, with an emphasis on in-depth investigation into visitor's talk, as most suitable for research into ways in which conversations in museums elaborate, enrich and extend the visitor's experience (Leinhardt, Crowley and Knutson 2002). Such innovative research studies have used a wide variety of methods to gather data, including

discourse analysis (Borun *et al.* 1998), and video and audio recording (Gutwill-Wise 2003, Vom Lehn *et al.* 2002). Looking at museums and art galleries from the outside in, sociologists increasingly are using flexible ethnographic methods to investigate museum visiting as one of a number of aspect of everyday life (Fyfe and Ross 1996, Longhurst, Bagnall and Savage 2004).

The wider political context of our research is, of course, the UK government's encouragement of a research agenda in museums and galleries. The current government considers that they are 'central to networks of knowledge, engaging with people locally, nationally and internationally... support learning and skills, community identity and cohesion and the economy and open up worlds of creativity and new experience for all' (Morris 2003). Over the past decade, as a result of the government's 'Renaissance in the Regions' initiative and investment by the Heritage Lottery Fund, there has been the beginning of a transformation in museums and galleries throughout Britain (Saumarez-Smith 2005), and a profusion of projects in the regions, which have been generated by local initiatives. Thus, for example, galleries such as our case study sites, Manchester Art Gallery, Sheffield Millennium Gallery and New Art Gallery Walsall, have become places for experimenting with new techniques for knowledge dissemination that will, it is hoped, breach social boundaries (Nacher 1997). Overall, such galleries are recognized for their 'inclusive policy, good facilities and responsive curatorship' (Cox 1998), engaging the local population, though 'many practitioners would argue that museums have been playing an active part in promoting social inclusion for a considerable time' (Lawley 2003).

In 2002 the Museums Association published the first edition of its Code of Ethics explicitly referring to the many forms of interaction between museums and society, and to a 'relationship which is mediated through actions and attitudes at individual and institutional level' (Museums Association 2002). The Museums Association's aim was 'to develop new audiences and deepen the relationship with existing users, demonstrating an institutional response to government pressure to acknowledge that museums exist to serve the public and that they are funded because of their 'positive social, cultural, educational and economic impact' (Museums Association 2002). Likewise, the Local Government Act of 1993 created a new climate of accountability to the audience that has led to curatorial staff in some art galleries adopting 'family friendly' strategies in order to broaden their appeal.

Family Group Research Project

The case study sites

The three galleries in which we conducted the Family Group Research Project were chosen from amongst a number of prestigious new museums and art galleries which have recently been built or substantially refurbished in the UK and which form part of a strategic policy across Britain for regional transformation. Regarded as an inexpensive way of kick-starting run-down inner city areas (Schubert 2000), these local and regional art galleries are of international quality and scope, and have focused attention on hitherto marginal locations with a wave of new architecture for the arts. The case-study sites were:

- *New Art Gallery, Walsall*

Walsall New Art Gallery was built in a European Regional Development fund priority area in a town not particularly well known nationally, except for its tradition of leather and lock and key manufacture. When The New Art Gallery, was opened in 2000 it was widely seen as a model National Lottery funded project in the UK because it answered a need not only to house the permanent collection, but also to provide a boost for a town suffering industrial decline. They commissioned innovative architecture for an ambitious project.

- *Manchester Art Gallery*

Manchester has historically been the industrial hub of the north of England. Manchester Art Gallery, in common with a number of other prestigious regional museums and galleries in the UK, received Heritage Lottery grants to refurbish

several galleries in response to pressing environmental and audience needs. In 2002 Manchester Art Gallery reopened after four years of building work. The competition for the redesign of the grade 1 listed site was held in 1994, and won by Michael Hopkins and Partners, best known previously for Portcullis House in Westminster. The development included purpose built education facilities, improved visitor facilities and a dedicated Children's Gallery.

- *Sheffield Millennium Galleries*

Sheffield located in South Yorkshire, is renowned for cutlery and silver plate, and the Millennium Gallery in the city centre is a new build. The architects, Pringle Richards Sharrett, designed a cluster of civic buildings including the art gallery and the Winter Gardens that reintegrate a series of previously dislocated city streets and squares (Glancy 2001). The Millennium Gallery building consists of a glass and steel covered avenue, from which the galleries project. The Metalwork Gallery is one of the most popular exhibitions in the gallery, and is easily accessible from the Winter Gardens.

The Sample

The aim of our wider research project has been to investigate the characteristics of family group visitors to art galleries and museums, and analyse family visitor motivation, experience, and behaviour. In each case study site, the sampling frame was *any multi-generational social group of up to 5-6 people, with children, that comes as a unit to the museum*. This definition was modified from that of Hein (2001), in that it includes 'children'. The three case-study sites were chosen because they are amongst a number of museum/galleries that represent an important pattern of recent development of art galleries in the UK. They have generated interest amongst museum professionals, students and the public partly because they have included dedicated children's spaces in their buildings, and because they are committed to attracting family audiences.

From the wider sample of 165 family group visitors interviewed, (using the above definition), we found that 44 family visitor groups in the sample were grandparents aged between 51 and 64, visiting with their grandchildren and as already explained these became the focus for research data detailed in this paper. The data are derived from an in-depth exit questionnaire which was administered in the galleries during the summer and half term school holidays of 2005 and which was conducted at various times. The questionnaire schedule was based on the needs of the project, its aims and objectives and those of the management team at each of the case study sites.

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews offer opportunities to collect a great deal of data on a respondent's perceptions, values, vocabulary and personal experience. In the field of visitor studies, in-depth interviews have been adapted from the methodology used by developmental psychologists in clinical settings (Hein 2001). The knowledge gained by the appropriate use of this research instrument can shed light on how people think, especially in informal educational settings.

This type of interview is also appropriate for use with family group visitors, and is the one that has been used in the current study. Because the subject of investigation is the family, an interview method needed to be developed that takes account of the multi-generational nature of the family group which may well include young children. The requirements of families with young children in relation to providing data for the current study are:

- Swiftness of completion
- Supervision of children whilst adults answer questions
- Appropriateness of questions for children

Behavioural conventions often constrain the type of study carried out amongst inter-generational

groups in art galleries (Cox *et al.* 2000) and interactive exhibits are often the focus of study (Cox 2000; Henderson and Watts 2000). These types of study usually rely on relatively small numbers of respondents and are often evaluations of exhibits or curatorial strategies intended to generate ideas, insights and new perspectives (Ryan 1995). Although meaningful, they do not shed light on the behaviour of family groups in art galleries except in interactive galleries. Visitors have expectations of their experiences that are based on previous experience, word-of-mouth reports, television and radio, newspaper and magazine articles, but research has revealed very little about how visitors integrate new information into their existing beliefs and knowledge (Soren *et al.* 1995). However, visitors go to art galleries for a number of important purposes and experiences and these constitute the beginning of a taxonomy which includes social interaction, reminiscence, fantasy, personal involvement and restoration (Roberts 1999).

The questionnaire for this first stage of our study was broadly divided into four sections dealing with demographic information, motivation for visiting, experience of the visit, and expectation. Teaching and inspiring children is often cited as a reason for families visiting art galleries and museums (Getty 1991, Borun *et al.* 1998, Falk and Dierking 2000), and we wanted to test this assumption. Using in-depth interviews, we asked 'what was your main reason for visiting the art gallery today', and what did you expect to do whilst you were here'. Previous research (Cox 2001, Falk 1991) suggests that children are often the instigators of art gallery and museum visits, especially if they have been to them on a previous occasion. We asked a whole range of questions including how family visitors knew about the gallery, if they had used the gallery website to pre-inform their visit, whether they had been before, their expectations, whether a child or an adult had initiated the visit, what they had done during their visit, and how long they stayed.

Findings

Distance travelled to the art gallery and motivation for visiting

We found that almost all grandparent and grandchildren visitors are local people. 51% of grandparent groups travelled less than four miles to visit the art gallery, and 96% travelled less than eight miles. The study found that grandparents have specific reasons for visiting, often because 'the children want to come' but also because there are exhibits or particular objects on display that relate to their working life and which they want their grandchildren to understand. For example, in the Metalwork Gallery in Sheffield, grandparents often referred to their working experience: 'We like the metalwork gallery, I used to work in the cutlery industry in Sheffield'. In addition, grandparents encouraged their grandchildren to investigate further: 'the children learned about this in school, they like the metalwork gallery'.

There was also a sense of pride and satisfaction in visiting a building that they and their grandchildren watched being built, for example, in Walsall, one grandfather said 'I work in town and saw it being built'. In Sheffield, media coverage of the Millennium Galleries and Winter Garden was extensive, and Sheffield people followed its progress; 'We are local, we know about the opening of the gallery'. At Manchester Art Gallery, there was also a sense of continuity, as one grandmother said, 'I used to come as a child', now she was bringing her granddaughter. Unlike other family types, particularly mother and child groups, grandchild and grandparent groups rarely combine visits with other activities such as shopping; grandparents in our study did not engage in such workaday practicalities, observing 'We will look round the rest of Manchester, but not the shops'. Instead they are having a 'day out' visiting more than one museum, going to the park or 'just enjoying the day'.

Particularly in Sheffield, where traditional industry and employment is in decline, grandparents were creating links with the past, and the findings suggest that they have a close relationship with the past because it is under threat; 'We tell them the life we had. When I went to school I wore clogs. Such a thing is unthinkable today. I see the children staring wide eyed. So we look at pictures and I tell them things that relate to the picture. Those things appeal to them because they're so different from their daily life'. We found that motivations for grandparents visiting art galleries with their grandchildren, especially in Manchester, with its renowned collection of Pre-Raphaelite paintings, include a desire to communicate their own

enthusiasm for what is on display; 'we came to show the children a little bit of culture'. There is also a desire to experience and to share their grandchildren's enjoyment; 'I like it because the children like it'.

Experience of the visit

Grandparents and grandchildren in this study enjoyed the social setting, conversations took place between grandparents and grandchildren, and grandparents took pleasure in imparting knowledge through story telling (Goulding 1999), stimulated by the presence of familiar objects which provided the catalyst for more intergenerational discussion: 'I was born in Sheffield and grew up there, the visit took me back to my roots. Both my grandparents worked in the steel industry, as did many other members of my family. It was wonderful to see the silver produced there over its history'. Both grandchildren and grandparents were intrigued by the contrast between contemporary and earlier manufacturing processes 'the most impressive was the modern punch bowl and the old historical silver table, how amazing to see the intricacy of the manufactured goods'.

Grandparents in the current study were involved in family, work and community, and crucially, they were very involved in the everyday care of their grandchildren whilst the children's parents were at work; 'She likes drawing, and she's interested in art. We've come to let her see some of the old paintings. Her mum works full time and doesn't have time to bring her'. But despite their being at work, we found that mothers often have a say in what grandparents and grandchildren do; 'their mother looked up the Interactive Children's Gallery in Manchester, a few weeks ago. She's given me a list of activities for each day of the holidays'. Our findings suggest that one motive for grandparent visits can be altruism: 'I don't really like art but I will come for the grandchildren and do what they want'. Moreover, grandparents may be carrying out the wishes of their own children: 'I brought the grandchildren because their mother wanted them to come'. Also grandchildren, rather than grandparents themselves, on occasions initiated the visit, having visited previously, generally with their school.

Clearly, grandchildren and grandparents play important social roles in each other's lives in which they share activities and through which grandparents may also serve as mentors for their grandchildren (Mueller and Elder 2003). We found that grandmothers with one grandchild aged 11 to 16 spent more time in the galleries than any other type of family visitor, mainly because their main reason for visiting was to see a particular exhibit. For example, Manchester Art Gallery was closed in 1998 for a £25 million expansion, and reopened in 2002, so a common reason for visiting was to see the restoration and refurbishments; 'we wanted to see how the Pre-Raphaelites were hung', 'we haven't been since it was renovated, we came to see the Pre-Raphaelites, Augustus John and the Chariot Race'. One grandmother and her granddaughter were surprised, when we asked how long they had been in the gallery, to find they had spent almost four hours there. The grandmother had been as a child, and altogether she and her various grandchildren had visited 15 times. She said 'we look at the paintings; we read what the paintings are trying to tell us, we like old paintings'.

We found that grandparents and grandchildren who had visited previously were likely to be visiting with the intention of seeing a specific exhibit and this finding accords with previous research (Merriman 1991) which suggests that keen, frequent visitors to art galleries are likely to be motivated to visit because of a specific interest.

The behaviour of grandparents and grandchildren

From the interviews and our observations, grandchildren were seen to be eager to show grandparents what they know and generally speaking, what the children knew about the exhibition has been learned previously, on a school trip to the gallery. This finding accords with evidence from an earlier study conducted at the old Walsall Art Gallery which showed that 'children on their second or third visit were noted to be more confident in using the exhibition, often acting as a guide to an adult 'novice' (Cox 1998). Very occasionally in our study, children were seen to adopt teaching roles and strategies in front of the art works and this was most likely when the children had visited previously with school.

Evidence from previous research into family groups (Hein 2001) has shown that children need more than one visit in order to become oriented to an art gallery and that apparently random activity is revealed, on closer examination purposeful; evidence to be purposeful; evidence from the current study suggests that if grandparents and grandchildren have made a previous visit, then their progress around the gallery can be predicted. From our observations, we found that grandparents took a shorter route around the gallery than their grandchildren, and that they frequently paid attention to their grandchildren, rather than to the exhibits. However, if grandchildren drew attention to an exhibit, then grandparents did pay attention to what had been indicated by the child.

The effect of physical space on grandparent and grandchildren visits

In her essay on reassessing exhibition space, Greenberg (1996) suggested that discussions about the meaning of exhibit often overlook the importance of the location and type of architectural space in which they are held. In our study, we found that although few grandparent groups visit in order specifically to look at the buildings and their architecture, they were affected by the space in which they viewed the exhibits. All three galleries represent a type of building for the arts which is associated with commercial and industrial architecture both in scale and use of materials. For example, although the original art gallery in Manchester dates from the 1820s, the new wing is constructed of glass and steel. Sheffield Millennium Gallery and New Art Gallery, Walsall are new buildings, and at all three of these case study sites, the exhibition spaces reflect current art gallery practice of eliminating most or all seating for the visitor. Our observations suggest that there is a deliberate curatorial policy in large, clear, exhibition spaces to exclude seating in order to show off uncluttered floor space and soaring white walls. Within these spaces, there are few opportunities afforded by seating which is conducive to the prolonged gaze. Where seating was installed it was not always focused on the exhibits themselves, but on the catalogues and other reading material, confirming earlier research which suggests that art galleries are increasingly creating separate reading areas within exhibition spaces (Lord Cultural 1994). We frequently observed grandparents looking around for somewhere to sit, especially if the grandchildren were absorbed in an exhibit or an activity. They might end up perching on the edge of an exhibit, sharing a seat with a child, or leaning on a wall.

Two of the main reasons that grandparents and grandchildren visited art galleries in our study were for enjoyment and learning, but, as Greenberg (1996) has suggested, lack of comfortable seating makes looking at exhibits more like work than a leisurely aesthetic experience. More detailed research into the absence of seating in exhibitions would be useful in relation to grandparent groups and other groups that include older and younger visitors, because standing to look at exhibits and read text panels is physically demanding and may be too demanding and unattractive for such family groups.

Discussion

Just as there is not a single definition of family, there is not a single type of grandparent, but a diverse range including 'companionate grandparents' whose relationship with grandchildren is characterized by closeness, affection and play, 'remote grandparents' who are geographically distant and 'involved grandparents' who assume parental roles such as disciplining their grandchildren (Gelles 1995). Factors that influence intergenerational contact include geographic distance, age of grandparents and grandchildren, gender, marital status and employment status of grandparents, relations with their children and the quality and number of relationships between grandparents and grandchildren (Aldous 1995, Uhlenberg and Hammill, 1998). Moussouri (1997) includes a summary of grandparent studies in her research into family agendas and family learning in interactive museums, suggesting that grandparents take great pleasure in their relationships with their grandchildren.

High proportion of grandparent groups

The findings of this study have important implications for the future development of audiences

for art galleries and museums. The number of those aged over 50 is forecast to grow by 1.4 million to 16.3 million or 27% of the UK population by 2005 (Jenner and Smith 1997). Grandparents are heavily involved in the lives of their grandchildren as carers, they are wealthier, healthier, more active, physically mobile, and technologically literate than were previous generations (National Opinion Poll, 2003) and are living long enough to make a sustained contribution to their.. The literature on retirement and identity shows that on the one hand the loss of an economic role characterizes the image of old age and suggests that the loss of a critical role such as that of worker, exacerbates the subject's sense of aging (George *et al.* 1980). On the other hand, some studies suggest the relationship is not so clear, rather and that retirement acts indirectly to increase age identity by reducing community involvement (Logan, Ward and Spitze 1992).

People who enjoy being a grandparent are likely to feel younger and will hope to live longer, and being active with younger family members provides a positive source for their self image and view of their life (Erikson, Erikson and Kivnik 1994). Furthermore, being involved with grandchildren provides grandparents with additional reasons to live and to look forward to the future and future events. Such research suggests that stereotypical descriptions of grandparents are to be challenged (Szinovacz 1998). Certainly we found that grandparents in our study defy stereotypes of old age (Attias-Dofnut and Segalen 2002); the grandparents we interviewed were typically in their prime, in good health and often still active in the labour force.

Being local

For grandparents and grandchildren, proximity matters, as evidence shows that grandparents living more than ten miles away from their grandchildren are far less likely to report any type of involvement compared to those who lived closer. Even a short distance limits the amount of involvement a grandparent has with grandchildren (Mueller and Elder 2003). We found that grandparents and grandchildren visitors live in and around Manchester, Sheffield and Walsall, and our evidence is borne out by recently published research showing that over half of all visitors to regional galleries are local residents (Probert 2003). A museum or gallery's ability to attract certain demographic groups is a function both of its programming choices, which make it more attractive to certain demographic groups than to others, and of the demographic groups that actually live near enough to make access possible (Davidson Schuster 1991). However, we found that grandparents who lived further away were also keen to visit with their grandchildren; 'we live in Spain ten months of the year, we come back to see the family and we bring the grandchildren to the gallery'.

New and renovated museums and art galleries in provincial towns and cities in the UK are regarded as nationally important, but despite the high profile of all three case study galleries, grandparent and grandchildren in our study were not national or international tourists. On the contrary, they are people who live within easy travelling distance of the museum and our evidence would suggest that these visits play a key role in transmitting a sense of belonging and an awareness of the wider family social and historical networks to their grandchildren. Grandparents who are involved in their grandchildren's lives are likely to live closer to their grandchildren than less involved grandparents, they are also younger grandparents and tend to be related from the maternal side. Furthermore, grandparents who are significant in a grandchild's life are likely to be embedded in strongly connected family systems, with close and high quality relationships both between and amongst the generations. Our findings suggest that grandparents and grandchildren are local, visit regularly, are knowledgeable about the galleries and their collections, and have specific exhibits in mind when they decide to visit.

Keeping it real: history versus nostalgia in grandparent and grandchildren visits

New art galleries are the setting for recreational experiences and are obliged to situate themselves within the larger context of leisure attractions. Art gallery visiting takes place during leisure time, draws upon discretionary income and occurs with an attendant expectation of a pleasurable experience. These are the same conditions which describe the contexts of other forms of recreation and amusement (Stephen, 2002).

Csikszentimihalyi, in *The Art of Seeing* (1990), uses the term 'flow' to describe the way in which a work of art becomes intrinsically interesting to a viewer. This state, he suggests, occurs when activities have clear goals and appropriate rules, when the challenges of the activity are in balance with the individual's abilities and clear and unambiguous feedback is provided. In an art gallery setting, Smith and Wolf (1996) found that frequent visitors, especially local visitors, have the luxury of focusing their attention on particular exhibits, but that infrequent visitors feel the need to see everything and spend less time in any particular area. We found that grandparents were frequent visitors, and that grandparents with their grandchildren were engaged and interested in their grandchildren's ideas. Whilst there was an integral nostalgic element to the experience of finding artefacts they could relate to, there was little to hint at the 'rose tinted remembrance' commonly associated with nostalgia (Goulding 1999).

Hein (2001) has shown the need for learners to associate new knowledge with what is already known, and have argued that prior knowledge is a major factor in mediating the new experience. If prior knowledge is at odds with the present material learners will distort the present material, learning something opposed to the exhibits intention, no matter how well information is presented (Roschelle 1995). We found that grandchildren and grandparents who had expert knowledge spent longer in the galleries than other family types, and these grandparents were able to guide their grandchildren through the exhibits; for example in the Metalwork Gallery; 'I was an engineer in Sheffield, and I brought them to see how the assey office works'. This finding appears to bear out earlier research showing that visitors coming specifically to see an exhibition spent on average one third more time in that exhibition than those who came for other reasons (Doering and Pekarik 1999).

Social capital

Social capital can be described as the 'active connections among people and the shared values and behaviours that bind members of networks and communities' (Cohen and Prusak 2001) and it operates through psychological and biological processes (Putnam 2001). Grandparents commented specifically that they could help with their grandchildren's schoolwork; 'the children learned about this in school, they like the Metalwork Gallery'. The term 'social capital' to describe sympathy and social interaction was first used in 1916; more recently, notable contributors have included Bourdieu (1983) in relation to social theory and Coleman (1988) on education, referring to the institutions, relationships and norms that shape the quality of social life. Evidence from the current study suggests that grandparents are playing a key role in their grandchildren's education and cultural enrichment. We found that although parents play a critical role in facilitating relationships between children and grandparents, grandparents and grandchildren often act independently of parents in developing meaningful relationships with each other in the context of the art gallery visit.

Behaviour

Activity that involves showing, pointing or pulling someone across to an exhibit is often described as 'teaching behaviour' (Diamond 1986), and is regarded as a fundamental aspect of the spontaneous social interactions of the family group, carried out by all members of the family group (McManus 1994). Unlike McManus, Hilke (1989) found that there was a striking equality between children and adults in affecting the course of the family's visit and adults did not engage in formal teaching behaviours. She found that adults rarely offered lengthy interpretations of the exhibits and rarely constrained children's behaviour. Rather they allowed children to choose their own routes around the exhibits (Hilke 1989). Evidence from this study strongly suggests that this is the case: we found that it is often children who engage in 'teaching behaviour', showing and discussing the exhibits with their grandparents. McManus modelled a picture of the family during a museum visit as a hunter-gatherer team actively foraging in the museum to satisfy their curiosity about topics that interest them. In the process, she suggested, parents are likely to identify or name new items encountered by the children, and in teaching mode, to comment on or interpret the information broadcast by the children (McManus 1994).

We would like to propose a model of grandparent and grandchild behaviour which is

based on our observations and which suggests that children are instrumental in deciding which works are to be attended to by the group. We suggest that the progress of grandparent and grandchildren groups around exhibits is regular and disciplined but not primarily based on the dissemination of knowledge. Evidence from earlier studies has suggested that children need adult guidance and instruction with exhibits (Piscatelli and Weier 2002) and we would agree that such socially guided experience is needed if their natural and untrained powers of perception are to be put to critical use. But we found little evidence of teaching behaviour between grandparents and grandchildren, if teaching behaviour includes attention to detail, close proximity of adult and child in front of the exhibit, and looking and talking. We cannot say with certainty that each of these criteria was fulfilled. What we can say is that exhibits appear to be points of departure for grandparent and grandchild conversations, which develop away from the exhibits themselves.

Conclusion

In focusing on grandparents and grandchildren in this study, we collected data which will lead to a useful understanding of the motivation, experience and behaviour of grandparent and grandchild visitor groups. Many art galleries base their 'family friendly' policies on an unsubstantiated, stereotype of 'family audience'. However, grandparents and grandchildren have a characteristic visiting style, which differs from those of other family group types. Grandparents have not been extensively researched in visitor studies, and the image of grandparents remains firmly associated with old age (Attias-Donfut and Segalen 2002). But the generation of grandparents in our study, aged between 51 and 64 and born between 1940 and 1954 are wealthier, healthier, more active, more physically mobile and more technologically literate than previous generations (National Opinion Poll 2003).

The interaction between members of the extended family is central to family life, and the findings of this study in relation to grandparents have important implications for the future development of museum and art gallery audiences. Grandparents play a large role in their grandchildren's educational and cultural enrichment, and during a typical art gallery visit, spend one-to-one time with their grandchildren, offering companionship in mutually enjoyable education and entertainment activities. Museums and galleries should consider how they could integrate the perspective of such intergenerational visitors, tailoring programmes that enhance grandparent and grandchild participation, based on a better understanding of how grandchildren, and grandparents make sense of gallery visits through story telling, representations of the past, memories and shared identities.

Finally, for the purposes of analysis in this study, we considered all grandparents as a single group; but we found that grandfathers with grandchildren were a small and interesting group in their own right. In the social sciences generally, grandfathers have been less well researched than grandmothers in family studies; we suggest that in the context of art gallery visiting, social history and life stories, research into the particular characteristics of grandfather and grandchild visits should be developed.

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