

Focus Groups Action Research

October 31, 2006

Good/bad news

- Ethics will take two more weeks for interview
- Discourse analysis assignment moves to Nov 14/06
- Interview assignment - Nov 28th
 - Readjusted requirements (less)
- Final Exam – Dec 4/06 9am

Assignment 3 now 2

- Consult lecture and text (chs 6 and 8) on discourse analysis
- Due Nov 14, 2006
- 10 newspaper or magazine articles from past 5 years
- Issue - “childhood obesity”

Assignment 2

- Utilise search engine in the library to locate 10 newspaper or other media documents on childhood obesity
 - Lexis-nexis (in library only)
 - Canadian newstand
 - CBCA
 - Toronto Star
 - Globe and Mail

Assignment 2

- You must ensure the 10 articles that are at least 250 words each
 - CBCA/etc. databases give you the word count
- You will need to print off the articles and append them to your assignment
- Why childhood obesity?

Assignment 2

- Recreation and leisure?
 - Solution? Problem? Both?
- In analysis, need to consider:
 - How is the problem presented?
 - Who is expert? Who consulted?
 - What are the facts presented?
 - Solutions
 - Recreation - Source of problem?
 - Recreation - Solution?

Ass. 2 to Turn in

- Introduction to issue (1/2 - 1 pg)
- Sample (database, how selected articles, different media, limitations) - 1pg
- Thematic analysis - examine all articles (5-8 pgs)
 - Causes/solutions
 - Role of recreation in the problem/solution
 - Role of experts, use of facts
 - Severity of the issue
- 10 documents
- Use quotations that demonstrate a point
 - But make use of those quotes

Outline for Tonight

- What are focus groups?
 - Advantages and Disadvantages;
Appropriate and Inappropriate Uses
- Action research

What are Focus Groups?

- Small-group interviews
- Purpose: To collect in-depth information from a group of people representative of a population of interest.

Advantages of Focus Groups

- Allows for in-depth discussion on an issue of relevance and interest to researcher and group
- Provides a large volume of information at a relatively low cost

Limitations of Focus Groups

- Potential for participants to influence opinions of other participants
- Potential for more extreme responses
- Number of questions that can be asked is limited
- Not as useful for detailed, content-related information (e.g., personal experience)

How Focus Groups Can be Used

- Problem identification: Developing hypotheses
- Planning: Finding the best way to achieve a set of goals
- Implementation: Assessment of how plan is working out
- Assessment: Lessons learned

Basic Ingredients of a Focus Group

1. A clearly defined objective / research question.
2. A group appropriate for the research question.
3. Atmosphere / environment and rapport.

Basic Ingredients of a Focus Group

4. An “aware listening” facilitator.
5. A well-organized moderator’s guide.
6. Structure, but restrained contribution to discussion.
7. Research assistance.
8. Systematic analysis.

Planning Focus Groups

1. Clarify purpose of focus group
2. Assess resources to conduct group
3. Train assistant moderator
4. Write moderator's guide

Format of Moderator's Guide

- Pre-discussion small talk
- Introduction to focus group
- Sample guidelines: One person talk at a time; feel free to talk to each other; no wrong answers

Creative Question Ideas

- Complete the following sentence:
 - “One problem with the program is
_____”
- Developing a collage on a theme
- Draw a picture
- Listing things

Creative Question Ideas



A Good Moderator...

Needs to:

Appropriate Uses of Focus Groups

- When there is a problem to be resolved
- When there is a gap between people
- When investigating complex behaviour and motivation
- When you want to understand diversity
- When you need a friendly, respectful research method

Inappropriate Uses of Focus Groups

- When they imply commitments you can't keep
- When participants are not comfortable with each other
- When the topic is not appropriate for participants
- When the project requires statistical data

Action Research

- Questions role of research
- Role of researcher
- Role of researched

Action research

- Does research have any benefit for the participants?
 - When?
 - Should it?
- Goal
 - Benefit both researcher and researched

PAR

- Participatory Action Research
 - Different approaches
 - Work with marginalised, research as liberation and empowering
 - Work within system, with stakeholders, to achieve change

Why Action Research?

- Connection between community and academia
- Use and abuse of researched
- What is the point of doing research?
 - Knowledge?
 - Solution to problems?

Stringer, 1996

- Look
 - Stakeholders
- Think
 - Meeting, focus groups
- Act
 - Solutions and action

Action research

- Problems?
 - Sharing power? Coequal relationship ever?
 - Dissemination (structure of academia, interest of others)
 - Responsibility
 - Ownership
 - Conflicting analyses