

Research Methods

COMPARATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Halley Perry

There have been various topics that have peaked my interest over the past several weeks. Those topics have ranged from collections at a museum to museums that partner with sports teams, and recently an interest in the free learning experience for children in museums. This assignment has allowed me to explore my latest interest in youth programs in museums and how to effectively design an exhibit focused for children. This has also led me to a curiosity of how children learn in a museum setting. With this in mind, I have come up with two research methods I want to explore as a possible subject matter for my final research project.

The first research method I have highly been interested in exploring was interviewing children. All the topics and exploration I have searched thus far have mostly included interviews and personal experiences from professionals and adults. There were great examples in both of the alumni research projects that I compared in the last assignment that made me want to understand how to effectively conduct an interview. The readings for the course has prepared me to ask unbiased questions, avoid leading questions, and develop questions targeted to the research goal. However, I have never experienced interviewing parents or children about their visitor experience or how to successfully open up families that have low-income or at risk youth.

The first article to discuss is about conducting interviews with school children. One article that studies directing interviews with children is called *Conducting qualitative interviews with school children in dental research* by Paul Gill. He discusses how children have traditionally been excluded from personally participating in research due to a variety of pragmatic and ethical concerns. Where children's personal perspectives are sought, proxy information even from parents is often inadequate. He tries to see if interviewing young children can produce unique detailed and trustworthy accounts, which can be used to improve understanding on a variety of issues.

I want to understand better how to successfully conduct interviews with children, especially, either children who have been abused or are at high risk. What are the strengths and weaknesses using

this method? What has this research been used for in the past? There are many questions I have for using this method and the limitations I may have for using this methods.

To help with familiarity and to make the children feel comfortable, they did not wear off-putting attire. People in suites and formal attire may intimidate children. They also consider getting children familiar with the equipment being used for the interview. For example, if the equipment you are using is a recorder or a video tape. It is the best interest to get children the most comfortable in the setting. The major guideline that is discussed frequently in this article is making sure to address the ethical aspects of interview research and the interview questions are addressed to the children in a manner that they understand. It is the researcher's responsibility to find the balance of ethical reasoning and able to measure the desired concept. Children need more guidance and support during interviews than adults do. This might be accomplished by rephrasing questions if a child does not understand what they have been asked.

After all the guidelines had been set, the interview questions began. In this certain study, the topic was what children thought about teeth cleaning. This study was written by a dentist and it explored the qualitative research with children in dentistry. This type of methodology is useful for trying to interview children for museum exhibits.

The article explains some guidelines on how to conduct a successful interview with children. The first advice is to visit children at their school and explain to them, in understandable language, who they are and what they are doing. This helps establish familiarity, trust and rapport, which may help to promote more productive interviews.

The other research method I wanted to explore more are focus groups. Using focus groups is something I have not explored before as a researcher. Moreover, I want to see what focus groups would be like if children were the primary subject. This relates to the study I want to explore in my research and to see what are the challenges and advantages of doing a focus group with just youth present. It will

also help me see how to effectively conduct a focus with a younger participants. It will also me to see the advantages and disadvantages of using this method and see if it is feasible with the amount of time I may have during my research project. It is also something most researchers shy away from because there is this understanding that children don't give critical feedback.

The second reference is about conducting focus groups with children. There is an article that discusses focus group with children. It is written by Leanne Wood Charlesworth and Mary K. Rodwell and it is called, "Focus Groups with Children: A Resource for Sexual Abuse Prevention Program Evaluation." Even though this is not directly related to museums, it has an in-depth look at youth who are at risk and how they conducted the research.

Charlesworth and Rodwell's goal for this paper was to present the focus group method as a tool for conducting social research with children and critics the advantages and disadvantages to use youth in these focus groups evaluative for social research. They look as if children are capable for such research questions and to see if they give critical feedback. It is also important to note that both of these researchers are using focus group as a social workers perspective. My main task is to try and see how the used the methodology and to possibly apply it in a museum setting.

They start by using historical facts about focus groups that gives the goal of focus groups to see how people regard an experience or event. It is to obtain understanding of the participants own experiences. Or as they put it "worlds in their own terms." (Charlesworth, 2009). To help both researchers discover if sexual abuse teaching is effective for at risk youth, they created an experiment that involved having children watch a play that discussed the awareness of sexual abuse. To help them convey using a proper focus group method, they give a cohesive table on the foundation of properly conducting a traditional focus group. They use the table as an outline for the research. For example, step one is Choosing Focus Groups as a Research Method and they explain how using children is more ethically used because their research is trying to see if the children understand the sexual prevention

program/play. They commonly state that this play had never been evaluated before and they are gaining evidence on whether or not they children are responding appropriately to the play. They appropriately did the focus group method treating the children like any other focus group.

There were a few ways that the steps were catered for the children participating in the evaluation. It is to believe that children below age 7 or were in kindergarten or first grade are unlikely to have an understanding of the moral issues involved in sexual abuse. In addition, in a focus group younger children may be overwhelmed by complex and fast-paced dialogue and thus unable to understand and respond to the perspectives of other group members in the same manner as older children. This was their primary group. For their research, they decided to take grade levels into three groups. Kindergarten and first graders, second and third graders, or fourth and fifth graders. It is similar to how homogenous or compatible groups are recommended for adult focus groups in order to facilitate comfortable interactions.

Another catering is the group size. For adults, six to 10 individuals is recommended for focus groups with adults. In recommendation of education and child development experts with experience in conducting research with children, a maximum number of 8 children were selected due to 10 participants create loss perspective, according to educational research.

What was appealing about the research is that the children appeared to have equivalent memories of the superficial aspects of the play, therefore comparison of group discussions for substantive differences. With the exception of a few children with minor behavior problems, attention span did not emerge as a significant issue during any of the groups. In addition, 30 minutes proved to be adequate time for discussion of both primary and secondary issues and is recommended as a general guideline for discussion length.

Both the interviewing and conducting focus groups with children has taught me a lot about the differences between conducting these methods with adults. Both research gave great advice on how to make the children comfortable and them critical thought for their experiments to express a successful responses. To further my research, I want to explore these methods in a museum setting. This research would defiantly be important for children museum.

Part 3- Outline a hypothetical data collection and analysis approach to your topic using one of these methods, and attach process notes (these will be “open-ended” and we will discuss this more in class).

- Partner with schools in the surrounding area.
- Depending on responses - picking at random the schools that were chosen,
- plan a visit to the exhibit/or activity area.
- The groups would be divided by grade levels. 1. Pre K, Kindergarten and First grade. 2. Second Grade and 3rd grade. 3.) 4th and 5th grade. 4.) Middle School
- Don't wear a suite and keep in mind the language presented to them.
- Also, have a volunteer take notes of the responses. Make sure the children are comfortable talking to me and my volunteer with possible multiple visits beforehand. The volunteer might be a staff member at the school that all children now or their teacher.
- Conduct the focus group with children in the surrounding schools by asking their class setting.

Other things that I will need to consider and that I have discussed in class

- Possible age or grade level to study the population.
- Would it be with the school or is it from free learning with the parents.
- Design the question – what is the population you want to focus on. What they learn in a specific program or a topic they are discussing in school?
- This could turn into evolution.
- Specific – types of learning. ART CORE??

Or

- Are you able to design things. This would be talked to Lisa Smith from JSMA